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## MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

### NOMINATION FORM

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#### PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

##### 1 SUMMARY

Highlight the nature, uniqueness and significance of the nominated documentary heritage.

The Ndembu archives are unique and most significant due to the following characteristics:

- Learning and use of writing by African people of the Mbundu group, with an oral Kimbundu tradition, appropriating a non African language, Portuguese, to this purpose, both languages working as lingua franca. The use of a non African language in an African context is better known in Islamic regions.
- The African and European mixture of internal and external features and contents that these records present.
- The extensive period these archives cover: more than 200 years
- The rarity of this type of archives moreover taking into account that they often disappeared along time.
- The richness of the cultural and political exchanges they already revealed.
- The studies that they can provide in areas such as History, Anthropology or Linguistics, contributing for mutual knowledge among different cultures and peoples and establishing ways of understanding each others.
- Their strong symbolic value from the point of view of common archival heritage reinforced by the fact that they are still venerated by people whose predecessors created them.
- The importance and value of the Ndembu archives is recognised, which will allow researchers a better understanding and knowledge of Angola from last two centuries, justify their inclusion in the “Memory of the World Register”.

##### 2 DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR

###### 2.1 Name

Arquivo Nacional de Angola (ANA)

Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical (IICT) / Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU)

###### 2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated

Arquivo Nacional de Angola has legal and physical custody over the heritage which is owned by the Angolan state.

IICT has legal and physical custody over the heritage, which is owned by Portuguese state

###### 2.3 Contact person (s)

ANA: Alexandra Aparício

IICT /AHU: Ana Canas

2.4 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)

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### 3 *IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE*

#### 3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated Arquivos dos Dembos / Ndembu Archives

#### 3.2 Description

The Ndembu archives in IICT/AHU include around 1160 manuscript items on paper and some in other supports, from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century till the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were created and kept by African local authorities of Central Africa, in the north of Angola known as Dembos (Ndembu), of the Mbundu group, which organized state archives. They comprise the following Dembos: Caculo Cacahenda (probably the most extensive), Caculo Congola, Ndala Cabassa, Zombo Amocambo, Quibaxi Quiamubemba, Gimbo Aluquem, Ngombe Amuquiana, Mufuque Aquitupa and Pango Aluquem. Other provenances have still to be checked in detail as archival processing goes on.

The documents were collected in Angola, in 1934, by António Almeida (1900-1994), a medical doctor and physical anthropologist, during a study mission to the Ndembu area. This mission was an anthropological one (focusing on anthropometrics) with ethnographic and linguistics aspects. It was requested by the High Colonial School (Escola Superior Colonial) of the Overseas Ministry and funded by the Junta da Educação Nacional, Portuguese government offices.

They were transferred to the AHU (Overseas Historical Archive) in three groups, from 2007 to 2009. A part of them was summarised and published, first by António Almeida (ca. 75) and Ana Paula Tavares and Catarina Madeira Santos (around 200). Another group was also transcribed (ca. 400) in order to be published by the latter.

Ca. 520 items were desinfested by anoxia in 2007 and around 240 were submitted to conservation treatment (cleaning, tear mending, gaps filling and enclosure in archival sleeves) in 2009/2010. Iron gall ink affected some of the documents that are expected to be treated along 2010/2011.

The ANA has a collection of documents organized in codices. For the time being, just one codex was found, comprising the register of out-letters from the colonial authorities to Ndembu chiefs. Due to its contents it is possible to understand that there was a fluent exchange of correspondence between the colonial authorities and Angolan chiefs. However, the letters of these Ndembu chiefs were not found in the colonial archives. The codex 240, Government Section, Letters to Angola, Correspondence with African Chiefs, dated from 1798-07-12 to 1854-09-18, presents a set of 184 written folios and 67

blank folios, regarding the mentioned register of out letters from the colonial authorities to Angolan chiefs - Ndembu chiefs, King of Kongo, Vice-Kings of Cabinda, Mbalundu chiefs and Humbe chiefs. The codex is already known by some researchers, who mentioned it in their works, such as Prof. Joseph C. Miller and Prof. John Thornton. To ensure the conservation of the codex, this was digitized. In the Ndembu archives, Portuguese is the language used, though integrating and adapting Kimbundo words. Kikongo echoes here and there and some Latin expressions appear too.

These documents establish and reflect diverse relations between, on the one hand, Portuguese colonial authorities of Angola including the governor in Luanda and, on the other, African authorities. The same happens among these ones and between them and the King of Kongo. Subjects are, for instance: space mobility, commercial routes, land ownership, state and diplomatic relations, vassalage, war, jurisdictional conflicts and European and African regulation, slave trade and European and African domestic slaves, counting and teaching Portuguese language, scribes and secretaries for the Dembos, African lineages. The archives are composed by original or copies and drafts of official and some private letters, wills, lists of products, receipts, bills of exchange, certificates, vassalage acts, orders, prayers, ex-votos, judicial cases, spelling books. Several documents were certified with wax seals and seals on paper either by Ndembu or Portuguese authorities.

There are allied archival materials not only in the IICT, mainly in AHU, and in the ANA, but also in the Military Historical Archive (AHM, Lisbon). In the Lisbon Geographical Society (SGL) there are other allied materials, such as Ndembu swords and staffs and also photos of these African authorities. ANA and IICT/AHU envisage organizing a training course in palaeographics, archival processing and conservation on the Ndembu Archives. ANA is working on listing and preserving the Angola Ndembu archives.

#### Bibliography

- Almeida, António de, *Relações com os Dembos: das Cartas do Dembado de Kakulu-Kahenda*. Lisboa: [s.n.], 1938. Sep.
- Miller, Joseph C. "The Archives of Luanda, Angola" *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, VII, 4/1974, 551-590.
- Santos, Catarina Madeira "Écrire le pouvoir en Angola" *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 4/2009 (64<sup>e</sup> année), 767-795.
- Tavares, Ana Paula and Santos, Catarina Madeira (Ed., introd., glossário e textos) *Africae Monumenta: A Apropriação da Escrita pelos Africanos*. Vol. 1, *Arquivo Caculo Cahenda*. Lisboa: IICT, 2002.

#### 4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

Refer to section 4.2 of the *General Guidelines* for the selection criteria. If space insufficient, attach separate sheets. Each question **must** be answered.

##### 4.1 Is authenticity established?

Yes it is, by the records themselves and their established custodial history both in Angola and in Portugal.

##### 4.2 Is world significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability established? (see 4.2.4)

Yes. The Ndembu archives, though not yet well known by the public have, as mentioned in 1 and 3.2, rare characteristics and witness long and different relationships among African peoples and between the latter and Europeans. They enlighten their history in a way that other types of textual records or oral ones do not. Moreover when considering that their producers appropriated Portuguese writing for their own purposes, conferring a special value to these state archives. This is expressed in their

contents: scribes and secretaries, new figures in Mbundu societies, became highly valued as well as writing authentication tools, namely paper, seals and wax seal. There is no identical documentary heritage. Their disappearance or ignorance would weaken the diversity of the heritage of humanity.

4.3 Is one *or more* of the criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style (f) social, spiritual and community significance satisfied? (see 4.2.5)  
Provide an explanation against each criterion selected. Attach separate statement if space insufficient.

In terms of time, the specificity of these African archives is their relatively long duration. They record variations in African communities, their internal relations and connections with Portuguese colonial authorities and individuals, allowing diachronic studies. The fact that these archives were created in Central Africa, Angola, in the Ndembu areas, sustains a peculiar regard on events and on people that they cover. Population movements, commercial relations, changes in social and political hierarchies, religious practices, writing acquisition and training by Mbundu people as well as the relationships with Colonial Portuguese authorities and the King of Kongo were recorded from a not so common point of view. Besides, these archives have a special linguistic value, as their records cross Portuguese and mainly Kimbundu words and expressions in both ways (documents created by the Ndembu or received by them and created by the Portuguese).

4.4 Are there issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management that relate to this nomination? (see 4.2.6)  
The rarity of these records was explained above especially in 1, 3.2, and 4.2. Integrity will be better established when the ones kept in AHU and those from ANA are processed in detail. There are no special threats and management issues related to the Ndembu archives in IICT/AHU neither in ANA

## 5 **LEGAL INFORMATION**

5.1. Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

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5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner).

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