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Nwamatibejana- Roberto Zixaxa. The man who lived twice.

“No meu caso, preservei o meu passado no nome que me restou. Os filhos e netos que terei nesta ilha não negarão este nome africano: Zixaxa. Sou feliz com esta minha pequena eternidade”. (Mia Couto. *O Bebedor de Horizontes*, 2018, p.342)

"In my case, I have preserved my past in the name I had left. The children and grandchildren I will have on this island will not deny this African name: Zixaxa. I'm happy with this tiny eternity of mine." (Mia Couto. *The Drinker of Horizons*, 2018, p.342)

Introduction

Nwamatibejana, aka Zixaxa, was the powerful king of Mpumungo, southern Mozambique. He led the rebellion against the colonial rule, imposing a siege to Lourenço Marques in 1894. The moment was crucial. The Portuguese crown had to react firmly since other colonial powers were looming. He was defeated in the battle of Marracuene (02/02/1895), annually commemorated in Mozambique through the Gwaza Muthini Festival. After the battle, received the protection of the Gaza Emperor Ngungunhane. Both ended imprisoned, firstly with their wives and then separated from them during the Azorean exile.

In Angra do Heroísmo the African prisoners were formally listed as sergeants in the army, converted in the so-called civilization mission and given Christian names. Differently from the other companions (Ngungunhane, Mulungo and Godide), Zixaxa ended up embracing his new life and his new name: Roberto. He had kids and turned into a well-known figure, appearing often in local newspapers. Appeals for his release came repeatedly from Brado Africano, Mozambican African press, in the 1920s. He died many years after the other prisoners, in 1927, 32 years after his imprisonment. His heirs, in Terceira Island are still bringing both names (Roberto Zixaxa).

Documentaries has been recorded in search of these “forgotten royalties”, since his memory didn’t vanish in Mozambique and Azores. In Mia Couto’s “Sands of the Emperor”, internationally prized, Zixaxa gains great relevance driving conclusions of the whole saga. In 2019 the Council of Angra do Heroísmo fixed on the walls São João Batista Fortress a plaque to the prisoners’ memory. Later in 2022 a monument shaped as Ngungunhane, ideally directed to Mozambique, was dedicated to him and all prisoners exiled on the island. Similarly, in November 2024 a plaque has been unveiled in Angra do Heroísmo cemetery.

His lifespan is divided into two distinct phases of existence.

Nwamatibejana: leader of rebellion against Portuguese Colonial Rule

Born around 1870 in the region of Mpumalo—present-day Maputo Province—Nwamatibejana was a prince of the small kingdom of Zixaxa, of Ronga people, a tributary state of the larger Gaza Kingdom. It was situated at roughly three hours walking from the port city Lourenço Marques (nowadays Maputo). His grandfather, Hamule, resisted Portuguese rule, an act that led to his temporary exile to Mozambique Island before he eventually returned and passed his mission of resistance on to his grandson. His father shared his same name, Zixaxa (also written Zilhalla or Zichaha).

Nwamatibejana established connections with Protestant missionaries, especially with the Methodist Preacher Roberto Ndevu Machava, of Ronga origins like him. Roberto Machava, due to a family trade of animal skin travelled to South Africa where he got in contact with a methodist congregation, converted and learned to read and write. Back to Mozambique he asked Nwamatibejana to open a missionary school in his land, it is likely that the two had an affinity: the missionary supported the principles of the anti-colonial struggle and the chief showed some interest in Christianity.

In fact, by the mid-19th century, Mozambique had become a bustling crossroads, attracting missionaries, explorers, and traders. Far from being passive in the colonial local kingdoms in Mozambique were active players, navigating geopolitical dynamics to their own advantage. Some of their traditional capitals evolved into cosmopolitan hubs, populated by merchants, missionaries, explorers, big-game hunters, and spies. Following the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, famous for the "Scramble for Africa," Mozambique became an arena of geopolitical tension as colonial powers—chiefly Britain, and to a lesser extent, Germany—competed for influence, with Britain issuing the 1890 Ultimatum to Portugal to withdraw forces from contested areas between Angola and Mozambique, a territory famously disputed under the "Pink Map" claim. Ultimately, Portugal and Britain reached an agreement to delineate borders 11/06/1891, although tensions remained. In 1894, the German navy even occupied Quionga in northern Mozambique.

While Ngungunhane, the powerful emperor of Gaza, took a more cautious approach to Portuguese encroachment, Nwamatibejana judged the time ripe for an open rebellion in southern Mozambique. His mother, a council elder, opposed the conflict, therefore Nwamatibejana removed her from the council to pursue his plans. This region bordered Transvaal, governed by Cecil Rhodes, who was known to seek unhindered access to the port of Lourenço Marques to open a route to the Indian Ocean without Portuguese tariffs. Reports suggest that Rhodes may have indirectly supported indigenous uprisings as a strategy to secure this access, possibly supplying rifles to Nwamatibejana's forces.

Approximately at age 25, Nwamatibejana, along with other Tsonga chiefs Mahazul and Finnish, ignited a huge rebellion in southern Mozambique. In 27/08/1894 they launched an attack on the Angoane post, securing a victory and seizing the military uniform of Lieutenant Colonel Nogueira, which Nwamatibejana subsequently wore as a symbol of defiance. At this point according to Roberto Machava's memoirs sent to the Governor of Mozambique, Nwamatibejana asked the preacher to write a letter asking the support of the English. Machava would have denied it, and from that point onward, they began exchanging mutual accusations, including Zixaxa's claim that he was spying on his behalf.

Zixaxa and Mahazul laid siege to Lourenço Marques, which, although not yet Mozambique's capital, was thrown into a state of panic. Portuguese settlers, built barricades and assisted the limited official garrison in defending against the insurgent forces from fortified "block houses." Nwamatibejana launched another direct assault in October 1894 and attempted a subsequent attack on the railway on January 7, 1895 just before the arrival of a numerous contingent of Portuguese army.

In fact, the insurrection served as the *casus belli* for the ensuing conflict in 1895. Despite Portugal's fragile financial state following a partial bankruptcy declared in 1891, the Crown took decisive action by mobilizing its army. Portuguese authorities suspected that Ngungunhane and, behind the scenes, Cecil Rhodes and the British Empire were looming.

On 02/02/1895, a decisive confrontation occurred between Portuguese forces and the rebels at Marracuene, a plain on the side of Incomati river. During this intense battle, an estimated 4,000 warriors managed to breach Portuguese defences and engage in close-quarters combat before ultimately being repelled. The Portuguese restored their machine guns, forcing the rebels to withdraw, resulting in dozens of casualties. As we'll see further on this pivotal event, known as the Battle of Marracuene, is commemorated annually with traditional music and rituals honouring the ancestors.

After this defeat, Nwamatibejana sought refuge with Emperor Ngungunhane, aligning the rebellion more closely with the Kingdom of Gaza in open defiance of Portuguese rule. Colonial sources subsequently began referring to Nwamatibejana as Zixaxa, after his home region, a name used even by his fellow prisoners. He sought vassalage with Ngungunhane, offering cattle and a contingent of 200–300 warriors. Although the Portuguese demanded Nwamatibejana's surrender, Ngungunhane refused, seeing this as a betrayal that would undermine his own authority. He became the bone of contention of the two sides.

The situation culminated in the final field battle of Coolela 07/11/1895 when the Empire of Gaza was defeated by Portuguese and collapsed. The same night colonial forces burned down Manjacaze the capital. Ngungunhane and his inner circle seek refuge in the holy ground of Chaimite. Meanwhile the

surrounded emperor ultimately handed over Nwamatibejana to Lieutenant Sanches de Miranda in Languene in a desperate try to save himself.

It did not work, Ngungunhane were captured on 28/12/1895, in Chaimite by the reckless captain Mouzinho de Albuquerque. Both leaders were sent into exile together with seven of their wives alongside Ngungunhane's heir, Godide, and the elder Molungo. The first stop in Lourenço Marques, where they have been shipped to Portugal. On the same ship was Roberto Machava, imprisoned for anti-Portuguese activities and exiled to Fogo Island, Cape Verde¹. It is likely that Nwamatibejana received his Christian name in his memory; however, it remains uncertain whether this was due to the inspiration Machava provided or an attempt to ease his conscience for having reported his fellow Ronga to the colonial authorities.

Male and female prisoners landed in Lisbon on Friday 13/03/1896 where they have been paraded before the public in a humiliating display. They were held in Monsanto Fortress in Lisbon, that quickly became a popular place of visit, to appease the curiosity of seeing with their own eyes the African celebrities, exposed in the press every day since the imprisonment.

It was anyway a temporary situation. Due to the scandal surrounding polygamy, the men were separated from their wives who were subsequently exiled to São Tomé and Príncipe, while Nwamatibejana Zixaxa, Ngungunhane, Godide and Molungo were sent to Angra do Heroísmo.

Roberto: a park ranger on a long exile.

The four famous prisoners arrived on 28/06/1896 on the navy ship Zambeze. Violently uprooted, much like the *Uprooted man* described by Todorov, they were torn from their homeland and cast onto an unknown archipelago—an alien world they had never even heard of, as if they had suddenly landed on another planet. Living on an island especially for the tree Nguni prisoners, more than for Zixaxa who did not share the same belief was a multiple punishment, since fish and seafood were a taboo connected with sea-spirits. On the other hand, the abundance of cattle, make a familiar environment as it was the pillar of southern Mozambique society (not only for economic reasons).

They were formally enrolled as sergeants in the São João Batista Fortress, with a pay, they could access to the higher rank canteen; they spent their days crafting baskets and hunting rabbits in the traditional way in the huge national park Mount Brazil. It is recognized that Terceira's people

¹ Unlike Zixaxa, Roberto Machava was later repatriated during the Republican era when he was already very old—first to a Methodist church in Cape Town, and in the year of his death, to his homeland, Catembe (Mozambique).

welcome them with a lot more dignity and respect rather than in the mainland. Their arrival shook up the island routine created a trend within Terceira society, inspiring cigars, hats, and postcards. Their pictures were offered as gift from tobacco packages. The displace and relocation with the effect on their identity, was a huge tool with which each adopted their strategy: Molungo was resisting and keeping strongly his original habits, as much as he could rejecting the language lessons and so forth. Gungunhana, was accepting some new habits, maybe because of the monotony of the life in exile, anyway he was showing clear signals of depression. While the younger Godide and Zixaxa showed more interest in what the new life could offer. In fact, the exile exacerbated unhealthy habits as increase the alcohol and smocking. Godide and Zixaxa were interested in learning Portuguese (especially written because they already know it orally), instead the elder Mulungo was reluctant². Their original writing compositions are conserved in the Geographic Society of Lisbon. Literacy was one of the pillars on which the Catholic Civilizing Mission based upon, together with new clothing, and Catholic indoctrination; all the process was accurately documented with pictures (later transformed in postcard on sale).

This culminated on 16/04/1899, with a ceremony sponsored by Terceira's nobility, they were baptized and confirmed in the Sé Cathedral by the Bishop of Angra do Heroísmo D. Francisco José Ribeiro de Vieira e Brito. His godfather was José Pimentel Homem de Noronha, mayor of the city, and Dona Francisca Bettencourt Rocha. His full new Christian name was Roberto Frederico Zichacha e Silva. He chose the name Roberto, in honor of his old friend, the missionary Roberto Machava.

The Portuguese Catholic Civilizing Mission was an isolated social experiment that capitalized on the prisoners' popularity to further its aims. According to Frantz Fanon, this postulate of colonialism is nothing but an act of violence in disguise. "The colonized is elevated above his "jungle status" in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle". In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon provide insights into how displacement and systemic oppression affect identity and mental health often resulting in psychological fractures, grappling with both their imposed isolation and the broader systems of domination that enforce their exile.

Gungunhana was the first prisoner to die, in late December 1906 for a brain hemorrhage. His body and soul were devastated by the trauma and the chronical alcoholism. The young Godide died for tuberculosis in 1911, the year later the 80 years old Mulungo passed away for an acute gastritis. So,

² The local Journal "O Castelo" in 01/06/1966 (when war on the Portuguese African colonies, included Mozambique was ongoing) published an article called *Falar pretogues*, something like talking "negro Portuguese" in which jokes with the expression used by Mulungo in his basic Portuguese.

by 1912 Zixaxa became the last of the four African remaining on the island. With the years passing his status of prisoner, de facto, slowly softened, he was basically free to walk around Angra do Heroísmo and he was turned into ranger of Monte Brazil Park. Over the decades, Zixaxa showed amazing capabilities, proving physical resistance and mental strength, in an everyday fight against alienation. He died in 13/11/1927 Zixaxa dies after nearly 32 years in exile for a heart attack.

Zixaxa, who was handsome and charismatic, became a well-known figure on the island, making many friends in different layers of Terceira society, including intellectual circles. As Edward Said states, in *"Reflections on Exile"*, exile is characterized by a kind of ambivalence: can enable a wider vision of the world, but the cost of it is "the perpetual state of estrangement". For the Palestinian author the condition is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. (Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000)).

Amid daily struggles with loneliness, loss, and alienation, life found its way forward. He committed to a relationship with an islander, Maria Augusta de Sousa Vila d'Amigo, daughter of João de Sousa, born in Terceira Island, and Francisca Vila d'Amigo, originally from Spain. Roberto Zixaxa and Maria Augusta did not marry, since she was already married, but separated. They had two sons, but one, Arnaldo, died few months after the birth. The second, was born in 02/10/1967. Named Roberto like his father, Roberto Francisco da Rocha, he was formally registered by Maria Augustas's husband (António Francisco da Rocha) that meanwhile went to live on another island, Flores.

It quickly became gossip on the island and beyond. Indeed, the relationship between Maria Augusta and Zixaxa is well ahead of their times. If we think that in the same period USA society was rigidly segregationist mixed couples were at an all-time low and sexual intercourse between races was a taboo (by 1924, the ban on interracial marriage was still in force in 29 American states)³. Which does not mean it was not blamed on Terceira Island, but surely on a lesser scale.

It should come as no surprise that this "impossible" love story inspired a novel like *The Drinker of Horizons*, where Zixaxa becomes one of the final voices to conclude Mia Couto's trilogy, *The Sands of the Emperor*.

³ Black-White Interracial Marriage Trends, 1850-2000 Aaron Gullickson* Sociology Department Columbia University 31/01/2006.

“Tenho uma namorada. É verdade, uma noiva branca, completamente branca. Chama-se Maria Augusta, é filha de João de Sousa, um açoriano natural da Ribeirinha. A mãe dela, a minha futura sogra, chama-se Francisca Vila d’Amigo e nasceu em Espanha. O mundo é pequeno e grande, Imani. Eis-me aqui, um africano numa ilha portuguesa, pronto para casar com uma açoriana de origem espanhola. Não poderei lobolar⁴ a minha noiva. Nesta ilha é como na terra dos zulus: um boi vale mais do que uma pessoa estranha como eu. Que dote tenho para lhe oferecer? Para meu consolo, consegui convites para um espetáculo de circo em homenagem aos presos de África. Noutras palavras, em nossa homenagem. A família da noiva- a sograria, como lhe chamamos- ficou impressionada com a minha importância. Mais impressionada ficou quando soube que fiquei promovido a guarda florestal. Tenho emprego, faço o meu dinheiro, ganho o meu respeito. Sabes que me puseram a guardar? Guardo um monte inteiro, guardo um monte chamado Brasil. De vigiado passei a vigilante”. P.345

I have a girlfriend. That's right, a white fiancée, completely white. Her name is Maria Augusta, she's the daughter of João de Sousa, an Azorean from Ribeirinha. Her mother, my future mother-in-law, is called Francisca Vila d'Amigo and she was born in Spain. The world is small and big, Imani. Here I am, an African on a Portuguese island, ready to marry an Azorean of Spanish origin. I won't be able to provide a dowry. On this island it's like in the land of the Zulus: an ox is worth more than a stranger like me. What dowry do I have to offer her? To console myself, I got invitations to a circus show in honor of the prisoners of Africa. In other words, in our honour. The bride's family - the in-laws, as we call them - were impressed by my importance. They were even more impressed when they heard I'd been promoted to forester. I have a job, I make my money, I earn my respect. Do you know what they put me in charge of? I guard a whole mountain, a mountain called Brazil. I've gone from watched to watchman [my translation]

Unfortunately, reality was not a fairy tale, especially on the long term. His heirs had to deal with the visible heritage of black traces, struggling against discrimination especially during the Estado Novo regime, in the peak of racism internationally. In the first half of the 20th century, bearing a visible marker on one's skin often meant facing inevitable marginalization—a reality that this specific instance of diaspora shares with other Atlantic islands.

Particularly, Roberto Francisco, the son of Maria Augusta and Zixaxa, had a challenging life. In his youth, he played for a local football team, but later struggled with alcoholism and depression, which ultimately led to his tragic decision to take his own life. His sons and daughters also endured

⁴ Ritual dowry from Southern Mozambique.

precarious economic conditions. José de Ornellas, a professor of community psychology at ISPA in Lisbon, and a former friend and neighbor of the family, reflects on their struggles. According to Ornellas, being descendants of political prisoners carried a significant stigma, compounded by the added burden of their skin color in the predominantly white society of Terceira at the time—a stark contrast to the diversity seen in the island during the 18th and early 19th centuries, which had long disappeared. For Maria João Vargas Moniz, a Professor of Applied Psychology born in São Miguel (Azores), this represents a deep wound of colonialism.

“The poverty in which they lived is also an expression of this wound. This is a part that is not inconsequential. Taking people out of their contexts and throwing them somewhere thousands and thousands of kilometres away doesn't come at a price. It has a price and a generational price, that's what it is. And this is a phenomenon that requires reflection. Even for this work of bringing trophy kings, making trophy humans has a generational price”.

Press

Back in 1896, right after the imprisonment, a media frenzy followed the displacement of the African court. The media already published photographs of Gungunhana, but there were not of Zixaxa and the queens. So, they were imagined through the lens of those times. Some representations of Zixaxa and the imprisoned queens, whether in engravings⁵ or caricatures, are quite significant in this sense, repressing clichés. They will, however, be disproved, as is typical of stereotypes, when they disembark in Lisbon (13/03/1896) thanks to the published photographs (the photographs taken at the time of disembarkation are today preserved in the Lisbon City Council Photographic Archive). Among all prisoners Zixaxa's finesse is highlighted.

“O valente e destemido Zixaxa, rapagão forte e vigoroso, typo distincto na sua raça, altivo, denotando nos seus movimentos e olhar incisivo a energia d'um selvagem audacioso e traiçoeiro, causou-nos admiração.” [The brave and fearless Zixaxa, a strong and vigorous young man, a distinguished type in his race, haughty, denoting in his movements and incisive gaze the energy of an audacious and treacherous savage, caused us admiration].

⁵ On 18/01/1896 *O Paiz* published two illustrations: one of Gungunhana and another of Zixaxa, On the same day, another republican newspaper, *A Vanguarda*, published the same illustrations of Zixaxa and Gungunhana, along with one of his "favoured" wife and another of Mouzinho de Albuquerque. Zixaxa covered only by a few animal skins, waving a bludgeon appears stereotyped as a primitive African warrior.

“O Zixaxa, embora diga que não fala português é certo que conhece a língua, tanto que presta sempre atenção ao que as pessoas que os tem visitado, mostrando na cara que está a compreender tudo.” *A União* 30/06/1896 p.3 [Even though Zixaxa says he doesn't speak Portuguese, it's certain that he knows the language, so much so that he always pays attention to what the people who have visited them say, showing on his face that he understands everything.]

With the turn of the century and the suicide of Mouzinho de Albuquerque on January 8, 1902, the metropolitan press was no longer interested in Gungunhana's imprisonment, and only then with the birth of the Estado Novo. The digression on the island of Terceira reported, in no. 1238 (20/01/1913), in the illustrated magazine *O Ocidente* is an exception. The report mistakenly states that all prisoners, including Zixaxa “died there of homesickness for their country, deprived of their country, deprived of their wives and freedom”. However, in Mozambique and in the Azorean archipelago it wasn't totally forgotten. Micaelense journalist and printer Alice Moderno interviewed Zixaxa in 1912, in her newspaper *A Folha* (12/05/1912). “He's a handsome black man, tall and lean, with a beautiful bearing and the melancholy pride of an exiled prince.” The journalist also points out that despite his incurable sadness, he remains a terrible lovelace.

Appeals for his liberation came from Mozambique and the local Azorean newspaper *União*, in a desperate effort to repatriate him for burial. In the mid-1920s when Zixaxa and all the story about the imprisonment of Gungunhana was largely forgotten, *O Brado Africano* spearheaded a campaign in defence of Zixaxa, as already did for the other Ronga exiled in the Atlantic: Father Roberto Machava.

O Brado Africano had a sort of double standard: the newspaper promoted a more humane colonization and was inspired by pan-Africanist movements, but never openly advocated the end of colonialism or independence. The figure of Gungunhana symbolizes this duality, mainly used as a negative example. Zixaxa instead is presented as a martyr of colonialism in several articles, most of them signed by the journalist Zeferino Franklin.

In 10/08/1924 *Echoes of the War of 1895* appeals for amnesty and repatriation, like other fellow prisoners (the women exiled to São Tomé). The cry then launches into a comparison with DinoZulu, exiled on the island of Sant'Helena, “civilized” and repatriated after 7 years: “our neighbors who were such enemies of the blacks knew how to forgive”. And he concludes: “28 years is enough as a corrective”. The same year, O Gremio Africano (The African Guild) 1924 reinforces its direct appeal to Dr Moreira Fonseca Governor General of the Province for the repatriation of Zixaxa. On 22/01/1927, with the title *Dois Vencidos* (transcribed in several metropolitan newspapers) relaunches the appeal for forgiveness that has fallen flat. Zeferino Franklin takes advantage of the news of the exile of the famous Marshal Gomes da Costa, who in his youth was an expeditionary in the war of

1895, to draw attention to the forgotten Zixaxa. He narrates the reader about the meeting of the two in exile. “Caprices of fate! Who would have thought that, 31 years later, victor and vanquished, they would find themselves in the same land, in the same prison and in the same harsh conditions?”

One month afterwards, 19/02/1927, the newspaper highlights the importance of being buried in his homeland, for the African prisoner, foreseen his near end. For Zixaxa’s death, article *The Last Beaten* (04/12/1927), commemorates the deceased by echoing the campaign, denouncing the uselessness and cruelty of the punishment; the article is illustrated with a photograph taken in Angra do Heroísmo during the civilizing mission. Ten years later (27/08/1938), *O Brado Africano* publishes *Four African Chiefs in Azores*, in a different context with much tighter censorship; praising the colonial hero Mouzinho de Albuquerque and declaring that because of the Civilizing Mission Zixaxa would have been disowned in his homeland. However, the timing raises a question mark. It commemorates the tenth anniversary, although not in correspondence with the day of his death, the correspondence is, in fact, with the day of the insurrection that led to the storming of the Anguane post and the beginning of the siege of Lourenço Marques.

Memory

In Mozambique, Zixaxa's memory is primarily celebrated at the Gwaza Muthini Festival. The festival was interrupted in 1976 due to the new socialist rule, compromising with eradication of tribalism (it was instituted the day of the heroes on November 3rd) and most of all due to the ongoing civil war. It was restored in 1994 for initiative of António Yok Chan.

The ceremony begins at night/early dawn with a ritual sacrifice (*Kuphalha*, in changana language) of a chicken or a goat, performed by the community leaders next to the memorial of the battle. This is the time when the spirit of the ancestors is evoked and praised. After the magical/religious ritual the dancers perform the warrior dance Xigubo (candidate to immaterial heritage of humanity for UNESCO), that dates back to the time of the battle⁶.

“Yes, we do have the pieces about Ngungunhane and Matibejana as well, our ancestors who fought for Marracuene. We have the Ndzeko group, the Ndzeko group that portrays the story of the chief

⁶ Also dating to Gaza Empire is the celebration of the Ukani, the canhou fermented beverage that, and used to coincide with the biggest happening/festival of the year, held every February.

(Ngungunhane or Matibejana) showing that we are in difficult times, and there is enough for everyone to drink”. Renato Inhabanga, Cultural Association Chibungo- Gwaza Muthini 02/02/2022.

The performance opens the stage for the authorities’ speech.

“It is very important to reference that the warriors of Gwaza Muthini, from the Gwaza Muthini square formation, were led by their chiefs: Machanganas, Magaias, and Zixaxa. These warriors embodied a strategy that explains the meaning of *Gwaza Muthini*, which translates to: “lure the enemies into your territory and annihilate them.” Justino Cuna, Director of the District Service for Education of Marracuene. Spokesperson for the Gwaza Muthini Festival.

We can say that the festival is divided in two parts. The first part of the festival, is a ritual that is focused on strengthening the belonging of the group. The elder says that a hippopotamus used to appear during the event, being hunt and cooked used to fill the all festival. Nowadays, allegedly due to un-respected norms in the ancestors respect it is not showing up anymore.

“At that time, there were *popota* (hippos), but now they no longer come out—there are no more *popota*. The one who killed a *popota* was my aunt Eduarda Muxane Mpfumo; she was the one who dealt with the *popota*. She was like my grandmother back then. She killed it, she even had a weapon specifically for hunting *popota*. But today, now, people would like to find *popota*, but there aren’t any. If there were, they could hunt them, but now there are none—none at all.” Grandma Teresa, Community leader and member of the OMM (Organization of Mozambican Women) in Marracuene. 02/02/2022

From the late morning the festival opens up to reach people from all over the country and beyond. It is the biggest gathering of Marrabenta, the national rhythm of Mozambique, with the performance of many bands, covered by the national tv.

“In 2019, when we didn’t have the pandemic, we had around 5,500 participants. We had two stages here, and at this time we wouldn’t be able to get around the town. This is a sign of evolution because it is a festival that is appreciated worldwide. We had the presence of Swazis, residents of Eswathini, from South Africa to come and accompany the Gwaza Muthini activity because there is also a relationship with the displacement of part of the residents (of these lands) in the traditional wars. Then a group moved to Mozambique, Sochangane, and it was they who went on to form the Gaza empire”. Director of the District Service for Education of Marracuene. Spokesperson for the Gwaza Muthini Festival. 02/02/2022.

Zixaxa and Mahazul are the leaders most commemorated. However, there is a scarce highlight on the exile of him in Azores.

In Terceira Island, many are the living memories, many houses even conserve the traditional baskets made by the prisoners. The IHIT is currently working on diaries from German prisoners of World War I that recount their encounters with him. That same year, the documentary *Forgotten Royalties*, by Mosco Kamwedo director with Zimbabwean origin, was released. The documentary weaves together the stories of the African prisoners with the living memories of Zixaxa's descendants; the main subject is the journey of Zixaxa's granddaughter back to Mozambique, discovering the family roots.

In Angra do Heroísmo, two plaques have been unveiled within the walls of São João Fortress (one in 1989, by the Prime Minister Mario Soares and the other in 2019). A half bust, dominating Relvão Park and all Angra do Heroísmo bay, shaped like Gungunhana (2022) by the sculptor Julian Voss-Andreae, lost in looking in the direction of southern Mozambique, in honors all political prisoners, with Zixaxa's name prominently mentioned.

Especially the last plaque, gives more spaces to Zixaxa than to the other prisoners. It was unveiled the 02/11 2024 as a final outcome of the Colloquium Gungunhana in a remarkable moment since it counted with the presence of the grand grand daughter, Bianca, and members of the larger family. In the same month, a podcast featuring the story of Gungunhana and giving great prominence to Zixaxa's legacy, was launched by the Terceirense Journalist of CNN Portugal, Sara Rocha, with the title *Gungunhana. When Portugal kidnapped a king*. With three plaques and the monument, curiously, Angra do Heroísmo counts nowadays with as much monuments on the public place than cities like Chibuto or Manjacaze, in the heart of Gaza. Of course it is not totally comparable, but gives us an idea of the deal.

Conclusions

In the year of the 50th anniversary of the decolonization and approaching the commemoration of the century of his death, the history of Zixaxa is still significant. From a Mozambican perspective, amid the serious unrest and confrontations in the capital following the results of the October 9, 2024, election, it is crucial to revisit the 1894 uprising led by him. Especially considering that the liberation war of 1964–1974 was fought almost entirely in central and northern regions of the country, with the capital only sporadically affected. Even during the bloody civil war between 1976 and 1992, Maputo has never been a hot spot.

From the Terceira Island side, the commemoration of the African prisoners on the island (2019-2022) reflected a growing willingness to confront the darker chapters of its past. These commemorations also are meant to create bridges with a distant African country, and on a larger scale they open the door for a network with other infamous exile islands, such as St. Helena (UK), Robben Island (RSA), Santiago (CV), enhancing cultural importance and attracting visitors. The islands of exile reveal much about the past and remain highly relevant today, as political imprisonment is far from eradicated.

The life of Zixaxa numerous biographical sources: articles, historical fiction, chapters in local historical essays and even a documentary is often over-romanticized. As Edward Said reflected on, it is not uncommon regarding exile existences (honestly, even the sub-title of this text, *the man who lived twice*, is following this pattern).

His story, split in two worlds, is an archetype of exile under colonial rule. As defended by O Brado Africano a similar case, including the civilizing mission and the postcards, of Dinu-Zulu son of Chetwaio exiled by the British colonial rule in South Africa on Sta Helena Island was repatriated after seven years; the exile of Zixaxa lasted almost 32 years.

During his lifetime, he was often overshadowed by the famous Emperor Gungunhana. However, in hindsight, he left a lasting legacy in Southern Mozambique and on Terceira Island, where arguably few other political prisoners left as significant an impact as he did.