

THE EMBASSY OF DAOMÉ IN SALVADOR (1750): DIPLOMATIC PROTOCOLS AND THE POLITICAL AFFIRMATION OF A STATE IN EXPANSION IN WEST AFRICA

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In the last decades, researchers interested in studying transatlantic relations during the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries have deepened the debate about the role of Africans not only as captives, but also as agents and partners in the business that involved the slave trade. The study of economic connections, communication networks and political negotiations has revealed new aspects of the functioning of the vast system of transcontinental relations and the role of diplomatic contacts is an essential element in this regard.

The practice of negotiations amongst Africans and Europeans was relatively common during the centuries of the Old Regime, in Africa or in Europe. However, not many diplomatic missions took place in Brazilian soil. The first one coming from West Africa began on 09/29/1750, when emissaries from the Guinean Coast were received by the Viceroy of the State of Brazil in Salvador. The event, seen at that time as unusual, drew the attention of the writer José Freire Monterroio Mascarenhas (1670-1760), who described it in detail in the booklet entitled “*Relaçam da embaxada que o poderoso Rey de Angome Kiay Chiri Brocon, senhor dos dilatadíssimos sertões de Guiné mandou ao illustríssimo e excellentíssimo Senhor D. Luiz Peregrino de Ataíde, conde de Atouguia... pedindo a amizade, e aliança do muito Alto, e Poderoso Senhor Rei de Portugal, nosso senhor*”, published in the year of 1751, which will be the central object of this article. Original copies of this document are preserved in the collection of the Reserved of the National Library of Portugal and in the collection of the Library of the Historical and Geographical Institute of Brazil.

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The diplomatic mission and the report that has been made of it are relatively well known among Brazilian specialists. In summary, it is known that it came specifically from ancient Dahomey, present Republic of Benin, and that was composed of an ambassador of name Churumá Nadir, two representatives of the *daomeana* elite designated as *alcatis*, an interpreter who knew the Portuguese language, personal servants and four ten-year-old girls – three of whom were later handed over to the viceroy as a gift and sent to the royal family in Lisbon. The emissary carried a sealed letter and two iron-plated boxes containing gifts, which in later correspondence from Portugal we know were woven. On the last page of the booklet, the author adds: “Send out the voice that also made the Count of a hundred Negroes humble to serve him. It may be that the common people were mistaken with the ship’s loading, in which the ambassador came from Angome” (Mascarenhas 1751, 11).

In the passage, the starting point of the mission is confirmed, the kingdom of *Angome*, which is one of the forms, alongside Danxomé, Angomé, Dahome or Dahomey, to designate the political unit formed from the unification carried out by the group *ajá-fon*. The excerpt also draws attention to the main motivation of the embassy: the proposal of friendship and alliance sent by the “Monarch of all Gentle Nations” to the “Great Lord of the West the King of Portugal” was directly related to the slave trade in “Dilated Backwoods of Guinea”.

The context

Although the movement of slaves between the African and Portuguese coasts has been frequent, the event considered here marks a double reconfiguration, social and economic, triggered by changing interest in the geopolitics of the international slave trade that should be pointed out to clarify its historical significance.

The first displacement concerns the expansion of the business developed by Portuguese-Brazilian traffickers on the African coast and the gradual transfer, from 1680 onwards, of contacts with local business intermediaries from the Angolan areas of Luanda and Cabinda to the Gulf of Benin, which returned to form an area of contacts after a few decades of the loss of the Fort of São Jorge da Mina to the Dutch in 1637. The base of operations began to be made from the Fort of St. John Baptist de Ajudá, parallel to the business maintained by the Dutch, French and the British in their respective coastal settlements, the forts of Djékin, Fort Royal Saint Louis

of Gregoy and Fort Williams (Ferreira 2010). Without trade exclusivity, negotiations always depended on the unstable balance of European state-owned trading companies and agents competing with both *iorubá* (Oyó and Onin) and *ajá-fon* African peoples, which disputed space and local hegemony (Soumonni 2001, 37-48).

The second shift is regarding, in Portuguese America, the gradual transfer of investments from the Northeast to the Southeast and Central West after the discovery of the gold mines from the 17th to the 18th century and the subsequent interest in the slave work force in those places, from which the increase of the presence of business men of the “gross treatment” originating from Rio de Janeiro and Bahia in the commerce of captives and tobacco, in conformity or in absentia of the Metropolis (Carrara; Araujo; Cavalcante 2011). The port of Salvador was the habitual point of passage for the “Indian career”, being an important point for the reception of slaves, and for the exit of tobacco and sugar, including, even after transferring the headquarters of the government to Rio de Janeiro, in 1763, gold export exclusivity (Rios; Mello and Silva 2011, 3).

The attachment of the Dahomey embassy to the interests of the Bahian merchants was such that, according to Mascarenhas, Ambassador Churumá Nadir, the *alcatis* and other crew members of the entourage arrived on board a ship owned by Luiz Coelho, a great merchant from Bahia, whose captain was Manuel Luiz da Costa. At this point, the research developed by Pierre Verger has for decades demonstrated, on the basis of abundant documentation, how much the Bahian commercial elite had political and legal instruments with the local representatives of the crown, including the viceroy, and even with the Overseas Council, to claim exclusivity in the trade with the Guinean Coast, based on the decisions and actions taken by the *Bureau of the Common Good or the Commerce Bureau of Bahia* (Verger 1987, 96).

Also on the African side, significant political-economic reshaping is also observed. They are associated with internal reconfigurations of the coastal peoples involved in the transcontinental trade circuit, the strengthening of increasingly organized militarized states for taxation, human predation, and the slave trade, among which stand out in the Benin Gulf of the first half of the eighteenth century, the states of Hueda (Uidá), Allada (Ardra), Onim, Popó and the most powerful of them, Dahomey.

The political assertion of Dahomey occurred in the last decades of the seventeenth century, when the microstate, controlled by the leopard clan (*akhosu*), had expanded its sphere of hegemony from the seat of government set in the Abomey palace – located around 80km to the North of the coast. In

the course of the eighteenth century, Dahomey gradually took on the traits of a state with a broad sphere of political influence, centralized, tributary, articulated to the international slave trade, and exercised control in areas of the coast where the European forts mentioned above were located (Soumonni 2001; Monroe 2014, 13-25). The occupation of Uidá's microstate in 1727 allowed the Dahomey people to gain direct access to the lucrative slave trade and to the commerce of tobacco, firearms, and aguardiente. The strategic importance of the coast of Uidá was widely recognized, as can be seen from the information recorded in a manuscript written in Spanish and preserved in the National Library of Lisbon, identified by the general title of "News of the Kingdom of Benin", where we can have the following evaluation:

The port of Judah, which also takes its name from the kingdom, is that of its trade with the Portuguese... Its commerce with the Portuguese, the English, and the French, has the greatness of the natives and the slave of the Tomanarman (sic) firearms, they have applied carefully the exercise of always being in war with their confinants, whence they get the slaves they trade (Salvadorini 1972, 24).

The period focused on this study, the first half of the eighteenth century, corresponds roughly to the moment of emergence of Dahomey as a local power. This occurred during the government of Akaba (1685-1708), Agadja (1708-1740) and especially of Tegbessu (1740-1774), who sent the embassy analyzed here. It is noted in this period of time the formation of a structure of government from the palatial administration and the establishment of local chiefs, the establishment of rules of succession of the rulers and the organization of a regular troop of combatants that was completed in 1729 with the introduction of a warrior elite called *Ahosi* or *the Mino* – praised in the European reports and object of admiration with the nickname, eminently Eurocentric, of "Dahomey's Amazon" (Fuglestad 1977, 497-505; Diamond 1996, 132-133).

The moment of the Dahomean military expansion coincides with that of the Portuguese-Brazilian reinsertion in the Gulf of Guinea. In 1680, the first instructions of the Portuguese crown were made so that a strong fort and factories could be created there, so as to intensify trade in the region, and from 1721 the completion of the construction of the Fort of Ajuda. Upon determination of the Overseas Council, all resulting jurisdiction, administration, charges and rights would fall to the General Commercial Board of Brazil, which could freely appoint its respective administrative staff, with the exception of the governors. The area was thus outside the

sphere of influence of the factories of Sao Tome and Principe and Cacheu, being controlled by the merchants coming from Brazil, mainly of Bahia, being on the other hand the responsibility of the viceroys in Salvador to make the payment of the garrison and to cost the maintenance of the establishment. Soon factories were founded in Popó, Apa, Calabar and Cameroon, to where Brazilian ships carried tobacco and aguardiente, and from where they brought slaves (Tavares 1999, 24-25).

In the 1730s-1740s, Dahomey's expansionist policy made it difficult for Europeans to stay on the coast, although from the outset Agadja and Tegnassu were willing to maintain good relations with the whites and to take control of the sources of captive provision. The problem concerned, specifically, the terms of the negotiations and who would influence Ajudá (Cornevin 1962, 101-111). In the year 1738, the suspicion that João Basílio, the director of the establishment, provided veiled support to the conquered peoples of the neighborhood led him to be summoned to appear before Agadja, and to be temporarily held prisoner, until Velho de Godoi replaced him in 1740. Three years later, rebels from Uidá entered Ajudá and, upon being urged by the same João Basílio to surrender, reacted with violence, partially destroying the installations, they resisted the attacks and ended up blowing up the loft and burning the fort (Tavares 1999, 39-40; Norris 1790, 39-48).

The episode resulted in the arrest and subsequent expulsion of the Portuguese-Brazilian authorities, who were summoned to leave the Dahomey and forced to return to Brazil. Negotiations were resumed with Father Martinho da Cunha Barbosa, who found shelter in the French fort, but his death in 1746 created a new situation of tension when representatives of Dahomey, in default of the Portuguese authorities, sought to impose someone from the trust of Tegnassu, named Francisco Nunes Pereira, in the direction of the commercial establishment.

Following the formal demand of the Count of Galveas, who then served as viceroy, in a letter addressed to the ruler of Dahomey, Filipe José de Gouveia was sworn in as the new director of the fort, and the other, considered usurper after being delivered by the Dahomeans to the authorities, was convicted of a crime of sedition, brought to Salvador and sentenced on 03/03/1750 to public scourge, to the perpetual deportation in the prison of San Felipe de Benguela and had the goods confiscated in favor of the Real Estate. As for Tegnassu, his involvement in the plot of the events raised serious doubts about the viability of the negotiations in the fields of Dahomey. That is why an embassy of Tegnassu was sent to Salvador (Tavares 1999, 44-45),

in an attempt to justify the ties that united him to Portugal and to see the tobacco and slave trade progress.

The ambassador

We owe to Pierre Verger the first formal analysis of the document and the context in which it was drafted. Throughout the decades of 1960-1980, that experienced Africanist examined in detail the administrative documentation and narrative of the 17th-19th centuries produced in Africa and Brazil, recovering a very vivid picture of economic exchanges, political and cultural rights of both sides of the Atlantic (Verger 1964; 1969; 1987). In a chapter of his best-known work, "*Fluxo e refluxo do tráfico de escravos entre o Golfo do Benin e a Bahia de Todos os Santos*", the Dahomean embassy was interpreted in the broader set of Portuguese-Brazilian diplomatic relations with the microstates of Lower Guinea.

The French researcher does not attribute more credibility to the information of the African part of the "*Relaçam da Embayxada...*", considering them "somewhat fanciful" (Verger 1987, 258). Starting with the exchange of the ruler's name, from Tegbessu to Kiay Chiri Brocon; and by the location of the kingdom, which did not conform, as it is said, to the River of the Good Signs or to the kingdoms of Bonsoló and Inhaque; much less was it West of the Gulf of Benin, but yes to the South. Moreover, no mention is made of the Portuguese fort São João Baptista de Ajudá, nor to the circumstances that involved its destruction, in 1743. It also seems to him to be unreliable particulars of the protocol of reception given to the ambassador and the party he wore when compared with the later African embassies sent to Salvador or to Lisbon (Verger 1987, 259).

However, Verger does not question the historicity of the diplomatic mission. We know that her goal was to restore tranquility in relations between the ruler Dahomean Tegbessu and the Luso-Brazilians after the dramatic events that led to the destruction of Fort of São João Baptista de Ajuda and the interruption of traffic. The visit of the emissaries is dealt with in the correspondence between the viceroy Luigi Peregrino de Ataide, the Overseas Council and the representatives of D. José I, shortly after the return of the Dahomeans. In a letter dated October 21, 1751, the Secretary of State confirmed that he had delivered the package of cloths offered in the royal palace and that the three female slaves had been sent to the queen's room. The craft ends in this way: "His Majesty strongly recommends to Your

Excellency to maintain the best possible harmony with Dahomey, for the conservation of Ajudá fortress and from there to trade in slaves to maintain this state of Brazil” (Verger 1987, 263).

Concerning the inaccuracies of the booklet, it is very likely that they are related to the narrative genre in which it is inserted. The subjects, the shape and writing style of the eleven printed pages from “*Relaçam da Embayxada...*” fall within the genre of popular literature works of wide circulation in the eighteenth century called *string literature*. The author, José Freire de Monterroio Mascarenhas, had a solid humanistic background and extensive experience in international affairs. He directed the *Gazeta de Notícias* in Lisbon for some forty years and was one of the most prolific writers of popular texts on matters of general interest and current affairs (Ramos 2003): such as peace, battles and wars; births and deaths of princes; lives of saints, miracles and miraculous apparitions; or subjects that could be considered even more exceptional, fantastic or exotic, such as the appearance of monsters, the incidence of earthquakes and other natural disasters, or the occurrence of unusual and curious events, as seems to have been the case of the African embassy in Brazil.

We are tempted to consider Mascarenhas’s inaccuracies partly to the little knowledge of Dahomey in the international scene of the mid-eighteenth century, and partly to the little care taken in characterizing the subjects dealt with in popular pamphlets, where form prevailed over content. The description of the type of dress used by the ambassador during the audience contributes to highlight the exoticism of the event:

The emissary was dressed in a scarlet cloth, all trimmed with coarse gold lace, with a spandex of saya as of a woman, without cox, to which they give the name of Malaya, also of the same cloth, all garnished with fringes of silk, short humsendal with pendant tassels, and a cloak with a large tail, like real clothing, furtacores fabric, lined with white satin with different color lists. Magnificent turban, and precioso, and the golden borzequins (Mascarenhas 1750, 9).

It is accepted that the first impression raised by this description is strange, leaving in doubt a question about the equivalence between representation and the actual existence of the character. For the first mental image suggested by the description is that of someone related to the Muslim world, and not to the emissaries sent by the later African rulers, who usually presented themselves in brief suits – considered unsuitable to European standards, and ended up receiving Western clothing. It is noteworthy,

incidentally, that this rule was broken by the Dahomean ambassador. At that moment, according to Mascarenhas, the viceroy's representatives offered him a Portuguese gown to be worn on the day of the hearing; he refused, insisting that he appear publicly dressed according to the costume of his country (Mascarenhas 1750, 7).

Details such as these may suggest the existence of different protocols in the diplomatic activity practiced in international conventions designed by representatives of countries in Europe and Africa. Because, despite the low frequency of events mediated by individuals from these two continents, diplomacy was widely used by leaders of West Africa as a valid means of conflict resolution, negotiation of peace agreements and declarations of war. The feature was very frequent in the eighteenth century; centralized states or in centralization phase, such as the Confederation Asante, the Hausa Sultanate and the kingdom of Oyo, among others (Smith 1973, 604-605), practiced it.

For what concerns directly to this study, it is known that an important part of institutional innovations occurred in Dahomey in the Tegbessu government period (Le Hérissé 1911, 40; Cornevin 1962, 107-111). It is credited to this ruler the introduction of a significant part of the palatial administration of Abomey, from models borrowed from the powerful neighboring kingdom of Oyo – to which it paid tribute. Hence it would have been the origin of the *ilarin* function (*ilari, lari*), name given to the royal messengers and emissaries in charge to send messages to the Europeans on the coast and spy on the activities contrary to government interests, and inspect the actions of kept heads under juice Dahomean (Smith 1973, 604; Smith 1989, 12). By having the partially shaved head with long hair and twisted on one side only, they were known as “half-heads” (*mi-tête, halfheads*) (Norris 1790, 103; Dalzel 1793, XX). They had the right to carry a cane or stick that was the bigger symbol of the power of the rulers, what legitimated them as ambassadors (Mendes 2002, 272).

Still, the visual description of an *ilarin* does not correspond to the portrait given by Mascarenhas of the ambassador Churuma Nadir. In this case, it is probable that, because of the importance of the mission, Tegbessu has resorted to the services of a high official of his confidence. In describing the audience with the Count of Atoguia, the “*Relaçam da embayxada...*” attributes to the African the following words: “And making in his council election of my person by the fidelity, zeal, and secret, which in me has recognized, made me gather from the campaign, from where I served him, to send me to Brazil...” (Mascarenhas 1750, 10).

It may be that the ambassador here considered belonged to the group of merchants who frequented the coast of Guinea and, despite the Atlantic traffic, continued with the usual business of intracontinental traffic. About forty of these Muslim merchants were seen by the English captain William Snelgrave in 1732 at the palace of Agadja, and as many were at the court of Tegbessu when Captain Robert Norris passed by there in 1776. They were black or dark in robes long, turb against the Turkish fashion and sandals or shoes to the Moroccan style, and received the name of *Mullahs* or *Mallays* (Malaysians). They came from the borders of Morocco, knew how to write just as the whites did, negotiated tobacco, spirits and other articles of general interest, were skilled manufacturers of goat and sheep skin artifacts with which they had cartons and storage containers cannon gunpowder (Snelgrave 1735, 92-93; Norris 1790, 117; Law 1990, 225). The use of Muslims in the bureaucracy of these expanding states on the Atlantic coast, a fact confirmed in historian Nehemia Levtzion's (1968, 181-188) research, suggests that the occurrence of Muslim emissaries in the service of Dahomey is an acceptable hypothesis, and Mascarenhas' description of ambassador Churuma Nadir was not entirely the result of the writer's fictional creation, but rather a likelihood – even if it is strange and exotic in the eyes of European and/or Portuguese-Brazilian readers.

The audience

The only publication dedicated exclusively to the examination of the contents of the "*Relaçam da embayxada...*" was elaborated by the researcher Silvia Hunold Lara, who is an outstanding specialist in subjects related to the transatlantic traffic and the forms of organization of the captives in the Brazilian manor world. Her reading of the document was directed to the narrative strategies and sub-understandings of the text, which led her to perceive a contrast between the usual forms of embassy descriptions and what is described in the booklet – which ends up evidencing certain "misadventures of the Luso-Bahian elite" (Lara 2001, 156).

In highlighting the novelty of the events surrounding the African embassy, "a great novelty, never seen in Brazil" (Mascarenhas 1750, 6), Mascarenhas would have resorted to a series of expedients to accentuate, in an apparent tone of awe and admiration, the exoticism of the meeting between representatives of such different peoples. The eighteenth-century writer attributed to the ambassador grandiloquent attitudes,

overly solemn gestures, and exaggerated pride in different situations involving host hospitality offerings, aspects valued in Silvia Lara's analysis.

According to the report of Mascarenhas, soon after arriving, Churuma Nadir and the rest were conducted in palanquin and chairs the College of the Jesuits, place with excellent accommodation, reserved for distinguished visitors – like the viceroys of India. Soon a special guard was set up at the porch, and the priests could not persuade him to give up this offer, which seemed to them unnecessary, on the grounds that he would be ill served if he rejected it (Mascarenhas 1750, 6). While awaiting formal reception at the palace, he was invited by officers of the viceroy to stroll through Salvador and enjoy his monuments, but he refused to do so on that occasion, "*but reserved it after having his first audience*" (7). Another negative is manifested by the time he was offered gala clothing of Portuguese fashion. To crown the series of misunderstandings, the instant that Atouguia Count offered him a seat in a richly ornamented chair, "*he disliked, saying that the seat had been made for a prolonged conversation, and thus the ambassadors were not given in their court, as the message is always brief*" (9). Upon returning from the palace, he gave 20 coins to the slaves helping, contrary to the prohibition of military officers that slave could not accept gifts, by the argument that "*no one had jurisdiction to limit Princes' actions*" (11). In the face of this evidence, Silvia Lara is of the opinion that Jose Freire Monterroio Mascarenhas could have, through the report, found an opportunity to, in an ironic tone, allow a glimpse of criticism to the viceroy and the court in Bahia. From where she concludes: "It is possible that, in Mascarenhas's account, otherness has been politically instrumented against Atouguia" (Lara 2001, 164).

Granted that such an interpretation is correct, the question remains: what are the probable motives of the irony and criticism of the behavior of that nobleman of the royal household, a high dignitary of the Portuguese empire? Moreover, whatever the answer is, you have that, in this way of reading the information in "*Relaçam of the embayxada ...*", the gestures, attitudes and expressions of the African belong solely to the level of literary creation, as a rhetorical device to achieve the European representative. What if these gestures, titles and expressions are in conformity with the protocol and ceremonial of diplomatic relations then in use in Dahomey?

Concerning the first question, we agree that Mascarenhas's account was developed in an ironic tone, and the reason for this is reviewed in the passage in which Mascarenhas informs the Count of Atouguia, in order to impress the newcomer, prolonged to his stay in Salvador until October 22th, when the anniversary of King João V was celebrated with great joy,

unaware that he had died three months before, on July 31th (Mascarenhas 1750, 6). Therefore, the Viceroy's plan to accentuate the power of the Portuguese sovereign in style could be read as a resounding misconception, a gaffe.

However, by shifting attention to the African representative, a different picture can be drawn. With or without intention, Mascarenhas describes the Dahomean ambassador not as an arrogant, reticent, or overconfident character, but as one who is concerned with properly fulfilling the mission assigned to him. He was “well made” and “noble figure”, he was sympathetic and thanked formally when invited to meet Salvador, which he did shortly after fulfilling the diplomatic commitment. During the hearing, when he saw and distinguished the Count of Atouguia,

he first courted the Portuguese woman with three barks, made with much air, and immediately, in the manner of his country, prostrating on the ground with arms outstretched, and hands one on the other, and clutching their fingers, like chestnuts: ceremony with which in Angome they use to venerate their Reys; thus indicating the taste with which this prostration makes them (Mascarenhas 1750, 9).

With due proportions, the scenes depicted during the Dahomean embassy reveal aspects of two highly hierarchical societies with monarchic powers surrounded by prestige and religious ballast, endowed with well-established rituals and signs of dissent. In the case of Portugal, socio-cultural conventions were guided by the principles of Christian civility, Greco-Roman humanism, and the aristocratic ethics of the European courts of the *Old Regime*. As for Dahomey, these emanations of the ancestral traditions, the rituals and ceremonies directed to the rulers and of a certain palatial style in the then developing in the Palace of Abomey (Antongini; Spini 1999; Monroe 2010; Monroe; Janzen 2014).

Indeed, in the area of the Arab cultural background of the Gulf of Benin, where societies tended to be regulated by states with a certain territorial unity, power was highly centralized and redistributed at different levels according to a pyramidal system of dependency. With minor variations, this power was monarchical, hereditary, and extended to the most diverse spheres: political, military, judicial, economic, social, cultural. The ruler possessed all power, and exercised it in all those spheres, as absolute master. His figure was surrounded by special care, interdictions and taboos, which led some to consider him a “god-king” (Palau-Martí 1964). The exceptional reach of the authority of the Daumen rulers transpires in qualifying employees

to distinguish its common people: *axosu* (the one who pays a debt, who is debtor), *dokonun* (the owner of all the assets, all the riches), *Semedo* (being without equal, which has), *dada* (which has everything). Thus, in the public sphere and in the private sphere, the power of these rulers was the epicenter of the other members of society, legitimizing them, protecting them, and finally radiating through them (Kossou 1981, 86-87).

Such absolute, unlimited power demanded recognition, reverence, and unreserved obedience. The forms of manifestation of political and social hierarchies jumped to foreigners' eyes that were in Dahomey during the eighteenth century. From the ethnographic records kept by slave traders, officers in charge of the direction of European strong or missionaries who were there under the pretext of converting them, as William Snelgrave in 1732, Robert Norris in 1776, Archibald Dal zel in 1793 and Vicente Pires Ferreira in 1798, practically the same information is repeated. Reception to foreigners was done according to fixed, ritualized procedures. When they were received on the coast by officers or ministers, the new arrivals were led by porters in hammocks or mats, accompanied by a large cortege composed of warriors carrying muskets and rifles and executing successive salvos of shots or alternating movements simulating war, to the sound of and their dances, were then formally received under colorful umbrellas where they were invited to drink fresh water and "water of life", palm wine or other kinds of alcoholic drinks, which were widely ingested in honor of the monarch. The illustrious visitors, upon entering Abomey, were greeted with cannon shots, and then taken to rooms reserved for the "whites" (Snelgrave 1735, 32; Norris 1790, 97).

On one occasion in which the Bahian missionary Vicente Pires Ferreira was received by some elite members of the "headwaters" of a community, everyone ate and drank brandy, but when they toasted to his king reported quietly that he was very well, although alerting they were saying so in such a tone due to the fact that the guest was not properly dressed: "this ceremony, why we were not decently dressed, and therefore, it was a crime to speak in you high in the name of the king, without us being dressed as we should to our state" (Ferreira 1957, 28).

The rules here considered seem to have been the same ones that guided the behavior of Ambassador Churumá Nadir in Salvador, rigid norms, aimed at the enhancement of the figure of the ruler of Dahomey. Vicente Pires Ferreira points out another significant aspect of these shared codes: when the king drank and saluted, the *headwaters* fell, and soon they also saluted the King of Portugal, but this time without repeating the prostration (Ferreira 1957, 30). From where it can be concluded that in carrying out the

double ceremonial gesture of greeting, European and Dahomean, before the Count of Atouguia, Churumá Nadir showed the magnificence of his natural master. In the palace of Abomey, the ruler's titles were always stated by speakers with low head, and, in his presence all knelt and kissed the floor three times (Ferreira 1957, 53). When they presented themselves to the highest dignitaries of the government, they proceeded to the same greeting that the ambassador presented at the hearing: "a handshake followed by three thumbs, a term and a sign by which they show respect". But the temporary condition of the visitor did not guarantee the foreigner the right to sit, standing all the time (Ferreira 1957, 53).

Final Considerations

We hope to have shown that the document used here as a reference for analysis contains pertinent information not only on the Bahian court and the Portuguese-Brazilian universe, but also on the society from which the Africans came. This evidence tended to be little explored by Brazilian scholars, whose attention was directed to the scene of the encounter and to the identification of standard behaviors established in Portuguese America. Our work aimed to highlight certain traits of the characters portrayed by José Freire Monterroio Mascarenhas, in order to broaden the angle of observation on the different diplomatic protocols followed by the respective representatives of monarchies in Europe and Africa. We also sought to underline how much various elements seemingly exotic and fanciful are plausible when viewed from the social references, political and cultural rights of the people *ajá-fon* of the Gulf of Benim.

To conclude, it should be said that this first settlement of the Gulf of Genoa succeeded seven others, three of Dahome (1795, 1805, 1818), three of Onim (now Lagos) (1770, 1807, 1822), and one of Ardra (Porto Novo) (1810), and a great deal of correspondence with the colonial and metropolitan authorities. The Brazilian interest in the negotiations with these commercial partners, in turn, tended to decrease in the first decade of the nineteenth century, when the continuity of the traffic was put in question by England (Rodrigues 2008). In fact, the last African diplomatic mission took place between 1822 and 1823, and King Ajan of Onim, through his emissary, Lieutenant Colonel Manoel Alves Lima, was the first ruler to express support and recognize the independence of Brazil (Guizelin 2015).

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an interpretation of the booklet “*Relaçam da embayxada que o poderoso Rey de Angome Kiay Chiri Brocon, senhor dos dilatadíssimos sertões de Guiné mandou ao illustrissimo e excellentissimo Senhor D. Luiz Peregrino de Ataíde, conde de Atouguia...*” written in 1751. The context of its composition, relations between Portugal, Brazil, and the kingdom of Dahomey are studied, and two questions develop from what the document portrays: 1) the identity of the ambassador of Dahomey; 2) the meaning of some protocol gestures of the ambassador Dahomean in the court of the viceroy of Portugal.

KEYWORDS

Brazil/Africa Relations; Diplomatic Protocols; Kingdom of Dahomey.

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