

## **Early Limits of Local Decolonization in São Tomé and Príncipe: From Colonial Abuses to Postcolonial Disappointment, 1945–1976\***

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### **Introduction**

The administration of São Tomé's rural interior and of some coastal rural areas—home of at least one third of the archipelago's population—was mainly a two-man show in the early years after decolonization. While the crucial decisions about the future of the country's main economic activity and source of agricultural wealth (the cocoa plantations or *roças* situated in these zones) were made at government level and in the president's office, and while these plantations formally had a strong degree of self-administration in the form of the *Comissões Administrativas Provisórias* (Provisional Committees of Administration) later becoming the *Comitês de Acção Política* (Committees of Political Action: both CAP), the control of everyday life lay in the hands of the labor inspectorate. Inspector-General Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina and his auxiliary, Américo Gonçalves da Graça do Espírito Santo, had an enormous task and held power over the lives of thousands of workers on the plantations. Both officials had been appointed during the transition phase before 12 July 1975, when São Tomé e Príncipe became an independent state.<sup>1</sup> Struggling for a short time with the complicated bureaucratic heritage that had been left by the colonial administration, both officials rapidly established a routine of work. During 1976 the two officials were constantly active in visiting the different plantations, in hearing the complaints of laborers, plantation officials, and owners, and in processing information coming from the

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<sup>1</sup> Carlos Gouveia Franco, president of the Instituto do Trabalho, Previdência e Acção Social (Institute of Labor, Providence and Social Action, hereafter ITPAS) of São Tomé e Príncipe to Portuguese Overseas Minister, *Resumo da situação no sector do Trabalho, Previdência e Acção Social* (without number), 6 January 1975, Curadoria Geral dos Serviços e Indígenas, 1176, Arquivo Histórico de São Tomé e Príncipe, São Tomé, São Tomé e Príncipe (hereafter AHSTP). Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina and Américo Gonçalves da Graça do Espírito Santo came both from elite *forro* families, many of whose members held middle-level posts in the public service under the colonial state, and became installed in leading functions in the different São Tomé e Príncipe ministries after independence. Espírito Santo, who normally was director of a bureau of civil service affairs, had had some former experience as acting labor inspector from 1974, and entered the post in March 1975. Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina was installed as inspector-general in May 1975.

CAPs and channelling the wishes of these local cells to São Tomé's ruling party, the Movimento de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe (MLSTP).<sup>2</sup>

Still more important, however, was the jurisdiction that both officials exercised over the social life of the plantations. In 1976, both officials held a type of informal court that dealt with hundreds of cases. Workers could be disciplined by loss of wages (for one or more days), or threatened with dismissal, which could indirectly mean the loss of the land that many workers had treated as their own fields (*lavras*) after 1974. In cases that were interpreted as being more clearly "political"—that is, whenever the inspectors believed they had to do with saboteurs who wanted to weaken the progress of the independent state—the political police and party institutions became involved in the process. Even so, the inspectorate was in itself an important court of first instance, which therefore exerted a powerful influence over the everyday life of plantation workers.

From this perspective, São Tomé e Príncipe provides an instructive case for examining the complexities of decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa. Within the new, independent administrations of Africa's postcolonial states, political and executive power was not always exclusively concentrated at the level of two or three leading ministries or in the offices of the presidency. Specialized bureaus, which often were a direct heritage of the colonial order, could retain a considerable amount of power. This can be illustrated in the cases of several gigantic development projects initiated under the late colonial regimes, of which arguably the most paradigmatic was the bureau, known as the *Office du Niger*, which administered the huge irrigation scheme in the Inner Niger Delta in French Soudan (present-day Mali) and which had a long and inefficient life until 1984.<sup>3</sup> Sympathies for socialist rhetoric, if not strict Marxist doctrine, made recourse to these schemes additionally attractive since, in many postcolonial countries, members of the leading political class were certain that technocratic planning was a way of directing the economies of their respective countries into a new age.<sup>4</sup>

Peasants or, as in the Santomean case, agricultural contract laborers experienced these phases of economic reorganization that followed the transfers of power. They had their own interests, and—even if one might argue that they were detached from processes happening at the level of the colonial capitals, the centers of political districts, or even in the colonial metropolises—they had their own memory of the last decades of colonial rule. This was all the more problematic as the late colonial period had been characterized by modernization and investment, and had, in nearly all cases, resulted in socioeconomic and

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<sup>2</sup> See this transfer of information in Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina, Chief Labor Inspector, Ministry of Labor and Social Providence, to Inspector of Judicial Police (no. 720/A-2-C/976), 13 October 1976 (p. 1), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>3</sup> On the history of the Office du Niger, see Emil Schreyger, *L'Office du Niger au Mali 1932 à 1982: La problématique d'une grande entreprise agricole dans la zone du Sahel* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1984); Monica M. van Beusekom, "Disjunctures in Theory and Practice: Making Sense of Change in Agricultural Development at the Office du Niger, 1920–60," *Journal of African History* 41, 1 (2000), 79–99.

<sup>4</sup> Crawford Young, *Ideology and Development in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 100–103.

material improvement that could be felt in the lives of individuals.<sup>5</sup> It is challenging to set these experiences against the concrete changes that took place in the years after independence, and to see in what ways they contributed to or impeded identification with the new societies.<sup>6</sup>

São Tomé e Príncipe is an under-researched African country, and the fact that its vast archival documentation has not been extensively explored alone justifies fresh initiatives in the reconstruction of its history. Second, the country gains particular interest from being a “Creole state”: a country settled by a first generation of Luso-African “creoles,” the descendants of slaves, and then by successive waves of slaves and more or less forced laborers from Angola, Mozambique, and Cape Verde, many of whom were never repatriated.<sup>7</sup> The fact that some series of the archives of São Tomé e Príncipe, such as those of the labor inspectorate, bridge the rupture of independence and are available to the historian up to 1980, makes research in these archives still more attractive. Two other facets contribute to the importance of studying São Tomé’s early postcolonial experience in comparison to others from the broader region: the archipelago had a population of laborers that was “ethnically” distinct from the “Creole” inhabitants of the settlements mainly situated around Trindade and the town of São Tomé, which facilitates a differentiated analysis of conflicts<sup>8</sup>; and the colonial metropole, Portugal, was particularly “backward” in terms of social modernization during the late colonial phase, which allows us to study a late colonial state with, apparently, a limited impact in its effect on colonial populations.

Some studies have attempted to collect the memories of Santomean workers from the *roças* through series of interviews.<sup>9</sup> However, the problems with this technique are, in

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<sup>5</sup> Over the last two decades, there have been many more general comments on the role of the “late colonial states,” but there is still rather little empirical work carried out on its effects. The obvious exception is the work of Frederick Cooper, which is joined by some other contributions. See Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 38–53; Andreas Eckert, “Regulating the Social: Social Security, Social Welfare and the State in Late Colonial Tanzania,” *Journal of African History* 45, 3 (2004), 467–89; and, specifically for the Portuguese case, Malyn Newitt, “The Late Colonial State in Portuguese Africa,” *Itinerario* 22, 3–4 (1999), 110–22.

<sup>6</sup> Augusto Nascimento rightly holds that over the last decades, the “African element” in São Tomé’s Creole culture, while of course essential, has been overstated, see Augusto Nascimento, “Os são-tomenses e as mutações sociais na sua história recente,” *Africana Studia* 6 (2003), 33. Nevertheless, for an analysis of a late colonial experience, São Tomé e Príncipe is a significant example for an African colony.

<sup>7</sup> Philip J. Havik and Malyn Newitt, “Introduction,” in Philip J. Havik and Malyn Newitt, eds., *Creole Societies in the Portuguese Colonial Empire* (Bristol UK: University of Bristol, 2007), 5–23, 22. On the political history of independent São Tomé e Príncipe, the principal work remains Gerhard Seibert, *Camara-das, Clientes e Compadres: Colonialismo, Socialismo e Democratização em São Tomé e Príncipe* (2nd ed., Lisbon: Vega, 2002, 132–92; the original edition is *Comrades, Clients and Cousins. Colonialism, Socialism and Democratization in São Tomé and Príncipe* [Leiden: CNWS Publications, 1999]).

<sup>8</sup> Marina Padrão Temudo, “De serviçal a camponês: A persistência das desigualdades sociais em São Tomé e Príncipe,” *Lusotopie* 15, 2 (2008), 76–79.

<sup>9</sup> The main work is Pablo B. Eyzaguirre, “Small Farmers and Estates in São Tomé, West Africa,” (Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1986). A summary of his positions can be found in Pablo B. Eyzaguirre, “The

the particular case of São Tomé's plantations, quite considerable since former plantation workers and their descendants—of which a great number still continues to live on the plantations in the decade of the 2000s—are particularly angry and frustrated with their situation, and have a tendency to paint the postcolonial decades in dark colors. This attitude appears to be nearly unanimous. Such prejudices scarcely give the historian an accurate picture that she or he could employ for reconstructing the past of the immediate postcolonial period. Moreover, some of the informants alleged they might encounter problems through being directly interviewed, and it appears to be difficult to conceal the identity of those who provide information. To avoid these problems, this article will instead rely on the abundant wealth of untouched archival data, which I will relate, where possible, to the results of studies by Pablo B. Eyzaguirre, Augusto Nascimento, and others. It is my goal to give a picture of the situation that will allow sociologists and oral historians to continue their own work on a basis that is somewhat better established.<sup>10</sup>

### The Decolonization Experience of São Tomé e Príncipe: A Paradigmatic Case

The example of the early independent Democratic Republic of São Tomé e Príncipe is particularly interesting and instructive in the context of postcolonial African states for a number of reasons. First, although the islands were a micro-state, in fact the smallest of the newly emergent independent states in Africa (not counting the Seychelles), such a small state was inhabited by a fascinatingly large number of different groups, whose ancestors had been transported to the place during different phases of Portuguese colonialism. Many inhabitants had been brought to work in the islands' cocoa agriculture during the twentieth century and some of them had come to live in the archipelago only a couple of years before independence. Second, the structure of the islands' economy included many examples of very large agricultural projects, in the case of the biggest of the plantations. While the majority of the *roças* were small complexes, others were large indeed. The *roça* Rio do Ouro was exceptionally large, and others were similarly impressive, employing together several thousands of the islands' more than 10,000 plantation workers and giving a home to their family members.<sup>11</sup> In 1975, at the moment of independence, all of the larger plantation complexes had passed through periods of considerable investment, leading to the installa-

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Independence of São Tomé e Príncipe and Agrarian Reform," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 27, 4 (1989), 671–78.

<sup>10</sup> Maciel Morais Santos and Alexander Keese held conversations with workers on a number of *roças* (Monte Café with dependencies São Nicolau and Nova Moka; Colónia Açoriana; Água-Izé; Boa Entrada; Agostinho Neto [former Rio de Ouro], and Ponta Figo), on 14 and 15 June 2008. The problems encountered with the material stem from these conversations.

<sup>11</sup> Francisco José Tenreiro, *A ilha de São Tomé (estudo geográfico)* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1961), 151, gives the number of laborers on the *roças* for 1950 as 19,800. A 1972 inspection report gives the number of laborers as only 8,000, but this number needs to be multiplied by at least a factor of two to account for children and other family members who were not counted as laborers. See Feliciano Gameiro Santos, Administrative Inspector, *Inspecção Administrativa Ordinária à Província de S. Tomé e Príncipe* (without number), April/June 1972 (p. 54), MU/ISAU, A2.001.02/06.00025, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (hereafter AHU), Lisbon, Portugal. Eyzaguirre, *Small Farmers*, 364, estimates 17,500 inhabitants for the *roças* of Xe Mochi (former Trindade) district alone in 1986.

tion of state-of-the-art equipment, and of an infrastructure of health institutions. From the 1960s onwards most *roças* had a reliable network of health posts, with the larger ones even boasting their own hospitals.<sup>12</sup> Also, basic schooling was, for the Portuguese empire where illiteracy was widespread, relatively well represented.<sup>13</sup>

The plantations, on the other hand, were the backbone of independent São Tomé e Príncipe's economic future. What had once, in the first decades of the twentieth century, been the major producer of cocoa in all of sub-Saharan Africa, had already suffered a considerable decline from the interwar period.<sup>14</sup> Other colonial economies in the region, notably of Gold Coast (today Ghana) and, to a lesser degree, Togo, and postcolonial Ivory Coast in the 1960s, had challenged São Tomé's position. The plantation economy of the islands had also been menaced by diseases attacking the particular type of cocoa plants used on the *roças*, and by mismanagement and lack of innovation on many of them. Nevertheless, the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s reaffirmed the archipelago's solid position in cocoa exportation, even against the background of considerable volatility in cocoa prices on the world market.<sup>15</sup> On the eve of independence, this seemed to provide an excellent economic basis for a new state, which in 1975 had only about 100,000 inhabitants, and perhaps 70,000 potential citizens.<sup>16</sup> The leaders of the MLSTP government consequently regarded the direct control of these resources as a central objective of their administration. Thus, until 1977, President Manuel Pinto da Costa himself held the post of minister of agriculture, and on 30 September 1975, twenty-three of the larger *roças* were nationalized.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> A description of the *roças* in the late 1950s can be found in Tenreiro, *Ilha*, 141–60.

<sup>13</sup> A number of the larger plantation complexes offered such basic schooling by the early 1950s. This effort is remarkable in comparison to the metropole and the rest of the colonial empire. See José Francisco Rodrigues, Curator-General of Native Affairs, *Relatório referente ao ano de 1952 [São Tomé]* (without number), n.d., Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 1153 (cota 3.24.2.37), AHSTP, 127.

<sup>14</sup> Maciel Morais Santos, "A rentabilidade do cacau de S. Tomé e Príncipe: hipóteses de explicação," *Africana Studia* 5 (2002), 181–212; William Gervase Clarence-Smith, "Cocoa Plantations and Coerced Labour in the Gulf of Guinea, 1870–1914," in Martin E. Klein, ed., *Breaking the Chains: Slavery, Bondage, and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 150–70; William Gervase Clarence-Smith, "O papel dos custos de trabalho no florescimento e declínio das plantações de cacau em São Tomé e Príncipe," *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos* 14–15 (1991–1995), 7–34.

<sup>15</sup> On the evolution of the archipelago's cocoa industry, see Alberto de Sousa, *Comércio Externo de São Tomé e Príncipe (Subsídios para o Seu Estudo)* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1963), 79–83 (and annexes). Obviously, the production quotas reached by the *roças* were no longer at the level of those at the beginning of the twentieth century, but for many investors the plantation sector remained attractive.

<sup>16</sup> The 1970 census gives a population number of 73,800 inhabitants. This is, very probably, far too low, as there is no explanation for the greater than 30 percent increase in the population of São Tomé e Príncipe in the following eleven years, given the exodus of nearly the entire European population and the repatriation of many Mozambicans and Angolans. See Grupo de Trabalho para a Realização do IV Recenseamento Geral da População e Habitação, *Censo da população e habitação: Notas explicativas* (São Tomé: C.T.P.I.E., 1970).

<sup>17</sup> There has been controversy over the motives of the *forro* leaders of the MLSTP with regard to the nationalization of the *roças*. Michel Cahen has argued that the nationalization and subsequent treatment of laborers had nothing to do with plans for social welfare, but with conservative measures of controlling a

The other 100 *roças*, which remained in the formal possession of private owners who were mostly absentees, would be subjected to ever-stricter vigilance, as by the creation of the CAPs.<sup>18</sup> By 1978, the majority of the remaining plantations also came under direct state control.

However, the real problem proved not to be the remaining “fascist” Portuguese plantation owners far away in Europe, who had already evacuated most of their European staff, but the workers themselves. Indeed, the plantation workers (who, including family members, might have totalled 20,000 or more individuals) lived an existence that was far removed—socially and emotionally—from the new elite that had taken over power in the small urban center of São Tomé Island and the other towns and villages. Evidently, the “creoles” of São Tomé e Príncipe (the *forros*), the freemen descended from the slave populations introduced during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, had not been recruited as laborers during the cocoa boom in the second half of the nineteenth century. The *forros* vehemently refused what they considered to be “slave labor.”<sup>19</sup> Instead, the labor force had mostly been made up of recruits from Angola, gaps in whose ranks were later increasingly filled by Mozambicans and Cape Verdeans.<sup>20</sup> These *serviçais*—as many studies have shown—had not always been voluntary laborers, and even in the 1920s the boundaries between free labor recruitment, forced labor redirected from infrastructure-building in the colony of Angola to the private sector of the far-off archipelago, and continuities of the slave system, had been blurred. The *serviçais* had been strictly separated from the “Creole” populations—not only were the *roças* often many hours or even days distant from the main concentrations of “Creole” inhabitants, but some of the *forro* families (who mostly had a mixed Afro-European—*mestiço*—background, but were regarded as “black” from the racialized Portuguese colonial perspective) had had their own tradition as plantation owners and slave-holders (although the majority of these families had been pushed out of the industry by the turn of the century). Unsurprisingly, many “creoles” regarded themselves as entirely different from the laborers on the *roças*—and refused to have any social relations to these laborers. Theoretically, during the period of Portuguese colonial rule, Angolan and other *serviçais* were to be repatriated after the end of their contract—normally after two to five years—but these provisions were, until the 1950s, quite frequently ignored. Therefore, even at independence there was a large group of Angolans (and also a number of Mozambicans) on the *roças* who waited (if they had not given up hope) to be able to return to their

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foreign labor force; a position contested by Gerhard Seibert. See Michel Cahen, “Arquipélagos da alternância: A vitória da oposição nas ilhas de Cabo Verde e de São Tomé e Príncipe,” *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos* 14–15 (1991), 126–31; and Gerhard Seibert and Michel Cahen in “Correspondência,” *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos* 16–17 (1992–1994), 353–65.

<sup>18</sup> Seibert, *Camaradas*, 164–72.

<sup>19</sup> Izequiel Batista de Sousa, *São Tomé e Príncipe de 1485 à 1755: une société coloniale du blanc au noir* (Paris: Harmattan, 2008), 296–300.

<sup>20</sup> The classical overview for the nineteenth century and early twentieth century is Augusto Nascimento, *Poderes e quotidiano nas roças de S. Tomé e Príncipe: De finais de oitocentos a meados de novecentos* (Lisbon: author’s edition, 2002).

home villages.<sup>21</sup> Many of these laborers had built (often loose) family ties, and had children born on the *roças*, who were known as *tongas*.<sup>22</sup> Given the protests from Portuguese colonial administrators and governors in Angola, who complained that “their” regions were being depleted of a potential workforce necessary to improve the local infrastructure and export agriculture, labor recruitment for São Tomé e Príncipe would in the 1940s and 1950s target the other groups more strongly.<sup>23</sup> Mozambicans were shipped to the islands in growing numbers, and they profited from a considerably improved system of repatriation (which means that many were really transported back into their regions of origin after the end of their contracts), while their practice of sending remittances home to their families worked far more efficiently than for the Angolan *serviçais*.<sup>24</sup> A fourth group on the *roças* (besides the Angolan *serviçais*, the *tongas*, and Mozambicans) were the Cape Verdeans, whose recruitment for work on the plantations had restarted mainly in the late 1940s and 1950s, after the experience of two severe famines in these islands.<sup>25</sup> Like the *forros*, Cape Verdeans automatically enjoyed the status of *civilizados* because of the special legal position of their home territory, which meant that they had a certain kind of Portuguese “imperial citizenship.” This made them workers who were difficult to handle: unlike their Angolan or Mozambican counterparts, the Cape Verdeans could not be subject to corporal punishment, and they were also not eligible for forced labor.<sup>26</sup> Many Cape Verdeans were

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<sup>21</sup> This situation is summarized as being common for 1945 in Jaime H. de Sá V. Couceiro, Director of Department of Maritime Affairs of Angola, *São Tomé e Príncipe, Relatório da viagem feita pelo Capitão de Mar e Guerra Jaime H. de Sá Couceiro de 2 a 20 Setembro de 1945* (without number), n.d. (p. 37), MU/ISAU, Sala 3, 1725, AHU.

<sup>22</sup> Jean Michel Lebigre, “L’obó de São Tomé (République de São Tomé e Príncipe): Un exemple d’hinterland forestier insulaire,” *Cahiers d’Outre-Mer* 56, 224 (2003), 379–400.

<sup>23</sup> Vasco Lopes Alves, Governor-General of Angola, to Carlos da Sousa Gorgulho, Governor of São Tomé e Príncipe, *Despacho: Confidencial* (without number), 1 August 1945 (p. 1), MU/ISAU, Sala 3, 1725, AHU.

<sup>24</sup> Augusto Nascimento, *Desterro e contrato: Moçambicanos a caminho de S. Tomé e Príncipe (anos 1940–1960)* (Maputo: Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> Augusto Nascimento, *O sul da diáspora: Cabo-verdianos em plantações de S. Tomé e Príncipe e Moçambique* (Praia: Presidência da República de Cabo Verde, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Augusto Nascimento, *O fim do caminhu longi* (Mindelo: Ilhéu Editora, 2007), 22–30, 35–36. The fear of the collusion of recalcitrant Cape Verdean workers on the *roças* with Cape Verdean officials in the Portuguese colonial service in São Tomé e Príncipe, is discussed in Alexander Keese, “The Role of Cape Verdeans in War Mobilization and War Prevention in Portugal’s African Empire, 1955–1965,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 40, 3 (2007), 507. A summarizing report about “turbulent behavior” of the Cape Verdeans, after one decade of revived Cape Verdean contract labor in São Tomé e Príncipe, is given in Octávio Ferreira Gonçalves, Acting Governor of São Tomé e Príncipe, to Raul Ventura, Portuguese Overseas Minister (no. 675/56/950), 19 November 1956 (pp. 3–4), Repartição Provincial dos Serviços da Administração Civil (RPSAC), SC:A\SR:A/Cx173 (0022), Arquivo Histórico Nacional de Cabo Verde (hereafter AHNCV), Praia, Republic of Cape Verde; another report can be found in Adelino Macedo, Curator-General of *Serviçais* and Natives of São Tomé e Príncipe, to Manuel Marques de Abrantes Amaral, Governor of Cape Verde, *Informação*, (no. 23/957), 19 June 1957 (pp. 2–3), RPSAC, SC:A\SR:A/Cx173 (0022), AHNCV.

ready enough to embark for São Tomé, given the agricultural disasters that had shaken their own archipelago and caused tens of thousands of deaths through the 1940s.<sup>27</sup> Apart from Augusto Nascimento's studies, little work has been done on the Cape Verdean Diaspora on São Tomé, which remained an uneasy presence on the *roças*.<sup>28</sup> In the twenty-first century, on the larger *roças* such as Agostinho Neto (former *roça* of Rio do Ouro), these peasants are the only group of plantation workers to profit from the existence of corporate associations—a type of union—and they receive some (limited) material support from the Cape Verdean government.<sup>29</sup> In the colonial period, there are regular reports of violence on the *roças* between Cape Verdeans and other groups of laborers, which, however, sharply decrease as a subject in correspondence after independence. In 1955 the position of the Cape Verdeans on the *roças* was summed up as follows by the colonial labor inspectorate:

The attitudes of the Cape Verdean workers have a pernicious influence on indigenous *serviçais* coming from Angola and Mozambique and, in parallel to frequent

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<sup>27</sup> Augusto Barreto de Carvalho, Administrator of *concelho* of Santa Catarina, Santiago Island, Cape Verde, *Ano de 1943: Relatório sobre estado do Concelho* (without number), 22 April 1944, RPSAC, SC:ASR:FCx124 (1503), AHNCV; João Coelho Pereira Serra, Administrator of *concelho* of Ribeira Grande, Santo Antão, Cape Verde, to Director of Central Department of Civil Administration Services of Cape Verde (without number), 30 September 1957, RPSAC, SC:ASR:A/Cx173 (0022), AHNCV. The statement in 1959 by Cape Verdean administrator Luís Rendall Silva that there had never been any forced recruitment during the 1940s and 1950s, and that the colonial government had never attempted to “dupe” Cape Verdeans into accepting labor in São Tomé e Príncipe, appears to be credible. See Luís Silva Rendall, Administrator of Sub-District (*concelho*) of Fogo, *Administração do Concelho do Fogo: Ano Civil de 1958* (without number), 24 February 1959 (p. 67), Repartição Provincial dos Serviços da Administração Civil (RPSAC), SC:ASR:Cx123, 1492, AHNCV. António Carreira's earlier claim that there had been forced recruitment, in António Carreira, *Cabo Verde (Aspectos sociais. Secas e fomes do século XX)* (2nd ed., Lisbon: Ulmeiro, 1984), 173–80—retaken in Luís Batalha, *The Cape Verdean Diaspora in Portugal: Colonial Subjects in a Postcolonial World* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 39—is not supported by reliable evidence, and Augusto Nascimento has shown for his own study that there is little available documentation to substantiate such claims.

<sup>28</sup> Augusto Nascimento, *Vidas de S. Tomé segundo vozes de Soncente* (Mindelo: Ilhéu Editora: 2008), 23; 52–53, 58–59; 72–73 (racist attitudes of Cape Verdeans); 80–81 (voluntary versus forced migration); 88–89 (modalities of recruitment). The living conditions of Cape Verdeans on the *roças* are also studied, albeit not with a systematic historical perspective, in Marina Berthet Ribeiro, “Transformações Sociais e Dinâmicas Locais nas Antigas Dependências Agrícolas de São Tomé e Príncipe” (Ph.D. thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 2005), 167–68.

<sup>29</sup> While a large part of the Angolans and most Mozambicans were repatriated in the aftermath of decolonization, many *tongas* remain on the plantations. Even so, by 1975 persons of Cape Verdean descent were likely to be in the majority on many of the *roças*. See Joaquim dos Santos Domingues, Labour Inspectorate of São Tomé e Príncipe, to Carlos Gouveia Franco, President of ITPAS, *Informação: Instalações para Trabalhadores Rurais na Roça Rio do Ouro*, 6 May 1970 (p. 1), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 648 (cota 3.22.4.2), AHSTP; Eyzaguirre, *Small Farmers*, 350.

disorders between the members of these groups, we registered some other cases of indiscipline of a type that rarely tended to appear before.<sup>30</sup>

After independence, conflicts and violence *between* members of the different groups on the *roças* appear to have become less frequent. It is of course possible that the new, African labor inspectors were less interested in the origins of workers—a point that will play a role in discussing these inspectors' activities—and more insistent upon their role in building up the postcolonial economy. However, it is also quite plausible that the larger socioeconomic problems on the plantations after 1975, which we will analyze in the following section, reduced internal group conflicts among the laborers, as they were all hit by the same socioeconomic difficulties.

### 1976: The Transition to the Postcolonial Economy in Practice

With the coming of independence, inspectors Xavier de Pina and Espírito Santo would now have to cope with the expectations, hopes, and fears of this very large mixed population. The energy shown by the officials in helping to foment the “well-being of the nation”—the *bem da nação*—is quite obvious from their early correspondence, and it is clear that this was not just lip service to the new, Socialist-style rhetoric popular with the early MLSTP regime in São Tomé e Príncipe. However, their initial motivation rapidly became frustrated. The inspectors initially gave big speeches to explain the importance of the individual worker in the building-process of the nation, but after a couple of months they limited themselves to taking punitive measures. Again and again, the inspectors believed themselves to be faced with recalcitrant individuals who did not wish to work according to the timetables specified in their contracts; who disappeared for days in “the bush,” where they apparently cultivated their own hidden banana or manioc plantations; who did not follow the discipline to be established by the overseers; and who on several occasions even burned or destroyed the valuable cocoa trees.

The latter type of incident remained particularly disturbing from the point of view of the inspectors, who could not find an explanation for such behavior. Were these actions the consequence of widespread alcoholism, as part of a larger, social problem to be tackled by the new state? Or did they constitute the expression of a desire to sabotage the progress of the nation? Schooled in Marxist rhetoric, Xavier de Pina tended to see the incidents as clear indications of counter-revolutionary behavior (which was absurd enough among a population of laborers living on remote plantations, and whose horizons were a million miles away from high politics). Given these “subversive trends,” the program of the inspection set by the inspectors themselves was simple enough:

The inspectorate, which in a general way is responsible for the protection of the labourers, will not hesitate to punish them whenever it verifies any act of indiscipline

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<sup>30</sup> Adelino Macedo, Curator-General of Native Affairs, *Relatório [São Tomé 1955]* (without number), n.d. (p. 2), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 1153 (cota 3.24.2.37), AHSTP.

on the part of these labourers. These [acts] have here gained enormous proportions.<sup>31</sup>

The tribunals presided over by the inspectors during 1976 are full of such acts. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss some of the categories in which these acts fall. The “crimes” discussed are representative of many more and if we only count those events into which official inquiries were held, they already amount to hundreds of cases.

Illegal harvesting of bananas, intended for the export commerce, by individual workers or groups of workers who now considered them as part of their diet, was a typical “crime.” On the *roça* Santa Luzia, for instance, such acts happened frequently, and with the connivance of a large number of workers.<sup>32</sup> As in the case of the worker Beileiro Viagas of the *roça* Laura, the inspectors attempted to find the leaders of such “acts of sabotage” and to expel them from the plantations.<sup>33</sup>

The destruction of cocoa plants was, however, regarded as much more serious because there was, from the point of view of the inspectors, no rational explanation. Whenever drunkenness could be given as a reason—workers like Carlos Cabral of the dependency Nova Olinda of Água-Izé plantation appear to have known very well that a confession in this sense could save them from worse punishment—the judgments could be rather mild. Cabral had to pay 500 São Tomean escudos, which was less than a third of his monthly salary.<sup>34</sup> In the cases of the workers Gabriel Borges and Miguel dos Santos Cipriano on Água-Izé, who had hacked out cocoa plants, as in the case of João Maria Soares on the subdivision (*dependência*) Anselmo Andrade of the same *roça*, there was no such justification, and the inspectors advocated a firm response.<sup>35</sup> Some acts, like the one provoked by Manuel do Rosário Afonso de Barros who started a fire on the *roça* Ponta Figo and, perhaps accidentally, destroyed 515 cocoa trees, could be interpreted as “accidents” caused by the illegal agricultural activities of the workers.<sup>36</sup> However, the inspectors were not con-

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<sup>31</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Sociedade Agrícola Ribeira Afonso Lda. (no. 145/A-2-B/976), 21 February 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>32</sup> Américo G. da Graça do Espírito Santo, Labor Inspector, to António Manuel Pereira de Carvalho, owner of Casa Novo Mundo (no. 269/A-2-A/976), 15 April 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>33</sup> Américo G. da Graça de Espírito Santo to António Manuel Pereira de Carvalho (no. 212/0-1/976), 23 March 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>34</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Technical Overseer of Zona 8, *Roça* Água Izé (no. 98/Q-2-Q/976), 6 February 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>35</sup> Francisco Martino Xavier de Pina to Inspector of Judicial Police (no. 785/A-2-A/976), 19 November 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP; Francisco Martino Xavier de Pina to President of *Tribunal Especial Para Actos Contra Revolucionários* (Extraordinary Court against Counter-Revolutionary Activities) (no. 818/A-2-A/976), 3 December 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP; Francisco Martino Xavier de Pina to President of CAP of *Roça* Água-Izé (no. 746/A-2-C/976), 25 October 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>36</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Inspector of Judicial Police (no. 631/A-2-B/976), 7 September 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

vinced that these incidents were not due to attempts of “subversion,” rather than being merely unauthorized agricultural activities and whenever, as in the case of the plantation Uba Budo, these phenomena became generalized, they reacted in a way that showed their deep concern:

After the visit paid on 13 July to the branch Uba Budo Velho (*roça* Uba Budo) I noted that the workers of the dependency in question caused serious damage to the existing palm trees, and also in some areas to the cocoa trees. They cut down some palm trees, pulled out others, burned down cocoa plants etc.

Given that these acts are not in line with the projects we wish to realize, we have formed the opinion that these workers need to suffer punishment, in order that these practices are not repeated in other agricultural zones.<sup>37</sup>

By comparison, drunken workers, such as Militão Sanches Rodrigues from *roça* Rio Leça, who showed indiscipline “against the party programme” of MLSTP and was punished with the loss of ten days’ wages, were regarded as more “normal.”<sup>38</sup> Insults against the members of the *Comités de Acção Política*, such as those by Manuel do Rosário Afonso de Barros, from the *roça* Ponta Figo, were a more serious problem, as were ways of talking classified as “subversive,” such as those by José Cabangala.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand there was little willingness to interfere in “normal brawls” between workers (one of the main preoccupations of members of the labor inspectorate during the late colonial period) and there had to be armed fights, like that between Manuel d’Apresentação Monteiro da Costa and António Francisco Boa Esperança in *roça* Uba Budo, to trigger the intervention of the labor inspectors.<sup>40</sup> Also, there was little interest in “normal” absences, such as those of Felizberto Dionísio da Silva Torres and Paulino d’Alva Torres, or by Osório Carlos Coelho and others from the *roça* Água Izé.<sup>41</sup>

There was greater concern about “turbulent workers,” who might later on become “subversive.” Early in 1976, workers of the *roça* Santy, (such as Jacinto Paulino, Paulo

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<sup>37</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to CAP of *Roça* Uba Budo (no. 513/A-2-A/976), 16 July 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviços e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>38</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Administrator of *Roça* Rio Leça (no. A-2-B/976), 31 October 1976 (p. 1), Curadoria Geral dos Serviços e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>39</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Inspector of Judicial Police (no. 690/A-2-A/976), 28 September 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviços e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP; Américo G. da Graça de Espírito Santo to Acting Administrator of *Roça* Ponta Figo (no. 680/A-2-A/976), 24 September 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviços e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>40</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to President of CAP of *Roça* Uba Budo (no. 653/A-2-B/976), 17 September 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviços e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>41</sup> Américo G. da Graça de Espírito Santo to Manager of Company João Ribeiro Lda. (no. 237/A-2-A/976), 1 April 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviços e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP; Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Technical Overseer of Zona 8, *Roça* Água Izé (no. 97/A-1-A/976), 6 February 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviços e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

Álvaro, Marta da Paz, and Catarina Mendes Tavares) were accused of being “turbulent.”<sup>42</sup> André Vaqueiro de Ceita Soares on the *roça* Montes Hermínios, Evangelista Pires on *roça* Palmar, Celestino Quaresma Soares and Maria Mutulia on *roça* Quinta das Palmeiras, and António de Déus Quinde and Felizberto Correia Pinto on Água-Izé, were all part of the group of those accused of being “turbulent” and potentially “subversive” individuals.<sup>43</sup> Sometimes, in these cases, the labor inspectors set up joint tribunals with the CAP from the *roças*. In case of constant “lack of compliance,” dismissal of the “rebellious” worker was always a last option, as in the case of Augusto Pinto on *roça* Santy.<sup>44</sup> More usually, as in the case of Lucílio Lopes and Armando Rosa on *roça* Piedade (on Príncipe Island), the turbulent workers were punished with payment of fines into the Fundo de Acção Social, a source of funds to finance some minor social projects, which tended to dry up rapidly.<sup>45</sup>

These problems did not at all disappear during 1976. Exemplary punishment for some “turbulent,” i.e., disobedient laborers, ceremoniously announced in front of the entire labor force of a given *roça* (or section of a *roça* in the case of the larger plantation complexes) did not bring the desired results. Moreover, the laborers turned out to be rather hesitant to pay the “voluntary” contributions to the Committees of Political Action on the plantations, which were dominated by the few *forros* active on the *roças*, who normally held the specialized or administrative roles. In a number of cases, the workers directly accused the leaders of the committees of embezzling their money. The inspectors were unsure what to make of these claims, but they normally defended the position of the party. This only led to further trouble. In late 1976, Xavier de Pina and Espírito Santo repeatedly deplored the “indiscipline at work [shown by many laborers], lack of respect and of response to orders, all of which contradicted in the most absolute way the programme of government and of the MLSTP.”<sup>46</sup> The “lack of respect” that was reported by the inspectors concerned both the directing committees of the nationalized plantations and the remaining plantation managers of the smaller *roças*.

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<sup>42</sup> Américo G. da Graça de Espírito Santo to Acting Administrator of *Roça* Santy (no. 24/A-2-A/976), 8 January 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>43</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Acting Administrator of *Roça* Montes Hermínios (no. 138/A-2-B/976), 19 February 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP; Américo G. da Graça do Espírito Santo to Carlos Alberto Gomes da Silva, Administrator of *Roça* Palmar (no. 164/A-2-A/976), 4 March 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP; Américo G. da Graça do Espírito Santo to Acting Administrator of *Roça* Quinta das Palmeiras (no. 191/A-2-A/976), 11 March 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP; Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to CAP of *Roça* Água Izé (no. 587/A-2-B/976), 18 August 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>44</sup> Américo G. da Graça do Espírito Santo to Acting Administrator of *Roça* Santy (no. 62/A-2-B/976), 16 January 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>45</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to *Roça* Piedade (no. 142/A-2-B/976), 20 February 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>46</sup> Francisco Martino Xavier de Pina to Administrator of *Roça* Rio Leça (no. A-2-B/976), 31 October 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

Complainants among the workers on the plantations were treated in a harsh and unfriendly manner by the inspectorate. The inspectors officially demanded more respect for the rules that they had laid down. Usually, however, this was an excuse to take a position against the potentially “turbulent” individuals among the workers, as in the case of a delegation from the plantation Santa Luzia that “complained about supposed infractions committed by the acting administrator of the plantation, such as: having cut down fruit trees, having distributed excessive tasks, and having forced the personnel to do some extra work.” The labor inspectors stated that there was no proof at all of these allegations, and punished the workers for calumny with the usual payment of fines into the *Fundo de Acção Social*.<sup>47</sup>

On some occasions the labor inspectors were sympathetic to the concerns of the workers, particularly when it came to the payment of outstanding wages from the colonial period, or when it was a question of the future of laborers on the smaller *roças* that had not been “nationalized.” In several cases, in the first two years after independence, it was uncertain whether individual Portuguese owners would somehow maintain their engagement, and under what conditions.<sup>48</sup> For some smaller plantations, such as *roças* Granja and Solidade, it was obvious that the owners would not return, nor attempt to claim any rights on these plantations, but it remained open who would pay the outstanding wages and eventual costs of repatriation.<sup>49</sup> Where nationalization had been implemented or the government had imposed acting administrators, other problems prevailed. On the plantation Colónia Açoreana, the CAP refused to pay the wages that were due.<sup>50</sup> On *roça* Santa Margarida, where the acting administrator complied with the new wage scales, he claimed that it was impossible to pay the raised wages within existing budgets, and that the new situation necessitated dismissals.<sup>51</sup>

Part of the worker discontent that materialized since this period is reflected in the disillusion expressed by local workers interviewed on several *roças* in June 2008, where it becomes clear that the *tongas*, the remaining Angolan *serviçais* who were veterans of plantation agriculture in São Tomé, but also the Cape Verdean workers now in the majority, regarded the story of the *roças* after 1975 as a history of decline, due to deliberate neglect and mismanagement on the part of the *forro* elite. Although these individual statements

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<sup>47</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Acting Administrator of *Roça* Santa Luzia (no. 312/A-2-A/976), 30 April 1976 (pp. 1–2), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>48</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Eugénio da Conceição Cunha, Ilhéu Santo Amaro (no. 78/N-13/976), 26 January 1975 [1976], Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>49</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Fausto Ferreira da Fonseca (no. 50/N-13/976), 14 January 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>50</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Technical Overseer of *Roça* Colónia Açoreana (no. 76/0-4/976), 23 January 1976, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

<sup>51</sup> Francisco Martins Xavier de Pina to Technical Overseer of *Roça* Santa Margarida (no. 13/A-1-E/976), 6 January 1976 (p. 1), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 181 (cota 3.8.3.6.), AHSTP.

lack a clear sense of chronology, they give an impression of the atmosphere that was reflected in the inspectors' reports.<sup>52</sup>

The inspectorate was obviously part of the problem. As we have seen, the inspectors carried out their activity for the most part in a punitive manner. They saw counter-revolutionary enemies of the new state nearly everywhere, and enforced rather harsh measures against these individuals. Cape Verdean workers may have been their principal targets—this can be deduced from the names appearing in the documents, although the margins of error are rather great (several of these names could be *tongas* or the few remaining Angolans)—but all former *serviçais* lived through a period of hard treatment.<sup>53</sup>

### The Contrast: Experiences of Liberalization in the 1950s, 1960s, and Early 1970s

Conflicts with the new national labor inspectorate experienced by *roças* workers in the years after independence contrast in a seemingly odd way with the cruel history of abuses on the plantations under Portuguese rule. In this section, I will analyze the link between the two phenomena, going back to the phase of the late colonial state, between 1945 and 1974, and investigating the role of the *colonial* labor inspectorate in this period. What were the experiences of laborers on the *roças* under the predecessors of Xavier de Pina and Espírito Santo? For the period before the late 1940s, the picture seems clear. Among specialists in the history of the Portuguese colonial empire, it is generally accepted that the late Portuguese Republic and the early Estado Novo had come under serious pressure through accusations from the International Labor Organization, which had held that the plantation regime in the 1920s was merely the continuation of the structures of slavery under a different name.<sup>54</sup> In the 1940s little seemed to have changed on the surface. There were serious abuses in the treatment of workers, and the whole recruitment process, at least in Angola, still reminded the more sensitive colonial administrators of versions of slavery.<sup>55</sup>

However, it was at the level of the labor inspectorates where ideas began to change. In the first half of the 1940s, some Portuguese inspectors had developed a distinct view of the needs of São Tomé's plantation workers, and loudly denounced the massive shortcomings of the treatment of workers on the *roças*.<sup>56</sup> Poor hygienic conditions on several *roças*,

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<sup>52</sup> Personal communications provided to Alexander Keese and Maciel Santos on 16 June 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, concerning requests for Santomean citizenship, there is no extraordinary percentage of Cape Verdean *roça* workers. See as examples, Pascoal Ayres Pires dos Santos, Director of Services of Territorial Administration, *Atestado [Alberto Correia Mendonça]* (no. 265/979), 7 March 1979, Ministério da Administração Interna, 003 (Cota 1.12.2.12), Vários, AHSTP; Osório Umbelina dos Prazeres, District Commissioner of Água Grande, *Atestado [Pedro Alves Fonseca]* (no. 133/980), 6 February 1980, Ministério da Administração Interna, 003 (Cota 1.12.2.12), Vários, AHSTP.

<sup>54</sup> See the broader context in Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, *Livros Brancos, Almas Negras: A "missão civilizadora" do colonialismo português, c. 1870–1930* (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2010), 211–49.

<sup>55</sup> Secretary of Administration of Sub-District (*circunscrição*) of Menongue, Angola, [*Relatório*] (without number), 19 March 1942 (p. 11), MU/ISAU, Sala 3, 1725, AHU.

<sup>56</sup> Part of this process is discussed in Alexander Keese, *Living with Ambiguity: Integrating an African Elite in French and Portuguese Africa, 1930–61* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2007), 166–67.

the distribution of rotten food, workers living for weeks on a couple of bananas per day—these scandals, while unknown to the public in the authoritarian Portuguese state, led in the late 1940s to gradual but real changes in the Portuguese attitude towards the plantation owners and their managers. In 1946 the labor inspectorate came to the following, damning verdict:

The reality today is the following: many agriculturalists of São Tomé organize their agricultural possessions on the basis of slave labor—and there is no euphemism that would allow us to change this expression, because this is not “forced labour” or “compulsory labour,” terms which with regard to other African colonies correspond, in their reality and their expression, to other forms and other processes.<sup>57</sup>

This comparison with slavery was a powerful blow. Over the following years, the labor inspectors insisted that the central government needed to be better informed about these abuses, which had obviously been untouched for years and which had to end.<sup>58</sup> In 1948, the Portuguese curator-general of native affairs in São Tomé emphasized that from the end of the Second World War, a “new spirit” and a wish for more social justice had become a reality on the islands.<sup>59</sup>

This does not mean that the practices of recruitment and the living conditions on the *roças* changed from one day to the other. Moreover, the attitudes of colonial administrators in the colonies of recruitment remained strongly negative towards the liberalization of these processes. In 1951, the administrator of the *concelho* (the suburban district) of Malange in Angola dismissed the idea of creating a rural model settlement with repatriated workers from São Tomé e Príncipe with the argument that, now, only criminal elements were forcibly sent to the archipelago, which even after four years of hard service were not at all disciplined enough to constitute a reliable labor force in Angola!<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, these administrators took the remittances of workers who had died during their service in São Tomé, and used them to boost the meagre public funds in Angola’s regions.

Notwithstanding these delays, the decade of the 1950s saw a complete revision of practices of recruitment, and of labor conditions in São Tomé e Príncipe. The labor inspectorate (or *curadoria*), both on the islands and in Angola, would be the key institution which brought about these changes, together with colonial labor inspectors based in Lisbon. By 1950 the rhetoric of the inspectors had already undergone a complete change, although the authoritarian structures of the Portuguese *Estado Novo* clearly slowed down this process. In spite of this, the inspectors became quite insistent that concrete changes were needed on

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<sup>57</sup> Inspectorate-General of Colonial Administration (Inspeção Superior de Administração Colonial), *Parecer [ : São Tomé ]* (without number), 6 July 1946 (p. 3), MU/ISAU, Sala 3, 1725, AHU.

<sup>58</sup> Henrique Jones da Silveira, Inspector-General of Colonial Administration, *Parecer* (without number), 20 March 1947 (p. 3), MU/ISAU, Sala 3, 1725, AHU.

<sup>59</sup> Octávio Ferreira Gonçalves, Curator-General of *Serviçais* and Natives in São Tomé, [*São Tomé: Relatório do Curador Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas* (without number), January 1948 (p. 3), MU/ISAU, Sala 3, 1661, AHU.

<sup>60</sup> Administration of *concelho* of Malange, *Relatório 1951* (without number), n.d. (p. 5), 1253, Arquivo Histórico de Angola, Luanda, Angola (hereafter AHA).

the *roças*, and they celebrated a number of successes during the decade of the 1950s. One early battle was for permission for contracted workers to bring their spouses or consorts and, in this context, the inspectorate strongly criticized the bad intentions or apathy of the colonial officials in the Angolan recruitment zones in question:

The request was transmitted to the agencies of the service of native affairs, in Duque de Bragança and in Huambo. As regards the first one, the response was negative, similar, unfortunately, to earlier responses, perhaps because some authorities or agents of the authorities were uninterested or lazy, and these latter did not come to the see intrigues [from the side of plantation owners and others who did not want the extra cost] and, more concretely, an adequate moral and social understanding of the fact, in all its important significance.<sup>61</sup>

Also, as in the inquiries made by the Intendant of Cuanza-Sul in Angola, there was now reluctance simply to accept the transport of potential criminals to São Tomé e Príncipe.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, there was growing awareness that the *cipaios*, the guards and auxiliaries in the service of the administration, had their own vested interests and were eager to extort bribes from locals who would then be spared from being sent to the archipelago.<sup>63</sup> Given the African population's constant fear of being consigned to this fate, common throughout Angola, there was always a potential for similar acts.

These changing attitudes of Portuguese officials during the 1950s increased the pressure on the more abusive owners of plantations, while the compliant administrators and owners, such as those on the large Rio do Ouro plantation, were now publicly celebrated as exemplary.<sup>64</sup> Feeling the changes inside the inspectorate, many of the *serviçais* and *tongas* on the *roças* believed they could now more easily obtain what they regarded as their rights. Therefore the manager of the *roça* Laura reported in March 1950, with some nervousness, that "the *serviçal* Quiolano came on Sunday in my presence, and said, with authoritarian gestures, that on the following day he would depart, with his whole family to the post of the labor inspectorate," to have a case resolved concerning his wish to change the plantation on which he worked in order to be united with his family (such unions had often been impeded by the owners).<sup>65</sup> This episode is representative of many others. Obvi-

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<sup>61</sup> Henrique B. de Araújo Regallo, Chefe de Expediente da Repartição Central dos Negócios Indígenas to Governor of Province of Benguela, *Circular* (no. 9/4<sup>a</sup>/4-E), 21 October 1949, 1830, AHA.

<sup>62</sup> Intendence of the District of Cuanza-Sul (in Novo Redondo) to Provincial Director of Civil Administration in Benguela (no. 238/41/Int<sup>a</sup>), 31 December 1951 (p. 1), 1830, AHA.

<sup>63</sup> Álvaro Corrêa de Freitas, Provincial Director of Civil Administration in Benguela, *Informação* (no. 140/S.T./2<sup>a</sup>/951), 20 February 1951, 1830, AHA.

<sup>64</sup> Octávio Ferreira Gonçalves to Administrator of Sociedade Agrícola Valle Flôr, Lda., *roça* Rio de Ouro, 29 October 1949 (pp. 1–2), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 189 (cota 3.27.2.14), AHSTP.

<sup>65</sup> Leandro d'Azevedo Rodrigues, Administrator of *Roça* Laura, to Curator-General of *Serviçais* and Natives of São Tomé e Príncipe, 21 March 1950, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 220 (cota 3.6.2.12), AHSTP.

ously, it was now in a growing number of cases no longer the owners and managers but the workers who found that the ears of the Portuguese inspectors were open to them.<sup>66</sup>

An early document, but one which is representative for many later files, was the report of the Labor Inspector (the *curador*) Octávio Ferreira Gonçalves, from July 1947. Gonçalves commented, indignantly, on the unhygienic state of several plantations. The verdict on the situation of the *roça* Cruz Grande was particularly severe:

More hygiene and a better organisation of everything is recommended, because only in this way will the *serviçais* on this *roça* feel better.<sup>67</sup>

Some plantation managers, like the administrator of the Sociedade Agrícola da Rozema, did indeed respond to these pressures. They would dismiss particularly brutal overseers and discipline others to make them respect the provisions of the law.<sup>68</sup> In the late 1940s this still did not amount to very much. Nonetheless, what was evident from the point of view of the *serviçais* was the first notable improvement of their overall situation. This improvement was associated, in particular, with the engagement of the Governor Carlos da Sousa Gorgulho, who without doubt gave unconditional support to the active labor inspectors.<sup>69</sup> One of Gorgulho's major projects under the *Estado Novo* was substituting the contract laborers coming from other overseas provinces with *forro* laborers. It remains unclear if the governor and his closest collaborators only attempted to employ pressure through the instrument of higher personal tax for the *forros*, or if it clandestinely involved routs and coercive labor.<sup>70</sup> In any case, Gorgulho's overall plans provoked outrage and open defiance by São Tomé's *forro* population.

In the course of these events and their bloody results, Gorgulho has become, in the *forro* experience of Portuguese rule, the particular villain of the story. In particular he was responsible for the so-called Batepá Massacre, the February 1953 incident during which a number of suspected rebels from the São Tomean elite were brutally tortured and even murdered.<sup>71</sup> However, the role of the plantation workers in these events is more complex.

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<sup>66</sup> This is neatly and convincingly summarized in José Francisco Rodrigues, Curator-General of Native Affairs, *Relatório referente ao ano de 1952 [São Tomé]* (without number), n.d. (p. 3), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 1153 (cota 3.24.2.37), AHSTP.

<sup>67</sup> Octávio Ferreira Gonçalves, Curator-General of *Serviçais* and Natives, to José da Costa Louro, Administrator of *Roça* Santa Cruz, 11 July 1947, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 225 (cota 3.6.2.20), AHSTP.

<sup>68</sup> This is another early case, which goes back to 1947, see Administrator of Sociedade Agrícola da Rozema to Octávio Ferreira Gonçalves, Curator-General (no. 1577), 8 June 1947 (p. 1), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 225 (cota 3.6.2.20), AHSTP.

<sup>69</sup> D. António de Almeida, Inspector-General of Labor, to Portuguese Overseas Ministry (without number), 20 February 1948 (pp. 5–7), MU/ISAU, Sala 3, 2245, AHU.

<sup>70</sup> Eyzaguirre, *Small Farmers*, 326–28.

<sup>71</sup> Gerhard Seibert, "The February 1953 Massacre in São Tomé: Crack in the Salazarist Image of Multiracial Harmony and Impetus for Nationalist Demands for Independence," *Portuguese Studies Review* 10, 2 (2002), 52–77; Seibert, *Camaradas*, 76–94; René Pélissier, "La 'guerre' de Batepá (São Tomé–février 1953)," *Revue française d'études politiques africaines* 73 (1973), 74–88.

Some of the plantation workers were mobilized against the alleged rebels and took part in the killings.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, while this might only have been a strategy of Gorgulho's, conditions on the *roças* effectively began to improve in the period of his government. Therefore, there was no need for the plantation laborers to share the *forro* vision of his role.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, the successes of the Portuguese labor inspectorate stabilized.<sup>73</sup> They were eventually accelerated by worries that the international pressures for decolonization and the effects of the anticolonial wars in other Portuguese colonies might affect São Tomé e Príncipe. On many of the *roças*, the living conditions improved steadily, and, at the moment of independence, the owners had been pressured to install rather modern facilities, and to treat the workers in a more decent way. For example, in 1963, the inspector of labor visiting the *roça* Monte Café, criticized the installations, the state of medical support, and nutrition.<sup>74</sup> The contrast with this earlier state of affairs was clear when in 1971, the inspectors were enthusiastic about the improvements, and occupied themselves with questions of basic education in the *roça's* kindergarten!<sup>75</sup> This trend towards a sharp critique of the regime on the *roças* had already grown during the late 1950s.<sup>76</sup> Any lack of compliance on the part of the proprietors was no longer tolerated. On smaller *roças*, like Filipina or Mulembú, where the owners were reluctant to improve con-

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<sup>72</sup> The Portuguese labor inspectorate was, as they held it, impressed by what they called the “loyalty” of the *serviçais*. See José Francisco Rodrigues, Curator-General of Native Affairs, *Relatório referente ao ano de 1952 [São Tomé]*, n.d., Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 1153 (cota 3.24.2.37), AHSTP, 5; Nascimento, *Fim*, 22; Eyzaguirre, *Small Farmers*, 330.

<sup>73</sup> Compare the information given to Nascimento in Nascimento, *Fim*, 38–39, 42–43. The labor inspectors criticized harshly what they regarded as sabotage from non-compliant managers of *roças*, who were to be disciplined more rigidly. See Instituto do Trabalho, Previdência e Acção Social of São Tomé e Príncipe, *Relatório dos Anos de 1966 e 1967* (without number), n.d., typed manuscript in possession of the Biblioteca Central da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, Portugal, under EA-STP 24, 28–29. It should be noted that there is no indication in this report of any strike movements on São Tomé (neither Nascimento nor Seibert ever mention this strike, nor does it appear in any report analyzed during research for this article).

<sup>74</sup> José Ferreira Simões Pinto to Administrador of *Roça* Monte Café (no. 1010/N-1/963), 26 June 1963, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 187 (cota 3.7.5.11), AHSTP.

<sup>75</sup> Raul Sérgio Pinto Baldaia, Chief Labor Inspector, to President of Instituto do Trabalho, Previdência e Acção Social, *Visita ao Infantário da Sede da Roça Monté Café* (no. 64/B-2-C/971), 26 October 1971 (p. 1), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 187 (cota 3.7.5.11), AHSTP; Carlos Gouveia Franco, Administrative Intendant, to Administrator of *Roca* Monte Café (no. 1608/B-2-C), 3 November 1971 (pp. 1–2), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 187 (cota 3.7.5.11), AHSTP. See, also, on the general socioeconomic situation on the islands, Feliciano Gameiro Santos, Administrative Inspector, *Inspecção Administrativa Ordinária à Província de S. Tomé e Príncipe* (without number), April/June 1972 (pp. 94–98), MU/ISAU, A2.001.02/06.00025, AHU.

<sup>76</sup> A. Mendes Serra, Inspector of Administrative Affairs of the Provincial Section of the Services of Labor and Welfare in São Tomé, to Administrator of *Roça* Monte Café (no. 1385), 16 November 1959 (pp. 1–2), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 187 (cota 3.7.5.11), AHSTP.

ditions, the critique of the labor inspectors became increasingly aggressive and made reforms unavoidable.<sup>77</sup>

In 1974, at the moment of the overthrow of the post-Salazarist dictatorship, the evolution of labor conditions on the plantations had gone a long way. The labor inspectors had been the principal vehicles of the Portuguese late colonial state, in its attempt to establish more modern and more beneficial conditions on the *roças*. The workers, while continuing to live in an authoritarian and exploitative system, fared incomparably better than those of thirty years previously, and part of this improvement could be attributed to the labor inspections, which were identified with progress throughout the late colonial system.

### **Conclusion: Late Colonial “Modernism” and Experiences of Decline and Disappointment—Understanding the Heritage of the Late Colonial State**

Given these improvements, even within a colonial empire based on authoritarian principles, it is not surprising that the laborers on the plantations of São Tomé e Príncipe were hoping to see further improvements after independence. At first glance, the disappearance of the Portuguese administration meant the retreat of the “fascist” plantation owners, and a possible Africanization of the structures of control of the *roças*.<sup>78</sup> However, in effect, these were in the end not the measures that were decisively positive from the point of view of the *serviçais* and *tongas*—and more so as the CAPs and the postcolonial inspectorate of labor did not seem to represent their interest. In social and economic terms, decolonization was unsurprisingly an immense disappointment—even if many of these problems stemmed from a lack of know-how among the new cadres of the independent state, which was in itself a result of the colonial conditions.<sup>79</sup> On the side of remuneration, the daily wages of the workers would be raised from 28 to 80 São Tomean Escudos—but the wages lost their value, given that the currency now had a very low purchasing power.

Worse, however, was the experience of loss of support that had, under the late colonial state, increasingly been available from the part of the agents of the specialized labor services. The attitude towards the labor inspectorate, which had slowly become established as advocate of the populations in the late colonial period, again became negative. From the point of view of the plantation workers, the inspectors became—like those of the early 1940s and the long and repressive preceding period—figures who were exclusively engaged in questions of control and discipline. They did not seem to respond to complaints and they appeared only to protect those who held an interest in the exploitation of the labor

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<sup>77</sup> Joaquim dos Santos Domingues, *Relatório da Inspeção à Roça Mulembú em 8/2/1965* (no. 21/1965-D), 8 February 1965, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 1153 (cota 3.24.2.37), AHSTP; Joaquim dos Santos Domingues, Inspectorate of Labor and Welfare of São Tomé e Príncipe, *Relatório: Roça Filipinas – Inspeção realizada em 26/4/1967* (no. 69/1967/D.), 1 May 1967, Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 1145 (cota 3.1.5.13), AHSTP.

<sup>78</sup> Nascimento, *Fim*, 56–57, 62–63.

<sup>79</sup> Particularly if compared to the demands brought forward by striking laborers on the *roças* in the second half of 1974; see Joaquim dos Santos Domingues, Administrator of *concelho* and acting Chief Inspector, to Delegate of Instituto de Trabalho, Previdência e Acção Social in Príncipe (no. 7/1974), 11 July 1974 (pp. 1–2), Curadoria Geral dos Serviçais e Indígenas, 1176, AHSTP.

force, even if these were no longer capitalist plantation owners, but managers installed by a “people’s democracy.” Through the whole of the late 1970s, this disappointment became increasingly damaging and by 1981, the state of things had become endemic. The inhabitants of the plantations did not participate in the popular disturbances of 1979 and 1981, as they were detached from the interest of the *forros*, some of which rebelled during these years against food scarcity and poverty. Nonetheless, they were negative towards the regime and its executive agents, in the form of the labor inspectorate. The experience with the inspectors who, in the eyes of the laborers, represented the repressive attitudes the ruling elites held towards them, widened the gap between the population on the plantations and the postcolonial urban or peri-urban society. In future, there would be no room for a consensus.

This analysis of a former Portuguese colony and the evolution of its economic system after independence allows us to draw some important conclusions for a broader view on decolonization processes and their effects on social relations in the postcolonial period. Even in a colonial state that was as authoritarian as the Portuguese *Estado Novo*, the improvement of labor conditions, through the abolition of practices that could be described as a kind of “forced labour,” did not fail to leave an impact. *Serviçais* in São Tomé e Príncipe were not content with the labor conditions they had by 1974. However, they recognized the improvement in their living conditions under the late colonial state, and began to rely on specialized services, notably the labor inspectorate, which in the late colonial state had become a key interlocutor for the needs of the laborers.

After independence, the populations on the plantations utilized this experience as a scale against which to measure the behavior of postcolonial bureaucratic elites. When the practices of regulating the labor force after independence reminded them strongly of the phase of active “forced labour” under Portuguese rule, this appears to have caused negative comparisons and, at least, passive resistance. In the end, the effect of these perceptions helped to alienate a part of the “civil society” from the decision-makers in the political centers. Given the similarities in the history of the abolition of forced labor under different colonial regimes, it is plausible to conclude that there were analogous experiences in several sub-Saharan African countries immediately after independence. From this perspective the effects of the late colonial state in other former colonial territories still need to be investigated.