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## **The Empire's Most Humble Servants: Capuchin Missionaries in Kongo and Angola (cc. XVII-XVIII)**

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# THE EMPIRE'S MOST HUMBLE SERVANTS

*Capuchin Missionaries in Kongo and Angola  
(cc. XVII-XVIII)*



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ResMA Colonial and Global History

## Research MA Thesis

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Frontispiece: Capuchin missionary burns the house of a shaman.

Source: P. Bernardino Ignazio d'Asti, *Missione in pratica. Padri Cappuccini ne regni di Congo, Angola et Adiacenti*, (ca. 1750), in Biblioteca Civica Centrale di Torino, *Manoscritti e rari*, MS 457. Available at: <https://bct.comune.torino.it/gallerie/missione-prattica>

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Ostia (Rome), 09.08.2023.

## NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

All non-English citations in this thesis are translated by the author. Lengthy quotes from primary sources are provided with the transcription of the original language in the footnotes.

The following abbreviations were used throughout the text:

**AHU**, *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*, Lisbon

**APF**, *Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide*, Rome

**ATT**, *Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo*, Lisbon

**CP**, *Congregazioni Particolari*

**MMA**, António Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana: África Ocidental* (Lisboa: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1952-1988).

**SC**, *Scritture riferite nei Congressi*

**SOCG**, *Scritture riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali*



Figure 1. The kingdom of Kongo, its provinces, and the Portuguese colony of Angola.  
 Credit: W. G. L. Randles, *L'Ancien royaume du Congo des origines à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Mouton, 1968), 22.



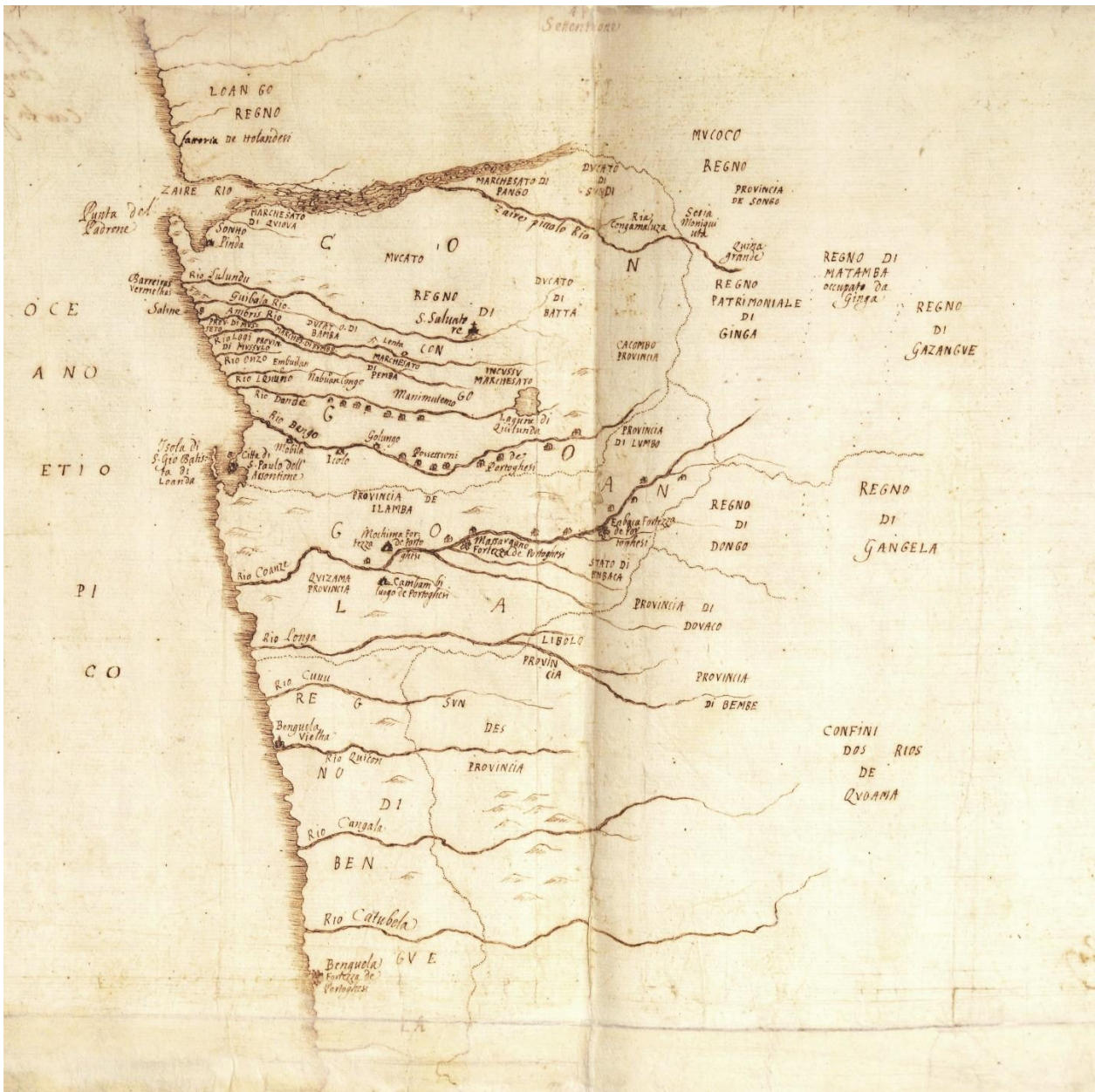


Figure 2. Map of Kongo and Angola kept in the Archives of Propaganda Fide.  
Source: APF, SOCG, vol. 250, f. 3



## INTRODUCTION

### APOSTOLIC OR IMPERIAL MISSIONARIES?

I received news that departed today from San Lucar one ship with fourteen Capuchins from Castille [...] and that these friars were requested to the king of Castille by the king of Kongo to reach the port of Pinda; as the entrance of that people could be of great damage for my service in those parts [of the empire], may the Overseas Council give me advice [...]<sup>1</sup>

On 17 February 1645, the Portuguese king D. João IV (1640-1656)<sup>2</sup> reported to the *Conselho Ultramarino* the departure of the first Capuchin missionaries – six Spanish and five Italians – bound for Congo. This expedition, secretly financed by the king of Spain Philip IV (1621-1665), marked the beginning of the longest mission ever established in premodern Africa, the so-called *Missio Antiqua*. This Catholic mission was entrusted to the Italian Capuchins by the Sacred Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* to evangelise the region between nowadays Congo and Angola. Informed by his spies in Spain, João IV expressed his concern for these men approaching the African territories under his political influence. At that time, the kingdom and its overseas colonies were threatened on multiple fronts. Since the union with Spain in 1580, Portugal suffered from Dutch competition throughout its colonial empire. After the end of the Twelve Years' Truce (1621), the United Provinces moved against the colonies in the South Atlantic, taking possession of Brazil (1630), Elmina (1637) and Luanda (1641). Moreover, in 1640 the kingdom restored its independence initiating a long period of

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<sup>1</sup> AHU, *Conselho Ultramarino*, Angola, cx. 4, doc. 365. Original: “Tenho aviso que de São Lucar será hoje partida uma Urca grande com quatorze Capuchos Barbados Castelhanos [...] e estes frades vão pedidos a el Rei de Castella por el Rei de Congo, tomar o porto de Pinda, e porque a passagem desta gente pode ser de grande dano a meu serviço naquela parte, me diga o conselho ultramarino o que lhe parece”.

<sup>2</sup> The years in brackets refer to the duration of the position in question. For the years of birth and death, the dates will be preceded respectively by “\*” and “+”.

political and military conflict with Spain. Finally, Madrid's political influence in Rome precluded the Holy See to recognise D. João, thus depriving the sovereign of crucial legitimisation.<sup>3</sup>

But who were these Capuchin missionaries? Why were they so important for the Portuguese sovereign? The king's reaction to the Capuchins' departure from Spain can be explained by the fact that there was a group of religious people sailing for Africa outside the Crown's control. The Capuchins were openly violating the jurisdiction of the *Padroado Real*, a set of privileges over the colonial church that had been granted by the Popes to the Iberian Crowns since the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> According to this institution, the king of Portugal had the exclusive right to transport religious people going overseas to territories under the kingdom's sphere of influence. This corresponded to almost half of the world, as settled by the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. In Early Modern colonial empires, controlling the mobility of people within the colonies was a major issue. Especially for the Portuguese case, imperial expansion and colonisation were made possible by several private initiatives, arranged and financed by merchant firms, adventurers, groups of migrant settlers, and missionaries. However, the mobility and activity of these groups also risked escaping metropolitan control, thus posing challenges to sovereign authority. Therefore, the process of empire-building was strictly linked to the development of effective measures to control the movement and activity of (suspect) individuals, as Silva explains.<sup>5</sup>

Missionaries became a special target for control. Because of their activity of evangelisation in the most remote and dangerous corners of the globe, they certainly set the "frontiers of Christendom".<sup>6</sup> Simultaneously, they could also represent the strongholds of European colonial rule and influence overseas. Religious orders often settled in European colonies as landowners, agricultural producers, and traders. However, they frequently acted as explorers, diplomats, and even spies for colonial authorities. For this reason, religious men had an ambiguous position, sometimes being precious allies of the colonising state, others posing a threat to the political stability of the colonies.<sup>7</sup> This was particularly the case if the missionaries were not subjects of the authority governing the colony. In

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<sup>3</sup> Charles R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415-1825* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1991), 106–27.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of the two juridical systems and their history, see Fernanda Olival and Ângela Barreto Xavier, 'O padroado da coroa de Portugal fundamentos y prácticas', in *Monarquias ibéricas em perspectiva comparada (séculos XVI-XVIII): dinâmicas imperiais e circulação de modelos político-administrativos*, ed. Ângela Barreto Xavier, Federico Palomo, and Roberta Stumpf (Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2018), 123–60; Ignasi Fernández Terricabras, 'El Patronato Real en la América Hispana: fundamentos y prácticas', in *Monarquias ibéricas em perspectiva comparada (séculos XVI-XVIII): dinâmicas imperiais e circulação de modelos político-administrativos*, ed. Ângela Barreto Xavier, Federico Palomo, and Roberta Stumpf (Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2018), 97–122.

<sup>5</sup> Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, 'Portuguese Empire-Building and Human Mobility in Sao Tome and Angola, 1400s-1700s', in *Mobility Makes States: Migration and Power in Africa*, ed. Darshan Vigneswaran and Joel Quirk (Philadelphia: Penn University Press, 2015), 37–58.

<sup>6</sup> Stephanie Caroline Boechat Correia, 'Nas fronteiras da cristandade: as missões como baluartes dos impérios europeus na África Centroocidental', *CLIO: Revista de Pesquisa Histórica* 30, no. 2 (2012): 1–18.

<sup>7</sup> Adriano Prospero, 'The Missionary', in *Baroque Personae*, ed. Rosario Villari (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 160–94.

this case, the Capuchins leaving Spain were violating Portugal's transportation monopoly and were not Portuguese subjects. Moreover, by leaving from a warring country, they were immediately perceived as spies of the king of Castile, and thus a menace to the Portuguese empire.

The king's concern also included the institution that these missionaries served. They were *Apostolic Missionaries*, a title given to missionaries appointed by the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* in Rome. This appointment constituted a violation of the patronage jurisdiction. The *Padroado* granted D. João IV the exclusive right to choose the religious institutions to be sent overseas. The Capuchins, appointed by *Propaganda*, were thus considered agents of a foreign state, the Holy See, that was not recognising D. João as Portugal's legitimate sovereign in connivance with Spain. Moreover, *Propaganda* had a reputation of ideological opposition to the Iberian patronage rights, considered an excessive limitation to the spiritual power of the pope.<sup>8</sup> João IV's concerns justify why the Capuchins bound for Kongo in 1645 were perceived as suspicious, and even dangerous, intruders.

From the turbulent start of the Capuchin *Missio Antiqua*, it is hard to believe that this mission would become the longest ever established in premodern Africa, lasting from 1645 until 1835.<sup>9</sup> It is even harder to imagine that some of these Capuchins could have carried out diplomatic expeditions for the Portuguese in the region. Or, that some of them, less than half a century later, could have worked for the Portuguese Inquisition, a key institution for social control, heavily controlled by the Crown. It seems reasonable to argue that the longevity of the Capuchin mission in Kongo and Angola was made possible by the good relationship established with the Portuguese authorities. How can we explain this shift in Portugal's attitude towards the Capuchins? And how does that shift reflect the "apostolic" or "imperial" nature of these missionaries and their *Missio Antiqua*?

This thesis seeks to answer these questions by analysing the role played by the Capuchins of the *Missio Antiqua* in Kongo and Angola. As they were agents of the Holy See, these missionaries have been often considered by historians a thorn in the back of the Portuguese.<sup>10</sup> However, especially when the Portuguese reconquered Angola from the Dutch in 1648, the Capuchins had to rely on them to reach Africa and accomplish their missionary activity. At the same time, the importance given to missionaries for the security and maintenance of the Portuguese colonial empire made the Capuchins more than simple Apostolic missionaries. Therefore, this work seeks to uncover to what extent and

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<sup>8</sup> Giovanni Pizzorusso, 'Il padroado regio portoghese nella dimensione "globale" della chiesa romana. Note storico-documentarie con particolare riferimento al Seicento', in *Gli archivi della Santa Sede come fonte per la storia del portogallo in età moderna: studi in memoria di Carmen Radulet*, ed. Giovanni Pizzorusso, Gaetano Platania, and Matteo Sanfilippo (Viterbo: Sette città, 2012), 177–220.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Gray and Lamin O. Sanneh, *Christianity, the Papacy, and Mission in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012), 27.

<sup>10</sup> Germán Santana Pérez, 'Acción española y plazas atlánticas portuguesas en África tras la independencia portuguesa: lealtad, ruptura o interés', *Estudios Ibero-Americanos* 43, no. 1 (2017): 159–71. See also David Birmingham, *Portugal and Africa* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 72.

how the Capuchins contributed to the process of empire-building and colonisation in Portuguese Africa. By focusing on the relationship between the Capuchins and the Portuguese, this research aims to explore how the missionaries adapted to the balance of power of the colonial world to gain the support and trust of the colonising institutions. Therefore, the main research questions of this thesis will be: *What was the relationship between the Capuchins of the Missio Antiqua and the Portuguese colonial empire? To what extent did they contribute to the endurance of European colonial rule in West Central Africa?*

Answers to these questions contribute to at least three historical debates. By focusing on West Central Africa, this thesis first intends to highlight an overlooked aspect of the history of the Portuguese *Padroado* and its conflict with *Propaganda Fide*. While most of the scholarship has focused on the Asian dimension of this conflict, this study will reconsider it from an African perspective.<sup>11</sup> By analysing the Capuchin *Missio Antiqua*, I will highlight an earlier attempt of *Propaganda* to overcome Portugal's patronage system and assert the Papacy's universal authority over the propagation of the Faith, which anticipated the start of the struggle between *Propaganda* and the *Padroado* in East Asia.

Secondly, this work seeks to highlight the importance of missionaries for European colonial empires by uncovering to what extent and how the Capuchins contributed to the process of empire-building and colonisation in Portuguese Africa. For this purpose, I build on the recent historiographic fields of New Imperial History and New Diplomatic History, which highlight the crucial role played by non-state actors in early modern diplomacy, on the one hand, and in empire-building, on the other.<sup>12</sup> In addition, I also draw on some recent works that focus on the relationship between missionaries and European colonial empires in the Early Modern period.<sup>13</sup> Inspired by these historiographic streams, I analyse the Capuchins' relationship with the Portuguese authorities in West Central Africa and the role of these missionaries in supporting their colonial power in the region.

Finally, this study aims at reviewing and partially reorienting the existing literature about the Capuchin *Missio Antiqua* by adding the perspective of colonial history. The Capuchins' missionary activity in nowadays Congo and Angola has produced a considerable amount of scholarship, which can be roughly divided into three groups. The first group consists of the history of the Capuchin

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<sup>11</sup> Olival and Xavier, 'O padroado', 123.

<sup>12</sup> New Diplomatic History: Maurits Alexander Ebben and Louis Sicking, eds., *Beyond Ambassadors: Consuls, Missionaries, and Spies in Premodern Diplomacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2021); Birgit Tremml-Werner and Dorothee Goetze, 'A Multitude of Actors in Early Modern Diplomacy', *Journal of Early Modern History* 23, no. 5 (2019): 407–22. New Imperial History: Stephen Howe, ed., *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, Routledge Readers in History (London; New York: Routledge, 2010); Amélia Polónia and Cátia Antunes, eds., *Mechanisms of Global Empire Building* (Porto: CITCEM, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Ananya Chakravarti, *The Empire of Apostles: Religion, Accommodatio and the Imagination of Empire in Modern Brazil and India* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Bronwen McShea, *Apostles of Empire: The Jesuits and New France*, France Overseas: Studies in Empire and Decolonization (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019); Matteo Binasco, *French Missionaries in Acadia/Nova Scotia, 1654-1755: On a Risky Edge* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

mission, which has been carefully reconstructed by some historians, although almost all of them members of the Order. However, while surely representing a complete outline of the Capuchins' activity in the region and an invaluable guide to the sources available, this literature often lacks historical objectivity.<sup>14</sup> The second group is represented by the literature produced by historians of Africa. A significant number of studies have been produced since the 1960s by Italian Africanists like Filesi, Toso, and Piazza, who mainly concentrated their efforts on the publication of sources produced by the Capuchins.<sup>15</sup> Starting in the 1980s, they were followed by American Africanists like Thornton, Hilton, and Fromont, who made extensive use of the wide corpus of sources left by the Capuchins to study African societies and political systems.<sup>16</sup> However, these authors only partially touched upon the relationship that the missionaries established with the Portuguese. As a result, Capuchin missionaries were considered as (biased) observers operating under the authority of African rulers, distant from the Portuguese colonial administration and often "caught in the crossfire of European and local political and commercial interests".<sup>17</sup> In the Italian literature, this view has been also added of an apologetic and slightly nationalistic rhetoric, that celebrated the Capuchins' apostolate in Africa in a heroic fashion.

While not rejecting these views fully, I claim that they present a somehow passive and victimising portrait of the Capuchins, thus providing only a partial understanding of their activities in West Central Africa. Instead, I argue that by closely analysing the relationship between the Capuchins and Portuguese authorities it is possible to uncover the extent to which the missionaries interacted with them and gradually adapted their missionary activity to win the sympathy and support of the colonisers. By doing so, the broader intent of this study is to bring historical sources kept in Italian archives into current debates on the history of European colonialism and empires, a research field that still has not found enough space in Italian scholarship. Although none of the Italian pre-modern states ever established a colonial empire like those that emerged from the European oceanic expansion, they

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<sup>14</sup> The main comprehensive work on the *Missio Antiqua* is Graziano Saccardo, *Congo e Angola: con la storia dell'antica Missione dei Cappuccini*, 3 vols (Venezia: Curia provinciale dei Cappuccini, 1982). For an earlier account, also produced by a member of the Order, see Rocco da Cesinale, *Storia delle missioni dei cappuccini* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1873), vol. 3.

<sup>15</sup> For an overview of this literature, see Teobaldo Filesi and Isidoro de Villapadierna, *La 'Missio Antiqua' dei Cappuccini nel Congo: (1645-1835): studio preliminare e guida delle fonti* (Roma: Istituto Storico Cappuccini, 1978); Teobaldo Filesi, 'Cappuccini italiani nell'antico regno del Congo (1645-1835) e recenti apporti alla conoscenza del loro patrimonio storico-missiologicalo', *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 42, no. 3 (1987): 455–73. For an English overview, see Anne Hilton, 'European Sources for the Study of Religious Change in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Kongo', *Paideuma* 33 (1987): 289–312.

<sup>16</sup> For the political history of Kongo, fundamental are John K. Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718* (Madison: University of Wisconsin press, 1983); Anne Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). More recently, Cécile Fromont focused on the kingdom's religious transformations in the early modern period, Cécile Fromont, *The Art of Conversion: Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of Kongo* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Cécile Fromont, *Images on a Mission in Early Modern Kongo and Angola* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2022). Also the scholarship on the Portuguese colony in Angola used Capuchin sources. For an literature review, see the section "Central and Southern Africa" in John M. Monteiro and Susanne Lachenicht, 'Portuguese Atlantic World' (Oxford Bibliographies Online in Atlantic History, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199730414-0044>.

<sup>17</sup> Fromont, *Images on a Mission*, 6–7.

remained entangled with these political institutions in several ways, at times actively participating in their different enterprises.<sup>18</sup> The nearly bi-centennial *Missio Antiqua*, almost completely manned by Italian-born missionaries and administered from Rome, is only one example of the several ways through which the Italian peninsula was connected to European colonial empires. Thus, contributing to the acknowledgement of Early Modern colonialism as a common feature of Western European history represents the ideological motivation behind this work.<sup>19</sup>

This thesis argues that missionaries cannot be considered simply as neutral apostles of the Catholic Faith. Upon their arrival in the kingdom of Kongo in 1645, the Capuchins were perceived as intruders that could endanger the political supremacy of the Portuguese. I argue that this was also the hope of the sovereigns of Kongo, who saw in these emissaries of the Pope an opportunity to curb the political influence of Portugal. The Portuguese restoration in Angola (1648), however, brought the Capuchins progressively closer to Luanda, on which they depended for transportation, communication with Rome, and protection. This process required the Italian Capuchins to adapt to the Portuguese colonial environment and, in the second half of the seventeenth century, resulted in a growing deployment of the missionaries as intermediaries, and informal diplomats, on behalf of authorities in Luanda. Therefore, although the Capuchins' relationship with Portugal was affected by the tensions caused by the conflict between *Propaganda* and the *Padroado* – and indirectly by the war between Spain and Portugal (1640-1669) – their activity in West-Central Africa remained generally well-regarded by the Portuguese. Conversely, the religious repression brought by their evangelic activity changed their perception among the Africans, who increasingly regarded the Capuchins' presence as an expression of European colonial rule.

This research analyses the Capuchins' activity in the kingdom of Kongo and the Portuguese colony of Angola in the second half of the seventeenth century and the first two decades of the eighteenth century. This period represents, on the one hand, the most flourishing for the *Missio Antiqua*, which started declining, both in terms of missionaries and documentary production, by the 1720s.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, these decades coincide with two major developments for Portugal and its colonial empire.

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<sup>18</sup> For a general overview on this topic, Giuseppe Marcocci, 'L'Italia nella prima età globale (ca. 1300-1700)', *Storica* 60 (2014): 7–50. Recent studies have highlighted how Early Modern Italian states did not need to develop their own empires to closely follow and actively participate in the imperial and colonial expansion of other European states. For example, see Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Elizabeth Horodowich and Lia Markey, eds., *The New World in Early Modern Italy, 1492–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Brian Brege, *Tuscany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2021); Alejandro García-Montón, *Genoese Entrepreneurship and the Asiento Slave Trade, 1650-1700* (New York: Routledge, 2022); Massimo Bomboni, 'Il galeone Livorno: sogni di gloria e imprese mancate di Ferdinando I de' Medici fra le Indie e il Mediterraneo (1606-1608)', *Mediterranea Ricerche storiche*, no. 57 (2023): 1–30.

<sup>19</sup> On this matter, I agree with Cátia Antunes' hypothesis of a shared European culture of colonial exploitation, as expressed by the proposal of the ongoing research project "Exploiting the Empire of Others: Dutch Investment in Foreign Colonial Resources, 1570-1800", available at: <https://www.nwo.nl/en/projects/vic191027>

<sup>20</sup> Filesi and de Villapadierna, *La 'Missio Antiqua'*, 129–33.



The reconquest of Angola in 1648 allowed the re-establishment of Portugal's control over the South Atlantic complex between Luanda and Brazil, with the slave trade at its core.<sup>21</sup> This caused a series of conflicts between the Portuguese and the neighbouring African polities that resulted in the collapse of the kingdom of Kongo, after the battle of Mbwila in 1665, and the defeat of the kingdom of Ndongo, after the conquest of Pangu-a-Ndongo in 1671. These events contributed to the transformation of Angola into “the scene of a devastating hunting of men”, as Luiz Felipe de Alencastro argues, and defined the context where the Capuchins had to deal with the Portuguese.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, the second half of the seventeenth century witnessed the peak of the conflict between *Propaganda Fide* and the *Padroado Real*. By the end of the seventeenth century, the country recovered a good diplomatic relationship with the Holy See and could start claiming back control over its “national” church. After the end of the Spanish War of Succession (1713), the conflict almost ceased, as Portugal finally experienced a moment of political stability on Great Britain's side and the Holy See granted the Patriarchal status to the country's Royal Chapel (1716). Therefore, analysing the *Missio Antiqua* within this broader context of international relations will highlight the exceptional ability of the Capuchins to navigate this intricate geopolitical scenario and win the trust of Portuguese colonial authorities.

The research conducted for this thesis relied on a vast *corpus* of primary sources published by authors like António Brásio, Louis Jadin and the Italian Africanists mentioned above, among others, which made available a significant amount of Capuchin sources, together with other documents extracted from archives in Rome, Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands.<sup>23</sup> This material was integrated by the documents kept in the *Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide* in Rome, where most of the correspondence between the Capuchins and the Congregation can be found. Reading the sources written by the Capuchins along with the institutional documentation produced by *Propaganda Fide* and the Portuguese authorities allows to overcome the inevitable biases of missionary sources and grasp a more neutral overview of their activity in West Central Africa. For the final chapter, I also surveyed some of the records of the *Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo* in Lisbon, which keeps the records of the Inquisition of Lisbon, the institution responsible for the investigations and trials in the

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<sup>21</sup> Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, ‘The Economic Network of Portugal's Atlantic World’, in *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800*, ed. Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 109–37.

<sup>22</sup> Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *The Trade in the Living: The Formation of Brazil in the South Atlantic, Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), 69.

<sup>23</sup> António Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana: África Ocidental*, 15 vols (Lisboa: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1952-1988). The sources published by Louis Jadin are extremely numerous, but particularly relevant is Louis Jadin, Joseph Bosseaux, and R. Aubert, *L'ancien Congo et l'Angola, 1639-1655: d'après les archives romaines, portugaises, néerlandaises et espagnoles* (Bruxelles: Institut historique belge de Rome, 1975). For the sources published by the Italian scholars, refer to Filesi and de Villapadierna, *La 'Missio Antiqua'*.

Portuguese Atlantic colonies. The archival series used for this research was the *Cadernos do Promotor*, which contains all the accusations and denunciations reported to the *Santo Oficio*.

To conclude, the results of this enquiry have been structured into four chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One illustrates the nature and meaning of the conflict between the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* and the *Padroado Real*, which represented the political context that the Capuchins faced as agents of the Holy See active in the Portuguese colonial empire. Rather than solely affecting the religious sphere, this conflict had crucial implications for the temporal one, because of the great importance of the church for the maintenance of the Portuguese colonial empire. The second chapter focuses on the long struggle undertaken by the kingdom of Kongo to overcome the *Padroado* and emancipate from Portugal's political influence. Seeking the help of the Holy See to gain direct control over the ecclesiastical structure of the kingdom, the sovereigns of Kongo played an important role in mobilising the political forces that led to the foundation of the *Missio Antiqua*. Chapter Three describes the difficult establishment of the mission and the activity of the Capuchins until the restoration of Angola (1648). Building on the historical context provided by the first two chapters, this section argues that the initial hostility of Portuguese authorities towards the Capuchins is to be understood in the broader struggle that opposed the *Padroado* and *Propaganda Fide*. Finally, Chapter Four analyses the relationship between the Capuchins and the Portuguese empire in the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This section highlights how the Capuchins contributed to the endurance of Portugal's colonial presence in West-Central Africa, demonstrating that the activities of the missionaries often overlapped with tasks as informants, intermediaries, ambassadors, and inquisitors. In so doing, this part will uncover the Capuchins' "mission" as agents of the Portuguese colonial empire, thus providing practical examples of the ties between evangelisation and colonisation in the early modern period.

## CHAPTER ONE

### “WELL-KNOWN IT IS THAT, BY CHANGING RELIGION, POLITICAL RULES CHANGE TOO”

#### *The Conflict Between the Padroado Real and Propaganda Fide*

Several authors stressed the crucial role played by Catholicism as a monarchical legitimising power, thus highlighting the deep connection established between the Portuguese State and the Catholic Church. José Pedro Paiva conceptualised the “interpenetration” between the State and the Church, which never meant the complete subordination of one sphere to the other, but rather corresponded to a dynamic and heterogeneous interaction of the two in different institutional contexts and over multiple interests.<sup>24</sup> One of the most important spheres where this interaction took place was the Portuguese oceanic expansion and establishment of a colonial empire between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Religion provided the legitimisation for the Portuguese overseas expansion, characterising it as an evangelising mission and a continuation of the *Reconquista*. For this reason, the ecclesiastical structures supported the creation of Portugal’s colonial empire from the outset. Referring to the Portuguese empire in Asia, Charles Boxer defined it as “a military and maritime enterprise cast in an ecclesiastical mould”, a definition that could be applied, with the due distinctions of time and space, to the Atlantic.<sup>25</sup> Secular and regular clergy became a stable presence in the colonies and represented an important human capital for the state, especially if their long-lasting activity was compared with the short-lived proxies of colonial administrators. This was particularly true for missionaries, whose religious activity often brought them to the farthest fringes of the empire, where they embodied – willingly or not – the “mainstay” of colonial rule.<sup>26</sup> As Boxer also noticed,

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<sup>24</sup> José Pedro Paiva, ‘Igreja y poder’, in *História Religiosa de Portugal*, ed. Carlos Moreira Azevedo, vol. 2 (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2000), 138. See also, Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri, eds., *História Da Expansão Portuguesa*, vol. 2 (Lisbon: Temas e Debates, 1998), 429–56; Joel Serrão and António Henrique Rodrigo de Oliveira Marques, *Nova história de Portugal. Portugal da paz da restauração ao ouro do Brasil*, ed. Avelino de Freitas de Meneses, vol. 7 (Lisboa: Presença, 2001), 90–124; Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, ‘Ecclesiastical Structures and Religious Action’, in *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800*, ed. Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 255–82.

<sup>25</sup> Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 75.

<sup>26</sup> Charles R. Boxer, *The Church Militant and Iberian Expansion, 1440-1770* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 75. On the role of missionaries in frontier zones also see, Joao Paulo Oliveira e Costa, ‘A diáspora missionária’, in *História Religiosa de Portugal*, ed. Carlos Moreira Azevedo, vol. 2 (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2000), 255–311.

clergymen were often regarded as state officials by Portuguese secular authorities, thus blurring the lines between spiritual and temporal spheres.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, religion sustained the empire-building process from a cultural point of view as an expression of the colonising ideology, as Isabel dos Guimarães Sá pointed out.<sup>28</sup> For this reason, Francisco Bethencourt included the action of the Catholic Church, in its various expressions, in that “nebula of power” that, in his view, “maintained the Portuguese empire in a permanent yet unstable balance among local, regional, and central crown agencies”.<sup>29</sup>

The “interpenetration” of State and Church in the Portuguese empire was made possible by the establishment of a specific jurisdiction over the colonial church: the so-called *Padroado Real*. This juridical apparatus can be defined as a series of rights, privileges and duties over the ecclesiastical administration, accumulated by the Portuguese sovereigns between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As this chapter explains, the patronage system provided the Portuguese Crown with an almost-supreme power over the ecclesiastical structures in Europe and overseas. In the second half of the sixteenth century, in the context of the Counter-Reformation, the patronage system started to be challenged in the face of growing claims of papal universalism. Arguing for the centrality of the pope as head of the Catholic Church, criticism arose about the patronage and the supreme control it granted to sovereigns over the process of propagation of the Faith worldwide. This reaction was institutionalized with the foundation of a papal dicastery entrusted with the task of bringing global evangelisation back to Rome’s purview: the Sacred Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*. Shortly after its foundation, Gregorio XV’s State Secretary and Prefect of *Propaganda*, Ludovico Ludovisi (1621-1623), wrote to the Apostolic Collector Antonio Albergati (1621-1624), his representative in Lisbon, expressing his view on the *Padroado*:

In the overseas regions, it should be deemed that [the Portuguese] act in the name of His Majesty’s great reverence and according to the duties assumed by the Kings of Portugal to plant and propagate our Holy Faith with the help of the clergy during their explorations and in those territories acquired from the barbarians. Nevertheless, this task is handled with great jealousy and secret, its developments and progression hidden so that the sovereigns can keep their secrets concealed, as if this business was not completely spiritual, nor concerning the soul, but rather the temporal jurisdiction and state interest.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 230.

<sup>28</sup> Sá, ‘Ecclesiastical Structures and Religious Action’, 256.

<sup>29</sup> Francisco Bethencourt, ‘Political Configurations and Local Powers’, in *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800*, ed. Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 199.

<sup>30</sup> “Instructions of the State Secretary to the Apostolic Collector”, 04-03-1622 in *MMA*, vol. VII, p. 5. Original: “Quanto poi alle parti lontane, benché per adempimento delli oblig[hi] che si presero i Ré di Portugallo di andaré nelle loro navigationi, e ne nuovi acquisti che ne[lle] parti di quei barbari facevano, plantando col mezo de Religiosi e propagando la santa fede nostra, si debba credere che nel ciò fare a misura della gran pieta di Sua Maesta si adoperino; nondimeno quasi che questo negotio sia opera non del tutto spirituale, ne

The Papacy's attempt to re-establish a universal authority over the Catholic Church found opposition in Portugal, whose colonial empire was significantly strengthened by the control exercised by the king over the religious sphere. This resulted in the harsh struggle opposing Portugal and the Holy See, represented by the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*, over the jurisdiction of the *Padroado Real*. In this chapter, I argue that it is crucial to understand this conflict as a political as much as a religious struggle. To do so, I first provide a brief outline of the juridical history of the *Padroado* and discuss its importance for the maintenance of the Portuguese colonial empire until the foundation of *Propaganda*. Afterwards, I focus on the Sacred Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*, describing the historical background and the geopolitical context of its creation, the mission it undertook for the Holy See, and how it posed a threat to the Portuguese empire by challenging the *Padroado* jurisdiction on a global scale. This political context and power relations constitute the entanglements that the Capuchins of the *Missio Antiqua* had to navigate during their missionary activity.

### “THE TWO SWORDS OF POWER”: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE *PADROADO REAL*<sup>31</sup>

The *ius patronatus* was an old legal institute of the Church, through which the Pope could devolve, to individuals or institutions, specific duties and rights over ecclesiastical foundations, as a reward for their piety.<sup>32</sup> The duties of *fundatio*, *dotatio*, and *aedificatio* consisted of the establishment of an ecclesiastical institution and the provision of the means necessary for its functioning. The individual or institution that fulfilled these obligations gained the status of *patronus*. In exchange, the patron was granted privileges over the founded institution that included the right to: present the candidates for the ecclesiastical offices to the competent religious authority (*ius presentandi*); collect the ecclesiastical tithe; manage the revenues of the institution; be entrusted with the administration of spiritual justice in the territory under the institution's jurisdiction. Evidently, the great influence granted by the *ius patronatus* over the ecclesiastical sphere resided in the possibility of disposing of revenues and creating political and social entanglements by appointing trustworthy people for administrative tasks.<sup>33</sup>

The *Padroado Real* arose out of a process of accumulation of privileges during the decades that witnessed the emergence of Portugal as a European colonial power. However, rather than being a

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dello spirito, ma di giurisdizione temporale, o di ragione di stato, se ne tratta con gran gelosia e secreto, se ne tengono gli affetti e gli andamenti, et con tutto ciò i secreti de' Re vogliono tener celati.”

<sup>31</sup> Paulo da Trindade, *Conquista espiritual do Oriente*, ed. Fernando Félix Lopes (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1962), vol. III, p. 127.

<sup>32</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. III, p. 199.

<sup>33</sup> Olival and Xavier, ‘O padroado’.

straightforward and unconditional accumulation of rights, the development of the *Padroado* was grounded in specific political conjunctures in Portugal, the Holy See, and Europe in general during the first phase of oceanic expansion. According to Xavier and Olival, the first stage of this process took place between the 1450s and 1550s and resulted in the development of a “Portuguese model” of patronage.<sup>34</sup> This period was characterised by a twofold accumulation of privileges. On the one hand, the Military Order of Christ, the institution that sponsored the first Portuguese voyages of exploration under the leadership of the Infante D. Henrique (\*1394--1460).<sup>35</sup> After the conquest of Ceuta in 1415, the Papacy faced the question of evangelising the populations encountered by the Portuguese. After the resolution of the turbulent Western Schism, the Holy See experienced a period of consolidation of its temporal jurisdiction that did not allow for a comprehensive solution for the evangelizing issues raised by Portuguese overseas conquest.<sup>36</sup> For this reason, the Pope used patronage to bestow this task upon religious institutions, including the Order of Christ, the reason for its prominent role in the development of the Portuguese *ius patronatus*. In this period, two papal bulls (in 1442 and 1456) granted the Grand Master of the Order of Christ the administration of the spiritual jurisdiction in the newly founded institutions overseas.<sup>37</sup>

In the meantime, privileges were also bestowed upon the Portuguese king. In 1455, Niccolò V (1447-1455) granted D. Afonso V (1438-1481) the privilege of *fundatio*, *dotatio*, and *aedificatio* in the newly conquered (or to be conquered) territories.<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that in the same bull, the pope also gave the monopoly over transport and commerce in those regions, supposedly to avoid the trade of weapons with the infidels. Nevertheless, this explicit overlap between the spiritual and temporal spheres demonstrates the deep relationship between commerce and evangelisation which, according to Souza, is “at the foundation of the Portuguese empire”.<sup>39</sup> However, it is during the pontificate of Leone X (1513-1521) that the Portuguese king finally achieved the *ius patronatus et presentandi* over the lands under his temporal dominion, and those to be conquered.<sup>40</sup> In his bulls,

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<sup>34</sup> Olival and Xavier, 129.

<sup>35</sup> D. Henrique found the economic resources to organise these voyages in the huge revenues of the Order, of which he was the Grand Master. Founded in 1319, the Order of Christ most of the possessions of the Order of the Temple, after its suppression in 1312. Nicholas Morton, *The Medieval Military Orders: 1120-1314* (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> The main reference for this is Paolo Prodi, *The Papal Prince: One Body and Two Souls: The Papal Monarchy in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> These were the bulls *Etsi suscepti* issued by Eugenio IV (1431-1447) and *Inter coetera* issued by Callisto III (1455-1458). Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. III, p. 200.

<sup>38</sup> Bull *Romanus pontifex*, 08.01.1455. In 1418, pope Martino V (1417-1431) already granted to the king Joao I the collection for the tithes for the Crusade, also known as *Cruzada*. António da Silva Rego, *O Padroado português do Oriente: esboço histórico* (Lisboa: Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca, Agência Geral das Colónias, 1940), 7–8.

<sup>39</sup> Marina de Mello e Souza, ‘Catolicismo e Comércio Na Região Do Congo e de Angola, Séculos XVI e XVII’, in *Nas Rotas Do Império. Eixos Mercantis, Tráfico e Relações Sociais No Mundo Português*, ed. João Fragoso et al. (Vitória: Edufes, 2006), 279–98. On the link between the *Padroado* and commerce, Giuseppe Sorge, *Il padroado regio e la S. Congregazione ‘de Propaganda Fide’ nei secoli XIV-XVII* (Bologna: Clueb, 1984), 35.

<sup>40</sup> Bull *Dum fidei* (1514). José Pedro Paiva, ‘Provisión de clérigos en las diócesis del imperio portugués y patronato real (1514-1777). Una visión sinóptica y comparativa’, *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna* 46, no. 2 (2021): 763–99.



the territories under the jurisdiction of the Portuguese crown and those declared under its sphere of influence – by Pope Alessandro VI (1492-1503) and the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) – were generally referred to as *Conquista*, a term that generated numerous jurisdictional disputes between the Holy See and Portugal.<sup>41</sup>

At the time of Leone X, the spiritual jurisdiction of the newly founded institutions was still entrusted to the Grand Master of the Order of Christ. However, the political decline of the order led to attempts by the Portuguese kings to have the Grand Master's privileges transferred to the Crown.<sup>42</sup> This final step would have brought into the hands of the Portuguese sovereigns all the *Padroado* rights *extra territorium*, that is, the colonial church. This ultimate privilege was granted in 1551 by Giulio III's bull *Praeclara clarissimi*, which declared the kings of Portugal Grand Masters of the Orders of Christ, Aviz, and Santiago, *in perpetuum*. With this decision, Portugal's patronage rights almost completely resembled the "Castilian model", where the rights over the colonial church were firmly in the hands of the king of Spain.<sup>43</sup>

The emergence of the *Padroado* was facilitated by the historical context of the late fifteenth up to the middle of the sixteenth century. In this period, Portugal gained substantial authority during some very turbulent years for the Holy See. From a geopolitical point of view, Rome found itself involved in the violent wars between the Habsburg Empire and the Kingdom of France that shook the Italian peninsula from the end of the fifteenth century onwards. Additionally, the Ottoman expansion in the Mediterranean kept the Catholic church under siege and absorbed most of the diplomatic energies of the Papacy. From a spiritual point of view, the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation and the subsequent movement of Counter-Reformation that culminated in the organisation of the Council of Trent in 1545, left the Church in extreme need of trustworthy allies among the European nations. Besides being one of the first nations to fully adopt the Tridentine principles, Portugal represented one of the most committed bearers of the Catholic faith, either against the North African Muslim polities or in the newly conquered lands. For these reasons, in such a delicate moment for the Catholic church, the Holy See was particularly accommodating towards the Portuguese sovereigns and their interests in gaining control over ecclesiastical structures.<sup>44</sup>

By accumulating privileges over the country's ecclesiastical offices and revenues, the Aviz sovereigns could use this significant stock of political and economic capital to consolidate their power

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<sup>41</sup> This issue is tackled in a printed eighteenth-century volume kept in the archives of *Propaganda Fide*, with the title "Alla Santità di Nostro Signore Benedetto Papa XIV. Memoriale responsivo alle animadversioni di Monsignor Segretario della S. Congregazione de Propaganda Fide sopra la nuova erezione de' vescovadi nell'Indie Orientali". From the point of view of the Congregation, that printed the volume, this issue was still at the core of the juridical dispute over the *Padroado* well into the eighteenth century. See APF, *Miscellanea Diverse*, vol. 1, ff. 1-33.

<sup>42</sup> Paiva, 'Igreja y poder', 144.

<sup>43</sup> Olival and Xavier, 'O padroado'; Terricabras, 'El Patronato Real'.

<sup>44</sup> Paiva, 'Igreja y poder', 146-54.

in the kingdom. Starting with the reign of D. João III, the crown undertook a political strategy of “clericalization” of the administration.<sup>45</sup> On the one hand, this consisted in making use of patronage rights to dispense ecclesiastical benefices and revenues to family members and loyal members of the nobility. On the other, the Portuguese sovereigns worked towards limiting Rome’s interference with the Portuguese church and its personnel, by creating different institutions entrusted with administering and surveying the ecclesiastical sphere, while being steadily controlled by the crown. The most important of these institutions were the *Mesa da Consciencia e Ordens*, a council created in 1532 with vast prerogatives over ecclesiastical affairs, and the Portuguese Inquisition, founded in 1536.<sup>46</sup>

Overseas, these institutional developments had an even stronger impact, given the pivotal role played by the Church in the colonies. Here, the *Padroado* emerged as “an efficient tool for maintaining the political domination in the extended and diverse parts of the empire”.<sup>47</sup> Due to the privileges and rights acquired, the sovereign was entitled to collect and manage the ecclesiastical taxes, appoint candidates for the main offices of the secular clergy, allow the erection of churches and other religious buildings, and – extremely important – control the transport and circulation of religious people in the empire, as well as in the sphere of influence designated by the Treaty of Tordesillas.<sup>48</sup> Overall, the *ius patronatus* made the overlap between the temporal and spiritual spheres more prominent. As Isabel dos Guimarães Sá highlights, the formation of the ecclesiastical structures followed the evolution of the Portuguese empire and was closely related to its administration.<sup>49</sup>

In such an interdependent context, missionary activity became a “pillar” in the Portuguese process of empire-building.<sup>50</sup> Particularly after 1540 and the foundation of the Jesuit Order, a new missionary effort ensued. This militant process of evangelisation found the economic and political support of Portuguese kings, who saw new possibilities for the penetration, expansion, and consolidation of Portuguese influence. Missionaries participated in the process of expansion of the empire together with other social groups. Unlike merchants and private entrepreneurs, however, missionaries were often subsidised by the sovereign and their movement was carefully controlled by the state.<sup>51</sup> The *Padroado* gave the Crown a monopoly over the transport of missionaries to the overseas territories,

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<sup>45</sup> Paiva, 151.

<sup>46</sup> Paiva, 152–53.

<sup>47</sup> Caio Boschi, ‘Estruturas eclesíasticas e Inquisição’, in *História Da Expansão Portuguesa*, ed. Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri, vol. 2 (Lisbon: Temas e Debates, 1998), 429.

<sup>48</sup> Boschi, 429–31.

<sup>49</sup> Sá, ‘Ecclesiastical Structures and Religious Action’, 259–60.

<sup>50</sup> Boxer, *The Church Militant*, 76–77.

<sup>51</sup> Costa, ‘A diáspora missionária’, 275–78.

“where the temporal and the spiritual domains were made to merge” to consolidate Portuguese power, as Pius Malekandathil put it.<sup>52</sup>

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the state infrastructure, as well as its interpenetration of temporal and spiritual spheres, had to endure the first major challenge since its creation: the Union of the Crowns (1580-1640). Although after 1580 the Portuguese empire and the patronage therein remained separate from its Spanish counterparts, the administration of the kingdom and its colonial empire were forcibly integrated into the political strategy of the Catholic Kings in Madrid, with important consequences for the country’s international authority and its relationship with the Holy See. Overall, the integration of the Portuguese colonial empire into the Spanish political agenda severely compromised the efficiency of its administration and exposed it to the commercial penetration of emerging European countries, like the United Provinces. This heavily weakened the political influence of Portugal in the Indian Ocean, where the Dutch became the main European power trading in Asia, and in the Atlantic, where the empire suffered heavy territorial losses with the Dutch conquest of Brazil in 1630. At the same time, the Union of the Crowns meant that Portugal had no more diplomatic relations with the Holy See as an independent state, but only through the mediation of Spain, which sensibly reduced the consideration of Portuguese interests in Rome.<sup>53</sup>

The political fragility of the Portuguese colonial empire and the reduction of the country’s authority in the papal court opened new possibilities to break through the strict monopoly perfected by the Aviz sovereigns over ecclesiastical affairs. Among the first states to take advantage of this situation was Spain, which sent its missionaries to China from Manila. Similarly, the Papacy questioned the extensive privileges of the *Padroado Real*. This was part of a broader political strategy undertaken by the Holy See to retrieve control of the process of evangelisation that culminated with the foundation of the Sacred Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* in 1622.

### *PROPAGANDA FIDE: THE FACE OF PAPAL UNIVERSALISM*

The institution of *Propaganda* cannot be considered an isolated event in the history of the Church. Rather, it was the peak of a long process of recovery of the Holy See’s control over the missionary

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<sup>52</sup> Pius Malekandathil, ‘Cross, Sword and Conflicts: A Study of the Political Meanings of the Struggle between the *Padroado Real* and the *Propaganda Fide*’, *Studies in History* 27, no. 2 (2011): 253.

<sup>53</sup> Paiva, ‘Igreja y poder’, 154.

effort worldwide, which started in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>54</sup> Its creation needs to be understood in at least two broader contexts. First, the ecclesiastical context of the Counter-Reformation and of the missionary church in the second half of the sixteenth century. Secondly, the geopolitical context in Europe and the significant changes that characterised its expansion worldwide.

The idea of a papal Congregation with jurisdiction over the entirety of the Church's missionary activity found its roots in the Counter-Reformation and the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The Council provided "a new mentality" to the Roman Church, which translated into a more aggressive and combative attitude towards heresy, a major effort of disciplinary reformation towards orthodoxy, and the determined affirmation of the universal supremacy of the Pope on spiritual matters.<sup>55</sup> This attitude was strengthened by a revival of the theory of papal primacy in the 1570s, which depicted the "papal prince" as a *primus inter pares*.<sup>56</sup> In the context of the European expansion overseas, this meant reaffirming the role of mediator between rival colonial powers assumed by the Holy See since the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>57</sup>

Although the Council of Trent (1545-1563) did not explicitly address issues concerning the missionary and colonial church, the "Tridentine paradigm" elaborated during its sessions significantly affected the evangelisation process. As it was pointed out by Pizzorusso, the Council "strengthened the figure of the pontifex" and affirmed its universal supremacy over ecclesiastical matters, which included the global enterprise of evangelisation entrusted to the missionaries.<sup>58</sup> This was a crucial component of the Counter Reformation's strategy to fight against Protestant heresy and expand Roman Catholicism outside Europe. Moreover, the Council's emphasis on the orthodoxy and alignment to the Catholic doctrine required the substitution of old missionary methods, made of massive and superficial conversions, for others oriented towards the heartfelt conversion of the neophytes.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> On the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, see the dated but still fundamental work Josef Metzler, ed., *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, 3 vols (Roma: Herder, 1971-1976). For a more recent study, Giovanni Pizzorusso, *Propaganda Fide. I. La congregazione pontificia e la giurisdizione sulle missioni* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2022).

<sup>55</sup> Pietro Chiocchetta, 'Il mondo politico e religioso all'inizio del sec. XVII', in *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, ed. Josef Metzler, vol. I/1 (Roma: Herder, 1971), 8. On the Council of Trent, see Adriano Prosperi, *Il Concilio di Trento: Una introduzione storica* (Torino: Einaudi, 2001). The Council promoted major adjustments to the Church's government, such as the establishment of new administrative institutions, like the cardinals' congregations, or the reinforcement of old ones, like the nunciatures, Pizzorusso, *Propaganda Fide*, xvii. On papal universalism, see the essays in Maria Antonietta Visceglia, ed., *Papato e politica internazionale nella prima età moderna* (Roma: Viella, 2013).

<sup>56</sup> Maria Antonietta Visceglia, 'The International Policy of the Papacy: Critical Approaches to the Concepts of Universalism and Italianità, Peace and War', in *Papato e politica internazionale nella prima età moderna*, ed. Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Roma: Viella, 2013), 17–62; Heinz Schilling, 'The two Papal Souls and the Rise of an Early Modern State System', in *Papato e politica internazionale nella prima età moderna*, ed. Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Roma: Viella, 2013), 103–16.

<sup>57</sup> Pizzorusso, *Propaganda Fide*, 25–26.

<sup>58</sup> Pizzorusso, xvi–xvii.

<sup>59</sup> Pizzorusso, 5.

Finally, Trent's reforming push promoted the idea of the *plantatio ecclesiae*, according to which this expansion required the solid and stable territorialization of the Church, its presence next to the flock and consequent distance from temporal interests.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the ideas and concepts that came out of the Council encouraged the Holy See to claim back the spiritual responsibility over the evangelisation process. Since the end of the 1560s, different popes pursued this political strategy, seeking to centralise the coordination and control over the missionary church in Rome.<sup>61</sup> However, for the centrality assumed by the missionary church in the expansion and maintenance of colonial empires – like in the Portuguese case – the coordinating role claimed by the Holy See could hardly be reduced to spirituality. Rather, it touched important interests of geopolitical and economic nature, as those jealously protected by the patronage rights granted to the Iberian crowns. Furthermore, these attempts also found resistance within the fragmented and variegated reality of the missionary church.

During the first phases of the European expansion, the evangelisation was carried out by the older Mendicant Orders (Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians), to which the Church and the colonial powers often granted privileges and monopolies over the apostolate of specific territories. This was made possible by the close relationship that was established between the missionary activity and the political expansion of the Iberian powers during the “patronage period”, as it is called in the history of Catholic missions.<sup>62</sup> However, in reaction to the rapid European expansion and the high demand of religious people to evangelise the conquered lands, new religious orders entered missionary activity during the sixteenth century. While some of them were founded with a clear apostolic mission, like the Jesuits (1540), some others developed their missionary vocation by the end of the sixteenth century, like the Theatines (1524), the Capuchins (1525) and the Discalced Carmelites (1562). These new religious orders had to make their way through a complex system of interests carefully defended by the *status quo* and some of them, like the Jesuits, had particular success in this endeavour. Conversely, those that could not find the support of the Iberian crowns turned to the Holy See to legitimise their missionary activity. Therefore, competition and rivalry within the missionary church increased, which in turn complicated the Holy See's attempts to centralise and coordinate its activity.<sup>63</sup>

Notwithstanding these difficulties, since the second half of the sixteenth century, the Papacy became increasingly aware of the universal dimension of its spiritual and political responsibility.

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<sup>60</sup> Pizzorusso, ‘Il padroado regio portoghese’, 191.

<sup>61</sup> On Propaganda's precursors, see Pizzorusso, *Propaganda Fide*, chapter I/1; Josef Metzler, ‘Wegbereiter und Vorläufer der Kongregation’, in *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, ed. Josef Metzler, vol. I/1 (Roma: Herder, 1971), 38–78.

<sup>62</sup> Josef Metzler, ‘La situazione della Chiesa missionaria’, in *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, ed. Josef Metzler, vol. I/1 (Roma: Herder, 1971), 24.

<sup>63</sup> Pizzorusso, *Propaganda Fide*, 4–6. On the Jesuits in Portugal, Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond, 1540-1750* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996).

Rome developed as a “global system of knowledge” and a key centre for international diplomacy, as the pontificate of Paolo V (1605-1621) demonstrated.<sup>64</sup> During his reign, the city hosted several non-European embassies, the first being the representatives sent by the king of Kongo (1608), discussed in the following chapter. Simultaneously, Rome imposed its role as the centre for the solution of important controversies regarding evangelisation, like those concerning the Chinese and Malabar rites. Moreover, it is under Paolo V that new religious orders such as the Capuchins and the Discalced Carmelites finally embraced the missionary cause. This development further diversified the action of the missionary clergy, raising the necessity of a coordinating institution. Finally, between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Roman environment was particularly open to missionary reformation, as missionaries demanded better preparation of the clergy, more links to Rome and less dependence on the political authority of colonial powers.<sup>65</sup>

From a geopolitical point of view, Paolo V’s pontificate was also marked by the first violations of the global system of international relations constituted at the end of the fifteenth century by Alessandro VI’s bulls and the Treaty of Tordesillas. The beginning of the French colonisation of North America provided the Holy See with a valuable ally for the propagation of the faith. Conversely, the Dutch and English expansion in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean exposed the extra-European territories to the Protestant threat, which represented a major concern for the post-Tridentine Church. Overall, these developments weakened the international authority of the Iberian Crowns, which were soon to lose their monopoly over the process of colonisation. However, it was the Portuguese colonial empire that suffered these foreign penetrations the most, after the VOC managed to break the *Estado da India*’s monopoly over the spice trade in Europe and establish its colonial structure in Asia.<sup>66</sup>

Finally, the combination between a restored international authority and the weakening of the Portuguese colonial empire, allowed the Holy See to launch its first direct attack against the *Padroado*. With the papal bull *Apostolicae Sedis*, issued by Paolo V in 1608, the Pope allowed all missionaries to reach the East Indies without passing through Lisbon, thus breaking the transportation monopoly granted to the *Padroado* since the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>67</sup> As Pizzorusso explains, in contrast with the strength of the Spanish patronage, “the Portuguese one showed gaps that the

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<sup>64</sup> Antonella Romano, ‘Rome and Its Indies: A Global System of Knowledge at the End of the Sixteenth Century’, in *Sites of Mediation: Connected Histories of Places, Processes, and Objects in Europe and Beyond, 1450–1650*, ed. Susanna Burghartz, Lucas Burkart, and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 21–45; Peter Burke, ‘Rome as Center of Information and Communication for the Catholic World, 1550-1650’, in *From Rome to Eternity: Catholicism and the Arts in Italy, ca. 1550-1650*, ed. Pamela M Jones and Thomas Worcester (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 253–69.

<sup>65</sup> On Paolo V’s pontificate, see Pizzorusso, *Propaganda Fide*, chapter 1/2; Metzler, ‘La situazione della Chiesa missionaria’; Metzler, ‘Wegbereiter und Vorläufer der Kongregation’, 73–77.

<sup>66</sup> Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 106–27.

<sup>67</sup> Paiva, ‘Igreja y poder’, 154–56.



Papacy aimed to occupy to recover an active role of missionary control”.<sup>68</sup> Although the long pontificate of Paolo V insistingly adopted this new attitude, it was under the short reign of Gregorio XV that it took institutional rooting with the foundation of *Propaganda*.

On 6 January 1622, Gregorio XV created a congregation to which “he committed and recommended the affairs of the Propagation of the Faith”.<sup>69</sup> The nature of these “affairs” was made explicit by the foundation bull issued by the pope in the following June, which stated that the duty of the members of the Congregation was:

to oversee all the missions, appoint and replace all the ministers necessary to preach and teach the Gospel and Catholic doctrine. That considered, by Apostolic authority and according to the tenor of the present, we grant and confer to them the full, free, and ample power of making, managing, negotiating, realising and executing all the necessary and convenient things to fulfil the task as above, even if they had been such as to require a special, specific, and clearly stated motion.<sup>70</sup>

In his choice of the members of the Congregation, Gregorio XV wanted to secure its activity from the temporal interests of the European ruling families that permeated the College of Cardinals at the time.<sup>71</sup> The *cardinal nepote* and State secretary Ludovico Ludovisi (1595-1632) was entrusted with the Prefecture of the newly founded Congregation, which underlines the importance of this institution. Francesco Ingoli (1578-1649), a determined opponent of patronage rights, was chosen as secretary.

The creation of *Propaganda*, and the contextual factors that prompted its successful foundation, initiated a new phase in the history of Catholic missions that was marked by a new multilateral participation in global evangelisation.<sup>72</sup> This task ceased to be left in the sole hands of the Iberian kings through the exercise of their patronage, to be brought under greater surveillance of the Papacy, becoming an expression of its attempt to claim a universal authority over spiritual matters. However, this shift was not characterised by the absence of resistance on the part of the colonial empires, whose control over the church still represented a crucial tool for the political control of their territories. This was particularly true for the weakened Portuguese empire, whose *Padroado* immediately caught *Propaganda*'s opposition.

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<sup>68</sup> Pizzorusso, *Propaganda Fide*, 42.

<sup>69</sup> From the report of the first meeting of the Congregation on the January 14, 1622, cited in Josef Metzler, ‘Foundation of the Congregation “de Propaganda Fide” by Gregory XV’, in *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, ed. Josef Metzler, vol. I/1 (Roma: Herder, 1971), 86. The Congregation was composed by thirteen cardinals, two prelates, a secretary, and a prefect.

<sup>70</sup> “Foundation bull of *Propaganda*”, Rome, 22.06.1622 in *MMA*, vol. VII, p. 30. Original: “Missionibus omnibus ad praedicandum et docendum evangelium et catholicam doctrinam superintendant, ministros necessarios constituent et mutant. Nos enim eis, tam praemissa, quam, omnia et singularia desuper necessaria et opportuna, etiam si talia fuerint, quae specialem, specificam et expressam requirant mentionem, faciendi, gerendi, tractandi, agendi, et exequendi, plenam, liberam et amplam facultatem, auctoritatem et potestatem, apostolica auctoritate, eorundem tenore presentium, concedimus et imperitumur.”

<sup>71</sup> Metzler, ‘Foundation of the Congregation “de Propaganda Fide” by Gregory XV’, 89. Although the majority of the members were Italian, the international tasks of the Congregation also required the presence of foreign cardinals, so that most of the European Catholic countries could be informed about its activity in the territories under their jurisdiction.

<sup>72</sup> Costa, ‘A diaspora missionária’, 259.

## THE CROSS AGAINST THE SWORD: THE CONFLICT BETWEEN *PROPAGANDA* AND THE *PADROADO*

After the first meeting of *Propaganda*, the secretary announced its creation to the Pope's representatives in Europe. Tellingly, he asked them to explain and reassure the temporal sovereigns of their regions about the mission and "intention" of the Congregation "to remove any possible suspicion". This was not "to erect tribunals or exercise temporal jurisdiction in any place nor to act in a violent or unusual manner". Rather, the Congregation aimed "to establish in Rome a continual administration of the Missions", the term "mission" meaning the apostolic mission of the propagation of the faith.<sup>73</sup>

Shortly afterwards, *Propaganda* started structuring its task by elaborating a *Divisio provinciarum*, which divided the globe into 13 provinces. For each of these provinces, a cardinal member was given decision-making power within the Congregation. The provision of information concerning the provinces, as well as their peripheric jurisdiction, was entrusted to Apostolic Nuncios. At this time, only the Nuncio of Spain and the Collector of Portugal had responsibility over non-European territories, which were considered either colonial territories of the Iberian crowns, or regions existing on the sphere of interest of their patronage.<sup>74</sup>

During its first months of activity, *Propaganda* was devoted to gathering as much information as possible on the ongoing process of evangelisation worldwide. This was not a secondary issue, as the recognition of *Propaganda*'s jurisdiction by the institutions involved in the propagation of the faith was deeply linked with the Congregation's capacity of establishing a wide and reliable information network over missionary activity around the globe. The success of this enterprise had relevant political implications. As Pizzorusso argues, the more *Propaganda* was recognised as the main jurisdictional authority over a specific territory, the more information was sent to Rome, the more was known about a missionary territory, and the more possibilities the Congregation had to effectively exercise its jurisdiction over it.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, the Superiors of the different missionary orders, as well as the prefects of the missions, were asked to produce reports on their activities. As a result, a huge

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<sup>73</sup> "Letter of the Secretary Francesco Ingoli to the Pope's representatives", Rome, 15.01.1622 in *Collectanea S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide seu decreta instructiones rescripta pro apostolicis missionibus ex tabulario eiusdem sacrae congregationis deprompta* (Roma: Ex Typographia Polyglotta, 1893), 1–2.

<sup>74</sup> Fabio Tosi, 'La memoria perduta di Propaganda Fide. La Relazione delle quattro parti del mondo, un inedito di mons. Francesco Ingoli, primo segretario della Sacra Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli (1622-1649)', in *Relazione delle quattro parti del mondo* (Roma: Urbaniana University Press, 1999), vii–xli. The *Divisio provinciarum* was elaborated by Giovanni Battista Agucchi, secretary of Pope Gregorio XV and non-cardinal member of the Congregation. The geographical division was based on geopolitical criteria and attributed each of the provinces to a cardinal, within the Congregation, and a Nuncio residing in the territory (except for the provinces of the Near East that were attributed to the patriarchal vicars). On the administrative organisation of the Congregation, see Pizzorusso, *Propaganda Fide*, 68. For a list of the provinces, see Metzler, *Memoria Rerum*, III/2, pp. 659–661.

<sup>75</sup> Giovanni Pizzorusso, 'La congregazione pontificia de Propaganda Fide nel XVII secolo: missioni, geopolitica, colonialismo', in *Papato e politica internazionale nella prima età moderna*, ed. Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Roma: Viella, 2013), 149–72.

amount of information reached the table of Secretary Francesco Ingoli. In a very short time, the Congregation, and particularly his secretary, managed to become one of the most informed institutions about the state of the Catholic church in the world.<sup>76</sup>

By collecting and reading all this information, Monsignor Ingoli became increasingly aware of the problems and shortcomings affecting the different missions, particularly those established in the overseas colonies, to which the secretary devolved particular attention. In two memorials, written in 1625 and 1628, Ingoli described the inconveniences and abuses that prevented the progress of the colonial church.<sup>77</sup> According to the first of these memorials, the progress of the faith in the Indies was hampered by the bad behaviour of the regular clergy: members of different orders or with different national backgrounds were often in harsh competition and their rivalry pushed away the indigenous population from embracing the Catholic religion. In absence of any apostolic delegate, these disorders were often resolved with the intervention of the secular authorities, colonial or indigenous, excessively merging the spiritual and temporal affairs. This situation was aggravated by the illicit participation of the clergy in colonial trade, which often sparked aggressive reactions from indigenous populations. As a result, evangelisation in the Indies proceeded with difficulty and Catholic kings were cutting down on the funds they were required to provide as patrons. The solution sketched by Ingoli was to place Holy See's representatives as close as possible to the colonies, by sending apostolic vicars and even establishing two subordinate offices of *Propaganda* in Seville and Lisbon!<sup>78</sup>

In 1628, the secretary was again denouncing the interference of colonial authorities in ecclesiastical matters and their connivance with the clergy in keeping the indigenous people away from the sacerdotal offices:

The Indians are not promoted to the sacerdotal offices, if not out of great favours and gifts, so that the European ministers do not lose their spiritual control on the Indians or the riches they obtain from them.<sup>79</sup>

Moreover, the mobility of indigenous people was controlled by the ecclesiastical and temporal authorities to maintain this dominion:

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<sup>76</sup> On *Propaganda* as a “centre for accumulation of missionary knowledge”, see Giovanni Pizzorusso, ‘La Congrégation De Propaganda Fide à Rome: centre d’accumulation et de production de «savoirs missionnaires» (XVIIe-début XIXe siècle)’, in *Missions d’évangélisation et circulation des savoirs: XVIe-XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Charlotte de Castelnau-l’Estoile, Marie-Lucie Copete, and Ines G. Županov (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2011), 25–40.

<sup>77</sup> Extracts of these three memorials are published in Henri Alexander Chappoulié, *Aux origines d’une église: Rome et les missions d’Indochine au XVIIe siècle*, vol. 1 (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1943), 383–90.

<sup>78</sup> “Discurso del Segretario della Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide intorno agl’inconvenienti che circa la propagatione della nostra Santa Religione occorrono nell’Indie, et intorno alli rimedii che si potrebbero usare per levarli, cavato dalle scritture che sono nella secretaria”, Rome, 16.06.1625 in Chappoulié, 1:383.

<sup>79</sup> “Principali disordini et inconvenienti dell’Indie Orientali et Occidentali circa le materie spirituali et ecclesiastiche”, Roma, 1628 in Chappoulié, 1:387. Original: “Non si promovono al sacerdotio Indiani se non pochissimi et con grandissime favori e presenti, acciò da sacerdoti Europei non si perda il dominio spirituale negl’Indiani, né le ricchezze grandi che da essi cavano”.

In order not to make the king or the Pope know about the temporal and spiritual disorders and inconveniences happening in the Indies, the Indians are not let to Europe, and those who want to come are brought back. For this reason, it happens that as the heathens realise being treated like slaves, they abhor our Faith, finding it corrupted and contrary to any charity for the neighbour.<sup>80</sup>

According to Ingoli, the creation of indigenous clergy in the colonies would considerably improve the propagation of the faith as “they would attend with more charity and less interest to the spiritual government of their countrymen while making it not necessary for the Europeans to move to the Indies to command and get rich with the excuse of providing spiritual aid to the Indians”.<sup>81</sup>

The problematic situation in these territories, and particularly that in the Portuguese East Indies, represented the starting point for the development of *Propaganda*'s programme for the renovation of missionary activity. Firstly, it was necessary to bring back the jurisdiction, direction, and control of the missions to the Roman Curia. As the two memorials of the secretary plead, this implied the disentanglement of the missionary activity from the colonial authorities and interests. Secondly, the Congregation aimed to go beyond the missionary phase by creating an autochthonous clergy and episcopal hierarchy to promote the development of a local church truly committed to the spiritual needs of its people.<sup>82</sup> From these instances, it becomes very clear how the missionary programme developed by *Propaganda* was pointing at reducing the colonial empires' control over ecclesiastical matters. As a result, open opposition to the patronage system and the attempt to separate the apostolic activity from colonialism became the main features of the Congregation's early years of activity under the leadership of Francesco Ingoli.<sup>83</sup>

*Propaganda* attacked the *Padroado* on two main levels: juridical and jurisdictional. From the juridical point of view, the main point of criticism was about the nature of the privileges granted to Portugal by the Popes. According to the Congregation, these had a “gracious” character, being only temporary graces conceded by the Holy See as long as it was necessary. Conversely, the Portuguese kings had always interpreted their privileges, and those allowed to the Military Order of Christ, as “onerous” and thus bestowed *in perpetuum*.<sup>84</sup> In terms of jurisdiction, a debate arose around the term *Conquista*, used in the sixteenth-century papal bulls to define the spatial limits of the patronage system. For Portugal, the term referred to the entire half of the globe under Portugal's sphere of influence, as defined and sanctioned by Alessandro VI's *Inter Coetera* Bull and the subsequent treaty

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<sup>80</sup> “Principali disordini et inconvenienti dell'Indie Orientali et Occidentali circa le materie spirituali et ecclesiastiche”, Roma, 1628 in Chappoullie, 1:387.

<sup>81</sup> Chappoullie, 1:388. Original: “Perché non si sappino dal Re o dal Papa li disordini et inconvenienti tanto temporali quanto spirituali dell'Indie, non si lasciano venir in Europa gl' Indiani, e chi di loro vuol venire si fa tornare indietro, dal che avviene che vedendo li gentili d'esser trattati come schiavi, aborriscono la nostra Santa Religione, parendoli questa interessatissima e contraria alla charità verso il prossimo.”

<sup>82</sup> Tosi, ‘La memoria perduta di Propaganda Fide’.

<sup>83</sup> Pizzorusso, ‘La congregazione pontificia de Propaganda Fide nel XVII secolo’, 152.

<sup>84</sup> Boschi, ‘Estruturas ecclesiasticas e Inquisição’, 431.

of Tordesillas. Therefore, the Portuguese interpretation of the *Padroado*'s jurisdiction extended to both the territories under the direct political domination of the Crown and within the sphere of influence defined in Tordesillas. Although nominally entitled to a commercial and spiritual monopoly over half of the globe, the Portuguese colonial empire only had a limited territorial dominion. This meant that only a small percentage of the Crown's sphere of influence had an ecclesiastical structure, leaving the rest unattended. For this reason, *Propaganda* openly contested Portugal's interpretation, claiming that patronage rights could have been exercised only in those territories under the Crown's political rule. This statement was based on the acknowledgement of Portugal's failure to establish and financially support the Church overseas. According to *Propaganda*, having failed to meet the duties of *fundatio* and *dotatio* in the territories under its influence, the Portuguese Crown could not maintain the right of *presentatio*.<sup>85</sup>

This counteroffensive by the Holy See was made possible by the specific conjuncture of the Union of the Crowns, and due to the very limited leeway left for Portugal in this period. Decades of political subordination to Spain significantly deteriorated the diplomatic relations between Portugal and the Papacy, while weakening the country's control over its seaborne empire. *Propaganda*, under the leadership of Ingoli, took advantage of this situation to move its critiques to the *Padroado*'s control of the colonial church and reclaim it under its jurisdiction. *Propaganda*'s initial activity did not interfere directly with the territories that fell under the *Padroado*, choosing a more cautious approach. However, with the Portuguese revolt of 1 December 1640, the conflict between the Congregation and the patronage system entered a new and more complex phase.<sup>86</sup>

Portugal's *Restauração* drew the country into a long frontier war against Spain, which lasted until 1668, when the Catholic king finally recognised Portuguese independence. Although keen to recover Portugal and its colonial empire, Spain's military power was already absorbed by the outbreak of the Reapers' Revolt in Catalunya (1640) and the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) in Central Europe, making this task nearly impossible. For this reason, the conflict moved to a diplomatic controversy about the recognition of the new Portuguese sovereign, in which the legitimising power of the Holy See became crucial. Contrary to the newly established Bragança dynasty, Spain's monarchy was the main European ally of the Papacy in the first half of the seventeenth century. Therefore, the great influence of the Catholic king on the Roman Curia made it impossible for the Pope to recognise as a legitimate sovereign an enemy of Spain. This created a problem for the exercise of the patronage

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<sup>85</sup> Pizzorusso, 'Il padroado regio portoghese'.

<sup>86</sup> Stefano Andretta, 'La Curia romana e la questione portoghese (1578-1585)', in *Religione cultura e politica nell'Europa dell'età moderna: studi offerti a Mario Rosa dagli amici*, ed. Carlo Ossola, Maria Antonietta Visceglia, and Marcello Verga (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2003), 213–29; Ágatha Francesconi Gatti, 'Em defesa da expansão da cristandade: o Pe. Nuno da Cunha e os primórdios do embate entre Portugal e a Santa Sé, 1640-1669', *Tempos Históricos* 23, no. 2 (2019): 202–37.

rights held by João IV as he was not considered the legitimate holder of such privileges.<sup>87</sup> As a result, the Portuguese kings lost all their rights to choose candidates for vacant ecclesiastical offices (*ius presentandi*) in Europe and the empire until 1670. In practice, this meant the impossibility to appoint new bishops, and thus ordaining new ministers, in all the Portuguese dioceses after 1659, when the last of Portugal's bishops died.<sup>88</sup>

The diplomatic controversy between Portugal and the Holy See finally gave *Propaganda* the opportunity to break the monopoly imposed by the *Padroado* and penetrate the weakest fringes of the Portuguese empire by sending missionaries under its jurisdiction. It is in this light that in the 1640s the Congregation launched its first missions in West Central Africa.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I describe the development of the Portuguese patronage system that accompanied the oceanic expansion and played a crucial role in the consolidation of the colonial empire. During this time, the kings of Portugal managed to centralise the privileges granted by the popes, thus provoking the “interpenetration” between State and Church that was so important for the infrastructure of the kingdom. On the one hand, the *Padroado* represented a significant stock of economic and social power at the disposal of the sovereign for compensating allies and earning loyalties to the Crown. On the other hand, the king's control over the Church's personnel gave him a crucial tool for extending the State's political influence in the most remote regions of his dominion. Since the second half of the sixteenth century, the Crown's exclusive control over the Portuguese church started to be questioned by the Holy See. In a broader process of reaffirmation of the papal supremacy on ecclesiastical matters, the Sacred Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* was founded in 1622 with the clear task of bringing the jurisdiction over the missionary Church back to the Roman Curia. Under the leadership of its first secretary, Francesco Ingoli, the Congregation developed an operative programme that was very critical towards the patronage system and the heavy links it established between the Church and colonial interests. This found the opposition of Portugal, which saw the policy of the Congregation as a dangerous threat to the integrity of its colonial empire. This essential link between religious and temporal sphere, evangelisation and colonisation, was certainly

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<sup>87</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. III, p. 203.

<sup>88</sup> Paiva, 'Igreja y poder', 154–58.

acknowledged by *Propaganda*'s Prefect Ludovico Ludovisi when he reminded his representative in Lisbon how “well-known it is that by changing the religion, political rules also change”.<sup>89</sup>

The historical context sketched here shows how “it would be reductive to consider the complex affairs related to the propagation of the ‘faith’ in isolation from colonial history”, as Maria Antonietta Visceglia suggests.<sup>90</sup> For this reason, it is important to consider the conflict between the *Padroado* and *Propaganda* not only as a religious dispute but especially as a political struggle with an impact on the security and maintenance of the Portuguese colonial empire. It is in this international context that, between 1640 and 1645, the first Capuchins sent by *Propaganda* to the kingdom of Kongo managed to establish their mission. However, the Holy See's attention to the kingdom of Kongo developed significantly earlier than the half of the seventeenth century, when the *Missio Antiqua* began. Next, I analyse how the Papacy's attempt to establish more direct control of Kongo's ecclesiastical structure was opposed by Portugal in the name of the *Padroado Real*. This case provides insights into how the patronage system worked in practice and explains the reason why the arrival of the Capuchins in 1645 represented a political threat to Lisbon.

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<sup>89</sup> “Instructions of the State Secretary to the Apostolic Collector”, 04-03-1622 in *MMA*, vol. VII, p. 6. Original: “E ben si sa che con la mutatione della Religione si mutano anco gli Imperii”. Interestingly, the Italian word *impero* could assume the meaning of both “political rule” and “empire”.

<sup>90</sup> Visceglia, ‘The International Policy of the Papacy’, 47.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE *PADROADO* IN WEST CENTRAL AFRICA

#### *The Prelude of the Capuchin Missio Antiqua*

Although Your Lordship's thoughtfulness should be applied to every country with the same passion, shall the king and kingdom of Kongo be given particular consideration. For, being them like newly born plants, still tender offspring of this Holy Church, and devoted to this Holy See, it is convenient to nourish and raise them with missions that are more suitable to their needs, especially if considered the great offences and cruel devilries committed by those that, bearing the name of old Christians, wear the name of the most savage barbarians.<sup>91</sup>

These words, written on 4 March 1622 by Ludovico Ludovisi to the Apostolic Collector in Lisbon, Antonio Albergati, illustrate the special attention of the Holy See for the kingdom of Kongo. The letter, the same in which Ludovisi criticised the *Padroado*, makes the link between the patronage system and Kongo's religious problems very explicit. The term "old Christians", a clear reference to the Portuguese colonisers, shows Rome's awareness of the problems caused by the Portuguese control exercised over the ecclesiastical structure of that African kingdom.<sup>92</sup> For Ludovisi, Prefect of *Propaganda*, Portugal endangered the successful propagation of the faith and hindered the Papacy's supremacy over the Catholic Church worldwide. This awareness was the result of a long struggle that saw Kongo insistently trying to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See outside Lisbon's purview. As an independent Catholic kingdom, Kongo was supposed to be recognised by the pope in his role as the head of the Church. However, for the *mani Kongos*, being recognised as Catholic princes was not only a matter of faith. Rather, Catholicism offered an important source of legitimisation and a means for political emancipation. However, religion in West-Central Africa was

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<sup>91</sup> "Instructions of the State Secretary to the Apostolic Collector", 04-03-1622 in *MMA*, vol. VII, p. 6-7. Original: "E benchè la Carità di V. S. debba stendersi ad ogni contrada col medesimo ardore, nondimeno se le fanno più particolarmente raccomandati il Rè et il Regno di Congo; poichè come piante novelle, e figliuoli ancora teneri della Chiesa Santa, et devoti di questa Santa Sedia, conviene andarli nutrendo et allevando con Missioni al bisogno loro più convenevoli, e massimamente intendendo commetterse fieri misfatte et empie sceleraggini da coloro, che portando il nome de christiani vecchi, vestono il nome di crudelissimi barbari".

<sup>92</sup> The term alluded to the separation between Old Christians and New Christians, the latter being the Jewish Portuguese who were forced to convert to Catholicism after 1496. José Pedro Paiva, 'The New Christian Divide in the Portuguese-Speaking World (Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)', in *Racism and Ethnic Relations in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, ed. Francisco Bethencourt and Adrian Pearce (London: Oxford University Press, 2012), 269–80.



a prerogative of the *Padroado Real*. In this chapter, I analyse how an independent diplomatic relationship between Kongo and the Holy See took shape and developed. By doing so, I demonstrate how the control of the Portuguese ecclesiastical structure played an important role in the exercise of political influence over the kingdom of Kongo, thus highlighting the strong link between evangelisation and colonisation. Moreover, I explain how the political threat represented by the Portuguese in West Central Africa encouraged Kongo sovereigns to turn to the Holy See as means of emancipation from Portuguese political control. In turn, some key episodes of this process contributed to the rise of papal universalism in Rome, which culminated with the foundation of *Propaganda Fide*. As a result, Rome progressively paid more attention to Kongo and its Church, which paved the way for the first propositions for an apostolic mission in Africa under the direct jurisdiction of *Propaganda*.<sup>93</sup>

Revisiting this moment in history will reveal the emergence of three different political agendas. For Portugal, controlling the ecclesiastical structure of Kongo and the newly founded colony of Angola represented a means for sustaining the territorial and economic penetration in West Central Africa. This met with a reaction by the sovereigns of Kongo, for whom religion was a source of internal power legitimisation and a means of liberation from Portuguese hegemony. Finally, for the Holy See, the African kingdom presented the opportunity to challenge the *Padroado* and re-establish control over the propagation of the faith.

## THE *PADROADO* IN PRACTICE: EVANGELISATION AND COLONISATION IN KONGO

The evangelisation of the kingdom of Kongo started less than ten years after Diogo Cão arrived at the mouth of the Zaire River in 1484. In the early 1490s, the first Portuguese missionaries baptised the *mani Kongo* Nzinga Nkuwu with the name of D. João I (1491-1506), in honour of Portugal's sovereign João II (1481-1495). This marked the beginning of a process of African reception of Portuguese culture and political structure, which led Lisbon to establish a solid alliance with the kingdom of Kongo, which formally remained independent.<sup>94</sup> Catholicism played a paramount role in this process, characterised by a conversion of reciprocal interests. Kongo rulers sought Catholicism as a means for consolidating an alliance with a strong commercial and military power like Portugal and an opportunity to strengthen and centralise the power of the king and his lineage thanks to the

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<sup>93</sup> Gray and Sanneh referred to Kongo's important contribution in mobilising the Papacy's resources in order to launch a mission in the kingdom as the "African origins of the *Missio Antiqua*". Gray and Sanneh, *Christianity, the Papacy, and Mission in Africa*, 27.

<sup>94</sup> Frans Bontinck, *Histoire du royaume du Congo (c. 1624). Traduction annotée du Ms. 8080 de la Bibliothèque nationale de Lisbonne* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1972), 92–93.

patrilinear hereditary system introduced by the Europeans.<sup>95</sup> This opportunity was taken by King Afonso I Mbemba-a-Nzinga, who seized Kongo's throne in 1506 and became the protagonist of a Catholic myth of foundation of the kingdom. More likely, as Hilton suggests, Afonso achieved power with the military and commercial support of the Portuguese and consolidated his dominion by establishing a monopoly over the trade in European goods.<sup>96</sup> From this position of power, Afonso used Catholicism to promote and appoint trustworthy collaborators at the administration of Kongo's provinces, thus strengthening his control on the periphery of the kingdom.

On the Portuguese side, these events clearly show how the propagation of the faith not only justified the oceanic expansion, but also provided a solid basis to establish commercial relations and, in turn, enforce trading monopolies, as it was unorthodox to exchange specific goods with infidels. Among these "goods" figured what became the main reason for Portugal's interest in West-Central Africa: slaves. As slaves converted to Catholicism could not be sold to others than Catholics – and being the Portuguese the only Catholics entitled to trade in Africa after Tordesillas – Lisbon could claim a monopoly over the slave trade, which started being largely exploited by merchants on the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe.

The Portuguese evangelisation allowed Kongo to develop the first contacts with the Holy See. In 1512, D. Manuel I of Portugal (1495-1521) sent his ambassador Simão da Silva to Mbanza Kongo, as the capital of the kingdom was known by then. Manuel I entrusted his ambassador with the task of establishing commercial relations with the *mani Kongo*, gathering information on his dominions, and reporting on their trading potential. At the same time, the embassy had to encourage D. Afonso I to send an envoy to declare his obedience to the Pope, "like all of us Catholic princes do".<sup>97</sup> To meet this expectation, D. Afonso entrusted his ambassador D. Pedro de Sousa to join the Portuguese embassy of Tristão da Cunha headed to Rome in 1514. However, with the excuse of protecting him from the "great wars happening in those parts", D. Pedro was kept in Lisbon by D. Manuel and could not meet the Pope in person.<sup>98</sup> To clear doubts over the Portuguese Crown's efforts at preventing direct contact between Kongo and the Holy See, it suffices to highlight that the first embassy directly entrusted by a *mani Kongo* reached Rome only in 1589, shortly after the outset of the Union of the

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<sup>95</sup> This crucial role of religion in this first phase of European and African contact was highlighted by Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 65–68; Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 50–68.

<sup>96</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 53–54.

<sup>97</sup> "Regimento que el-Rei D. Manuel deu a Simão da Silva quando o mandou a Manicongo" in *Arquivos de Angola: publicação oficial* (Luanda: Repartição Central de Estatística Geral, 1933), 383. Simão da Silva died before arriving to Mbanza Kongo and the embassy was concluded by Alvaro Lopez. Teobaldo Filesi, 'Le relazioni tra il regno del Congo e la Sede Apostolica nella prima metà del XVI secolo', *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 22, no. 3 (1967): 260.

<sup>98</sup> "Letter by the king of Portugal to the king of Kongo", 1517 in *MMA*, vol. XV, p. 33. See also, Kate Lowe, "'Representing" Africa: Ambassadors and Princes from Christian Africa to Renaissance Italy and Portugal, 1402-1608', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 17 (2007): 108. On this issue, Filesi was more careful in assuming the active role of Portugal and its king in preventing the embassy to reach Rome, Teobaldo Filesi, 'Le relazioni tra il regno del Congo e la Sede Apostolica nella prima metà del XVI secolo', 260–61.

Crowns (1580). This long Portuguese intermediation by way of the *Padroado* illustrates how controlling the religious sphere truly mattered to maintain Lisbon's political influence over the independent kingdom of Kongo. On the other hand, it shows, as Filesi argues, the "unitary essence" of the patronage as a powerful tool for controlling the spiritual and temporal spheres.<sup>99</sup>

The central decades of the sixteenth century were characterised by major political and economic developments. The increase of Portuguese commercial penetration and the growing demand for slaves for the European markets soon exhausted the Kongo rulers' provisions. As a result, Mbanza Kongo's monopoly over European trade was eroded by the intervention of the other provinces of the kingdom and by the Portuguese *pombeiros*, which in turn destabilised the *mani Kongo*'s political authority and reduced his economic power.<sup>100</sup> The abuses committed by the Portuguese merchants involved in the slave trade were often denounced by the correspondence between the *mani Kongo* Afonso I and Lisbon. However, the new Portuguese sovereign João III was more interested in increasing the kingdom's revenues than maintaining good diplomatic relations with Kongo.

From the spiritual point of view, Afonso had to face the burden posed by the scarcity of clergymen, which made the propagation of the faith – and indirectly of the power of the sovereign – more difficult. Only the establishment of a Jesuit mission in Mbanza Kongo in 1548 partly solved this issue by providing a stable missionary presence. However, religious people in Kongo remained for the majority European by birth or descent and were strictly linked to the Portuguese authorities. Finally, Lisbon firmly kept the role of intermediary between Kongo and the Holy See, preventing Kongo from bringing its grievances to Rome. Afonso I resigned to this precarious balance as he had significantly relied on Portuguese support and thus implicitly recognised Lisbon's right of patronage. However, his successors rapidly identified the hardships generated by the increasing Portuguese political influence.

The first tensions arose during the kingdom of Diogo I Ncumbi-a-Mpudi (1545-1561), whose political strategy aimed at increasing the king's control over the exchanges with the Europeans and over the Church by establishing direct contacts with Rome. This attitude drew the antipathy of the Portuguese community in Mbanza Kongo and of the Jesuits, who repeatedly tried to overthrow him. In the meantime, the expedition of Paulo Dias de Novais in 1559 demonstrated to Lisbon the advantages of direct control over the slave trade outside the influence of Kongo. This strategy took shape in 1575 with the establishment of São Paulo de Loanda, which marked the start of the Portuguese colonisation of Angola.<sup>101</sup> The settlement in Luanda was actually a concession granted to

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<sup>99</sup> Filesi, 'Teobaldo Filesi, 'Le relazioni tra il regno del Congo e la Sede Apostolica nella prima metà del XVI secolo', 263.

<sup>100</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 55–68.

<sup>101</sup> David Birmingham, *The Portuguese Conquest of Angola* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

D. Sebastião I (1557-1578) by the *mani Kongo* Alvaro I Nimi-a-Lukeni (1567-1587), in gratitude for the Portuguese military support against the Jaga invasion of 1568. Nevertheless, the price to be paid for Portugal's support was the establishment of Lisbon's direct rule in West Central Africa and, in the long run, the possibility of further threatening the political and economic stability of Kongo by organising independent routes and networks of trade with the interior of the continent.<sup>102</sup>

## DUARTE LOPEZ'S EMBASSY AND THE DIOCESE OF SÃO SALVADOR

The union of the Portuguese Crown with Spain in 1580 seemed to open new possibilities for direct contact between Kongo and the Holy See.<sup>103</sup> Already in 1583, Alvaro I asked Duarte Lopez, a Portuguese merchant who had gained the king's trust, to undertake a diplomatic expedition to Madrid and, finally, to Rome. According to Alvaro's instructions, Lopez's task was to offer the *mani Kongo*'s obedience to the pope and ask him to provide the kingdom with more religious men who could ordain indigenous people to enlarge the country's clergy.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, the king gave him a letter in which he donated to the Holy See almost a hundred square leagues of land rich in mines of precious metals, as a gift to support the pope's fight "against the enemies of his Church".<sup>105</sup> According to Alvaro, however, some of the matters Lopez had to discuss with the Pope were too sensitive to be written on the instructions:

I recommend you deal with the issues that you carry by memory, which were discussed between me and you, hoping that you will do so with the diligence and reliability that I expect. I recommend you all the things that you know to be necessary for this kingdom, so that you will demand and seek from Our Lord the Pope on my behalf.<sup>106</sup>

Scholars have suggested that the requests that Lopez carried "by memory" regarded the possibility to place Kongo under the Holy See's protection, thus emancipating it from the *Padroado Real* and away from Luanda's political influence.<sup>107</sup> Notwithstanding Alvaro's foresights, the arrival of his ambassador did not escape the vigilant eye of Lisbon's authorities, who worried that a direct link with

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<sup>102</sup> Teobaldo Filesi, 'Le relazioni tra il regno del Congo e la Sede Apostolica nel XVI secolo', *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 22, no. 4 (1967): 457.

<sup>103</sup> Lowe, "'Representing" Africa', 108.

<sup>104</sup> "Instructions of the king of Kongo to Duarte Lopez", São Salvador, 15.01.1583 in *MMA*, vol. III, pp. 234-235.

<sup>105</sup> "Letter of donation by the king of Kongo to the Holy See", São Salvador, 20.01.1583 in *MMA*, vol. III, pp. 238-239.

<sup>106</sup> "Instructions of the king of Kongo to Duarte Lopez", São Salvador, 15.01.1583 in *MMA*, vol. III, pp. 234-235. Original: "Vi raccomando che trattiate sopra quello che da me levate per memoria trattato da me et voi, sperando che lo farete con la diligenza et confidenza che tengo di voi. Vi raccomando tutte le cose che sapete essere necessarie per questo Regno, et le domandarete et ricercarete per mia parte dal Sommo Pontefice Nostro Signore".

<sup>107</sup> Teobaldo Filesi, 'Duarte Lopez ambasciatore del re del Congo presso Sisto V nel 1588', *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 23, no. 1 (1968): 53-58.

the Holy See could weaken Portugal's influence in Kongo. They kept Lopez away from contact with the pope's representatives in Lisbon, where the ambassador arrived in 1586 after a perilous voyage.<sup>108</sup> When Lopez arrived in Madrid by the end of 1586, the matter of his embassy was immediately passed from the royal court to Portugal's viceroy, Cardinal Archduke Alberto (1583-1593), who warned Philip II of the anti-Portuguese intention of the mission. According to the Cardinal, the mines that Alvaro I was offering to the pope were part of the kingdom of Ngola, which by the time had been occupied by the Portuguese captained by Paulo Dias de Novais. Therefore, he advised the king to send a representative to São Salvador –Kongo's capital– and not to trust Lopez nor other Portuguese residing there, being most of them New Christians and, thus, deemed untrustworthy.<sup>109</sup> Lisbon's open opposition against Lopez was confirmed by the Apostolic Nunzio in Madrid, Cesare Spacciani (1585-1589), the first to warn Rome about Alvaro I's ambassador and his mission. On 25 February 1588, Spacciani informed the papal State Secretary, cardinal Alessandro Peretti (1586-1590), that he was contacted by Lopez, who told him about his diplomatic mission and the difficulties he was facing at Philip II's court. According to the Nunzio,

although he arrived at this Court well accompanied and honoured as a real ambassador, His Majesty and his ministries never accepted him as such. And because he was short of money for the unexpected duration of his journey, now decided to take the dress of a hermit, in the use of the Portuguese that go there on pilgrimage. Moreover, this sovereign did not want to give him money, even though he requested it several times, and to allow him to come to Our Lord, as it was understood to be his King's intention.<sup>110</sup>

To verify the ambassador's claims, Spacciani contacted some representatives of the Portuguese Crown in Madrid, who slandered Lopez accusing him to be a New Christian who took advantage of Alvaro I's embassy to pursue his interests. However, these defamatory words were contradicted by a prominent member of the Italian community in Madrid, who trusted Lopez to the point to offer

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<sup>108</sup> This is demonstrated by a letter of 15 March 1587 written by the Apostolic Collector in Lisbon, monsignor Muzio Bongiovanni, to Alvaro I, in which he invited the *mani Kongo* to send an ambassador to offer his obedience to Pope Sisto V (1585-1590). At that time, Lopez should have been already in Madrid, demonstrating that he did not have any contact with representatives of the Holy See. "Letter by the Apostolic Collector to the king of Kongo", Lisbon, 15.03.1587 in *MMA*, vol. III, pp. 342-343. After leaving from Kongo in 1583, the Portuguese merchant was forced to stop in Venezuela for more than a year, due to the damages suffered by the small boat that was carrying him to Europe. Having missed the departure of the annual Spanish fleet, he had to wait for more than a year to arrive to San Lucar and then went to Lisbon. Filesi, 58–60; Filippo Pigafetta, *Relatione del reame di Congo et delle circonvicine contrade, tratta dalli scritti e ragionamenti di Odoardo Lopez portoghese* (Roma: Bartolomeo Grassi, 1591), 63–65.

<sup>109</sup> "Letter by the Viceroy to the King of Spain", Lisbon, 18.10.1586 in *MMA*, vol. III, pp. 340-341. Filesi argued that the mines were offered by Alvaro I to Philip II as well, but gives no evidence for that. Filesi, 'Duarte Lopez ambasciatore del re del Congo presso Sisto V nel 1588'.

<sup>110</sup> "Letter by the Apostolic Nuncio in Madrid to the State Secretary of the Holy See", Madrid, 25.02.1588 in *MMA*, vol. III, p. 363. Original: "se bene egli entró in questa Corte bene accompagnato et anche honorato quasi como tale Ambasciatore, non di meno S. Maestà non l'há mai ammesso intieramente per tale, ne ancora li suoi Ministri, et essendogli mancati li danari per esser stato nel viaggio più che non credeva, hora va in habito di Heremita come sogliono andare alcuni Portoghesi, che sogliono venire costà in peregrinaggio; et questa Maestà, ancora che più volte egli ne habbia fatto instantia, non gli ha voluto dar' denari, n'e meno permettere che venga costa da N. S.re, come si era lasciato intendere, che haueua commissione dal suo Ré". Duarte Lopez did receive 400 *cruzados* from Philip II, but this letter seems to suggest that these were only sufficient to cover the debts he accumulated during his long voyage to Europe. "Letter by the Apostolic Nuncio in Madrid to the State Secretary of the Holy See", Madrid, 25.02.1588 in *MMA*, vol. III, p. 363.

himself to bring his documents to the pope if the royal ministers would prevent his departure. In June 1588, though, the Nunzio informed Rome that Lopez had decided to depart by his means, having arranged a crossing on “Florence galleys”.<sup>111</sup>

In the summer of 1588, Lopez finally reached the Vatican and obtained an audience with Sisto V. The *Relatione del reame di Congo* (1591) by Filippo Pigafetta (\*1533 - +1604) is the only source that describes the outcome of the embassy:

He was introduced to the pope and gave his credential letters. He sufficiently reported his affairs and was gladly heard, but he was told that, belonging the kingdom of Kongo to the King of Spain, it was his business.<sup>112</sup>

As Teobaldo Filesi highlights, Sisto V’s very dismissive answer seems to suggest the pope’s inability to overcome Philip II’s patronage prerogatives in a very difficult moment for European Christendom in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe. Nevertheless, it was after the publication of Pigafetta’s renowned *Relatione* that Duarte Lopez’s embassy achieved its most important results. Besides being the first description of Kongo ever published in Europe, the publication of the *Relatione* in 1591 was crucial for the Holy See’s acknowledgement of the kingdom’s spiritual and political clout.<sup>113</sup> Meanwhile, the election of Clemente VIII (1592-1605) provided the Holy See with a pope who was very sensitive to the issues regarding the colonial church. The new pope appointed the Apostolic Collector Fabio Biondi (1592-1596) to Lisbon. His presence was crucial for the maintenance of the diplomatic relationship between Kongo and the Papacy, an activity that contributed to his unpopularity among Portuguese royal officials.<sup>114</sup>

This combination of events contributed to the assembling of yet another embassy from Kongo, this time dispatched by Alvaro II (1587-1614) in 1594. Supported by Biondi and the Holy See, the *mani Kongo* sent his close relative Antonio Vieira to Madrid to request, among other things, the erection of new dioceses in Kongo, detached from the diocese of São Tomé, and the appointment of a bishop to São Salvador that could closely supervise the spiritual sphere of the kingdom and help install an indigenous clergy as part of the broader demand for clergymen.<sup>115</sup> Already in 1543, king Pedro I plead with the Portuguese Crown to concede a bishop for taking care of the spiritual needs of

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<sup>111</sup> “Letter by the Apostolic Nuncio in Madrid to the State Secretary of the Holy See”, Madrid, 15.06.1588 in *MMA*, vol. III, p. 366-367. How Lopez managed to overcome the royal ministers’ opposition remains unclear. According to Filesi, the ambassador decided to reach Rome as a pilgrim to avoid the obstacles posed by Madrid, see Filesi, ‘Duarte Lopez ambasciatore del re del Congo presso Sisto V nel 1588’, 61. This interpretation is based on Pigafetta, *Relatione del reame di Congo*, 65.

<sup>112</sup> Pigafetta, *Relatione del reame di Congo*, 66. Original: “Presentossi al Papa e li consegnò le lettere di credenza, gli narrò a sufficienza le sue commissioni, e fu graziosamente udito, ma poi fattogli intendere che essendo il regno di Congo appartenente al Re di Spagna, a lui lo rimetteva”.

<sup>113</sup> Joseph Cuvelier and Louis Jadin, *L’ancien Congo d’après les archives romaines (1518-1640)* (Bruxelles: Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1954), 26; Teobaldo Filesi, *Roma e Congo all’inizio del 1600* (Como: Cairoli, 1970).

<sup>114</sup> ‘BIONDI, Fabio’, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Roma: Treccani, 1968).

<sup>115</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola* vol. 1, 112-114.

the kingdom. From his perspective, the creation of a bishopric and the possibility to ordain local priests represented a way to emancipate Kongo from Portugal in the administration of the spiritual sphere. However, this was exactly what Lisbon was trying to avoid by carefully protecting the *Padroado* privileges and preventing direct contact between Rome and São Salvador. As Gouveia explains, the confederation between Portugal and Kongo was based on a spiritual alliance that, under the regime of the *Padroado*, granted a significant degree of political influence to Lisbon, which turned into a “form of domination”.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, even though Vieira’s embassy was relatively quick in achieving its goal, the creation act of the diocese of São Salvador on 20 May 1596 confirmed the patronage privileges of the Portuguese Crown.<sup>117</sup> The fact that an Iberian king managed to impose his patronage over an independent kingdom did not pass unnoticed, as it is evident from the comments that the Bishop of São Tomé himself gave to Rome one year after the creation of the diocese:

The Kingdom of Kongo is not subject to the rule of the kings of Portugal. Rather, the sovereign of that kingdom claims to be the Emperor of other kings. And it seems incongruous to create a bishop in a foreign domain at the instance of someone else. For, although these things may at first appear beneficial, whenever the bishop, either to correct the manners or other abuses, or to defend the jurisdictions and ecclesiastical liberty, happens to disagree with the King in some matter, he would immediately question his appointment, and also demand his removal or even his detention, given the unbridled lust and barbarous customs of that nation.<sup>118</sup>

The bishop’s predictions were well-founded. Although freed from the “distaste” provoked by the distance of the former bishopric, as Fabio Biondi gladly announced, Alvaro II rapidly realised that the new diocese significantly increased Portugal’s interference in the kingdom’s affairs.<sup>119</sup> In compliance with the *Padroado*, the Portuguese Crown sent clergymen to São Salvador who were often connivant with the aggressive policies of the Portuguese governors in Luanda.

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<sup>116</sup> Jaime Ricardo Teixeira Gouveia, ‘La creación de una diócesis portuguesa en los reinos de Kongo y Angola en 1596: estrategias imperiales e implicaciones religiosas’, *Hispania Sacra* 74, no. 150 (2022): 499.

<sup>117</sup> “Creation of the diocese of São Salvador and appointment of the first bishop”, Rome, 20.05.1596 in *MMA*, vol. III, pp. 530-531. See also, “Bull of creation of the diocese of São Salvador and the kingdom of Angola”, Rome, 20.05.1596 in *MMA*, vol. III, p. 538.

<sup>118</sup> “Report of the Bishop of São Tomé to the Pope”, Lisbon, 24.10.1597 in *MMA*, vol. III, p. 573. Original: “Regnum Congi non subiacet imperio Regum Portugalliae. Immo Rex illius se Imperatore iactat aliorum Regum. Et sic incongruum videtur in aliena ditione Episcopum creari ad alterius instantiam. Quamvis enim haec prima facie salutaria visa fuerint, quandocumque tamen Episcopus aut in correctione morum aut in corrigendis aliis diversis abusibus, aut super iurisdictionibus et libertate ecclesiastica defendendis cum Rege dissentire contigerit in aliquo, statim suscitabitur quaestio de illius nominatione, ac etiam de illo vel amovendo, vel longius relegando, prout est gentis illius effrenata libido et barbaricus mos”.

<sup>119</sup> “Letter by the Apostolic Collector to the king of Kongo”, Lisbon, 20.09.1596 in *MMA*, vol. III, p. 542.

## THE FIRST AFRICAN ENVOY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PERMANENT EMBASSY

The first bishop, D. Miguel Rangel (1596-1602), arrived in São Salvador with his chapter in April 1601 but died only one year later. However, already on 15 October 1602, Alvaro II wrote to the former Apostolic Collector Fabio Biondi announcing the death of “his good bishop” and complaining about the behaviour of his brother, the dean Simão Rodrigues Rangel, who had been appointed vicar of the chapter and “never wanted to assist this Church, but always went negotiating to increase his temporal power without any fair reason”.<sup>120</sup> Harsh complaints about the Portuguese clergy were also raised by the diplomatic envoy dispatched by Alvaro to the pope two years later, the first to be conducted by natives of Kongo. On 13 July 1604, Alvaro entrusted D. António Manuel and D. Garcia Baptista to go to Rome to ask the pope to accept Kongo as his vassal, in exchange for a portion of the precious metal to be extracted from the mines. The *mani Kongo* also wanted to gain more control over the diocese by being granted the right to choose the members of the chapter and collect the tithes. Alvaro further requested the establishment of a Royal Chapel under his control and independent from the bishopric. Finally, even though the *mani Kongo* recognised the Portuguese Crown’s privilege to appoint the bishop, he wanted him not to be Portuguese.<sup>121</sup> As Saccardo noticed, Alvaro’s requests aimed at limiting Portugal’s control over the diocese and placing part of the *Padroado*’s privileges under his power.<sup>122</sup> The king was finally willing to do away with the interference of the Portuguese clergy in the political sphere of his kingdom and once again turned to the Holy See.

As Duarte Lopez before them, also D. António and D. Garcia had the task of informing the Pope about some affairs they orally discussed with Alvaro II, which probably contributed to the tragic end of the embassy.<sup>123</sup> The envoys reached Portugal in November 1605, after the *mani Kongo*’s representatives were robbed of all their possessions by Dutch privateers. Once in Europe, the embassy encountered the usual obstacles of the Portuguese and Spanish administrations. In December 1606, more than a year after the ambassadors arrived in Europe, Pope Paolo V sent them a letter: D. Garcia was kept in Madrid without being able to reach Rome, while D. António was still in Lisbon.<sup>124</sup> He probably reached the Spanish capital by the beginning of 1607, as when the *Conselho da India* finally discussed their requests to Philip III, both ambassadors are said to have been in Madrid.<sup>125</sup> It was only with the decisive support of the Apostolic Nunzio in Madrid, Giovanni Garzia Mellini (1605-1607),

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<sup>120</sup> “Letter by the king of Kongo to Fabio Biondi”, São Salvador, 15.10.1602 in *MMA*, vol. V, p. 42. Original: “... nè mai hà voluto assistere in questa Chiesa, mà sempre andare in negotiatiõni per accrescere il temporale senza hauerne giusta causa.”

<sup>121</sup> “Requests of D. António Manuel to the king of Spain”, 29.06.1604 in *MMA*, vol. V, pp. 110-111.

<sup>122</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, p. 119.

<sup>123</sup> “Requests of D. António Manuel to the king of Spain”, 29.06.1604 in *MMA*, vol. V, pp. 110-111. The instructions are those given to D. António, the only ambassador who made it to Rome in 1608 and whose documents were translated by the Holy See administration.

<sup>124</sup> “Letter by Paolo V to D. Garcia Baptista”, Rome, 09.12.1606 in *MMA*, vol. V, pp. 233-236.

<sup>125</sup> “Advice of the *Conselho Ultramarino*”, Lisbon, 31.03.1607 in *MMA*, vol. V, pp. 233-236.



that D. António managed to convince the Spanish king to let him leave for Rome in the summer of 1607. Most of the people of his entourage had died, D. Garcia included, and when D. António finally arrived in Civitavecchia on 2 January 1608 his health was so poor that he died shortly after, on Epiphany Day. The arrival of the ambassador of Kongo was a particularly awaited event at Paolo V's court and the dramatic end of the embassy did not go unnoticed by some of the diplomats in Rome. On 5 January 1608, the Venetian ambassador Francesco Contarini (1607-1609) informed the city's Senate about the arrival of D. António and added:

It is argued that, besides swearing obedience, he intends to voluntarily declare himself a tributary of the Pope. There are rumours that this does not please the Ambassador of Spain, being he expected to be dependent on the Crown of Portugal, and it is believed that, remaining him several months in Spain and having obtained such a small provision, this embassy is not really appreciated.<sup>126</sup>

This version was confirmed by the ambassador of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Giovanni Niccolini (1587-1610), who warned his government about D. António's death a few days later:

Subsequently, I better understood from a cardinal who was in the Consistory that the Pope, updating the council about the embassy that brought the ambassador of the King of Kongo just dead, [explained] how that King wanted to be vassal and tributary of the Holy See. And it is believed that the King wanted to do so to get free from some of the pretensions that the King of Spain claims to have, which also emerges from some words that Cardinal Zapata said to some cardinals concerning the death of the said ambassador, [arguing that] it was the result of some plots.<sup>127</sup>

The two *dispacci* highlight the Iberian king's opposition towards the African envoy. The main reason for this opposition lies in Alvaro II's intention to emancipate his kingdom from the political influence of the Portuguese by becoming the pope's vassal. As Filesì noticed, the ecclesiastical and political interests of Kongo overlapped in the *mani Kongo*'s instructions to D. António.<sup>128</sup> This explains the Crown's attempt to prevent the arrival of the embassy to Rome and the complaints raised by its representatives to Paolo V's sumptuous reception of the envoy. From the Iberian perspective, the *mani Kongo* was a vassal whose representatives could not be received with all those honours.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> "Report of the Venetian ambassador", Rome, 05.01.1608 in *MMA*, vol. XV, p. 409. Original: "Vien affermato, che oltre il prestar obedientia, sia per dicchiarsi volontariamente tributario del Pontefice, et mi è capitato sussurro, che ciò non piaccia al Sr. Ambasciatore di Spagna, pretendendosi, che sia dependente dalla Corona di Portugallo, et si congettura, che dall'essersi trattenuto per molti mesi Spagna, et dall'hauer havuto così pocca provisione, non piaccia molto questa Ambasciaria."

<sup>127</sup> "Report of the ambassador of the Granduchy of Tuscany", Rome, 08.01.1608 in *MMA*, Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, vol. XV, p. 411. Original: "Ho di poi inteso meglio da un Cardinale che fu in Concistoro, come il Papa nel dar conto in Concistoro dell'Ambasciata che portava l'Ambasciatore del Rè di Congo morto ora che quel Rè diceva volersi fare feudatario, et tributario della Sede Appostolica et si crede che quel Re si inducesse à far questo per liberarsi da qualche pretendenza che si tiene che vorrebbe havervi il Re di Spagna, il che tanto più si cava da certe parole che disse il Cardinal Zappata ad alcuni Cardinali trattandose della morte di detto Ambasciatore, che si era fuori talvolta di qualche intrigo." The cardinal is Antonio Zapata Cisneros (\*1550-+1635), at the time Cardinal Protector of the Kingdom of Spain. See "Zapata Cisneros, Antonio" in Gaetano Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica da S. Pietro sino ai nostri giorni* (Venezia: Tipografia Emiliana, 1842).

<sup>128</sup> Filesì, *Roma e Congo all'inizio del 1600*, 21.

<sup>129</sup> "Report of the Venetian ambassador", Rome, 12.01.1608 in *MMA*, vol. XV, p. 417.

Notwithstanding its tragic ending, the embassy conducted by D. António Manuel significantly increased the pope's authority over the spiritual matters of Kongo, strengthening its diplomatic relationship with the Holy See. With a letter dated 13 October 1608, Paolo V offered Alvaro II the Holy See's support to his kingdom and promised to protect his interests at the Spanish court. The embassy had two direct consequences. The first was the attempt to send a mission of Discalced Carmelites to Kongo. The order's missionary effort had increased since the last decade of the sixteenth century, to the point that Paolo V entrusted its Italian members to assume the activities of Clemente VIII's Congregation *de Fide Propaganda*, interrupted in 1604.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, several members of the order emerged as important advocates for papal universalism and supported Rome's attempt to gain back control of the missionary church. In 1607, two Spanish members of the Order, P. Diego de la Encarnacion and P. Tomàs de Jesus, accompanied D. António Manuel to Rome and convinced him to ask the pope for their services. Unsurprisingly, Paolo V decided to support this initiative by providing the necessary means to the missionaries in the years that followed. However, alarmed by the Portuguese Crown's agent in Rome, D. José de Mello, the *Conselho de Portugal* opposed the plan and managed to send some Portuguese Dominicans, thus avoiding the entrance of foreign missionaries in Kongo. The project was completely abandoned by 1612.

The second consequence was the appointment of a cardinal protector and an ambassador as permanent representatives of Kongo at the papal court in 1613. Alvaro II's choice fell on Monsignor Juan Bautista Vives (1613-1632), who was probably recommended to the *mani Kongo* by someone in Rome. Vives was another indefatigable advocate of the Holy See's supremacy over the propagation of the Faith, who played a key role in the foundation of *Propaganda* and became one of its first non-cardinal members.<sup>131</sup> With his presence in Rome, the kings of Kongo could maintain direct contact with the Holy See and balance the political control exercised by the *Padroado*. His activity as the ambassador of Kongo significantly contributed to bringing about the Capuchin mission in Kongo and to managing *Propaganda*'s policy towards the African kingdom.

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<sup>130</sup> On this short-lived precursor of *Propaganda*, see Pizzorusso, *Propaganda Fide*, 16–19.

<sup>131</sup> Pizzorusso, 30–31. Before the foundation of *Propaganda*, Vives made several attempts to establish seminars for the formation of missionary clergy and, in 1625, he proposed the creation of the *Collegio Urbano* of *Propaganda*, founded in 1627. The *Collegio* was hosted in Vives's palace in Piazza di Spagna, which was later donated to *Propaganda* and became the Congregation's headquarters. See, Giovanni Antonazzi, *Il Palazzo Di Propaganda* (Roma: De Luca, 2005).

## CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates how the *Padroado* played an important role in the exercise of Portuguese political influence over the kingdom of Kongo. For the African sovereigns, religion initially represented an opportunity to gain a powerful ally and strengthen their political control over the kingdom, but soon they realised the constraints it implied. Through the patronage, the Portuguese Crown managed to prevent direct contact between the Holy See and the independent kingdom of Kongo, thus covering up abuses and injustices perpetrated by the Portuguese. The Union of the Crowns weakened Portugal's control over its colonial empire and opened new possibilities for the African kingdom to reach Rome. However, the difficulties encountered by both Duarte Lopez and D. António Manuel provide an effective example of what the *Padroado* practically entailed. It was only after the 1608 embassy that Kongo's cause started being seriously considered in Rome by some fierce supporters of papal universalism like the permanent ambassador Juan Bautista Vives. Their presence and activity prepared the ground not only for the foundation of *Propaganda Fide* but also for the proposition of establishing an apostolic mission in Kongo, marking the beginning of the process that led to the foundation of the Capuchin *Missio Antiqua* in 1645. However, the different political agendas of Portugal, Kongo, and the Holy See – which emerged quite clearly already in the second decade of the seventeenth century – drastically affected the establishment of the mission and determined its turbulent start.

## CHAPTER THREE

### APOSTOLIC MISSIONARIES, SPANISH SPIES AND AFRICAN AMBASSADORS

#### *The Capuchins and the Turbulent Start of the Missio Antiqua*

In the first two decades of the seventeenth century, the kingdom of Kongo finally managed to establish direct diplomatic relations with the Holy See. The encounter opened a period of intense interaction between Rome and São Salvador, motivated by the converging interests of both parties. On the one hand, African rulers aimed at emancipating the kingdom's ecclesiastical structure from the control of the Portuguese *Padroado*. To achieve this goal, Kongo sovereigns sought the recognition and approval of the Papacy, requested new rights and privileges over the choice of the religious ministers, and demanded the dispatch of missionaries directly from the Holy See. On the other hand, the beginning of the seventeenth century was characterised by an unprecedented effort of the Papacy to claim back control over the propagation of the Faith overseas, as already described in the first chapter. This conjuncture resulted in the first attempt of the Holy See to send missionaries to Kongo with the unsuccessful expedition of the Spanish Discalced Carmelites in 1611. The obstacles posed by the Portuguese to this mission, as described before, clearly demonstrate their opposition to allowing religious men to reach their overseas territories outside the *Padroado* jurisdiction.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, the *mani Kongo*'s requests could now rely on the permanent presence of representatives in Rome. A few years later, this resulted in the bestowing of the Kongo mission to another reformed order that enjoyed the trust of the Papacy: the Capuchins. However, opting for another religious order did not remove the difficulty of overcoming the *Padroado Real* and the vigilant eye of the Portuguese royal ministries.

In this chapter, I analyse the turbulent and difficult start of the Capuchin *Missio Antiqua*. I begin with an account of the first attempt to establish the mission between 1618 and 1621, explaining the

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<sup>132</sup> Although the sources often report the difficulties encountered by non-Portuguese missionaries in overcoming the *Padroado*, nationality was not the main issue. As Županov noted, the term “Portuguese” referred to a “transnational community” of religious men loyal to the *Padroado*, despite their geographical provenance or “nationality”. Ines G. Županov, *Disputed Mission: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 95.

reasons for its failure and the role played by Juan Bautista Vives in keeping this episode alive in the newly founded *Propaganda Fide*. The lessons learned from Vives crucially influenced *Propaganda*'s strategy for the second attempt to send its apostolic missionaries to West Central Africa in 1640. Nevertheless, the political changes of the 1640s once again hindered the establishment of the mission, and when the Capuchins finally reached São Salvador in 1645, they were violating Portugal's jurisdiction. These developments significantly complicated the first years of missionary activity and the Capuchins' position in the region until 1648, when the Portuguese reconquest of Angola forced them to adapt to a different balance of power.

### CAPUCHIN MISSIONARIES FOR KONGO

Although appointed in 1613, it was only in 1616 that Juan Bautista Vives could formally act as ambassador of Kongo. As a Spanish subject, the prelate needed the approval of Madrid's royal officials, which took a considerable amount of time.<sup>133</sup> In the meantime, Alvaro II died and was succeeded, not without political strife, by Alvaro III Nimi-a-Mpanzu (1615-1622). The correspondence between Rome and São Salvador was often intercepted by the Portuguese and the letters had to be sent through the Apostolic Collector in Lisbon and trustworthy members of the clergy in Luanda.<sup>134</sup> Through Vives, Alvaro III could demand Rome rights and privileges to establish a Congolese patronage. The direct experience of the *Padroado* probably influenced some of the sovereign's requests, like creating a military order with him as Grand Master or establishing a Royal Chapel independent from the bishopric's jurisdiction.<sup>135</sup> In the same period, Alvaro also requested the Holy See to dispatch new missionaries for his kingdom, as it emerges from the minutes of the General Chapter of the Capuchin Order, held in Rome in June 1618. It was Vives, supported by the newly appointed cardinal protector Gabriel Trejo y Panigua, to bring the *mani Kongo*'s petition to the chapter, which agreed to send some missionaries of its Spanish province under the direction of P. Luis de Zaragoza.

It is reasonable to assume that Alvaro's petition to the Capuchin Order came out of advice sent from Rome, as it appears very unlikely that the African sovereign had a clear notion of who the

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<sup>133</sup> "Royal letter to Vives", Madrid, 18.01.1616, in *MMA*, vol. VI, p. 250.

<sup>134</sup> See, for example, "Letter by the king of Kongo to Vives", São Salvador, 19.10.1619, in *MMA*, vol. VI, p. 390. For a detailed description of how the Portuguese interference was avoided, see "Letter by Bras Correa to Vives", São Salvador, 23.07.1622, in *MMA*, vol. VII, pp. 46-47.

<sup>135</sup> "Instructions of the king of Kongo to Mons. Vives", São Salvador, 25.10.1617, in *MMA*, vol. VI, pp. 290-295.

Capuchins were at that time.<sup>136</sup> The order was created less than a century before, in 1528, after a scission within the Observant branch of the Franciscans. Their rule was characterised by strict adherence to the vote of poverty and by a rigorous religious life. In the first period of their activity, the Capuchins were even accused of creating a scandal for their excessive zeal that embarrassed other regulars. Because of these features, the Capuchins earned the sympathy of the Papacy since the beginning of their activity. However, the ideological schism out of which the order arose – and the delicate religious context of the Reformation – probably forced the popes to limit their development to the Italian peninsula until 1574. After this date, the Order spread throughout Europe and, by 1600, accounted for almost seventeen thousand members and forty-two provinces. Besides this outstanding growth, it is important to highlight how the order was intimately linked to Italy and the Papacy during its early decades. In the Italian peninsula, it developed as a mendicant order, whose main task was preaching the gospel and participating in social work. By preaching in the countryside and among soldiers and mariners of European armies and fleets, they managed to be recognised as humble servants of God, severely obedient to the Catholic territorial hierarchy and, ultimately, to the Pope.<sup>137</sup>

If the sixteenth century was a period of adjustment for the Capuchin Order, the seventeenth century represented its “golden age”, as Gleason put it.<sup>138</sup> By the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the order went through some major changes in its constitution and started developing a particular vocation for missionary activity. As Dompnier demonstrates, this process caused a significant debate within the order and missionary activity was undertaken by its provinces at different times.<sup>139</sup> However, in the second decade of the seventeenth century, the Capuchins were the religious order that could best support the Papacy’s intent to reclaim control over the missions. Moreover, the death of some key members of the Carmelites opened the door for Rome to deploy reformed missionaries to Kongo, as requested by Alvaro II in 1613, in the form of the Spanish Capuchins, being their province subject to the Habsburg Crown and supposedly loyal to the king.<sup>140</sup>

Shortly after the decision issued by the Capuchins’ General Chapter, Vives and Cardinal Trejo, through the Nuncio of Spain and the Collector of Portugal, started working to obtain Madrid’s approval for the Capuchin mission. However, the Portuguese immediately mobilised to prevent the dispatch of the expedition. In October 1618, Lisbon’s *Mesa da Consciencia e Ordens* rapidly

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<sup>136</sup> Saccardo suggested that it was Vives to advise the *mani Kongo* to request Capuchin missionaries. Although there are no sources sustaining this assumption, it seems likely that Alvaro got informed about the Capuchins from Rome. See, Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, p. 193.

<sup>137</sup> Elisabeth G. Gleason, ‘The Capuchin Order in the Sixteenth Century’, in *Religious Orders of the Catholic Reformation*, by Richard DeMolen (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994), 31–58.

<sup>138</sup> Gleason, 40.

<sup>139</sup> Bernard Dompnier, ‘Tensions et conflits autour des missions chez les capucins du XVIIe siècle’, in *Religione, conflittualità e cultura: il clero regolare nell’Europa d’antico regime*, ed. Massimo Carlo Giannini (Roma: Bulzoni, 2006), 159–84.

<sup>140</sup> Gray and Sanneh, *Christianity, the Papacy, and Mission in Africa*, 39–47.

appointed a group of Jesuit missionaries to make the Capuchin mission look unnecessary.<sup>141</sup> In the following months, the *Conselho de Portugal* started complaining in Madrid about the activity of the cardinal protector Trejo. According to royal officials, Kongo's interests should have been entrusted to the cardinal protector of the Iberian kingdoms.<sup>142</sup>

Meanwhile, Alvaro III received the news of the Capuchin mission in October 1619 and manifested his enthusiasm to Vives and Pope Paolo V. The Pope himself was convinced of the success of the mission and, on 31 August 1620, he announced the arrival of the Capuchins with a letter to the *mani Kongo*.<sup>143</sup> However, the Portuguese let the enthusiasm last only shortly, as on 22 September 1620 the ministers of the *Conselho de Portugal* convinced Philip III to sign a decree that prohibited the entrance of foreign religious men in all the territories of the *Conquista*.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, under pressure from the Portuguese, the king revoked Trejo's permission to be the cardinal protector of Kongo in March 1621, thus depriving Rome of an influential representative of the African kingdom and a strong supporter of the Capuchin mission. Interestingly, while informing the ambassador in Rome about his decision, Philip explained how Trejo, in virtue of his position as Protector of Kongo, was attempting to send "Capuchin clergymen from Italy" to the Portuguese *Conquista*. Although the king was well informed about the fact that the missionaries were Spanish, the Italian leadership of the Order was perceived as problematic by the court.<sup>145</sup>

The signature of the royal decree was not immediately communicated to Rome. For this reason, Paolo V and, after his death, the new pope Gregorio XV, sent two more letters to Alvaro III reassuring him about the Capuchin mission in January and March 1621 respectively.<sup>146</sup> The fact that Gregorio XV immediately renewed the effort of sending the Capuchins to Kongo demonstrates Rome's vested interest in this endeavour. Unsurprisingly, the Capuchin mission to Kongo became a priority for the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* immediately after its foundation. Between August and November 1622, the Congregation solicited the Nuncio in Madrid and the General of the Capuchins to pressure Madrid for releasing the "impediments" and approve the mission, but without success.<sup>147</sup> In January 1623, the news of Alvaro III's death allowed the Iberian Crown to prevent the departure of missionaries for Kongo with the excuse that there was the risk of succession wars before the crowning

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<sup>141</sup> P. Melchor de Pobladora, 'Génesis del ovimiento misional en las provincias capuchinas de España (1618-1650)', *Estudios Franciscanos* 50 (1949): 212; Filesi and de Villapadierna, *La 'Missio Antiqua'*, 17.

<sup>142</sup> "Letter of the Council of State to the king", Madrid, 02.04.1619, in *MMA*, vol. VI, p. 358.

<sup>143</sup> "Brief by Paolo V to the King of Kongo", Rome, 31.08.1620, in *MMA*, vol. VI, pp. 508-510.

<sup>144</sup> "Royal letter to the Vice-king of Portugal", Madrid, 22.09.1620, in *MMA*, vol. VI, p. 518.

<sup>145</sup> "Royal letter to Cardinal Trejo", Madrid, 27.03.1621, in *MMA*, vol. VI, p. 576.

<sup>146</sup> "Brief by Paolo V to the King of Kongo", Rome, 13.01.1621 in *MMA*, vol. VI, pp. 557-558; "Brief by Gregorio XV to the King of Kongo", Rome, 19.03.1621, in *MMA*, vol. VI, pp. 574-574.

<sup>147</sup> "Letter by *Propaganda Fide* to the Nuncio in Madrid", Rome, 06.08.1622, in *MMA*, vol. VII, pp. 54-55. See also "Memorial by the Apostolic Collector to the king of Spain", Madrid, 1622, in *MMA*, vol. VII, pp. 75-77.

of the new king.<sup>148</sup> In reality, the election of Alvaro's successor, Pedro II Nkanga-a-Mvika (1622-1624), run smoothly and without contention.<sup>149</sup>

In Rome, the establishment of a mission in Kongo remained one of the goals pursued by *Propaganda*. As illustrated in the first chapter, the first activity and political agenda of the Congregation was significantly shaped by the information arriving from the Iberian empires, the Portuguese in particular. In Lisbon, the Apostolic Collectors reported to the Congregation about the impediments to evangelisation in the empire and exercised their pressure on the royal administration to facilitate the travelling of foreign missionaries overseas. In 1623, the expert diplomacy of Antonio Albergati managed to convince the Portuguese authorities to accept Italian reformed missionaries in the *Conquista*.<sup>150</sup> Meanwhile, in Rome, Monsignor Vives continued to represent the interests of Kongo's sovereigns at the papal court and with *Propaganda* until he died in 1632. Finally, the Congregation strengthened its ties with the Capuchin Order, whose missionary activity significantly increased after 1622. During the 1620s and 1630s, the Capuchins established a privileged relationship with *Propaganda*, thus becoming the main missionary group available for the Congregation. Being reformed missionaries, members of a relatively young order, and not entangled with the Iberian patronage as other missionary groups, the Capuchins were entrusted with a growing number of missions within and outside of Europe.<sup>151</sup> In 1633, a new attempt to send Spanish missionaries to Kongo met again with the opposition of the *Conselho de Portugal*.<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, this context made the Holy See particularly responsive when, in 1636, a new plead came from the *mani Kongo* Alvaro VI Nimi-a-Lukeni (1636-1641).

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<sup>148</sup> "Letter by the Nuncio in Madrid to *Propaganda Fide*", Madrid, 14.01.1623, in *MMA*, vol. VII, pp. 82-83. Alvaro III died in May 1622.

<sup>149</sup> Louis Jadin, 'L'oeuvre missionnaire en Afrique noire', in *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, ed. Josef Metzler, vol. I/2 (Roma: Herder, 1971), 432-33.

<sup>150</sup> "Report on the missions in Asia, Africa, and Brazil", Lisbon, 04.03.1623, in *MMA*, vol. VII, pp. 97-194.

<sup>151</sup> Dompnier, 'Tensions et conflits'. On the privileged relationship between *Propaganda* and the Capuchins, see Josef Metzler, 'Francesco Ingoli, der erste Sekretär der Kongregation (1578-1649)', in *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, ed. Josef Metzler, vol. I/1 (Roma: Herder, 1971), 225; Pizzorusso, *Propaganda Fide*, 301-9. The only comprehensive study of Capuchin missionary activity was conducted in the nineteenth century by a member of the Order. See, da Cesinale, *Storia delle missioni dei cappuccini*. However, Capuchin missionary activity in the seventeenth century has been generally studied by focusing on a specific Province of the Order or on some of its most famous members. For some examples, Pobladora, 'Génesis del movimiento misionero en las provincias capuchinas de España (1618-1650)'; Mateo de Anguiano, *Misiones capuchinas en Africa*, 2 vols (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo, 1950); Luca Codignola, 'Pacifique de Provins and the Capuchin Network in Africa and America', *Proceedings of the Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* 15 (1992): 46-60; Giovanni Pizzorusso, 'Propaganda Fide e gli ordini religiosi nel XVII secolo: note di ricerca con particolare riferimento ai Cappuccini', in *I Cappuccini nell'Umbria del Seicento*, ed. Vincenzo Crisuolo (Roma: Istituto storico dei Cappuccini, 2001), 309-34; Matteo Binasco, 'I Cappuccini europei nell'America Francese nella prima metà del Seicento', in *Miscellanea di Storia delle esplorazioni*, vol. 27 (Genova: Bozzi, 2002), 85-110; Alessandro Catalano and Alessandro Catalano, 'Strategie politiche e trame occulte nell'Europa del Seicento: le "relazioni del cappuccino", Valeriano Magni e Albrecht von Wallenstein', in *Per Adriano Prosperi. vol. II: L'Europa divisa e i nuovi mondi*, ed. Massimo Donattini and Stefania Pastore (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2011), 357-66; Carlos Henrique Cruz, *A escola do diabo: indígenas e capuchinhos italianos nos sertões da América (1680-1761)* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2019); Anel Hernández, 'Los capuchinos hispanos y sus misiones americanas durante la primera mitad del siglo XVII', *Fronteras de la Historia* 27, no. 1 (2022): 124-45.

<sup>152</sup> Filesi and de Villapadierna, *La 'Missio Antiqua'*, 18.



From the end of the 1610s, the kingdom of Kongo suffered increasing threats from the Portuguese in Luanda on three different levels. From an economic point of view, the independent trade channels established by Luanda with Soyo, on the one hand, and the southern states of Kongo, on the other, weakened São Salvador's power over the kingdom. In exchange for slaves and ivory, the Portuguese supplied the African states with European goods, thus increasing their economic power. Moreover, Luanda also controlled the extraction of *zimbu* shells, which gave it control over the production and circulation of currency in the region. This economic threat was worsened by the military pressure imposed by Luanda's governors. During the second and third decades of the seventeenth century, several Portuguese governors raided the southern provinces of Kongo to capture slaves for the Brazilian markets, often against orders received from the court in Madrid.<sup>153</sup> Finally, Luanda's political agenda was significantly sustained by the Crown's control over the ecclesiastical structure granted by the *Padroado*. The bishops and several members of São Salvador's chapter were often connivant with the Portuguese governors and moved their residence to Luanda to keep their distance from the Kongo rulers. This was to be added to the royal ministers' efforts to maintain the Crown's monopoly over the appointment of religious men, described above.<sup>154</sup>

After Alvaro III's death, Pedro II showed his hostility to the Portuguese by massacring their communities in Kongo, in reaction to Governor João Correia de Sousa's (1621-1623) invasion of the province of Mbamba. At the same time, Dutch trading penetration in Soyo in the 1620s offered the *mani Kongo* a possible ally against the Portuguese. Diplomatic contacts started and went so far as to convince the Dutch to attack Luanda in 1624.<sup>155</sup> However, by that time, governor Correia de Sousa had been called back to report to Madrid and the new bishop and temporary governor of Angola, D. Simão de Mascarenhas, had restored peaceful relations with the new *mani Kongo* Garcia I Mubemba-a-Ncanga (1624-1626). The governor's suspension was also made possible by the intervention of the Apostolic Collector Antonio Albergati who, informed by the *mani Kongo*, pressured Madrid to intervene.<sup>156</sup>

Although restored, the relationship between São Salvador and Luanda remained unstable between the end of the 1620s and the 1630s. European commerce continued to weaken Kongo's political control over its provinces, as Portuguese governors persevered in their attempts to obtain the copper

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<sup>153</sup> It is important to keep in mind, as Meuwese pointed out, that in the 1620s more than ten thousands slaves were shipped from Luanda to Brazil every year. Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595-1674* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 193.

<sup>154</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 104–41.

<sup>155</sup> On this issue and its contextualisation within the broader scenario of the Thirty Years' War, John K. Thornton and Andrea Mosterman, 'A Re-Interpretation of the Kongo-Portuguese War of 1622 According to New Documentary Evidence', *The Journal of African History* 51, no. 2 (2010): 235–48; John K. Thornton, 'The Kingdom of Kongo and the Thirty Years' War', *Journal of World History* 27, no. 2 (2016): 189–213.

<sup>156</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade*, 197. Pedro II complained with Collector Antonio Albergati about Correa's abuses. It was also thanks to Albergati's intercession in Madrid that the governor was removed and called back to Spain. See, "Letter by Collector Albergati to *Propaganda Fide*", Lisbon, 26.07.1624, in *MMA*, vol. VII, pp. 244-247.

mines in the southern region of Mbembe and kept pressuring the *mani Kongo* to take action to expel the Dutch traders from the province of Soyo. The ecclesiastical hierarchy further supported the Portuguese. The new bishop D. Francisco de Soveral (1628-1643) never resided in São Salvador, neglected Kongo's church in favour of the colony of Angola, and aided Luanda's governors in pursuing their political agenda in the region. Similarly, the Portuguese members of São Salvador's chapter moved their residence to Luanda in open violation of the Tridentine precepts. The Jesuit missionaries in Kongo also started retreating to Angola and aligning with the Portuguese governors. By the late 1630s, the mission had already lost the enthusiasm and support of Kongo's sovereigns.<sup>157</sup>

Internal and external pressures finally convinced King Alvaro VI to renew requests for help from the Holy See as soon as he ascended to the throne. In 1636, he declared his obedience to the pope and urgently demanded "zealous and uninterested missionaries" for the kingdom.<sup>158</sup> In another letter from 1639, Alvaro wrote again to Urbano VIII (1623-1644) denouncing the abuses committed by Luanda's governors against his kingdom and complaining against bishop Soveral for not residing in São Salvador.<sup>159</sup> These letters found the prompt reply of the Papacy and reactivated *Propaganda's* project for a mission in Kongo. On 4 April 1640, Monsignor Ingoli asked the Apostolic Collector for advice on the nationality of the missionaries to be sent to Kongo "suspecting that in the kingdom the Portuguese are not well-regarded".<sup>160</sup> The Collector's response probably confirmed *Propaganda's* doubts, as on 25 June 1640 the Congregation created the Apostolic Prefecture of Kongo, entrusting the mission to a group of Italian Capuchins led by P. Bonaventura d'Alessano.<sup>161</sup> The design of the expedition was carefully planned to avoid possible impediments from the Iberian Crowns. This time, *Propaganda* did not appoint Spanish missionaries to avoid the opposition of the *Conselho de Portugal*. However, the missionaries were selected among Italian vassals of the king of Spain and one of them, P. Giovanni Francesco Romano (from the Province of Umbria), was asked to change his name to "da Città Ducale", to figure as a tributary of Spain.<sup>162</sup> Building on the failed attempts of the previous decades, *Propaganda* planned the missionary expedition precisely to meet the expectations of both the Portuguese and Spanish imperial administrations. However, the geopolitical changes of the 1640s complicated *Propaganda's* scheme.

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<sup>157</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 139–40.

<sup>158</sup> Filesi and de Villapadierna, *La 'Missio Antiqua'*, 18.

<sup>159</sup> "Letter by the King of Kongo to the pope", 16.12.1639, in *MMA*, vol. VIII, pp. 433-434.

<sup>160</sup> "Letter by the Secretary of *Propaganda Fide* to the Apostolic Collector in Lisbon", Rome, 04.04.1640, in *MMA*, vol. VIII, p. 435.

<sup>161</sup> "*Propaganda Fide* entrusts the mission in Kongo to the Capuchins", Rome, 25.05.1640, in *MMA*, vol. VIII, p. 436. The group of missionaries had already volunteered to the Congregation on 2 May 1640, "Letter by the Capuchin missionaries to the cardinals of *Propaganda Fide*", 02.05.1640, in *MMA*, vol. VIII, p. 601.

<sup>162</sup> "Report of the first Capuchin expedition", 1640, in *MMA*, vol. VIII, pp. 471-473.

## THE *RESTAURAÇÃO* (1640)

When P. Bonaventura d'Alessano and his companions arrived in Lisbon in April 1641, they had to face the sudden geopolitical change caused by the *Restauração*. On 1 December 1640, the kingdom of Portugal restored its independence under the Bragança dynasty and elected King João IV. The event marked the start of a lengthy period of political and military conflict with Spain, which did not recognise Portugal's independence.<sup>163</sup> For the group of Apostolic Missionaries appointed by *Propaganda Fide*, Portugal's independence significantly compromised the success of the expedition. Once arrived in Lisbon, the Capuchins were received by the Apostolic Collector, Girolamo Battaglia (1640-1646). Through his intercession, the missionaries were received by the new king of Portugal and the queen, D. Luisa de Gusmão (1640-1656). The sovereigns reacted with great enthusiasm to the plan of the Kongo mission, and the Capuchins were immediately welcomed at court and promised a passage on a Genoese ship bound for Africa by the following September.<sup>164</sup> King João had his reasons to enthusiastically receive the Capuchins: for the newly elected sovereign, the Apostolic missionaries represented a great opportunity to show the goodwill of the new dynasty towards the Papacy and attain its support to restore Portugal's independence. At the same time, legitimising the dispatch of the mission would have provided the Portuguese Crown with the opportunity to exercise its *Padroado* privileges and claim independence from Spain.<sup>165</sup> However, Madrid's political influence in Rome rapidly pushed the Holy See to refuse the recognition of D. João IV as legitimate sovereign, thus depriving him of the crucial international legitimacy accrued by the pope.<sup>166</sup> With these conditions, João was reluctant to allow the Capuchins to enter his colonies and decided to bid his time.

After the warm welcome received during his first months in Lisbon, by 29 July 1641 P. Alessano informed *Propaganda* that the departure had been postponed for over a month. In the same period, the missionaries encountered a French Capuchin who just came back from the East Indies after a long journey through central Asia. Once arrived in Goa, the Capuchin raised the suspicions of the royal officials and Portuguese clerics, who imprisoned him and shipped him back to Lisbon to be set on trial.<sup>167</sup> Even though the French Capuchin was immediately released once he arrived in Portugal, the episode impressed P. Alessano, who reported it to *Propaganda*, anticipating the difficulties the

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<sup>163</sup> Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 106–27.

<sup>164</sup> "Letter by P. Bonaventura d'Alessano to the cardinals of *Propaganda Fide*", Lisbon, 08.06.1641, in *MMA*, vol. VIII, pp. 503-504.

<sup>165</sup> Cristina Bravo Lozano and Roberto Quirós Rosado, 'Evangelizzare nella tempesta. Fra' Bonaventura d'Alessano, la "Restauração" in Portogallo e le origini della missione del Congo', *RiMe. Rivista dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea* 8, no. III (2021): 168.

<sup>166</sup> Jadin, 'L'oeuvre missionnaire en Afrique noire', 480–81.

<sup>167</sup> "Letter by P. Bonaventura d'Alessano to the Secretary of *Propaganda Fide*", Lisbon, 29.07.1641, in *MMA*, vol. VIII, pp. 529-533.

Capuchins later endured in Portugal. At the end of the summer of 1641, the Genoese ship destined for the Capuchins was suddenly ordered by the King to sail to La Rochelle, thus forcing the expedition to be postponed to March 1642. In addition to this, royal officials started examining the missionaries' documents and requesting certificates to assess their provenance. The missionaries started to realise that the court was buying time. According to the Prefect:

We walk through so many suspects that every dubious detail will suffice not only to disturb the passage and the voyage but even to imprison us. We fear, particularly in these times of spies, to face surprises, as the experience showed us to happen to other religious men.<sup>168</sup>

In the meantime, the news of the Dutch occupation of Luanda reached the Portuguese capital. The military operation was conducted in August 1641 by the Dutch West India Company (WIC), despite the truce between Portugal and the States General signed in June, where both countries allied against the common enemy, Spain. The loss of Luanda provided yet another excuse for the Crown to prevent the Capuchins to leave Portugal, but by February 1642 the Apostolic Collector was already informing *Propaganda* of P. Alessano's decision to return to Italy. "Being unable to obtain the passage to Angola from the royal officials", who claimed that it was against the law to send foreign missionaries to the overseas territories, the Capuchins left Lisbon on a Genoese ship.<sup>169</sup> Two years after the *Restauração*, Portugal was at the dawn of a long war with Spain and still not recognised by the Holy See as an independent state. Therefore, royal officials were reluctant to send missionaries under the Papacy's jurisdiction – and Spain's subjects – to their territories.

During the homeward journey, the Capuchins encountered the Spanish lay brother F. Francisco de Pamplona, a former officer in Philip IV's army known as D. Tiburcio de Redín. F. Francisco convinced P. Alessano that the mission could have reached Kongo via Spain with the support of the king. This possibility was immediately reported to *Propaganda* by the Prefect when he arrived in Sicily in March 1642. Here, the Prefect was received and interrogated by the Spanish Admiral of Palermo, to whom he reported everything he knew about Portugal: the names of João IV's *validos*, the social climate in Lisbon after the *Restauração*, the nationalities of the kingdom's mercenaries fighting against Spain, and the Catalan rebels' attempt to establish an alliance.<sup>170</sup> The Admiral did not miss the opportunity to gather sensitive information about the Portuguese court, where the missionaries spent almost ten months, and reported to Madrid.

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<sup>168</sup> "Letter by P. Bonaventura d'Alessano to the Secretary of *Propaganda Fide*", Lisbon, 01.10.1641, in *MMA*, vol. VIII, p. 537. Original: "Si cammina con tante gelosie, ch'ogni minimo reo di sospetto basterà non solamente a frastornare, e passaggio e viaggio, etiandio a carcerarci, temendosi, massime in questi tempi di spie, di intendere revelationi, come l'esperienza ci dimostra esser avvenuti a daltri Religiosi".

<sup>169</sup> "Letter by the Apostolic Collector to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide*", Lisbon, 05.02.1642, in *MMA*, vol. VIII, p. 560.

<sup>170</sup> "Report of the Admiral to Philip IV", 16.04.1642, in *MMA*, vol. VIII, pp. 576-581.

Finally arrived in Rome, the Capuchins reported to *Propaganda* the outcome of their expedition and proposed the alternative suggested by F. Francisco. In March 1643, he was included in the Capuchin mission to Kongo and, by the summer of 1643, presented, with P. Alessano, a memorial to Philip IV requesting a passage to Kongo. Although allowing Bonaventura and Francisco to seek the support of the Spanish king, *Propaganda* did not give up on the possibility to dispatch some missionaries with the approval of the Portuguese Crown. By the end of 1643, the Congregation entrusted four Capuchins from Genoa to go to Lisbon and ask for a passage to Kongo. This parallel mission had an important impact on the development of the *Missio Antiqua*.

Thanks to F. Francisco's mediation, the advice of the *Conselho de Portugal* in Madrid was positive, and the king accepted to sponsor the expedition with 1.000 ducats at the end of 1643.<sup>171</sup> However, Philip IV wanted his share in the mission, and the Prefect had to accept some Capuchins from Spain added to the expedition, which reached a total number of twelve men (seven Spanish and five Italians).<sup>172</sup>

While the Capuchins were in Seville, news about the Dutch occupation of Angola circulated reporting that the new king Garcia II Ncanga-a-Lukeni (1641-1660) had allied with the WIC and was hostile to Catholicism. Fearing that the establishment of the mission in Kongo had become impossible, the Capuchins mobilised to obtain from the Holy See and Spain the possibility to preach somewhere else in the Spanish empire in case their mission to Kongo would fail. Although *Propaganda* enthusiastically agreed to the Capuchins' proposal, the Spanish *Junta de Indias* opposed this prospect, advised by no less than the Castilian Provincial of the Order.<sup>173</sup> Being the expedition led by Italian missionaries, it would have broken "His Majesty's order not to allow the passage to those provinces to foreign religious men, if they are not Spanish".<sup>174</sup> The opinion of the Provincial clearly shows how at least some members of the Capuchin order shared with the royal administration the fear of sending foreign missionaries overseas. It could be assumed, then, that *Propaganda's* Italian Capuchins found their way to Kongo via Spain mainly because they were penetrating the empire of the enemy.

By the beginning of 1645, these issues were finally overcome, and the Capuchins left San Lucar on the ship *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, captained by the Genoese merchant Bernardo Falconi. Shortly afterwards, Portuguese spies denounced the departure of the Capuchins to the *Conselho Ultramarino* in Lisbon, which issued its advice on 21 February 1645. The presence of a former soldier

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<sup>171</sup> "Opinion of Francisco Leitão about the Capuchin mission", Madrid, 04.12.1643, in *MMA*, vol. IX, pp. 85-99.

<sup>172</sup> "Missionaries for Kongo", 25.04.1644, in *MMA*, vol. IX, pp. 118-129. For a complete list of all the Capuchins sent to Kongo between 1645 and 1835, see Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. III, pp. 19-119.

<sup>173</sup> "Letter by the Secretary of *Propaganda Fide* to P. Bonaventura d'Alessano", Rome, 02.07.1644, in *MMA*, vol. IX, pp. 144-145.

<sup>174</sup> "Letter by the Provincial of Castile to the *Consejo de Indias*", Convent of S. Antonio, 01.10.1644, in *MMA*, vol. IX, p. 168.

like F. Francisco de Pamplona immediately convinced the Council that the expedition was part of a Spanish covered operation to conquer the port of Mpinda. According to the *Conselho*:

It would be very convenient for the service of His Majesty to arm two military ships with a considerable number of people to prevent Castile's plan and assist our countrymen in Angola. However, considering the little money available, it is necessary to inform the Governor General of Brazil, the Governor of Rio de Janeiro, and Salvador Correa de Sá to do everything possible to block this plan undertaken by this Castilian ship with the reinforcements that His Majesty ordered to go to Angola.<sup>175</sup>

On 25 May 1645 Falconi arrived in sight of the port of Mpinda, in the province of Soyo, where the ship risked being blocked by a WIC vessel. The discovery of Spanish missionaries onboard the Genoese ship would have compromised the entire mission. Therefore, Falconi decided to hide the Capuchins in a small boat and rapidly reach the coast avoiding the Dutch blockade. Once arrived in Soyo, the Capuchins introduced themselves to the *mani Soyo* Daniel da Silva (1640-1649) as Apostolic missionaries of the Holy See, earning his protection against the Dutch captain.

Eventually, the Portuguese did manage to capture Falconi's ship, but only after he disembarked the Capuchins. After leaving the coast of Kongo, Falconi embarked 150 enslaved Africans and set sail to the Americas, his compensation for having transported the Capuchins to Africa. In proximity to the island of Principe, his ship needed reparations but was discovered by one Portuguese and one Dutch ship and taken to São Tomé at the beginning of 1646. Here, he was deprived of his slaves and risked being executed by the Portuguese governor, who wanted to get rid of him for being knowledgeable of the coast of Guinea, and thus a potential source of information for a Spanish invasion by sea. Moreover, Falconi had to be sentenced to death "for having brought, without any order [of the King], twelve Capuchin fathers to the kingdom of Kongo, Portugal's enemy". Luckily for the captain, he was spared by the Dutch governor of the island, who sent him to Amsterdam as a prisoner in September 1646.<sup>176</sup> In the meantime, however, the Capuchins had reached King Garcia II in São Salvador and established their mission in the capital of Kongo.

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<sup>175</sup> "Consultation about the Capuchin mission to Kongo", Lisbon, 21.02.1645, in *MMA*, vol. IX, p. 229. Original: "que muito conueniente fora ao seruiço de V. Magestade armaremse desta cidade dois nauios de forsa, com alguá gente para deuertir este dezenho de Castella e se socorrer a nossa gente que está em Angola. Porem considerandose o pouco dinheiro que há, se deue auizar ao governador geral do estado do Brasil, ao governador do Rio de Janeiro, e a Saluador Correa de Sá, que fação daíy todo o posiucl para que sé diuirta este desenho que leua esta vrca de Castella, com os socorros que V. Magestade tem ordenado que uaõ a Angola."

<sup>176</sup> "Bernardo Falconi to *Propaganda*", Amsterdam, 27.08.1645 in APF, *SOCCG*, vol. 94, ff. 274-279.

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE *MISSIO ANTIQUA*

When P. Alessano and his companions arrived in Kongo in 1645, they were pleased to find out that the kingdom did not reject the Catholic faith after the Dutch occupation. However, the ecclesiastical structure of the kingdom was tragically affected by the geopolitical developments of the previous five years. West Central Africa was in the middle of a war between the Portuguese on one side, and the WIC and Kongo on the other. After their first attempt to capture Luanda in 1624, the Dutch were given a second opportunity in 1641 after the election of Garcia II, particularly hostile to the Portuguese. In August 1641, an envoy was sent to Soyo seeking support against Luanda. The Dutch proposed an anti-Portuguese alliance, but the geopolitical changes happening in Kongo and Europe made Garcia II doubtful. Kongo was struggling with the control of the province of Soyo, where D. Daniel da Silva took power without the explicit approval of the *mani Kongo*, thus manifesting clear tendencies to emancipate from São Salvador's control. Moreover, the Portuguese clerics in Kongo informed Garcia about the treaty agreed between Portugal and the Dutch Republic in June 1641, keeping the sovereign distrustful of WIC's emissaries. However, by the end of the year, Dutch representatives found support from Soyo and Queen Njinga Mbande (\*c. 1583 - +1663), ruler of the kingdom of Matamba. Njinga was the legitimate heir to the throne of Ndongo, conquered by the Portuguese in the 1620s. Since then, Njinga had been forced to retreat to the interior and conquered the kingdom of Matamba, from where she kept attacking Luanda.<sup>177</sup>

In the first months of 1642, WIC representatives managed to convince Garcia II to join forces against the Portuguese and an alliance was signed in March. Trying to emulate Portugal's strategy, the Dutch attempted to replace their religious and political presence in São Salvador by sending Protestant clerics and a permanent ambassador to the *mani Kongo*. Garcia rapidly refused this offer, claiming that he was a subject of the pope and that the cruelty of the Portuguese was not sufficient for him to abandon the Catholic Faith, which was his "natural defence".<sup>178</sup> Besides the rhetoric, in such a context of fragile and shifting alliances, Catholicism was crucial to sustain the kingdom and legitimise Garcia's power. The temporary defeat of the Portuguese gave Garcia unprecedented control over the Kongo church.<sup>179</sup> Moreover, the diplomatic relations established with the Holy See were still important to seek political emancipation, the imminent arrival of the Capuchins being a concrete example of this. Finally, Garcia had his reasons not to trust the Dutch completely. In the following months, the war between the Portuguese and the Dutch proceeded between open hostilities and ceasefires arranged by the Europeans to allow the slave trade to continue. Despite the agreements

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<sup>177</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade*, 205–10.

<sup>178</sup> "Letter by D. Garcia II to Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen", Congo, 12.05.1642, in *MMA*, vol. VIII, pp. 585-586.

<sup>179</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 154–61.

stipulated with their African allies, the Dutch main interest was to ship slaves to their Brazilian colony. When Salvador Correia de Sá conquered Luanda on 18 August 1648, the Dutch immediately surrendered, turning their back on Njinga and Garcia.<sup>180</sup>

The arrival of the first Capuchins in June 1645 added a new set of interests to this geopolitical situation. As Catholic missionaries, they found a kingdom deprived of sacerdotal support and in the middle of an armed conflict with Portugal, allied to the heretics of the WIC. After a few weeks, P. Alessano decided to send back F. Francisco de Pamplona to Madrid and Rome to negotiate the dispatch of more missionaries. Reporting to *Propaganda*, the Prefect urged the need to appoint a new bishop and train indigenous priests. Since the start of the mission, the Prefect showed his alignment with the Congregation's political programme, which was shared by other members of the mission who insistently asked *Propaganda* to appoint a bishop in Kongo outside the *Padroado*.<sup>181</sup> Enthusiastically received by the *mani Soyo*, the Capuchins had to cope with his hostile relationship with São Salvador, which recently had started a war with Soyo. Adopting a conciliatory attitude, the missionaries managed to reach Kongo's capital, where they were received by Garcia II in September 1645 with all the honours. Conversely, part of the Portuguese community of São Salvador opposed their religious activity, claiming that it was not sanctioned by the King of Portugal. Moreover, they were accused of being Castilian spies before the Portuguese governor D. Francisco de Soutomaior, recently arrived in Massangano with reinforcements from Brazil to fight against the Dutch and Njinga. At this news, the clergy of Massangano detached from São Salvador's chapter, accusing it of rebellion against the Crown. Similarly, the WIC representatives in Kongo informed Luanda's superiors of the arrival of the Capuchins from Spain, thus alarming the Dutch authorities as well.<sup>182</sup>

On Easter 1646, the news of the capture of four Capuchins by the Dutch in Luanda reached São Salvador. These were the four Genoese missionaries sent by *Propaganda* in December 1643. From *Propaganda's* perspective, the good diplomatic relationship between Genoa, Portugal and the Dutch Republic would have helped the Capuchins to obtain a passage to Kongo. Under the leadership of P. Bonaventura da Taggia, they arrived in Lisbon from Nantes in July 1644. In France, the Capuchins used their extensive network to obtain recommendation letters from king Louis XIV (1643-1715), an ally of Portugal. Once in Lisbon, the Capuchins were well received by João IV but soon encountered the usual suspicion of the Portuguese administration that delayed their departure. In October 1644, P. Taggia wrote a petition to King João, explaining the religious and *political* reasons for allowing the mission to Kongo. From a political point of view, the Capuchins could be "of great profit to the

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<sup>180</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade*, 212–27.

<sup>181</sup> "Letter by P. Bonaventura d'Alessano to the Secretary of *Propaganda Fidei*", Mpinda, 04.06.1645, in *MMA*, vol. IX, pp. 256-273.

<sup>182</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 361-363.



kingdom of Portugal”, by contributing to restoring its relationship with Kongo against the Dutch. From a religious standpoint, they could support the fight against the Protestant heresy, thus preserving Catholicism and making the Portuguese empire “more secure and stable”.<sup>183</sup> The Portuguese Crown ignored the pleas of the Genoese and tried to use the missionaries to obtain recognition from the Holy See. According to the Crown, the Capuchins would have been allowed to depart only after papal recognition of João’s patronage rights, revoked since the *Restauração*.

This diplomatic impasse delayed the Capuchins’ departure until May 1645, when the king autonomously conceded them passports for Brazil.<sup>184</sup> The sovereign’s decision demonstrated the diplomatic ability of P. Taggia, whose permanence in Lisbon was crucial to establish a good reputation for the Italian Capuchins and their mission. However, it also shows that Portugal’s decision not to allow the Capuchins’ departure in 1641 was mainly political, rather than the result of the Dutch occupation of Luanda. Although in peace with the Dutch Republic, Portuguese royal officials preferred to keep the missionaries in Lisbon to use them to pressure the Holy See. By personally interceding to allow the Capuchins’ departure, the Portuguese sovereign hoped to gain the Papacy’s favour against Spain. Therefore, P. Taggia accepted João as the “father and patron” of their mission and reported to *Propaganda* the king’s dissatisfaction towards the political developments in Rome.<sup>185</sup> The Capuchins arrived in Africa at the beginning of 1646, when the hostilities between the Portuguese and the WIC had restarted. Captured by the Dutch, the missionaries were imprisoned in Luanda.<sup>186</sup>

After this news reached Kongo, Garcia II sent the Spanish Capuchin P. Buenaventura de Sardegna, together with his confessor, to request the liberation of the four Capuchins before the WIC authorities and establish a protocol for dealing with the missionaries arriving in the future. When Garcia’s representatives arrived, the Genoese Capuchins had already been sent back to Brazil and the WIC manifested its intention to forbid missionaries to enter Kongo without passports from the Dutch Republic. As a result, Garcia understood that the free passage for his Apostolic missionaries had to be earned in Europe. Therefore, advised by the Capuchins themselves, Garcia II took this opportunity to send an official embassy to Europe. Two Capuchins, the Italian P. Giovanni Francesco da Roma and the Spanish P. Angelo de Valencia, were chosen to represent the sovereign’s interests in three different states: the Dutch Republic, the Holy See, and Spain. In December 1646, the two ambassadors left Luanda for the Dutch Republic. In less than two years, the Capuchins earned the trust of the *mani Kongo* to the point of representing his interests in Europe.

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<sup>183</sup> “Letter by P. Bonaventura da Taggia to the King of Portugal”, Lisbon, 29.10.1644, in *MMA*, vol. IX, pp. 182-186.

<sup>184</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 344-347.

<sup>185</sup> “Letter by P. Bonaventura da Taggia to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide*”, Lisbon, 16.05.1645, in *MMA*, vol. IX, p. 250. Original: “Padre et Padruero”.

<sup>186</sup> Jadin, ‘L’oeuvre missionnaire en Afrique noire’, 472–73.

In the meantime, F. Francisco de Pamplona returned to Rome in June 1646, to report on the mission and request new missionaries. Once again, the Spanish Capuchin interceded in Madrid to dispatch the new missionaries from Spain, as it happened in the previous year. However, this time F. Francisco attempted to convince *Propaganda* to entrust the *Missio Antiqua* to the Spanish Capuchins, supported by some Spanish cardinals. *Propaganda* did not accept his requests and selected a total of fourteen Capuchins, eight Italians and six Spanish. According to a contemporary report produced by the Capuchins of the Roman province, Francisco intended to exclude the Italian provinces from the mission and favour the appointment of Spanish “to induce and reduce the people of Kongo to the king of Spain’s obedience”.<sup>187</sup> Francisco’s attitude raised the suspicion of the Italian members of the expedition, who blamed him for the delays and impediments that the group found in Spain before embarking in October 1647.<sup>188</sup> Whether or not F. Francisco wanted to use the *Missio Antiqua* to start a Spanish penetration in West Central Africa is unknown, though his closeness to Madrid’s court leaves few doubts that he was partially making his sovereign’s bid.

A few months before, the *mani Kongo*’s Capuchin ambassadors arrived in Amsterdam with clear instructions. In the Dutch Republic, the Capuchins had to negotiate free passage to Kongo for missionaries, as expected by the treaty signed by Garcia and the WIC in 1642 but failed in the task. In Madrid and Rome, Garcia’s intent was twofold: consolidating his power as sovereign of Kongo and finally releasing his kingdom from Portugal’s political interference. More specifically, P. Giovanni Francesco had to request the new Pope Innocenzo X (1644-1655) the dispatch of more Capuchins, the appointment of a new bishop and the recognition of the hereditary title to Garcia II’s son.<sup>189</sup> All these requests would have significantly consolidated the political authority of the *mani Kongo* and his control of the country’s church. In Madrid, P. Angelo de Valencia delivered to Philip IV a letter by Garcia, in which the African sovereign declared his support against Portugal’s rebellion, asked for a fleet to retake Luanda, and demanded the end of the Portuguese administration of Angola.<sup>190</sup> From the ambassadors’ instructions, it appears that Garcia II made use of the Capuchins to improve both the spiritual and temporal conditions of his kingdom. On the one hand, the Papacy represented a crucial ally to legitimise the royal power and consolidate its control of the ecclesiastical structure by overcoming the *Padroado*. On the other hand, the Catholic King could provide military power to get rid of Dutch and Portuguese colonisers.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> “Letter by the Apostolic Nuncio in Madrid to Cardinal Capponi”, Madrid, 11.11.1649, in *MMA*, vol. IX, pp. 446-447.

<sup>188</sup> See, for example, “Letter by P. Bonaventura d’Alessano to the King of Portugal”, Congo, 25.11.1649, in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 438-444.

<sup>189</sup> “Reverential letter by the King of Kongo to Pope Innocenzo X”, Congo, 05.10.1646, in *MMA*, vol. IX, pp. 461-462; vol. X, pp. 136-137.

<sup>190</sup> “Letter by D. Garcia II to D. Philip IV”, Congo, 05.10.1646, in *MMA*, vol. IX, pp. 450-453.

<sup>191</sup> Gray and Sanneh, *Christianity, the Papacy, and Mission in Africa*, 82–86.

Overall, the embassies achieved divergent results. In Spain, the sovereign did not offer to the *mani Kongo* more than his support for the dispatch of new missionaries. In Rome, the Capuchins became the vehicles to express Garcia's resentment towards the Portuguese and their *Padroado*. For this reason, Portugal's representatives Fr. Manoel Pacheco and P. Nuno de Cunha immediately took action to protect the interests of the Portuguese Crown. Shortly after the arrival of the two Capuchin ambassadors, they denounced their intention to demand a bishop for Kongo, bypassing the king's patronage rights. In May 1648, Pacheco wrote to his superiors:

In the last days arrived in this Curia two Capuchins from Kongo, one of them Castellan, the other Roman, as ambassadors of that king to His Holiness, requesting missionaries, bishops, and other things concerning the spiritual sphere of that kingdom. It can already be noticed that the Castilian has other goals and that the necessities of the mission and the affairs of the church are only an excuse to interfere with that king [the *mani Kongo*] to subtract him from our friendship, and almost subjection, or at least to obtain the slaves that are so needed in the Indies.<sup>192</sup>

Garcia II's requests were discussed by *Propaganda Fide* and Pope Innocenzo X but were only partly conceded. Afraid to interfere in the temporal affairs of Kongo, and consequently, in Portugal's sphere of influence, the pope did not grant hereditary rights to Garcia. Conversely, the demand for more Capuchin missionaries was enthusiastically answered by preparing a third expedition of eighteen men.<sup>193</sup> Lastly, the Papacy attempted to address the issue of appointing a bishop for São Salvador, whose see was vacant since 1641. On 9 May 1648, *Propaganda* produced a dossier requesting the appointment of a new bishop. The document explained the abuses committed by the Portuguese and their neglect of the kingdom's church, claiming that, for these reasons, "they cannot be called protectors of Kongo, but rather destructors".<sup>194</sup> To *Propaganda*'s request, the Papacy replied by secretly appointing the Neapolitan Francesco Staibano as bishop *in partibus infidelium* in June 1648. However, the diplomatic pressures of Portugal's representatives to honour the *Padroado* delayed the bishop's ordainment.<sup>195</sup> Finally, Salvador Correia de Sá's conquest of Luanda in August 1648 restored Portugal's control over Angola making it unfeasible to send Staibano to Kongo and forcing *Propaganda* to abandon the plan. The radical shift in the African balance of powers also

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<sup>192</sup> "Letter by F. Manuel Pacheco to the ambassador in France", Rome, 18.05.1648, in *MMA*, vol. X, p. 149. Original: "Os dias passados hauiaõ chegada dois Capuchos uindos do Congo a esta Curia, hú delles Castelhana valenciano, outro romano, por Embaxadores daquelle Rej a Sua Santidade, pedindo Missionários, Bispos, e outras cousas tocantes ao spiritual daquelle Rejno. Já se uê que tem outros cuidados o Castelhana, e que lembranças de Missões e cousas da jgreia hé pretexto de se introduzir cõ aquelle Rej, para ou o tirar totalmente de nossa amisade, e quasi soieição, ou pello menos colher o seruiço de escauros de que tanto necessita para [a] India".

<sup>193</sup> Jadin, 'L'oeuvre missionnaire en Afrique noire', 481–85.

<sup>194</sup> "Requests of the embassy of the King of Kongo", 09.05.1648, in *MMA*, vol. X, p. 144.

<sup>195</sup> Staibano was nominated bishop *in partibus infidelium*. For a detailed analysis of this episode and of the Portuguese opposition, see Gatti, 'Em defesa da expansão da cristandade: o Pe. Nuno da Cunha e os primórdios do embate entre Portugal e a Santa Sé, 1640-1669'.

required the Capuchins of the *Missio Antiqua* to adapt to a new geopolitical situation and come to terms with the Portuguese colonial administration.

After defeating the Dutch, Correia de Sá declared war on Kongo, but Garcia II surrendered at the beginning of 1649. Between February and March of the same year, the *mani Kongo* asked the Capuchin P. Buenaventura de Sardegna to be part of the diplomatic envoy entrusted to negotiate a treaty with Luanda. Garcia heavily relied on the Capuchins' advice in this delicate moment, as a copy of the sovereign's peace conditions kept in *Propaganda Fide's* archive testifies.<sup>196</sup> However, for the Portuguese, Garcia attempted to destroy them by inviting the Dutch and by illegally receiving Capuchin missionaries from Spain and Italy, who were still perceived as spies of the king of Spain.<sup>197</sup> Therefore, Luanda's terms for peace were merciless, significantly reduced Kongo's territory, and almost turned it into a Portuguese dependency, anticipating the future collapse of the kingdom.

Interestingly, the only concession of the Portuguese governor affected the Capuchins. Understanding the importance of establishing good relations with the Portuguese in Angola, the Capuchins added to Garcia's peace conditions a request to establish a missionary station in Luanda. In their view, this would improve their possibility to support both Kongo and their mission. Received by governor Correia de Sá, P. Buenaventura de Sardegna denied the Capuchins' intention to violate Portugal's *Padroado* and rejected the accusations of being involved with a Spanish plan to invade Angola. Rather, Buenaventura convinced the governor of the sincere zeal of the missionaries and their distance from matters other than the spiritual salvation of Kongo. As a result, Correia de Sá's peace treaty allowed the Capuchins to reside in the kingdom, with the condition that they would communicate to Rome and receive missionaries only via Portugal.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, Buenaventura appealed to Correia de Sá to the point that the governor offered the Capuchins to open a hospice in Luanda, which in turn provided them with a crucial foothold to interact with Portuguese colonial authorities and the Crown.

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<sup>196</sup> "Peace conditions of the King of Kongo", São Salvador, 19.02.1649, in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 326-328.

<sup>197</sup> A clear example of Portugal's attitude towards the *mani Kongo* is expressed in João IV's instructions to his ambassador in São Salvador. See, "Instructions of D. João IV to P. António do Couto", 18.12.1648 in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 287-288.

<sup>198</sup> François Bontinck, 'Répercussions du conflit entre le Saint-Siège et le "Padroado" sur l'évangélisation de l'ancien Royaume de Congo au XVIIème siècle', *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 4 (1966): 204; Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, 397-401; Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 163-64.

## CONCLUSION

The establishment of the Capuchin *Missio Antiqua* was affected by the struggle between *Propaganda Fide* and the *Padroado* and by the geopolitical changes of the 1640s. Although deprived of political autonomy by the Union of the Crowns, the kingdom of Portugal maintained control over its colonial empire's administration and ecclesiastical structure. Therefore, the relocation of the decision-making centre from Lisbon to Madrid only partly meant the weakening of the *Padroado*'s jurisdiction, which continued to hinder the Papacy's ambitions to impose its control over the evangelisation process in parts of the Portuguese *Conquista*. Even though the authorisation to dispatch a mission was issued in Madrid, the process was still under the control of Portuguese royal officials. This is the reason why the Holy See's attempts to send loyal missionaries to the kingdom of Kongo – in 1611 with the Carmelites and in 1618 with the Spanish Capuchins – failed.

After its foundation, *Propaganda* tried to overcome this issue and penetrate Portugal's jurisdiction by entrusting the Kongo mission to Italian Capuchins, although most of them were subjects of Spain. This plan was severely compromised by the *Restauração* and the subsequent war waged by Spain in an attempt of recovering Portugal and its empire. Spain's pressure on the Holy See not to recognise Portugal's independence turned the Italian Capuchins into unpleasant guests in Lisbon. Although the Capuchins were well received by the Bragança sovereigns, they encountered the opposition of the Portuguese colonial administration, not eager to have their ecclesiastical structure penetrated by *Propaganda*'s Apostolic missionaries. Unable to reach Africa from Portugal, *Propaganda* and the Capuchins turned to Spain, which did not miss the opportunity to send some of its missionaries to the Portuguese *Conquista*.

The WIC conquest of Luanda weakened the Portuguese in West Central Africa, allowing the Capuchins to reach Kongo from Spain. Moreover, it gave Garcia II unprecedented control over the ecclesiastical structure of his kingdom, which the sovereign hoped to consolidate with the arrival of missionaries under Rome's jurisdiction. This is confirmed by their employment as Garcia's ambassadors to Europe already in 1646, only one year after the arrival of the mission. However, the arrival of the Capuchins in this context was perceived by Portuguese authorities as a threat to the stability of the empire. Not only they violated the *Padroado* aided by a European enemy, but they were also received by Garcia II, who allied with the Dutch against the Portuguese.

Lisbon's concerns were not completely unjustified, however. As agents of *Propaganda*, the Capuchins were not only strenuous supporters of the Congregation's spiritual (and political) programme but also active participants in his realisation. Since their arrival in Kongo, the Capuchins manifested to the Congregation the necessity of appointing a bishop in the African kingdom, a request

that was further renovated by the Capuchin embassy of Garcia II in 1647. Therefore, Capuchin pressures significantly contributed to *Propaganda*'s decision to entrust the administration of Kongo's diocese to Francesco Staibano in 1648. His secret election demonstrates the intention of the Congregation to provide the kingdom of Kongo with a bishop independent from the *Padroado*. Despite its failure, the active involvement of the Capuchins in this attempt to penetrate Portugal's sphere of influence shows their alignment with *Propaganda* in this prelude of its conflict with the *Padroado*. Only ten years later, a similar strategy was pursued to create three new dioceses in East Asia, where the lack of direct political control by the Portuguese allowed the Congregation to impose its jurisdiction.

The victorious expedition of Salvador Correia de Sá in August 1648 regained the colony of Angola to Portugal and changed once again the balance of powers in the region. Facing this new geopolitical situation, the Capuchins realised that the survival of the *Missio Antiqua* depended on their ability to come to terms with the Portuguese colonial authorities and, already by the end of 1649, they managed to establish a missionary station in Luanda. This provoked a radical shift in the Capuchins' relationship with the Portuguese empire and *vice versa*, which drastically affected their position in the region and forced them to adapt their missionary activity to Portugal's political agenda. In the following chapter, I analyse how this shift took place and how it reflected the apostolic or imperial nature of the Capuchins' *Missio Antiqua*.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “WITHOUT INTERFERING WITH STATE INTEREST OR MATTERS OF WAR”

#### *The Capuchins and the Portuguese Empire*

Salvador Correia de Sá's victorious expedition in Angola re-established Portuguese control over the Southern Atlantic trade that linked West Central Africa to Brazil. After the losses caused by the Dutch offensive in the East and West Indies, trade between Brazil and Angola became crucial for the survival of the Portuguese empire. During the second half of the seventeenth century, Luanda secured this trade by imposing its authority over the neighbouring African polities. In turn, it allowed the development of what Alencastro defines as “the largest slave market in the Atlantic”.<sup>199</sup> As anticipated in the previous chapter, only three years after their arrival, the Capuchins of the *Missio Antiqua* had to face the re-establishment of the Portuguese empire in West Central Africa. However, the Apostolic missionaries also had to navigate the intensification of the struggle that opposed *Propaganda Fide* and the *Padroado*. After the *Restauração*, the diplomatic controversy between Portugal and the Holy See finally allowed *Propaganda* to overcome the *Padroado* and penetrate the weakest fringes of the Portuguese empire. After the establishment of the *Missio Antiqua*, *Propaganda* sent its Apostolic missionaries to other parts of Portuguese Africa. In 1658, the Holy See also created three new dioceses in the East Indies (Tonquin, Conchincina, and Siam), drastically reducing the jurisdictional space of the *Padroado*.<sup>200</sup>

Notwithstanding the challenges posed by the re-establishment of the Portuguese colony in Angola and the ongoing struggle between *Propaganda* and the *Padroado*, the Capuchin *Missio Antiqua* remained active and became *Propaganda*'s longest mission in premodern Africa. In this chapter, I demonstrate that this was made possible by the Capuchins' ability to adapt to the new geopolitical situation and establish a relationship of trust with the Portuguese authorities in Luanda and Lisbon. As a result, throughout the second half of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth

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<sup>199</sup> Alencastro, ‘The Economic Network of Portugal’s Atlantic World’, 113.

<sup>200</sup> Costa, ‘A diáspora missionária’, 290–97; Paiva, ‘Igreja y poder’, 154–58.

century, the Capuchins were gradually deployed in tasks that contributed to the maintenance of the Portuguese colonial empire in West Central Africa. I explain first how, after 1648, the Capuchins redefined their relationship with Luanda and how this affected their mission in Kongo. Afterwards, I illustrate how they were integrated by the Portuguese as peacekeepers and agents of the Inquisition.

## ADAPTING TO A NEW BALANCE OF POWERS: THE CAPUCHINS IN LUANDA

The restoration of the Portuguese colony of Angola drastically changed the balance of powers in West Central Africa. The rapid retreat of the Dutch deprived Garcia II and Njinga of a crucial ally for getting rid of the political and military threat posed by Luanda. For the Capuchin *Missio Antiqua*, this geopolitical turmoil marked a watershed in their relationship with Kongo and Portugal, which consequently affected the development of the mission and the activity of its members. After 1648, the Capuchins' relationship with the *mani Kongo* rapidly deteriorated. Factors internal and external to Kongo turned the Apostolic missionaries into a burden for the sovereign, rather than a source of emancipation and legitimisation of his power. Simultaneously, the need to establish peaceful relations with the Portuguese brought the Capuchins to Luanda, where they were allowed to found a missionary station in 1649. In the beginning, this created some doubts for the missionaries, whose expedition had been entrusted by *Propaganda* to evangelise only the kingdom of Kongo. However, the sudden geopolitical change severely compromised the *Missio Antiqua*, thus requiring the Capuchins to consider Angola as part of its jurisdiction. From an instrumental foothold to reassure Portuguese authorities of the holy nature of the mission and advocate for the goodwill of its members, Luanda quickly became a crucial hub for the Capuchins to gain the trust of Portugal.

The peace treaty signed on 13 April 1649 by Salvador Correia de Sá and the representatives of Kongo, presided by P. Buenaventura de Sardegna, restored the political, economic, and military threat of Luanda. The *mani Kongo* lost most of his control over the kingdom's resources and trade with the Europeans. He was forced to send one of his relatives to Luanda as a hostage to guarantee his loyalty and could only receive other Europeans if coming from Luanda. Finally, Kongo was required to allow the construction of Portuguese forts in its domains, which also suffered significant reductions in favour of the colonisers. After these humiliating conditions, Garcia II complained to João IV through his ambassador in São Salvador, the Jesuit Antonio do Couto.<sup>201</sup> The *mani Kongo*'s grievances were

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<sup>201</sup> "Letter by P. Couto to João IV", São Salvador, 28.07.1649 in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 366-370. Couto arrived in Angola with Salvador Correia de Sá in 1648 and was sent to Kongo the following year by the King.



considered by the court in Lisbon, which already by April 1649 instructed the governor of Luanda to be tolerant towards Kongo, to prevent plots against the Portuguese. In addition, Garcia entrusted another Capuchin, P. Bonaventura da Sorrento, to conduct an embassy demanding fairer peace conditions to João IV. Bonaventura also had to go to Rome, to request new missionaries and report about the development of the mission to *Propaganda* and the Capuchins' General Chapter.

In November 1649, P. Sorrento left São Salvador with a letter from the Prefect that declared the Capuchins' obedience to João IV, as suggested by Correia de Sá.<sup>202</sup> After the governor's request for Capuchin missionaries, P. Alessano sent P. Serafino da Cortona and a lay brother to Luanda, where they were given the hospice of S. António. P. Serafino's presence in Luanda was crucial to reconcile Kongo and the mission with the Portuguese authorities. In the final months of 1649, Correia de Sá informed the king that the Capuchins were honest missionaries, alien to Kongo's temporal affairs and uninterested in the administration of its diocese.<sup>203</sup> When P. Bonaventura da Sorrento left for Lisbon, in December 1649, the governor and the *Câmara* of Luanda formally requested the king to receive the services of the Capuchin missionaries. Expressing his availability to perform this task, Serafino informed the king of his desire "to serve his royal Crown and his vassals in the spiritual matters" and claimed that the Capuchins only came to Kongo "to help and save those poor heathens". He concluded:

This is what gives us the spirit and strength to bear and suffer such remarkable and enormous distresses to show them the way of truth with the light of the evangelical doctrine. We desire to give our life to set them to heaven, without interfering with state interest or matters of war, nor any temporal affairs.<sup>204</sup>

After he arrived in Lisbon, P. Sorrento was allowed to proceed to Rome, where he had to attend the General Chapter. In April 1650, he was in Genoa, where he learnt that his companions P. Giovanni Francesco da Roma and P. Angelo de Valencia were in Cadiz, waiting to embark for Kongo and Benin, respectively.<sup>205</sup> P. Sorrento informed the two missionaries that the peace treaty signed with Portugal the year before forced them to pass through Lisbon, and urged them not to leave from Spain.

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<sup>202</sup> "Letter by P. Bonaventura d'Alessano to João IV", São Salvador, 25.11.1649, in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 438-440.

<sup>203</sup> "Letter by Salvador Correia de Sá to João IV", Luanda, December 1649, in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 444-445. P. Serafino was not completely lying to the Governor. It is true that the appointment of a Bishop for Kongo was an important demand of P. Giovanni Francesco da Roma's embassy in 1648 (see chapter 3), but when *Propaganda* planned to entrust a Capuchin of the administration of the diocese, this idea was rejected by the General Procurator of the order, probably to avoid compromising the missionaries with Portuguese authorities. Nevertheless, the insistent requests of the Capuchins for the appointment of a bishop in Angola remain. See, Bontinck, 'Répercussions du conflit entre le Saint-Siège et le "Padroado"', 201-2.

<sup>204</sup> "Letter by P. Serafino da Cortona to João IV", Luanda, 26.12.1649, in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 460-461. Original: "questo è quello che ci dà animo e forze per soggettarci, e soffrire così grandi et immensi travagli per illuminarli nella via della verità con la luce della dottrina evangelica, e desideriamo dar la propria vita per incammarli al cielo: senza intrometterci né in ragioni di stato, né in cose di guerra, né in altro interesse temporale".

<sup>205</sup> After concluding his embassy for Garcia II, P. Angelo da Valencia was appointed Prefect of the Benin mission, requested to *Propaganda* by P. Francisco de Pamplona in 1646. On the genesis of this mission, Pobladora, 'Génesis del movimiento misional en las provincias capuchinas de España (1618-1650)'.

The Capuchins had just denied the Portuguese accusations of being Spanish spies planning a military invasion of Kongo, but sending other missionaries from Spain would have endangered both the African kingdom and the mission.<sup>206</sup> When P. Sorrento arrived in Rome in June 1650, he informed *Propaganda*'s authorities, who instructed the Capuchins to postpone the departure until new orders.

The instructions from Rome particularly disappointed the Spanish Capuchins bound for Benin, who asked the opinion of the *Junta de Estado* in Madrid. Madrid urged the Capuchins to embark as soon as possible, to have more chances to find a safe landing place on the coast. The pressure from the court in Madrid finally convinced P. Giovanni Francesco da Roma, initially aligned to *Propaganda*'s orders. In October 1650, he wrote two letters to the Congregation explaining the reasons to proceed with the expedition. In his view, the war in Portugal made departing from Lisbon impossible. Moreover, P. Angelo da Valencia and he could have pretended not to be aware of the peace treaty signed in 1649, thus avoiding Portugal's retaliation. Finally, cancelling the mission would have caused relevant losses to the merchants that offered the passage, who had received a royal concession to ship a cargo of slaves to the Americas in exchange for transporting the missionaries.<sup>207</sup> Not receiving an answer from Rome, P. Giovanni Francesco decided that the passage arranged and financed by the King of Spain was not to be wasted and, supported by the Nuncio of Madrid, he informed *Propaganda* of his imminent departure. On 12 February 1651, he left Cadiz with eighteen missionaries. A few days later, the Nuncio received *Propaganda*'s order to prevent the departure of the Capuchins at all costs, but it was too late.<sup>208</sup>

In June, the Congregation sent P. Bonaventura da Sorrento back to Lisbon, together with the new Prefect of the mission, P. Giacinto da Vetralla, and two lay brothers. P. Giacinto informed João IV of the unexpected departure of P. Giovanni Francesco da Roma and reassured the sovereign that *Propaganda* had already ordered to repatriate the insubordinate missionaries. He also demanded permission to embark for Luanda, in compliance with the peace treaty of 1649.<sup>209</sup> As ambassador of Garcia II, P. Sorrento demanded King João IV fairer peace conditions between Kongo and Portugal. The two issues were discussed during the summer, and, by the end of September 1651, Lisbon reviewed the most humiliating conditions of the peace treaty, loosening the political and economic control of Luanda over Kongo.<sup>210</sup> Also, the passage to the Italian Capuchins was granted, provided that they were not subjects of Spain, and that they would have travelled and communicated with their

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<sup>206</sup> "Letter by P. Bonaventura da Sorrento to the Capuchins in Cadiz", Genoa, 21.04.1650, in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 495-498.

<sup>207</sup> "Letter by P. Giovanni Francesco da Roma to the Prefect of *Propaganda*", Seville, 10.10.1650, in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 575-577; "Letter by P. Giovanni Francesco da Roma to the Prefect of *Propaganda*", Seville, 18.10.1650, in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 585-588.

<sup>208</sup> "Letter by the Nuncio of Madrid to *Propaganda*", Madrid, 16.02.1651, in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 10-11.

<sup>209</sup> "Request of the Italian Capuchins to João IV", 13.07.1651, in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 53-55.

<sup>210</sup> "Advice of the *Conselho Ultramarino*", Lisbon, 27.07.1651, in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 61-64. The fact that the new capitulations were drafted by P. Bonaventura da Sorrento himself and copied in the official document produced by the *Conselho Ultramarino* is quite remarkable and could testify the great level of consideration achieved by the Capuchins in Lisbon. See, AHU, *Angola*, cx. 5, d. 506.

superiors only via Lisbon.<sup>211</sup> However, P. Giacinto was allowed to leave in October, but his companion P. Sorrento, a Spanish subject, was blocked, despite being Garcia's ambassador.<sup>212</sup>

In the meantime, the Capuchins' relationship with Garcia II started deteriorating. In 1648, the *mani Kongo* enthusiastically received a second group of fourteen Capuchins (see Chapter 3), which allowed the expansion of the mission to the kingdom's provinces. In the beginning, Garcia was incredibly supportive and issued letters inviting the chiefs of the provinces to help and assist the missionaries. For the first time in Kongo's history, Garcia had the opportunity to send throughout the kingdom religious men independent from Portugal. As Hilton argues, since the arrival of the Capuchins, Garcia tried to associate them with the kingship and his lineage, as the request for hereditary rights to the Pope through P. Giovanni Francesco da Roma demonstrates.<sup>213</sup> However, the restoration of Angola undermined Garcia's religious policy by returning Kongo's church under Luanda's control, which contributed to both compromising the Capuchin's missionary activity and changing the *mani Kongo*'s policy towards them.

Firstly, the Portuguese appointed new dignitaries in the diocesan chapter through the *Mesa da Consciencia e Ordens* in Lisbon. The new members of the chapter were Portuguese and subsidised by Luanda's government, which also protected them against confrontations with the *mani Kongo*. Therefore, they soon moved to Luanda, depriving Garcia of control over the diocese. Most of the Portuguese clerics adopted a hostile attitude towards the Capuchins and hampered their missionary activity, claiming that it was not authorised by the king of Portugal as patron of Kongo's church.<sup>214</sup> Moreover, the Capuchins did not ask for payment to administer the sacraments, provoking the complaints of local clergy, whose income largely relied on the fees they imposed on their services. This raised a jurisdictional contention in Rome and, in November 1650, *Propaganda* prohibited the Capuchins from administering the sacraments within five leagues from any parish priests' residence.<sup>215</sup> Finally, the Capuchins' orthodoxy was particularly unpopular among local clerics, who were often reprimanded and denounced for their illicit behaviours or for participating in the slave trade.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> "Disposition of João IV towards the Italian Capuchins", Lisbon, 20.09.1651, in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 78-80. See also, Bontinck, "Répercussions du conflit entre le Saint-Siège et le "Padroado"", 207.

<sup>212</sup> *MMA*, vol. XI, p. 89. The Capuchin was initially allowed to embark, but the concession was suddenly retired by the royal ministers.

<sup>213</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 157-61.

<sup>214</sup> Several examples of these frictions are mentioned in a report by P. Bonaventura da Sorrento to *Propaganda*, probably written after the Capuchin was repatriated in 1655. See APF, SC, vol. 1, ff. 101-102, "Contraddizioni delli Portughesi alli missionari cappuccini nel regno del Congo".

<sup>215</sup> "Resolutions of *Propaganda Fide* about the mission in Kongo", Rome, 22.11.1651, in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 615-616.

<sup>216</sup> The Archives of *Propaganda Fide* abound of Capuchin reports about the abuses committed by the secular clergy in Kongo and Angola. On 4 July 1660, *Propaganda* scheduled a Congregation specifically focused on the mission in Kongo and redacted a list of the "impediments to the propagation and establishment of the Faith". See, APF, CP, vol. 20, ff. 1s.

The Capuchins' presence and activity in São Salvador was further opposed by João IV's ambassador, the Jesuit Antonio do Couto. Shortly after he arrived in 1649, P. Couto reported to the king about the situation at Garcia II's court. He noted that the majority of the Capuchins in São Salvador were Spanish that, according to the rumours, kept enhancing "idle hopes" of a rescue fleet incoming from Madrid against the Portuguese, supposedly solicited by the *mani Kongo's* ambassador, P. Angelo de Valencia. P. Couto concluded:

Be it real or not, the truth is that, for stable peace and tranquillity in this realm, and to end every distrust, it is convenient to drive these missionaries out of this kingdom.<sup>217</sup>

The arrival of P. Couto also affected the attitude of the diocesan chapter towards the Capuchins, as the correspondence of P. Alessano illustrates. If in a report written to *Propaganda* on 4 August 1649 the prefect was optimistic about the development of the mission, by the end of the year he was ready to interrupt it, if the Congregation would not have provided new permissions to the Capuchins to exercise their activity.<sup>218</sup> The Prefect was implicitly complaining about the limited freedom allowed by the chapter dignitaries, who questioned the Capuchins' ecclesiastical authority and prohibited them from preaching in São Salvador's Cathedral.<sup>219</sup>

Besides these external factors, the event that marked a watershed in Garcia II's attitude towards the Capuchins was the return of his ambassador P. Giovanni Francesco da Roma in June 1651. To the *mani Kongo's* eyes, what the Capuchin achieved in Rome was to be considered a failure. Pope Innocenzo X refused to grant hereditary rights to Garcia's lineage without an episcopal report. Moreover, the *Restauração* prevented his Capuchin ambassador and *Propaganda* from appointing a new bishop for Kongo. Even though the bishopric was still vacant due to the diplomatic struggle between the Holy See and the Portuguese Crown, its *Padroado* over the church of Kongo was now a matter of fact that nullified Garcia's plans to impose his lineage on the throne.

At this point, the political liability of keeping the Capuchins inside his kingdom came to the fore and drastically affected the missionaries' position in São Salvador, as Hilton claims.<sup>220</sup> The return of the Capuchin ambassador with a group of eighteen Apostolic missionaries embarked in Spain revived the rumours of a Spanish plot behind the mission.<sup>221</sup> This was a huge source of risk for Kongo, as it broke the terms of the peace treaty and provided Luanda with a perfect excuse to invade. When the Portuguese governor threatened an invasion, Garcia required P. Giovanni Francesco to publicly

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<sup>217</sup> "Letter by P. Antonio do Couto to João IV", Congo, 28-07-1649, in *MMA*, vol. X, p. 368. Original: "seja o que for, a uerdade hé que conuem, para huã firme paz, e quietação deste Reyno, e para que de todo se acabem todas as desconfianças, que se uaõ estes Missionários fora deste Reyno".

<sup>218</sup> "Letter by P. Bonaventura d'Alessano to *Propaganda*", São Salvador, 04.08.1649, in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 379-386; "Letter by P. Bonaventura d'Alessano to *Propaganda*", São Salvador, 11.12.1649, in *MMA*, vol. X, p. 448.

<sup>219</sup> "Letter by P. Bonaventura da Sorrento to the Capuchins in Cadiz", Genoa, 21.04.1650, in *MMA*, vol. X, pp. 495-498.

<sup>220</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 183.

<sup>221</sup> "Letter by the Chapter of Kongo to João IV", São Salvador, 13.10.1651 in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 94-97.

justify his actions, which met with the lenient understanding of Correia de Sá.<sup>222</sup> The diplomatic tension was further increased by the return of P. Bonaventura da Sorrento, another of Garcia's ambassadors. After that, Lisbon denied him a passport to Angola in 1651, the Capuchin embarked on a Spanish ship in Cadiz and arrived in Luanda in February 1653. Arrested by the Portuguese authorities, P. Sorrento was released only through the personal interceding of P. Serafino da Cortona with governor Rodrigo de Miranda Henriques (1651-1653).<sup>223</sup>

P. Serafino's influence in Luanda testifies how the Capuchin mission substantially turned towards Luanda after 1648, which provided Garcia with another reason to oppose the missionaries. The establishment of the hospice of S. António at the end of 1649, increased the Capuchins' popularity in the Portuguese colony. Writing to his provincial superior at the end of 1651, P. Serafino reported the difficulties faced by the missionaries due to Garcia's hostility and how the prefect was considering transferring the mission from São Salvador to Luanda, where it would have enjoyed the support of the Portuguese colonial authorities.<sup>224</sup> In Angola, the Capuchins' zeal and orthodoxy contrasted with the widespread corruption of the secular clergy and, in 1651, also Massangano requested their services, and a mission was established.<sup>225</sup> The efforts of the Capuchins to meet the sympathy and trust of the Portuguese demonstrate how the missionaries adapted their activity to the changing balance of power in the region. After the peace treaty between Kongo and Portugal, Luanda had a monopoly over their transport and communication to Europe. Moreover, with Garcia II's growing antipathies, the Capuchins increasingly looked at Luanda for political support and protection.<sup>226</sup>

This gradual shift of the Capuchins' relationship with the Portuguese authorities reached a turning point after the arrival of the new Prefect, P. Giacinto da Vetralla, in March 1652. Initially, the *mani Kongo* praised the Capuchins for having improved the peace conditions of 1649. However, learning that the new prefect did not have any episcopal privileges, Garcia II lost all his trust in the missionaries. On their behalf, since the start of the provincial evangelisation, the Capuchins complained about the permanence of pagan rites in the kingdom and criticised Garcia's religious policy. The strict orthodoxy observed and promoted by the reformed missionaries often translated into the violent repression of African rites and re-interpretations of Catholicism. Avant-garde of the Catholic Reformation, the Capuchins' missionary activity consisted of "eradicating and destroying, dispersing and dissolving, edifying and planting", as one of them put it.<sup>227</sup> Repressive practices of

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<sup>222</sup> "Letter by Salvador Correia de Sá to P. Giovanni Francesco da Roma", Luanda, 15.11.1651 in *MMA*, vol. XI, p. 110.

<sup>223</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 183–84; Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, p. 448.

<sup>224</sup> "Letter by P. Serafino da Cortona to the Provincial of Tuscany", Luanda, 22.11.1651, in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 111-119.

<sup>225</sup> "Letter by the residents of Massangano to João IV", Massangano, 18.07.1651, in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 59-60.

<sup>226</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 182–83; Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 437-443.

<sup>227</sup> On the Capuchins violent repression of African rites and re-interpretation of Catholicism, see Carlos Almeida, "Fit to the form of Christian living". Catholic Mission and Resistance in African Lands', *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos*, no. 33 (2017): 59–80. The

evangelisation often provoked violent reactions from local populations against the Capuchins and undermined the *mani Kongo*'s authority supporting them.<sup>228</sup> The contrasts that arose were paired with the increasing influence and popularity of the missionaries among the provincial chiefs. As a result, Garcia started suspecting them to be involved in conspiracies to destitute him from the throne.<sup>229</sup> Therefore, he started intercepting their correspondence and obstructing their activity in São Salvador. Garcia was also concerned that the Capuchins could damage his kingdom from Luanda, informing Portuguese authorities of his attempt to ally with Spain. For this reason, he took advantage of a series of accidents involving the missionaries to undermine their reputation, denouncing them as Spanish spies to the Portuguese governor and João IV.<sup>230</sup>

The breaking point was reached when a new Capuchin expedition landed at Luanda on a Spanish ship at the end of 1654. The furious reaction of Garcia II provided P. Vetralla, who barely tolerated the *mani Kongo*, with the perfect excuse to move the prefecture of the *Missio Antiqua* to Luanda, where he reconciled with the Portuguese colonial authorities.<sup>231</sup> The transfer of the Apostolic prefecture of Kongo from São Salvador to Luanda testifies to the substantial shift in the Capuchins' relationship with the Portuguese colonial empire. As Hilton notices, P. Vetralla's tenure radically moved the emphasis of the Capuchin *Missio Antiqua* from Kongo to Angola. When the new prefect arrived in 1652, the mission counted twenty-six missionaries in Kongo and four in Angola. At the end of his mandate in 1657, thirteen Capuchins were active in Angola and thirteen in Kongo, two of which assigned to the semi-independent province of Soyo.<sup>232</sup>

The growing popularity of the Capuchins in Angola was added to the sympathy they inspired in some factions of the royal court. Already during the troublesome first years of the *Missio Antiqua*, the presence and permanence of the missionaries in Lisbon was highly appreciated by some members

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quote, reported at p. 71 of the cited article, is from P. Bernardino Ignazio d'Asti's manuscript missionary method. See, P. Bernardino Ignazio d'Asti, *Missione in pratica. Padri Cappuccini ne regni di Congo, Angola et adiacenti* (ca 1750) in Biblioteca Civica Centrale di Torino, *Manoscritti e rari*, MS 457. On this work, see Filesi and de Villapadierna, *La 'Missio Antiqua'*, 74–79.

<sup>228</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 192–98. According to Hilton, the violent religious repression carried out by the Capuchins in the countryside of Kongo enhanced the association of their missionary activity with Portuguese colonial domination from the local population. In the longer run, the clandestine survival of African rites and re-interpretation of Catholicism also contributed to the emergence of the Antonian movement, which aimed at reuniting the kingdom of Kongo while opposing both Portuguese colonial presence and Capuchin religious repression. On this topic, see also Louis Jadin, *Le Congo et la secte des Antoniens. Restauration du royaume sous Pedro IV et la 'saint Antoine' congolaise (1694-1718)* (Bruxelles: Academia Belgica, 1961); Teobaldo Filesi, 'Nazionalismo e religione nel Congo all'inizio del 1700: la setta degli Antoniani', *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 26, no. 4 (1971): 463–508; John K. Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>229</sup> "Letter by P. Giovanni Francesco da Roma to *Propaganda*", São Salvador, 04.12.1651, in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 120-124.

<sup>230</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 187–92; Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 452-455; 463-469.

<sup>231</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 470-474.

<sup>232</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 191. P. Giacinto's decision to give priority Angola over Kongo was opposed by some members of the mission, who also criticized his authoritarian and selfish attitude, and nearly cruel behaviour. In a letter to *Propaganda* the new Prefect was criticised by his companions for having moved to Luanda, where he sought the support and comforts of the Portuguese, proving disloyal "to God, the Order, and the Mission". They accused him of being the "disruptor and dissipator" of the mission, for his attempts to withdraw the Capuchins from Kongo, further compromising their position in São Salvador. See, "Letter by the missionaries of Kongo to *Propaganda*", São Salvador, 25.10.1656 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 66-72.

of the royal family (Chapter 3). In the second half of the seventeenth century, this favourable environment in Europe played a significant role in protecting the Capuchin mission in Kongo and Angola from the harsh struggle between Portugal and the Holy See over the *Padroado*. Portugal's control over Angola did not allow the Congregation to overcome the *Padroado*. However, the reaction of Portugal to *Propaganda's* policy often complicated the activity of its missionaries in Lisbon and other regions of the empire.<sup>233</sup>

Lisbon's authorities attempted to disentangle the Italian Capuchins from *Propaganda's* jurisdiction and gain their official loyalty to the Crown. However, the Capuchins' ties with the royal court, on the one hand, and their increasing popularity in Angola, allowed the members of the *Missio Antiqua* to come to terms with the Portuguese authorities. Despite the ongoing diplomatic tensions between Rome and Lisbon, the Capuchins managed to maintain their status as Apostolic missionaries affiliated to *Propaganda Fide* and even obtain the Crown's financial support for their mission. Therefore, although the struggle between *Propaganda* and the *Padroado* sporadically hindered the supply of missionaries to Kongo and Angola, ultimately it did not pose a determinant obstacle to the *Missio Antiqua*.<sup>234</sup>

## THE CAPUCHINS' INVOLVEMENT IN PORTUGUESE MATTERS OF WAR

In Angola, the Capuchins' popularity grew thanks to the activity of P. Serafino da Cortona, whose influence considerably increased after he became the confessor of governor Rodrigo de Miranda Henriques. As a result, the *Conselho Ultramarino* approved the dispatch of the missionaries to Angola in September 1654. Although aware that "people practical of war for being Castile's vassals could reach Angola in religious clothes", the Council considered the Capuchins "above suspicion" for being requested by Luanda.<sup>235</sup> However, the success of the Apostolic missionaries was not achieved without controversies. In Luanda, the Capuchins found harsh opposition from the Jesuits, who saw the Italian missionaries as dangerous competitors in the area, especially when they started winning the sympathy and support of colonial authorities.<sup>236</sup> The Angolan governors and *câmaras* particularly admired the Capuchins for the zeal and humbleness of their missionary activity, which was opposed to that of the Jesuits. The members of the *Companhia* were often involved in all kinds of temporal activities and

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<sup>233</sup> Serrão and Marques, *Nova história de Portugal. Portugal da paz da restauração ao ouro do Brasil*, vol. 5, t. 2, pp. 81-85.

<sup>234</sup> Bontinck, 'Répercussions du conflit entre le Saint-Siège et le "Padroado"'.

<sup>235</sup> "Advice of the *Conselho Ultramarino*", Lisbon, 08.09.1654 in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 400-401. On P. Serafino's activity in Luanda, see Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 410-411.

<sup>236</sup> Several documents produced by the Capuchins denounced the hostile attitude of the Jesuits towards them. Particularly relevant for this period is the "Letter by P. Serafino da Cortona to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 10.02.1655 in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 444-450.

their real estate was among the vastest of the colony, with properties in both Kongo and Angola, often protected by royal privilege.<sup>237</sup> According to Governor Luis Martins de Sousa Chichorro (1654-1658):

The said Fathers own the best and most numerous agricultural lands of the entire region, with many slaves in each of them. Next to their college, they have large villages of slaves, some larger than villages in the kingdom. Almost all of these Fathers hold various offices, which give them considerable profits.<sup>238</sup>

The governor complained that the Company's large slave population was often creating disorder and committing crimes, which were hardly prosecutable due to the royal privileges the Company enjoyed. This was confirmed by the Capuchins, who also lamented the difficulties they faced to repress unorthodox behaviour among Jesuit slaves.<sup>239</sup> Luanda's attitude towards the Jesuits probably favoured the emergence of the Capuchins in Angola, which resulted in the establishment of new missionary stations in the colony and the growing participation of the Apostolic missionaries in political affairs. More specifically, throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, the Capuchins were involved in some crucial episodes of Luanda's military strategy in the region.<sup>240</sup>

### **Intermediaries in Matamba: The Peace with Queen Njinga (1656)**

In remarkable contrast with his statement to João IV of not being interested in Angola's affairs of war, P. Serafino da Cortona, Capuchin bridgehead in Luanda, played a crucial intermediary role during the 1650s, between the Portuguese and Queen Nzinga Mbade of Matamba, at war with Luanda for thirty-eight years.<sup>241</sup> In this period, the interests of the two contenders converged and allowed the start of negotiations, to which the Capuchins importantly contributed. After the restoration of Luanda, the slave trade was struggling to develop, thus hindering the economic development of Angola and, consequently, Brazil. In this context, some factions of the *Angolistas* were urging for a military expansion to subdue the African polities that were obstructing the trade like the kingdom of Matamba.

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<sup>237</sup> For an overview of the Jesuits' holdings in this period, see "Letter by P. Manuel de Matos to P. Diogo de Alfaia", Luanda, 15.02.1655 in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 456-472.

<sup>238</sup> "Letter by the Governor of Angola to João IV", Loanda, 17.09.1655 in *MMA*, vol. XI, p. 521. Original: "os ditos Padres possuem as mais, e as milhores fazendas, de todo este dstricto, com grande cantidade de escravos, em todas ellas, que hé a fazenda mais corrente em Angolla, e aqui pegado ao seu Colégio tem huma povoação dos mesmos escravos, que algumas villas há nesse Reyno, muito menores, e coazi todos estes sam officiaes de vários officios, que lhe gainham jornais concideraveis".

<sup>239</sup> Compare "Letter by P. Serafino da Cortona to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 10.02.1655 in *MMA*, vol. XI, p. 446 and "Letter by the Governor of Angola to João IV", Loanda, 17.09.1655 in *MMA*, vol. XI, p. 520.

<sup>240</sup> The important role played by the Capuchins as diplomatic agents for the settlement of political and military disputed in Kongo and Angola has been analysed by Toso. However, the author only briefly describes the activities of the missionaries in the broader context of the Portuguese colonial expansion in the region. See, Carlo Toso, 'Il contributo dei religiosi italiani al pacifico sviluppo dell'antico Congo (sec. XVII-XVIII)', *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente*, no. 2 (1992): 184-220.

<sup>241</sup> P. Serafino's great influence in Luanda was acknowledged by his companions. According to P. Antonio da Gaeta, "he became lord of everyone's mind and, if it was not for him, the mission would have not resisted to all the turbulences and persecutions moved against us", see "Letter by P. Antonio da Gaeta to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 02.02.1655, in *MMA*, vol. XI, p. 436.



However, this strategy was not supported by Lisbon, whose authorities opposed the restart of an armed conflict, fearing another Dutch invasion in West Central Africa, and demanded peaceful solutions.<sup>242</sup> On the other side, the restart of the slave trade would have favoured also Nzinga, who had retreated further into the interior after the Dutch withdrawal killed her hopes to recover the kingdom of Ndongo. Moreover, the old Queen was in urgent need of an heir for her kingdom, but her only sister D. Barbara Mukambu was still a prisoner of war of the Portuguese, who captured her in 1646. Njinga's previous attempts to ransom her sister were unsuccessful, as the Portuguese did not want to lose their leverage over the queen.<sup>243</sup>

In Luanda, P. Serafino became the confessor of D. Barbara and by the spring of 1651 was approached by Njinga, who declared her willingness to receive Capuchin missionaries if her sister would be released.<sup>244</sup> Reacting to the queen's request, P. Serafino suggested she write directly to *Propaganda* to ask for the establishment of a Capuchin mission in Matamba, which she did in August 1651.<sup>245</sup> In Rome, the members of the Congregation accommodated the request of the African sovereign and created the Apostolic Prefecture of Matamba, which was entrusted to P. Serafino and based in Massangano by the end of 1654.<sup>246</sup>

In the meantime, Luis Martins de Sousa Chichorro arrived in Luanda, with explicit instructions to maintain peace in the colony. The governor immediately adopted a very favourable attitude towards the Capuchins, defending them from the accusations by Garcia II in São Salvador and the Jesuits in Luanda, but also employing them as military chaplains in the Portuguese army.<sup>247</sup> Through her Capuchin intermediary, Njinga sent a gift of slaves and an embassy to Luanda at the beginning of 1655, offering to negotiate a peace treaty.<sup>248</sup> In response, a Portuguese ambassador was sent to Matamba and, by the end of the year, the Queen wrote her peace conditions to Chichorro. She demanded the release of D. Barbara and asked her to be accompanied by Capuchin missionaries to Matamba. In return, she offered 200 slaves for her sister's ransom and to open the slave trade to the Portuguese.<sup>249</sup>

Njinga's offer provoked conflictual reactions in Luanda, where Chichorro and the Capuchins were favourable to send D. Barbara to Matamba, the *Câmara* and the Jesuits opposed this option, fearing

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<sup>242</sup> David Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and Their Neighbours Under the Influence of the Portuguese, 1483-1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 113–14.

<sup>243</sup> Jadin, 'L'oeuvre missionnaire en Afrique noire', 492.

<sup>244</sup> "Letter by P. Serafino da Cortona to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 05.06.1651 in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 41-44. The Queen knew about the Capuchins since the Dutch occupation of Angola, when he captured two missionaries in Kongo, after attacking a province loyal to the Portuguese. In that occasion, Njinga treated the Capuchins well and allowed them to go back to São Salvador. See, Jadin, 492.

<sup>245</sup> "Letter by Queen Njinga to *Propaganda*", Kingdom of Matamba, 15.08.1651 in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 70-71.

<sup>246</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, p. 500.

<sup>247</sup> Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola*, 115. On the Governor's relationship with the Capuchins, see "Letter by P. Antonio da Gaeta to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 25.01.1655 in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 414-422. On their employment as military chaplains, see Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 527-529.

<sup>248</sup> "Letter by P. Serafino da Cortona to a Capuchin brother", Angola, 10.02.1655 in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 451-455.

<sup>249</sup> "Letter by Queen Njinga to the Governor of Angola", Matamba, 13.12.1655 in *MMA*, vol. XI, pp. 524-528.

to be attacked by the Queen as soon as her sister was safe. However, the Governor imposed his will. The *Câmara* also invoked the help of Lisbon, where the *Conselho Ultramarino* and the Queen regent asked Chichorro to keep D. Barbara. However, Lisbon's instructions arrived too late and in August 1656 Njinga's sister entered Matamba joined by an armed escort and the Capuchin P. Antonio da Gaeta. The same day that the envoy entered Njinga's camp, on 12 October 1656, a peace treaty was signed.<sup>250</sup> In the first article, Njinga agreed to embrace Catholicism and to accept Capuchin missionaries in her kingdom, "the main goal of this negotiation" as defined by Governor Chichorro.<sup>251</sup> The Capuchins' participation in achieving such an important treaty was acknowledged by the presence of P. Antonio da Gaeta, "Apostolic missionary and Capuchin preacher", among the signatories.<sup>252</sup> The Capuchins' crucial role in ending Luanda's long-lasting conflict with Njinga, and thus re-opening the slave trade with Matamba, was later underlined by Chichorro and recognised by the *Conselho Ultramarino* and Queen Luísa de Gusmão.<sup>253</sup>

#### **"The Help of the Secular Arm": The Battles of Mbwila (1665) and Pangu a Ndongo (1671)**

The stability achieved by the peace treaty with Njinga did not last, as new geopolitical tensions drew West Central Africa into several armed conflicts during the long 1660s. These were the result of an increasingly aggressive policy from Luanda, which sought to subjugate as much as possible the African polities surrounding the colony, to maximise the profits coming from the slave trade. Crucial to this strategy were the governorships of João Fernandes Vieira (1658-1661) and André Vidal de Negreiros (1661-1666). These two governors were *Brasílicos*, as the settlers of Portuguese descent in Brazil were known, who got their position as a reward for their aid to the recovery of the American colony from the Dutch. Their interest in developing the slave trade, often to boost the profits of their Brazilian plantations, inaugurated a period of numerous military campaigns launched by the Portuguese against neighbouring African polities. The motivations for these conflicts were always futile and masked the Portuguese intent of expanding Luanda's control over the slave commerce and imposing its trading conditions onto their neighbours. Therefore, alleged violations of treaties stipulated with the Portuguese Crown, African attempts to maintain their control over European trade, and the emergence of local rulers who rejected Portuguese political influence, became sufficient *casus*

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<sup>250</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 507-514.

<sup>251</sup> "Letter by the Governor of Angola to João IV", Luanda, 29.07.1656 in *MMA*, vol. XII, p. 40.

<sup>252</sup> "Capitulations of the Governor of Angola with Queen Njinga", 12.10.1656 in *MMA*, vol. XII, p. 60. The Capuchin signed as "P. Antonio Romano" to hide his real provenience, Gaeta in the Kingdom of Naples, and the fact that he was a Spanish subject. See "Letter by P. Serafino da Cortona to the Provincial of Tuscany", Massangano, 10.04.1657 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 107-110.

<sup>253</sup> "Letter by the Governor of Angola to João IV", Luanda, 14.10.1656 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 61-63; "Letter by the Governor of Luanda to the Queen of Portugal", Luanda, 14.04.1657 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 105-106; "Advice of the *Conselho Ultramarino*", Lisbon, 12.11.1657 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 141-142; "Letter by the Queen regent to the Governor of Angola", Lisbon, 24.11.1657 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 144-145.

*belli* to launch offensive attacks.<sup>254</sup> The two major battles of Mbwila (1665) and Pungu a Ndongo (1671) annihilated two of the major contenders of the Portuguese, the first by throwing the kingdom of Kongo into political chaos and the second by reinstating the obedience of the kingdom of Ndongo, consequently dissuading the states in the interior to challenge Luanda's supremacy in the region.

In both these episodes, the religious sphere emerged as a very important factor. For the Portuguese, the propagation of the Faith represented "the main reason" to justify their colonial expansion.<sup>255</sup> On the other side, the African rulers rejecting Portuguese influence heavily relied on social discontent towards the imposition of Catholicism. Therefore, the reaction to the Portuguese witnessed a revival of African local cults, which often targeted Catholic symbols or preachers. Being the Capuchins the most active missionaries in the region, the members of the *Missio Antiqua* had to come to terms with these geopolitical developments. However, the Capuchin reaction to the turmoil of these years shows the extent to which the survival of their mission depended on the adaptation to, if not on the support of, the Portuguese authorities.

The battle of Mbwila in 1665, where the Portuguese defeated the *mani Kongo* António I Nevita-a-Ncanga (1661-1665) and threw the kingdom into a civil war that lasted until the early eighteenth century, was the result of almost a decade of tensions between Luanda and São Salvador. These started during Chichorro's final years of governorship, immediately after the peace with Njinga. The Portuguese accused Garcia II of disregarding the conditions of the 1649's peace treaty, by sheltering fugitive slaves from Angola, allowing Dutch trade in his kingdom, and demanding illegal fees to Portuguese merchants in Kongo. In September 1658, the new governor Vieira threatened Garcia II with war if he did not have respected the treaty and returned the fugitive slaves. In March 1659, he reunited the representatives of the clergy and the nobles of Luanda in a war council. In his opening letter to the council, Vieira explained that, since his arrival, he was told that Kongo represented the "major ruin" for the colonists and that he had been informed "by trustworthy people, well-informed about that kingdom" that the *mani Kongo* and his vassals had nothing Catholic "but their name".<sup>256</sup> Therefore, asking the council to vote on declaring war on Kongo, he obtained the consent of all the participants but the Capuchin Prefect, P. Crisostomo da Genova, who abstained. Referring to the Governor's letter, he claimed that "nothing reported in it can be doubted of, but that he was impeded from voting for being a foreigner and for having many companions in Kongo and its provinces".<sup>257</sup> In an explicit conflict of interests, the Prefect could not join the rest of the council in declaring war,

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<sup>254</sup> Birmingham, 119-126

<sup>255</sup> See, for example, "Declaration of the Governor of Angola at the War Council", Luanda, 09.09.1658 in *MMA*, vol. XII, p. 172. Original: "O principal intento".

<sup>256</sup> "Declaration of war to the King of Kongo", Luanda, 11.03.1659 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 223-227.

<sup>257</sup> "Declaration of war to the King of Kongo", Luanda, 11.03.1659 in *MMA*, vol. XII, p. 229.

but the complete alignment to the governor's view about Kongo, which was probably informed by the Capuchins themselves, tacitly approved the final decision.

Political turmoil within the Portuguese ranks prevented Vieira from attacking Kongo, a task that was immediately embraced by his successor, André Vidal de Negreiros.<sup>258</sup> When he arrived in Luanda in the spring of 1661, Garcia II had been succeeded by António I, who ensued with hostilities against the Portuguese and the Capuchins. In 1663, the disputed succession in the neighbouring province of Nambu a Ngongo provided Negreiros with the excuse to militarily support the ruler favourable to the Portuguese, with the consent of the Capuchins.<sup>259</sup> With his army at Kongo's gates, Negreiros started claiming Portugal's control over the mines of the province of Wandu, despite the 1649's treaty recognition of the *mani Kongo's* property rights.<sup>260</sup> When António I rejected the Governor's demands and sent an army to Wandu, Negreiros could justify a campaign to defend Portugal's mines. On 29 October 1665, the Portuguese defeated Kongo's army at Mbwila and killed António I, whose crowned head was brought to Luanda and buried in a solemn celebration in the presence of all the religious representatives, the Capuchins included.<sup>261</sup>

The battle of Mbwila marked the end of Kongo's political unity and, for the Portuguese, the neutralisation of a cumbersome neighbour that caused much havoc throughout the seventeenth century. In addition, Kongo's downfall into a long civil war opened new possibilities for unregulated slave trafficking in the region, as Birmingham highlights.<sup>262</sup> Conversely, for the Capuchins, the political fragmentation that affected the kingdom after the battle significantly compromised their missionary activity, which in turn concentrated in the territories where they could enjoy the support of secular authorities in exchange for legitimising their power.<sup>263</sup> However, given the crucial role played by the Capuchins in the re-definition of the 1649 treaty between Kongo and Portugal, their almost complete silence before and after Mbwila is remarkable. Their only reaction to Negreiros' invasion came from São Salvador, where two missionaries followed the Chapter in contesting Luanda's declaration of war.<sup>264</sup> One of them, P. Francisco de São Salvador, was a *mulato* priest who was ordained by P. Giacinto da Vetralla in 1652.<sup>265</sup> When he followed the *mani Kongo* as chaplain

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<sup>258</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 530-536.

<sup>259</sup> "Letter by the Dean of Angola to Alfonso VI", Luanda, 29.07.1665 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 555-558.

<sup>260</sup> "Letter by the Governor of Angola to the Chapter and clergy of Kongo", Luanda, 25.06.1665 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 547-548.

<sup>261</sup> "Report of the Battle of Mbwila", 29.10.1665 in *MMA*, vol. XII, p. 588. See also, Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola*, 121-23; Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 587-597.

<sup>262</sup> Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola*, 122-23.

<sup>263</sup> Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 202-3.

<sup>264</sup> They were P. Giuseppe da Bassano and P. Francisco da São Salvador. See, "Letter by the Chapter of Kongo to the Governor of Luanda", São Salvador, 13.06.1665 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 545-546. The Chapter of Kongo was considerably discredited in Luanda, where the clergy harshly criticised two key members of the institution, the *mulatos* Simão de Medeiros and Miguel de Castro, accused to be hostile to the Portuguese Crown and to manipulate the *mani Kongo*. Therefore, the complaint of the religious men about Luanda's attack was simply ignored by Portuguese authorities. See, "Letter by the Dean of Angola to Alfonso VI", Luanda, 29.07.1665 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 555-558. On the two members of the Chapter, see Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 358-360.

<sup>265</sup> Saccardo, vol. I, p. 451.

and died at Mbwila, new critiques fell on the Capuchins, which were immediately rejected by the *Câmara* of Luanda.<sup>266</sup> The other members of the *Missio Antiqua*, too, took their distance from P. Francisco and criticised his actions in the following years.<sup>267</sup>

The explanation for the Capuchins' tacit alignment to the Portuguese wars is to be found in their increasing dependence on Luanda to conduct their missionary activity. The crucial importance of Portuguese military power for an effective evangelisation of the Africans was already clear to P. Serafino da Cortona, shortly after he arrived in Luanda:

I confess to Your Most Reverend Paternity that our brothers would be better employed here than in Kongo, as there is plenty of blacks in this kingdom of Angola, partly heathen and partly baptised. And for being [the blacks] subject to the Crown of Portugal, with the zeal and effort of our missionaries and the help of the secular arm, which would not be lacking, more profit could be done here in one year than what has been done in Kongo in several.<sup>268</sup>

When the Capuchins established their missionary stations in Angola and Matamba, they encountered the same difficulties they were facing in Kongo's provinces. Local chiefs accepted to convert and abandon African cults and unorthodox habits only in appearance. Indigenous rites and customs continued to be practised by the population and supported by the ruling authorities, despite the often-violent repression of the Capuchins. While missionary reports abound about these practices, they also testify to how Portuguese political supremacy in the region crucially supported and protected the Capuchins. In 1658, P. Serafino reported how the ruler of Kasanje initially rejected the service of a Capuchin, fearing that he would have troubled the kingdom by burning idols and that "if he resolved to kill him, the Governor would have moved war".<sup>269</sup> On other occasions, the Capuchin was lamenting "the lack of the secular arm's support", like when one of his missionaries was almost killed by the king of Ndongo after he tried to burn the house of a shaman in the capital Pangu a Ndongo. Probably aware of the danger of murdering a Capuchin, the inhabitants blocked the king and the missionary was let go.<sup>270</sup> In 1660, one Cuncha, supreme head of Kasanje's army, warned P. Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo that he would not have remained for long in the kingdom if he kept demanding the rigid observance of Catholic precepts, as defined by the treaty signed with the Portuguese in the

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<sup>266</sup> In a letter to the Conselho Ultramarino, the *câmara* defended the Capuchins, claiming that P. Francisco "was a son of Kongo, born from an African woman and a Portuguese, so he respected more his mother's blood than his duties as a religious man". See, "Advice of the *Conselho Ultramarino*", Lisbon, 07.12.1665 in *MMA*, vol. XII, p. 596.

<sup>267</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 595-597.

<sup>268</sup> "Letter by P. Serafino da Cortona to the Provincial of Tuscany", Luanda, 22.11.1651 in *MMA*, vol. XII, p. 114. Original: "Confesso a V.P.M.R. che meglio impiegati saranno i nostri Frati qua che in Congo: perché vi è per questo Regno d'Angola infinità di Neri, parte gentili e parte battezzati; e per istare soggetti alla Corona di Portogallo, con la diligenza e travaglio de' nostri Missionarij e coll'aiuto del braccio secolare, quel non mancherebbe, si potrebbe fare in un anno più profitto, che non si è fatto nel Regno di Congo in tanti".

<sup>269</sup> "Report of P. Serafino da Cortona to the Queen of Portugal", Lisbon, 09.12.1658 in *MMA*, vol. XII, p. 198.

<sup>270</sup> "Report of P. Serafino da Cortona to the Queen of Portugal", Lisbon, 09.12.1658 in *MMA*, vol. XII, pp. 197-197; 202.

occasion of the chief's conversion. When the Capuchin disagreed with such an intimidatory statement, Cuncha said:

Listen, oh *nganga*! When you will be present, we will abstain from our rites, so that, by not offending you, we will not offend the Whites, with whom, being our confederates, we care to maintain inviolable friendship. However, when you will be absent, we want to live with our old freedom.<sup>271</sup>

Around the same time, Portuguese military power was even discussed by the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*. Explaining the difficulties that the missionaries were facing in Kongo, due to the hostility of the sovereign, the Secretary of *Propaganda* gave the following instructions to the cardinal protector of Portugal:

Everything could be solved if, through Your Eminence's authority, effective orders would be issued by Portugal to the Governor of Angola, to resolutely warn that King not to dare obstructing the Evangelical preaching.<sup>272</sup>

Facing the hostility of the *mani Kongo* and the *Mbundu* rulers, and struggling with effectively preaching the Gospel and converting the indigenous population, the Capuchins and *Propaganda* soon understood that the survival and success of the *Missio Antiqua* heavily depended on the Portuguese political and military support. Therefore, it is understandable that the missionaries did not react when the Portuguese violently repressed the kingdom of Ndongo, their historical ally in the African interior, by sieging his capital Pangu a Ndongo in 1671. After the victory, the Portuguese built a fort in Ndongo's capital, imposing direct rule. As a result, the Portuguese significantly strengthened their control over Angola and consolidated the slave trading routes with the interior.<sup>273</sup> However, the battle needs to be understood into the broader geopolitical scenario of West Central Africa during the second half of the 1660s, which in turn will provide further elements to comprehend the Capuchins' position in these events.

Since his election in 1664, the new sovereign D. João Ngola Ari II started opposing the Portuguese and rejecting their political influence, by attacking the caravans of Luanda's *pombeiros* and expelling a Capuchin missionary from the capital. Ngola Ari II tried to exploit the turbulent situation unfolding in Matamba, where the Portuguese were also struggling in maintaining their presence, to escape

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<sup>271</sup> "Letter by P. Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo to the Prefect of the mission", Kasanje, 25.08.1660 in *MMA*, vol. XII, p. 296. Original: "Udite oh Ganga; quando voi sarete presente, ci asteremmo da nostri Riti, affinché offendendovene voi, non rimangano offesi i Bianchi, co' quali essendo confederati, ci mette conto mantenere inviolabile amicizia; ma quando sarete assente, vogliamo vivere con l'antica nostra libertà". The Capuchins were considered *nganga* by West Central African populations, see Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, p. 20.

<sup>272</sup> "Letter by the Secretary of *Propaganda* to Cardinal Virginio Orsini", Rome, 06.10.1660 in *MMA*, vol. XII, p. 309. Original: "Al che tutto si rimediarebbe, quando per mezo dell'autorità di V. E. si spicassero ordini efficaci da Portugallo al Governatore di Angola, che faccia risolutamente intendere à quel Rè, che non adisca impedire la predicatione Evangelica".

<sup>273</sup> Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola*, 126–27.

Luanda's political influence and expand his territorial control eastwards. In Matamba, after the death of Queen Njinga and her sister D. Barbara, respectively in 1663 and 1666, political power passed into the hands of Barbara's husband, the captain general Nzinga Amona. The new chief immediately showed hostility towards the Portuguese, whose representative in Matamba significantly hindered his control over the slave trade, and started persecuting Capuchin missionaries, despite his initial adherence to Catholicism. Facing the possibility of losing their presence in Matamba, essential to secure a stable supply of slaves to Luanda, the Portuguese began fighting Nzinga Amona by militarily supporting his rivals. The Capuchin mission of Matamba abruptly ended to escape the political turmoil.<sup>274</sup>

In the meantime, the Portuguese were defeated in the attempt of subjugating the Count of Soyo, whose commerce with the Dutch was breaking their monopoly over the slave trade. By the end of 1669, the new Governor of Luanda Francisco de Távora (1669-1676) received the embassy D. Rafael Nzinga a Ncanga, one of the competitors to the throne of Kongo, who asked for military support against the current *mani Kongo* Alvaro IX Napanzu-a-Civilla (1669-1670), supported by the Count of Soyo D. Paulo II da Silva (1658-1670). To impose his favourite ruler, Soyo had moved war to São Salvador, killing the *mani Kongo* Pedro III Nsimba Ntamba (1669) and destroying the city's churches. Keen to bring Soyo into obedience and favour the ascension of a favourable *mani Kongo*, the Portuguese declared war on the Count in 1670.<sup>275</sup> However, after a first victory, where Paulo II himself was lethally wounded, they were defeated by the new Count Estevão I da Silva (1670-1672) at Kitombo, with the crucial military support of the Dutch.<sup>276</sup>

These geopolitical developments encouraged Ngola Ari II to reject his vassalage duties towards the Portuguese Crown. As a response, governor Távora sent Captain Luis Lopes de Sequeira, victor of the battle of Mbwila, who conquered Pangu a Ndongo in November 1671.<sup>277</sup> By that time, the Capuchin *Missio Antiqua* was in dire straits. Kongo's civil war was severely hampering their activity in Kongo, where the missionaries had to rely on the fluctuating support of the various competitors to the throne. After the fall of the Matamba mission in 1667, the Capuchins had two missions in Angola and four in Kongo, respectively served by nine and seven missionaries.<sup>278</sup> In addition, the diplomatic impasses provoked by the ongoing struggle between the *Padroado* and *Propaganda* impeded a steady supply of missionaries in these years.<sup>279</sup> As a result, we do not find comments or complaints about the Portuguese aggressive strategy in the region – which lasted well into the 1680s – in the Capuchins'

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<sup>274</sup> Birmingham, 123–25; Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, pp. 577-582.

<sup>275</sup> "Letter by the Governor of Angola to the regent Prince D. Pedro", Luanda, 15.03.1670 in *MMA*, vol. XIII, pp. 112-114.

<sup>276</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. II, pp. 22-25.

<sup>277</sup> Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola*, 125.

<sup>278</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. II, p. 46. For an overview on the missions in 1668, see also "Letter by P. Pietro da Barchi to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 30.01.1668 in *MMA*, vol. XIII, p. 70-75.

<sup>279</sup> Bontinck, 'Répercussions du conflit entre le Saint-Siège et le "Padroado"'.

correspondence, which was rather characterised by a constant request for new manpower for the missions. Besides sporadic episodes, it seems that the few missionaries present in the region either aligned with Portuguese authorities, for example by serving in their armies as chaplains, or gradually became perceived as an expression of Luanda's authority by African rulers.<sup>280</sup> This was particularly the case in Soyo, where the Capuchins once again acted as intermediaries between the province and the Portuguese in the final decades of the seventeenth century.

### **Violence and Peace-Making in Soyo (1670-90)**

For several reasons, the province of Soyo held a very complex position within the geopolitical scenario of West Central Africa. Since the first contact with the Portuguese at the end of the fifteenth century, trade between Kongo and Portugal passed through Soyo's port of Mpinda, significantly boosting the economic development of the province. The province's geographical advantage within the political structure of Kongo resulted in some privileges, like the possibility to elect the *mani Soyo*, as the provincial chief was known, autonomously from the *mani Kongo*. The possibility of maintaining local control over the ruling authorities of the province coupled with the new commercial opportunities opened by the Dutch penetration in West Central Africa since the 1590s, and further increased Soyo's strategic value. Unlike the Portuguese, Dutch merchants provided Soyo with high-quality European goods and, above all, were willing to sell firearms and gunpowder to the province. To meet their demand and guarantee a steady supply of these goods, Soyo's counts developed new commercial routes with the interior that bypassed São Salvador and escaped its control. As a result, during the first half of the seventeenth century, the province increasingly sought political independence from Kongo, which was finally achieved in 1645 in the political unrest following the Dutch occupation of Angola. Political independence was ultimately consolidated with the collapse of Kongo, after which Soyo became a key competitor in the kingdom's civil war.<sup>281</sup>

In the same year, the first Capuchins disembarked at Mpinda and founded the first missionary station of the *Missio Antiqua* in Mbanza Soyo, the provincial capital. Soyo's peculiar role was further enhanced by the fact that its ruler was the first Kongo lord to receive baptism in 1491 when the Portuguese promoted the evangelisation of the region. Similarly to Kongo, religion started playing a crucial role in legitimising the power of the local ruler and aristocracy. As Piętek argues, after the arrival of the Capuchins, Catholicism started having an even more important role in defining and

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<sup>280</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. II, p. 81.

<sup>281</sup> Richard Gray, "'Come Vero Principe Catolico': The Capuchins and the Rulers of Soyo in the Late Seventeenth Century", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 53, no. 3 (1983): 39–54. On the Soyo's relations with the Portuguese and the Dutch in the first half of the seventeenth century, see Stephanie Caroline Boechat Correia, 'O reino do Congo e os miseráveis do mar: o Congo, o sonho e os holandeses no Atlântico, 1600-1650' (PhD diss., Niterói, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2013).



supporting the ideology of power in Soyo.<sup>282</sup> Differently from Kongo and its provinces, however, the Capuchins' presence in Soyo was rather stable, with missionaries on the ground throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, and their activity almost uncontested, given the absence of competing clergymen as in São Salvador. The continuous presence of Capuchin missionaries had ambivalent results. On the one hand, it provided the ruling class with a constant source of legitimisation of their power. On the other, it also limited the *mani Soyo*'s authority, thus representing a threat to the sovereign. Every conflict between the secular authority and the missionaries undermined the sovereign's authority, which was considered to be the intermediary between the people and the Church.<sup>283</sup>

As already mentioned, the increasing commercial penetration of the Dutch in the slave trading routes along the Zaire River represented one of the main reasons behind Luanda's war against Soyo in 1670. Luanda's failed attempt to subjugate the province had a significant impact on the Capuchins, whose cumbersome presence in Soyo started being perceived as aligned and connivant with Luanda's aggressive policies.<sup>284</sup> For this reason, the *mani Soyo* Estevão I immediately attempted to emancipate from the Prefecture of Kongo, based in Luanda, for the supply of missionaries in his province. According to the Count, the Capuchins' presence in West Central Africa was completely dependent on the Portuguese Crown's approval and their mission was considered too entangled with the interests of Luanda. Therefore, in 1671, Estevão sent an embassy to Amsterdam, from where he contacted the Apostolic Nuncio in Brussels and independently asked for new missionaries.<sup>285</sup> Although the Count's plan to recruit missionaries outside the *Missio Antiqua* eventually failed, his suspicion towards the Capuchins clearly shows how the Apostolic missionaries were perceived as operating under the *Padroado* by some African authorities.

Already under Estevão I, the Capuchins experienced some forms of repression, and one father was beaten after he had left the mission following a conflict with the Count, which resulted in his excommunication. However, Capuchin presence in Soyo was severely compromised by the ascension of Count Pedro Futila da Silva (1672-1674). Failing to bring the Capuchins' activity under his direct control, the new Count raised the people against P. Tommaso da Sestola and P. Andrea da Buti, accused of favouring a new Portuguese invasion of Soyo. As a result, the Capuchins were severely beaten and expelled from the province in December 1673.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Robert Piętek, 'Christianity and the Formation of the Ideology of Power in Soyo in the 17th Century', *Studies in African Languages and Cultures*, no. 53 (2019): 117–33.

<sup>283</sup> Gray, 'Come Vero Principe Catolico', 41–42; Piętek, 'Christianity and the Formation of the Ideology of Power in Soyo in the 17th Century', 121–22.

<sup>284</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. II, p. 25.

<sup>285</sup> The embassy and the diplomatic controversy sparked by it had been analysed and documented by Jadin. See, Louis Jadin, *Rivalités luso-néerlandaises au Soho, Congo, 1600-1675: tentatives missionnaires des récollets flamands et tribulations des capucins italiens 1670-1675* (Bruxelles: Academia belgica, 1966).

<sup>286</sup> On this episode, see "Letter by P. Girolamo da Genova to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 02.06.1674 in APF, SC, vol. 1, ff. 293-296.

Once arrived in Luanda, the missionaries asked the Portuguese authorities to rescue the companions who remained in Soyo, but Governor Távora lacked the manpower to effectively intervene.<sup>287</sup> In addition, the political pressures coming from the Catholic community of Soyo rapidly convinced the Count to go back on his attacks. Already in March 1674, Pedro da Silva proposed to the newly appointed Prefect P. Antonio Cavazzi da Montecucolo an agreement to bring the missionaries back to Soyo. Among other things, the Count committed not to obstruct the missionaries' communication with Luanda but reserved the right to inspect the letters exchanged until the end of the state of war with Portugal. Moreover, the Capuchins were allowed to purchase and receive goods on Luanda's ships, "being impossible for these Fathers to sustain this mission in Soyo without the support of the Portuguese".<sup>288</sup> Despite this attempt, the Count had already lost the trust of a relevant part of his *fidalgos*, who dethroned him in May 1674, electing Paulo III da Silva (1674-1675), favourable to the Capuchins. After this short but harsh controversy, the Capuchin mission in Soyo was restored under P. Giuseppe da Busseto, who reconciled the missionaries with the rulers of the province.

While serving in Soyo, P. Busseto was elected Vice-Prefect of the *Missio Antiqua* in 1684, after the death of the Prefect P. Giovanni da Romano. From this position, he managed to convince Count Antonio II Barreto da Silva (1680-1691) to formally ask for peace from the Governor of Luanda through the intercession of the bishop. Finding some difficulties to convince Luanda's authorities due to the bishop's death and, according to the Capuchin, some schemes of the Jesuits, P. Busseto wrote to the King of Portugal in March 1687, pleading him to order the Governor to negotiate a treaty.<sup>289</sup>

In Lisbon, the *Conselho Ultramarino* agreed with the Capuchin that peace with Soyo would be more beneficial to commerce than a state of war. Finally, in April 1688, King Pedro II sent instructions to Governor João de Lencastre (1688-1691) to stipulate a convenient peace with the Count. From the Crown's perspective, the peace treaty had to allow the Portuguese to build a fortress in Mpinda to secure their monopoly of the slave trade from Soyo.<sup>290</sup> Once these orders arrived in Luanda, the Governor wrote to P. Andrea da Pavia, a missionary in Soyo, asking him to convince the Count to renovate his demand for peace with Portugal. Knowing how the conflict with Soyo caused "a great loss for the Crown of Portugal", the missionary accepted the task. By the end of 1688, he

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<sup>287</sup> "Letter by the Governor of Angola on the Belgian Recollets in Soyo", Luanda, 07.03.1674 in *MMA*, vol. XIII, pp. 287-288.

<sup>288</sup> "Capitulations of the Count of Soyo", Soyo, 20.03.1674 in *MMA*, vol. XIII, pp. 289-291. The mission dependence from Portuguese supplies is also confirmed by the Capuchins' Prefect. See "Lettera di P. Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 25.06.1674 in *MMA*, vol. XIII, pp. 311-315.

<sup>289</sup> "Letter by P. Giuseppe da Busseto to Pedro II", Luanda, 09.03.1687 in *MMA*, vol. XIV, pp. 51-52. On the supposed role played by the Jesuits in undermining the peace with Soyo, see "Letter by P. Giuseppe da Busseto to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 17.06.1686 in APF, *SOCCG*, vol. 499, ff. 338-339. The Capuchin's key role in convincing the Count to demand peace was also recognised by the clergy of Luanda, in a letter to the Apostolic Nuncio in Portugal. See, "Letter by the clergy of Angola to the Nuncio in Lisbon", Luanda, 17.10.1687 in *MMA*, vol. XIV, pp. 70-72.

<sup>290</sup> "Letter by King Pedro II to the Governor of Angola", Lisbon, 05.04.1688 in *MMA*, vol. XIV, pp. 122-123.

had convinced the *mani Soyo* to send an ambassador with him to Luanda with such a proposal. As a result, an embassy was sent by Count Antonio II in January 1689.<sup>291</sup>

Once arrived in Luanda, P. Andrea was informed by Lencastre about Pedro II's request to build a fortress in Soyo, which surprised the Capuchin. "If Your Most Illustrious Lordship had written me about this", the Capuchin said, "I would have acted differently or I would not have interceded".<sup>292</sup> Nevertheless, the embassy was sumptuously received by the Governor and informed about the peace conditions demanded by Lisbon. The ambassadors could not accept the peace terms without reporting to the Count, and the envoy resolved to go back to Soyo. At this point, Lencastre openly required P. Andrea to negotiate with the Count of Soyo the construction of the fortress. Initially, the Capuchin refused, arguing that the missionaries were "only allowed to intercede to achieve peace, not to participate in stipulating political treaties". In the end, however, Portuguese authorities got the upper hand. "After several arguments and talks", the Capuchin reported, "I considered it convenient to lower my head and return to Soyo to continue the negotiations".<sup>293</sup>

Back in Soyo, P. Andrea informed the Count and his council about Luanda's demands but only obtained a negative response. Therefore, he warned Lencastre about the burden posed by the construction of the fortress and the Governor reported everything to Lisbon in April 1689.<sup>294</sup> Following the Capuchin's advice, the *Conselho Ultramarino* agreed on removing the clause from the peace conditions and instructed the Governor to conclude the peace at the conditions already obtained by P. Andrea. The negotiations were reopened, and a treaty was ratified in October 1690.<sup>295</sup> Despite the peace treaty, the relationship between Luanda and Soyo remained troubled, due to the province's increasing commerce with Dutch and English merchants. Nevertheless, the important role played by the Capuchins in soliciting and negotiating the peace once again testifies to the great influence they had achieved over Portuguese colonial authorities.

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<sup>291</sup> Louis Jadin and Joseph Bosseaux, *Andrea da Pavia au Congo, à Lisbonne, à Madère. Journal d'un missionnaire capucin, 1685-1702* (Bruxelles: Institut historique belge de Rome, 1970), 87–88.

<sup>292</sup> Jadin and Bosseaux, 93.

<sup>293</sup> Jadin and Bosseaux, 96.

<sup>294</sup> "Letter by the Governor of Angola to Pedro II", Luanda, 04.04.1689 in *MMA*, vol. XIV, pp. 161-164.

<sup>295</sup> Jadin and Bosseaux, *Andrea Da Pavia*, 97. The peace treaty once again remembered the decisive solicitation of P. Busseto to open the negotiations. See, "Peace treaty between the Count of Soyo and the Governor of Angola", Luanda, 18.10.1690 in *MMA*, vol. XIV, pp. 197-204.

## ORTHODOXY AND STATE INTEREST: THE CAPUCHINS AND THE PORTUGUESE INQUISITION

In the last decades of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Portuguese colony of Angola witnessed the triumph of *Brasilicos* interests in the region's slave trade. With its aggressive military policy, Luanda's governors managed to bring Ndongo and the neighbouring kingdoms under their control and to establish particularly convenient trading relationships with the African polities of the interior, such as Matamba and Kasanje, where the main slaving markets were located. The injection of capital from Brazil and the growing export of colonial goods produced in Brazilian plantations contributed to what Alencastro labelled as "the victory of the *cachaça*", after the sugar cane-base liquor that became the means of exchange for slaves in the markets in Luanda.<sup>296</sup> However, for the entirety of this period, the slave trade remained firmly controlled by local authorities of various sorts – Luanda's governors, the *capitães mores* inland, and even the clergy – significantly increasing the level of violence and oppression over local populations.<sup>297</sup>

The Capuchins did not ignore the horror of the slave trade. When P. Andrea da Pavia reported on his missionary activity to *Propaganda*, in 1693, he was sure that most of the difficulties encountered by the Capuchins were caused by the slave trade of the Portuguese.<sup>298</sup> At the beginning of the eighteenth century, another Capuchin described to the Congregation his missionary activity in the station of Cayenda, on the border between Angola and Matamba. Visiting the countryside, he found "other black, very numerous, part Christians, part heathen, still all subjects of Portugal, but scattered and hidden in bushes and caves to escape the abuses of soldiers and merchants, who greatly damage them".<sup>299</sup> Many Capuchins also accused the local clergy, to be fully involved in the slave trade, among other abuses, considerably hindering the evangelisation of the local population.<sup>300</sup> These are only some examples of the numerous critiques moved by Capuchin missionaries to the Atlantic slave trade, in West Central Africa and elsewhere. Nevertheless, these critiques often condemned forms of supposedly "unjust" servitude suffered by Catholic enslaved people, like the sale of black Catholics to heretic merchants in Soyo, rather than a universal idea of slavery. Moreover, the Capuchins of the

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<sup>296</sup> Alencastro, *The Trade in the Living*, 304–13. On this specific issue, see also José C. Curto, *Enslaving Spirits: The Portuguese-Brazilian Alcohol Trade at Luanda and Its Hinterland, c. 1550-1830* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

<sup>297</sup> Joseph C. Miller, 'The Slave Trade in Congo and Angola', in *The Afacan Diaspora: Interpretive Essays*, ed. Martin L. Kilson and Robert I. Rotberg (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 75–113.

<sup>298</sup> "Congregation of 3 August 1693" in APF, *Acta*, vol. 63, ff. 126v-129.

<sup>299</sup> "Congregation of 22 June 1705" in APF, *Acta*, vol. 75, ff. 217s

<sup>300</sup> Examples of these claims in APF are numerous, for example "P. Antonio Maria da Firenze to *Propaganda*", Rome, 1707 in APF, *SOCG*, vol. 561, ff. 161-165. On the conflicts between the Capuchins and the clergy in Congo and Angola, see Louis Jadin, *Le clergé séculier et les capucins du Congo et d'Angola aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: conflits de juridiction, 1700-1726* (Bruxelles: Academia Belgica, 1964).

*Missio Antiqua* made extensive use of unpaid workers or *servi della Chiesa* to partly emancipate from local authorities for provisions and transport. Therefore, these critiques never really impacted or modified the horrific reality of the trade in West Central Africa.<sup>301</sup>

The Capuchins' opposition to the Angolan slave trade did not compromise their relationship with the Portuguese authorities. Throughout the final decades of the seventeenth century, the Capuchins kept being praised by Portuguese authorities in Angola.<sup>302</sup> In addition, the missionaries maintained and improved their relationship with the Portuguese Crown, which granted them privileges and donations. In 1668, the Crown donated the hospice and church of S. António in Luanda and in 1677 the missionaries were granted the privilege to travel for free on the ships bound to Angola, similarly to those who transported horses to the colonies.<sup>303</sup> Finally, in 1686 *Propaganda* could appoint P. Paolo da Varazze as permanent Procurator for the Italian Capuchins in Lisbon, where he was given the hospice of S. Apollonia in 1692.<sup>304</sup>

At the same time, the Capuchins were requested in other parts of the Portuguese empire. In 1685, P. Francesco da Monteleone was invited to São Tomé to establish a mission. From the island, other Capuchins undertook missionary expeditions to the kingdoms of Warri, Benin, and Arda on the West Coast of Africa.<sup>305</sup> Finally, the outbreak of the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1715) resulted in a conflict with France and the expulsion of the French Capuchins from Brazil. Therefore, since the first decade of the eighteenth century, the French missions were taken over by Italian Capuchins appointed by *Propaganda*.<sup>306</sup>

Finally, the Capuchins' good relations with Lisbon and its court provided the *Missio Antiqua* with a steady supply of missionaries to man stations in Soyo, Angola, and Kongo. As already mentioned, Soyo maintained a stable presence of Capuchins throughout this period. Civil wars and political unrest significantly reduced Capuchin activity in Kongo, where nevertheless the missionaries kept a crucial role in legitimising the power of the different competitors to the throne.<sup>307</sup> In Angola, the Capuchins

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<sup>301</sup> On the relationship between the Capuchins of the *Missio Antiqua* and the slave trade, see Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. III, pp. 263-306; Carlo Toso, *L'anarchia congolese nel sec. XVII: la relazione inedita di Marcellino d'Atri* (Genova: Bozzi, 1984) pp. xxxi-iii. For the Capuchins' critiques of the slave trade in elsewhere, see Richard Gray, 'The Papacy and the Atlantic Slave Trade: Lourenço Da Silva, the Capuchins and the Decisions of the Holy Office', *Past & Present*, no. 115 (1987): 52-68.

<sup>302</sup> See, for example, "Letter by the *câmara* of Massangano to *Propaganda*", Massangano, 20.05.1675 in *MMA*, vol. XIII, pp. 357-358; "Letter by the Governor of Angola to the regent D. Pedro", Luanda, 26.03.1678 in *MMA*, vol. 439-433; "Letter by the *câmara* of Luanda to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 20.01.1683 in *MMA*, vol. 537-538; "Letter by the clergy of Angola to the Apostolic Nuncio in Lisbon", Luanda, 17.10.1687 in *MMA*, vol. XIV, pp. 70-72.

<sup>303</sup> "Royal letter over the hospice of S. António", Lisbon, 20.01.1668 in *MMA*, vol. XIII, p. 69; "Advice of the *Conselho Ultramarino*", Lisbon, 29.03.1677 in *MMA*, vol. XIII, pp. 417-418.

<sup>304</sup> Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. III, pp. 229-237. The hospice was meant to provide the Italian Capuchins with logistic support for travelling to the missions. In 1684, the Governor of Angola also suggested to *Propaganda* to establish a hospice for the Capuchins in Bahia, Brazil. See "Letter by the Governor of Angola to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 20.04.1684 in *MMA*, vol. XIII, pp. 572-573.

<sup>305</sup> Saccardo, vol. III, pp. 307-312.

<sup>306</sup> Saccardo, vol. II, pp. 249-253; Cruz, *A escola do diabo*, 104-8.

<sup>307</sup> Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 65-68; Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 199-210. On the role of Capuchin missionaries in Kongo's civil wars, see Toso, 'Il contributo dei religiosi italiani al pacifico sviluppo dell'antico Congo (sec. XVII-XVIII)'. For the supply of Capuchin missionaries in this period, see the complete overview available in Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. III, pp. 19-119.

kept being highly appreciated by Portuguese authorities, to the point that some missionaries were complaining about their insistent control over the evangelical activity. In 1705, P. Bernardo da Firenze was urging *Propaganda* to send more missionaries, while making sure that “they were not forced by the Portuguese to the sole service of their people in Angola”. The Capuchin also complained about the obstacles posed by some Angolan *capitães mores*, who prevented the missionaries to preach in the neighbouring regions.<sup>308</sup>

Despite these localised frictions, the Capuchins maintained a prominent position among Portuguese authorities, which was further evidenced by their employment as agents of the Portuguese Inquisition from the end of the seventeenth century. Since its foundation, the control exercised by Portuguese monarchs over the *Inquisição* allowed them to make use of the institution to protect the Crown’s political and economic interests. In the overseas territories, the Inquisition’s action of vigilance and repression became functional to the maintenance of Portuguese colonial rule, providing the state with a powerful tool for social control. For the impossibility to establish peripheric offices throughout Portugal’s colonial territories, the Inquisition relied on a wide network of local agents, selected from the manpower provided by the colonial administration and the ecclesiastical structures. Because of their widespread presence in colonial territories, members of religious orders were among the main people selected as unofficial agents of the Inquisition.<sup>309</sup>

The Capuchins had their first encounters with inquisitorial agents during the 1650s. Writing from Luanda in 1651, where he had recently established a missionary station, P. Serafino da Cortona was lamenting how the opposition of the Jesuits towards the Capuchins was also manifesting through Frei Miguel de Mariz, *comissário* for the Portuguese Inquisition.<sup>310</sup> The *comissários* were the inquisitorial agents entrusted with the transmission of denunciations to Portugal and with conducting the investigations that were eventually issued to eradicate deviant behaviours. From this position, the Jesuit commissioner was questioning P. Serafino’s missionary faculties, accorded to him by *Propaganda*. In the first years following his arrival in Luanda, P. Serafino founded two lay confraternities to organise the religious life of specific groups residing in Luanda, like women and enslaved Africans. Convinced that the Capuchin had no valid title to establish these institutions, Frei Miguel opened an inquiry into his missionary activity. The Jesuit contended that the privileges accorded by the Congregation were not to be considered legal, as they were not sanctioned by the

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<sup>308</sup> “Letter by P. Bernardo da Firenze to *Propaganda*”, Rome, 22.06.1705 in APF, *SOCG*, vol. 552, ff. 62-67.

<sup>309</sup> On the Portuguese Inquisition, see Giuseppe Marcocci and José Pedro Paiva, *História Da Inquisição Portuguesa (1536-1821)* (Lisboa: A Esfera dos Livros, 2013). On the Inquisition in Portuguese Africa and its role as a tool for social control in the colonies, see the introduction and bibliography in Toby Green, Philip J. Havik, and Francisco Ribeiro da Silva, eds., *African Voices from the Inquisition. Vol. 1: Trial of Crispina Peres of Cacheu, Guinea-Bissau (1646-1668)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

<sup>310</sup> “Letter by P. Serafino da Cortona to *Propaganda*”, Luanda, 05.06.1651 in MMA, vol. XI, pp. 41-44. In the African colonies, the *comissários* were appointed by the Tribunal of Lisbon, which was the inquisitorial office charged with the jurisdiction of the Atlantic possessions. See Green, Havik, and Silva, *African Voices from the Inquisition*, xxii–xxx.

king of Portugal, in virtue of the *Padroado* rights. By accusing the Capuchins of violating Portugal's patronage rights, Frei Miguel and other Portuguese members of the *Companhia* hoped to avoid the establishment of a competing order in Angola.<sup>311</sup> Despite the Jesuit attempt to make use of the *Inquisição* to get rid of the Capuchins, the growing trust they developed with Portuguese colonial authorities, later resulted in their recruitment as inquisitorial agents.

The first Capuchin *comissário* found in the sources is P. Luca da Caltanissetta, Prefect of the *Missio Antiqua* from December 1701 until his death in November 1702. Born in 1644 in the homonym Sicilian town, he arrived in Luanda on 6 December 1690 and started a long missionary activity in Kongo and the neighbouring kingdoms. With his companion P. Marcellino d'Atri, he tried to establish a mission in the kingdom of Makoko and reached the southern edge of nowadays Stanley Pool, a territory which had been visited by hardly any European by the end of the seventeenth century. P. Luca's apostolate is described in a manuscript report that he wrote for *Propaganda* once he was elected Prefect of the mission and inquisitorial *comissário* in 1701.<sup>312</sup> Although the report did not describe P. Luca's activity as a Prefect and inquisitorial agent, it provides information on his election. On 25 October 1701, P. Luca met the late Prefect P. Francesco da Pavia in the Duchy of Mbamba. Both the Capuchins were on their way to Luanda: P. Francesco, at the end of his Prefecture, had to make his return to Europe, whereas P. Luca, had to recover from an illness he contracted on mission. In his report, P. Luca described the moment in which the outgoing Prefect delivered him the documents certifying his appointment:

After he brought me to my house, the Reverend Father Prefect gave me the decree of the Sacred Congregation of *Propaganda* entrusting me the onerous responsibility of the Prefecture of these missions. He also gave me the necessary privileges granted by the Tribunal of the Holy Inquisition in Rome, and those of the Tribunal of the Holy Inquisition in Lisbon, which assigned me the office of General and Apostolic Commissioner of this tribunal in the kingdoms of Congo, Angola and *adiacentibus*.<sup>313</sup>

From the report, it appears clear that P. Luca obtained his appointment as *comissário* directly from the late Prefect, rather than from the Tribunal of Lisbon. A few years later, this prerogative granted to the Capuchins was confirmed by another Capuchin *comissário*, P. Lorenzo da Lucca. In 1713, P. Lorenzo wrote that in the city of Luanda, the Prefect of the mission was usually given the office of *comissário* and *qualificador*, which was also granted to the Rector of the Jesuits and the Prior of the

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<sup>311</sup> An undated letter by P. Giacinto da Vetralla, Prefect of Kongo between 1652 and 1657, refer to other attempts of the Jesuits to discredit the Capuchins. See APF, *SOCG*, vol. 250, ff. 193-194. In response to the opposition of the Jesuit *comissário*, P. Serafino and other Capuchins asked *Propaganda* to exempt the Apostolic missionaries from the action of the *Inquisição* and its agents, which was later granted by the Congregation. See, Saccardo, *Congo e Angola*, vol. I, p. 410.

<sup>312</sup> Frans Bontinck, *Diaire congolais (1690-1701) de Fra Luca da Caltanissetta* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1970), i-li.

<sup>313</sup> Bontinck, 226.

Discalced Carmelites.<sup>314</sup> Therefore, it can be assumed that the office of *comissário* had already been entrusted to P. Francesco da Pavia, Prefect after 1693, who transmitted it to P. Luca. Even though it is unclear if P. Francesco was the first Capuchin to be employed as *comissário*, it is not surprising that the Tribunal of Lisbon decided to rely on the Capuchin for this office. The Prefecture of P. Francesco represented one of the most appreciated by the Portuguese authorities. Besides playing a major role in the attempts of the Capuchins to end Kongo's civil war, his activity of mediation in the disputes that arose between the Governor and the episcopal Chapter was highly praised by Luanda's secular and religious authorities.<sup>315</sup>

Capuchin Prefects also enjoyed a certain degree of freedom to dispose of the office of *comissário*. In a document submitted to *Propaganda* around 1707, P. Antonio Maria da Firenze declared that, during his short Prefecture, P. Luca appointed him Superior of the Hospice of Massangano and "Commissioner of the Holy Office".<sup>316</sup> A similar case is provided by the above-mentioned P. Lorenzo da Lucca, Prefect of the mission since 1711. In 1716, the Tuscan Capuchin decided to join his companion P. Giuseppe da Modena to Massangano, "taking the opportunity to take a case in quality of Commissioner of the Holy Office".<sup>317</sup> When P. Lorenzo decided to go back to Luanda, in August 1716, he left the certificates of the *Inquisição* to P. Giuseppe, who had also been appointed Superior of the Hospice of Massangano. According to the Prefect, the frequency with which inquisitorial cases needed to be taken in Massangano required a commissioner on the spot.<sup>318</sup>

The consistent employment of Capuchin missionaries as agents of the Inquisition is not surprising. Since the start of their activities in the Kongo provinces, the Capuchins became renowned and feared for their harsh repression of unorthodox behaviour. This spanned from their critiques of the abusive colonial clergy to the adoption of extreme forms of violence to repress local cults and rites, like burning indigenous temples and idols or enslaving shamans and practitioners. Once established in Angola, the Capuchins' missionary method found the political and military support of the Portuguese, as already noted. Therefore, with its pervasive presence in the colony, the *Missio Antiqua* became a source of experienced and zealous manpower, available to expand the social control exercised by the

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<sup>314</sup> Bontinck, 307. The *qualificadores* were the inquisitorial agents charged with the control of publishing and required to add titles to the Index of forbidden books. For an overview on the different agents employed by the Portuguese Inquisition in the colonies, see Bruno Lopes, 'A Inquisição nas terras periféricas: comissários, notários e familiares do Santo Ofício em Montemor-o-Novo (sécs. XVI-XIX)', *Almansor*, no. 2 (2016): 11–69.

<sup>315</sup> On P. Francesco's diplomatic activity in Kongo, see Toso, 'Il contributo dei religiosi italiani al pacifico sviluppo dell'antico Congo (sec. XVII-XVIII)'. On his activity in Luanda, see "Letter by the *câmara* of Luanda to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 08.04.1698 in *MMA*, vol. XIV, pp. 446-447 and "Letter of the Chapter of Angola to *Propaganda*", Luanda, 18.04.1698 in *MMA*, vol. XIV, pp. 448-449.

<sup>316</sup> "Catalogue of the first Capuchin missionaries sent to Kongo and Angola by the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*", Rome, 1707 ca. in APF, *SC*, vol. 1, f. 125.

<sup>317</sup> P. Giuseppe da Modena, *Viaggio al Congo* (1723) in Biblioteca Estense Universitaria (Modena), *Fondo Estense*, alfa.n.09.07, p. 414.

<sup>318</sup> P. Giuseppe da Modena, *Viaggio al Congo*, p. 416



*Inquisição* in the colony. In turn, the Capuchins received a further institutional legitimisation for their repression, as the activity of P. Giuseppe da Modena shows.

Shortly after the departure of the Prefect, P. Giuseppe captured three shamans and publicly burned their objects of devotion in front of the church of the order. Not satisfied, the Capuchin sent the three men to Luanda with a letter for the Governor, requesting their shipment to Brazil as slaves. To justify his appeal to the secular authority to get rid of the three shamans, P. Giuseppe complained that religious authorities “set them free after one month of jail, so that they come back and behave worse than before”.<sup>319</sup> According to the missionary, this caused further social disorder and was the main reason behind a harsh dispute he had to face in his role of inquisitorial commissioner.

Between 1716 and 1717, P. Giuseppe incarcerated three women suspected of idolatry, burnt their houses, and confiscated their goods, which were redistributed to the poor people of Massangano. Immediately after the capture, the commissioner was confronted by Ignacio Salem, a soldier of the local garrison and relative of one of the prisoners, who broke into the Capuchin Hospice and demanded the liberation of the women, rejecting their accusations and claiming the property of the confiscated goods. When P. Giuseppe refused his allegations, Salem threatened to burn the properties of the Portuguese who denounced him. The Capuchin replied that he would have him reported to the *Capitão Mor* of Massangano, Luis Bautista Thomas for his threats and offences against an agent of the Inquisition. Hearing this, Salem ran away but was immediately captured by P. Giuseppe’s slaves and brought to the station house. The sight of African slaves capturing a soldier of the garrison provoked the reaction of the captain’s assistant and his soldiers, who immediately set the prisoner free and almost attacked the slaves of the Hospice, if not discouraged by a lay Capuchin brother. Protesting with the *Capitão Mor* about the threats received by an official of the Inquisitorial Commissioner, P. Giuseppe found the same hostility. After some of the soldiers involved came to the hospice to beg for the absolution of the inquisitorial excommunication, the captain arrested them. For this reason, P. Giuseppe reported the events to the Governor of Luanda, who eventually urged the captain to imprison his soldiers until they would have publicly apologised to the Commissioner.

The episode reported by P. Giuseppe da Modena clearly shows the complex reality faced by the inquisitorial agents in the Portuguese colonies. Behind religious denunciations often laid a set of economic and political interests that could rapidly mobilise and expose the highest ranks of colonial society. Rather than a secondary institution, the Inquisition was an important tool to maintain social order, which often required the support of central authorities, as P. Giuseppe’s appeal to the Governor illustrates. In their role as *comissários*, the Capuchins enthusiastically joined this institution and

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<sup>319</sup> P. Giuseppe da Modena, *Viaggio al Congo*, p. 418

expanded its jurisdiction in some very remote territories of the Portuguese empire. Nevertheless, a more detailed analysis of the Capuchins' activity as inquisitors still needs to be conducted in the archives of the *Inquisição de Lisboa*.<sup>320</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Portuguese restoration of Angola in 1648 forced the Capuchins sent by *Propaganda* to adapt their missionary activity to a new balance of powers in West Central Africa. Initially arrived in Luanda as ambassadors of Garcia II to obtain fairer peace conditions for the defeated kingdom of Kongo, the Apostolic missionaries understood that a good relationship with Portuguese colonial authorities was the only means to secure the survival of their mission. Therefore, they rapidly seduced the colonists of Angola and won the trust of their political authorities, despite some opposition coming from factions of the *Padroado* clergy, like the Jesuits.

On the one hand, the establishment of such a good relationship contributed to increase Garcia II's hostility towards the Capuchins. In the beginning, the *mani Kongo* hoped to make use of the Capuchins to emancipate the ecclesiastical structure of the kingdom from the *Padroado* and impose his dynasty over the royal throne. However, the re-establishment of the Portuguese in Angola nullified Garcia's attempts, through the Capuchins and with the support of *Propaganda*, to create an independent diocese in Kongo, which would have allowed him to use the Church as a source of legitimisation for centralising royal power. In this context, and with the Capuchins closer to Luanda, the *Missio Antiqua* became only another burden for Garcia's sovereignty and the often-violent orthodoxy of its missionaries a threat to the political stability of the kingdom.

On the other hand, the growing popularity of the Capuchins in Angola and the transfer of the mission's Prefecture to Luanda in 1654 made the members of the *Missio Antiqua* increasingly dependent on the Portuguese political and military authority for the evangelisation of the region. As a result, not only the Capuchins gradually aligned with Luanda's colonial policy, but they also contributed to the maintenance of Portuguese imperial power in the region by acting as intermediaries and peacekeepers with different African rulers. Their very good reputation in West Central Africa also contributed to safeguarding their mission from the struggle opposing the Portuguese Crown and *Propaganda* over the *Padroado* rights. Moreover, the appreciation received by the Italian Capuchins in Portugal and Angola contributed to their establishment in other regions of the empire, like West

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<sup>320</sup> A first survey in the archives of the Inquisition of Lisbon has revealed two cases respectively issued by issued by P. Lorenzo da Lucca and P. Giuseppe da Modena. See ATT, *Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor*, lv. 279, ff. 61-65v; lv. 284, ff. 41-62v.

Africa, São Tomé, and Brazil. Finally, their vast knowledge and on-the-ground experience of the African interior allowed them to be employed at the service of a crucial institution for maintaining social order in Portugal's colonial society: the *Inquisição*. Of the three religious orders entitled to represent the Portuguese Inquisition, the Capuchins were the only ones not to be nominated by the Crown, according to the *Padroado* rights.

In an article analysing “the contribution of the Italian missionaries to the peaceful development of the ancient kingdom of Kongo”, the Africanist Carlo Toso concluded that, given the significant interference of the Capuchins in the geopolitical affairs of the region, it was licit to ask whether they transgressed the Congregation's instructions not to intervene in temporal affairs.<sup>321</sup> Partly replying to that study, this chapter demonstrates that, despite their nature of Apostolic missionaries under *Propaganda*'s jurisdiction, the consideration reached by the Capuchins among Portuguese colonial authorities and the status they achieved in West Central Africa were comparable, if not superior, to that of imperial missionaries.

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<sup>321</sup> Toso, ‘Il contributo dei religiosi italiani al pacifico sviluppo dell’antico Congo (sec. XVII-XVIII)’.

## CONCLUSIONS

### “THE PERFECT MISSIONARIES”

Despite the consistent publication of sources produced by Capuchin missionaries, on the one hand, and the vast literature that used them to reconstruct the history of West Central Africa, on the other, the *Missio Antiqua*'s relationship with the Portuguese colonial empire has never been systematically analysed. This is probably the result of a broader negligence, only recently reviewed, by historians of the Early Modern Portuguese empire towards Africa, significantly understudied compared to regions like Brazil or the *Estado da India*. This is further evidenced by the almost complete lack of studies about the *Padroado Real*, and the challenges by the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*, in Africa. As a result, the role of African states like the kingdom of Kongo in the emergence of the post-Tridentine idea of papal universalism, that will peak in the foundation of *Propaganda* in 1622, has not received the attention it deserved. Finally, the remarkable *corpus* of published sources and studies produced by Italian scholars between the 1960s and the 1980s only superficially touched upon the participation of the Capuchins in the process of European colonisation in West Central Africa. Rather, this scholarship too often remained entangled in nationalistic views, which highlighted the still important contribution of the missionaries in documenting the interior of the African continent and collecting information about its peoples. However, these scholars overlooked not only the crucial role of the missionaries in legitimising the power of African rulers, later pointed out by authors such as Anne Hilton and Richard Gray, but also their ties with the Portuguese colonial authorities. Praising the uninterested and zealous activity of the Italian Capuchins, one of these scholars underlined how they were appreciated by both African and Portuguese authorities, and mentioned that, in 1749, the *Conselho Ultramarino* referred to them as “the perfect missionaries”.<sup>322</sup> Nevertheless, the reason why the main institution for the administration of the Portuguese colonial empire moved such a compliment to the Capuchins remained unexplored.

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<sup>322</sup> Carlo Toso, ‘Il contributo dei religiosi italiani al pacifico sviluppo dell’antico Congo (sec. XVII-XVIII)’, *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell’Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente*, no. 2 (1992): 193.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I highlight the crucial role played by the *Padroado* jurisdiction in the expansion and development of the Portuguese colonial empire in the system of international relations created by the Treaty of Tordesillas. Consequently, I framed the origin and early programme of *Propaganda Fide* not only as a challenge to the monopoly exercised by the Portuguese Crown over the evangelisation process and the spiritual sphere, but also as a concrete threat towards the structure of the Portuguese empire. Thus, I argue for the necessity of understanding the diplomatic struggle between *Propaganda* and the *Padroado Real* as a political, rather than a simply spiritual, conflict. This perspective allows to grasp the challenges faced by the Capuchins in their attempt to establish the *Missio Antiqua*, as well as the reasons underlying the initial hostility of the Portuguese authorities towards them.

Chapter Two stresses the important contribution of the kingdom of Kongo to the ideological awakening of forces that led to the creation of *Propaganda* and, consequently, of the Capuchin mission. The attempts undertaken by Kongo to establish independent diplomatic relations with the Holy See aimed at emancipating the kingdom by overcoming the *Padroado* and the control it exercised on its ecclesiastical structure. Rather than a secondary institution, the Church's hierarchy constituted an important source for the legitimisation of the *mani Kongos'* authority, as well as a means for supporting the centralisation of their power over the kingdom. However, the monopoly exercised by the Portuguese Crown over the appointment and transport of religious men, as well as on the concession of most of their subsidies and revenues, turned these people into crucial allies to support the process of colonisation in the region. As a result, the sovereigns of Kongo increasingly attempted to claim their right to control the ecclesiastical structure of their kingdom.

In the Holy See, Kongo's instances found the support of individuals, like Monsignor Vives, who crucially contributed to the foundation of *Propaganda* and its early commitment to the evangelisation of Kongo. Initially failing in overcoming the boundaries posed by the patronage rights, *Propaganda* exploited the conjuncture of the Portuguese *Restauração* to finally launch its *Missio Antiqua*. In 1645, the arrival of the first missionaries in open violation of the *Padroado* drew the opposition of Portugal's royal administration against the Capuchins. In the third chapter, I focus on the turbulent early years of the mission, and I demonstrate how the Apostolic missionaries actively contributed to Garcia II's attempts to emancipate Kongo's church from Portuguese control. The diplomatic efforts of the Capuchins in providing the African kingdom with a separate diocese and a bishop independent from the *Padroado* explain the Portuguese suspects towards them. Therefore, I argue that *Propaganda's* plan to provide Kongo with an Apostolic administrator with episcopal powers represents one of the earliest attempts of the Congregation to break the monopoly of the Portuguese Crown on the colonial church. Overlooking this failed attempt, historians generally considered the

creation of the three dioceses in East Asia, administered by the Congregation's Apostolic vicars, as the starting point of the diplomatic conflict between *Propaganda* and the *Padroado*.

The restoration of Portuguese Angola in 1648 completely nullified the attempt of the Congregation and the Capuchins to penetrate the jurisdiction of the *Padroado Real*. As a result, the Capuchins were forced to adapt to a new balance of powers in West Central Africa. This new geopolitical scenario was characterised by the political and military supremacy of Luanda, which also monopolised the means of transport and communications of the missionaries with Rome. However, the Capuchins soon realised the advantages represented by Portuguese logistic and military support for the evangelisation of the region. In the fourth and final chapter, I describe the substantial shift of the mission from Kongo to Angola, occurred in the 1650s, as the Capuchin response to the restoration of 1648. Moreover, I argue that the adaptation of the Capuchins to this new scenery increasingly entangled their missionary activity with the Portuguese colonial power. This manifested in a growing dependence of the Capuchins on the colonisers' political and military authority for the evangelisation of the African interior during the second half of the seventeenth century. Consequently, their presence in the region was gradually perceived as an expression of Portuguese colonial rule by Africans. Finally, the zeal and humbleness of the Capuchins contributed to their rising popularity among Portuguese colonial authorities. As a result, they became increasingly employed as intermediaries between Luanda and African rulers, and later as commissioners for the Inquisition of Lisbon. From these positions, the Capuchins significantly contributed to the sustainment of Portugal's empire and to the maintenance of Portuguese colonial rule in West Central Africa.

Upon their arrival in Kongo, the Capuchins represented one of the biggest concerns of the Portuguese in their attempt to recover such a crucial region for the sustainment of their empire. Although they never directly showed hostility towards Portuguese authorities – indeed they were very well received since their first arrival in Lisbon – they did act as agents of the Sacred Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* in its attempt to claim jurisdictional supremacy over the propagation of the faith worldwide. Rather than a casual group of preachers, *Propaganda* specifically chose the Italian Capuchins for their loyalty to the Congregation and entrusted them to bring the “spirit of Rome” to Africa, as its first secretary Francesco Ingoli would put it.<sup>323</sup> However, after 1648 the Capuchins rapidly emerged as incredibly adaptive and persuasive missionaries, who managed to overturn their relationship with the Portuguese empire, as well as the way they were perceived by imperial authorities. In slightly more than fifty years, the Capuchins changed their status of dangerous intruders into that of pious religious men, highly praised, desired, and considered by Portuguese

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<sup>323</sup> Fabio Tosi, *Relazione delle quattro parti del mondo* (Roma: Urbaniana University Press, 1999), 64.

authorities, both in Lisbon and in Angola. Their rigorous lifestyle and indefatigable commitment to the evangelisation of the Africans overturned the perception that the Portuguese had of them. From being strangers questioning the Crown's rights and penetrating its *Conquista*, they achieved a position in the colonial society that was absolutely comparable to that of the "nationals", as the clergy loyal to the *Padroado* was often defined.<sup>324</sup> Initially considered as foreign bodies, they were absorbed by the Portuguese empire and turned into perfectly functional bolts in that "nebula of power" that characterised and maintained Portugal's colonial empire.<sup>325</sup>

To conclude, despite their status of agents at the service of the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*, the Capuchins secured the survival of their *Missio Antiqua* by gaining the trust and approval of Portuguese authorities, eventually acting also as agents, if not servants, of the empire.

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<sup>324</sup> Županov, *Disputed Mission*, 95.

<sup>325</sup> Bethencourt, 'Political Configurations'.

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