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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Between Land Reform and Postcolonial Frustration: Understanding the Social Roots of Local Opposition to the PAIGC/PAICV in Santo Antão, Cabo Verde, 1975–91

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Abstract

This study discusses the processes of increasing social malaise and an “oppositional mood” in the Cape Verdean island of Santo Antão, where growing frustration between 1975 and 1990 led to the building of massive political opposition against the single-party regime in the archipelago. Early scrutiny of the shortcomings of independent administration, anger about the installation of a new police force, resettlement schemes, a failed agrarian reform, regime violence to achieve that reform, and a generalised mood of decline in the second half of the 1980s, constitute different elements explaining the unrest in that island. Based on newly available, local archives as an innovative source, the interpretation of a remote Cape Verdean opposition island also addresses the potential of studying opposition against “winning parties” and regimes after independence in wider regional frameworks, referring to discontent and “oppositional mood” elsewhere in postcolonial (Lusophone) Africa.

Keywords: West Africa; Cape Verde; postcolonial; protest; social movements; agriculture

In 1990/91, when Cabo Verde changed from an authoritarian regime into a multiparty democracy, Santo Antão already experienced years of growing opposition. The island’s populations were unsatisfied with the regime’s performance. They shared that opposition with many other regions in sub-Saharan Africa after independence, which have not generated much sustained interest from historians but have attracted the attention of political scientists predominantly focused on elites centralising power.¹ Before Cabo Verde’s first multiparty elections in 1991, elites of the ruling party — the Partido Africano para a Independência de Cabo Verde (PAICV) — refused to believe that their party, and the first president of independent Cabo Verde, Aristides Pereira, could lose in a democratic contest at national level.² However, they had understood that there was considerable opposition in some places, and they regarded Santo Antão as one such vulnerable part of the

¹On the wider context of democratisation and resilience of authoritarian regimes in sub-Saharan Africa after the end of the Cold War – in a political science perspective – see Samuel M. Makinda, “Democracy and Multi-Party Politics in Africa,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 34, no. 4 (1996): 555–73; Bruce Magnusson and John F. Clark, “Understanding Democratic Survival and Democratic Failure in Africa: Insights from Divergent Democratic Experiments in Benin and Congo (Brazzaville),” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, no. 3 (2005): 552–82.

²Elisa Silva Andrade, “Cape Verde,” in *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa*, eds. Patrick Chabal et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 264–90, 270.

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electoral landscape.³ At a late moment, party leaders decided to use a leading party official, who was a native, former administrator, and local party representative in Santo Antão, Armindo Cruz, as a sort of campaign organiser to preserve the “social peace” and to work locally for a better result.⁴ However, this strategy failed: the electoral defeat in Santo Antão was resounding,⁵ and incidents of violence took place, including opposition activists in Paúl setting fire to the local PAICV headquarters. Some leading citizens of Paúl criticised the oppositional Movimento para a Democracia (MpD), which would take power in the island and the archipelago after the elections, for inciting islanders to unnecessary violence, but such criticism was quite restrained, and the widespread anger commented upon as just retribution.⁶

How and why did Santo Antão become a key place of anti-regime mobilisation in the period of one-party rule? According to the 1980 census, the population of the archipelago’s second largest island was at over 43,000, being some 14 percent of the country’s inhabitants; despite its relative remoteness from the centre of political life in Cabo Verde, Praia, the capital, and the island of Santiago, Santo Antão was nevertheless of political importance, being a place notorious for “feudal” landholding practices and exploitation under colonial rule. This article attempts to understand the making of an opposition stronghold and the driving forces of increasing discontent with the PAIGC/PAICV regime in the island between 1975 and 1990.⁷ It will try to deconstruct the official narrative of a harmonious national community created out of an anticolonial struggle locally, through analysis of new archival records and oral testimony. In that regard, I will argue that the history of oppositional movements in independent African societies, and, more specifically, in the post-independence history of Lusophone Africa, has not attracted sufficient interest from historians. However, the research possibilities are vast: as Benedito Machava and Euclides Gonçalves have recently shown, archival resources below the level of the national archives of Lusophone African countries are sometimes difficult to access and are at risk of destruction, but they do exist and are frequently available for pathbreaking analysis.⁸ For the history of Cabo Verde this is certainly the case.

For Santo Antão (see Fig. 1 below), the archives of the three municipal districts on the island (*arquivos da câmara municipal*) are now open for research. In a landmark undertaking, the archives of the district of Paúl, severely damaged, were transported in 2016 to the National Archives (the Arquivo Nacional de

³According to the 1990 census in Cabo Verde, Santo Antão was home to 43,845 of the independent state’s 341,491 inhabitants. See the – partisan – overview by Hopffer Almeida, first published in a Cape Verdean online publication, and later on the platform Buala: José Luís Hopffer Almeida, “Das tragédias históricas do povo caboverdiano e da saga da sua constituição e da sua consolidação como nação crioula soberana,” *Buala*, 17 Feb. 2012, <https://www.buala.org/pt/a-ler/das-tragedias-historicas-do-povo-caboverdiano-e-da-saga-da-sua-constituicao-e-da-sua-consolidacao>.

⁴Arquivo da Câmara Municipal da Ribeira Grande, Ponta do Sol, Santo Antão, Cabo Verde (ACMRG-CV), 30 – Actividades política e partidária (henceforth 30-APP), Carlos Reis, Secretary of the National Council of the PAICV, to Executive Secretariats of Sector Committees of Santo Antão (no. CN./227/90), 30 June 1990; Arquivo Nacional de Cabo Verde, Praia (ANCV), Fundo Paúl (F-Paúl), SAP, cx. 104, *Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde – Sector do Paúl – Memorando* (no. 2/90), n.d. (reporting on meeting of 27 Apr. 1990).

⁵For the five electoral districts of Santo Antão, during the legislative elections of 25 Jan. 1991, the oppositional MpD received 12,797 votes (77.7%) and the PAICV 3,658 votes (22.3%), compared to 78,454 votes (66.4%) for the MpD and 39,673 votes (33.6%) for the PAICV at the national level, see <https://cne.cv/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/LEGISLATIVAS-1991.pdf>. During the presidential elections of 17 Feb. 1991, the oppositional candidate of the MpD, António Mascarenhas Monteiro, obtained 13,047 votes and 87% of the valid vote in Santo Antão against 1,938 votes and 13% for the incumbent, Aristides Pereira, compared to 70,623 votes (73.4%) for Mascarenhas Monteiro and 25,544 votes (26.6%) for Pereira at the national level, see <https://cne.cv/resultado-das-eleicoes-presidenciais-1991/>.

⁶ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 6, Alcídio José Gonçalves Tavares, President of the Municipality and Delegate of Government in Paúl; Salomão Sanches Furtado, Administrative Secretary, *Conselho Deliberativo do Concelho do Paúl extracto da Acta No. 1/90 da Reunião Extraordinária*, n.d.; ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 6, Alcídio José Gonçalves Tavares; Salomão Sanches Furtado, *Conselho Deliberativo do Paúl – Extracto da Acta No. 6/90*, n.d.

⁷The PAIGC (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e de Cabo Verde) changed its name in PAICV after the 1980 coup d’état removing the party from power in Guinea-Bissau.

⁸Benedito Machava and Euclides Gonçalves, “The Dead Archive: Governance and Institutional Memory in Independent Mozambique,” *Africa* 91, no. 4 (2021): 553–74.

Cabo Verde in Praia), restored, and are now in principle available for researchers. The municipal government of the district of Ribeira Grande organised through an impressive effort the establishment of a local archive within an annex of the Ponta do Sol town hall. The author of this article, along with officials of the town hall and historian Beatriz Valverde Contreras, led the first steps towards reorganisation, providing access to the historical records of the district archives of Porto Novo for the first time in April 2019.⁹ Finally, the article also used evidence from an oral history project carried out by the town hall of Paúl in cooperation with the author. The oral testimony given, however, strives to avoid the troubled period of the one-party state and tends to remain in the safer waters of discussing the repressive routines of Portuguese late colonialism: this is about a question of social peace and old wounds coming from the local conflicts lived through, which makes the period of authoritarian rule an uneasy issue.¹⁰

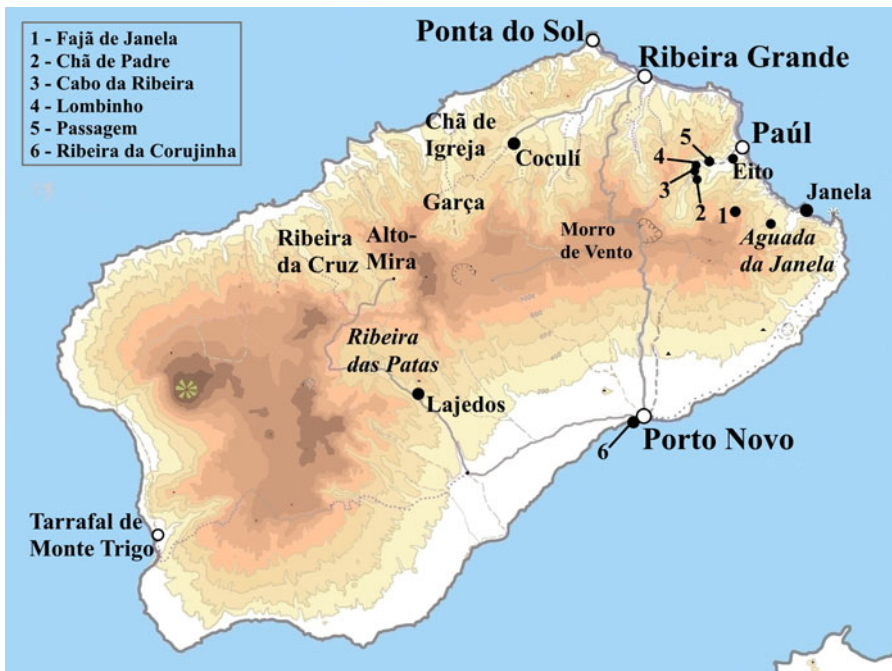


Fig. 1 Santo Antão
Source: Created by author.

Following a discussion of the Santo Antão case within the social history of opposition movements after independence in sub-Saharan Africa, both in Lusophone Africa and beyond, this analysis will discuss opposition in Santo Antão through four categories of its appearance. These categories include early frustrations of local expectations, anger about a combination of more police control paired with the absence of certain juridical and administrative services, resistance to the creation of structures of the ruling party in certain places, resettlement initiatives and the effects of unwanted agrarian reform. The aim is to reframe different expressions of opposition and to

⁹Alexander Keese and Annalisa Urbano, "Researching Post-Independence Africa in Regional Archives: Possibilities and Limits in Benin, Cabo Verde, Ghana, and Congo-Brazzaville," *Africa* 93, no. 4 (2023): 551–2.

¹⁰The results of this activity, mainly four long recorded interviews, are available at the Town Hall of Paúl, and can be consulted by researchers after authorisation by the local councillors of social and/or cultural issues. For avoidance of conflictual post-independence issues, see the interview with Eduardo Manuel Silva, Janela, 26 Jan. 2018.

establish them as elements of an “oppositional mood” on the island. At the same time, the creation of these categories might provide a roadmap towards studies of oppositional movements elsewhere.

Opposition against the victorious nationalist movements in early postcolonial Africa: a marginalised topic

Santo Antão might be a peripheral Cape Verdean island, but its history of local discontent and opposition is significant for the wider field of the history of postcolonial regimes in sub-Saharan Africa. There are three levels at which the creation of opposition as exemplified here is very relevant for readers interested in wider processes: the mechanisms of antagonising populations of certain regions, the mood of unfair treatment, and the implications that this discontent has for the writing of the national post-independence histories. I will first make observations that are supposed to give a wider view, and subsequently take a perspective that more clearly refers to historiography of Lusophone Africa.

Nationalist rhetoric in the late colonial and early postcolonial periods in Africa created huge expectations in terms of generation of welfare. Existing research has especially shown that heavy-handed intervention could produce widespread anger and local resistance. Julius Nyerere’s *ujamaa* programmes of rural resettlement and developmental intervention in Tanzania together with other measures like in forestry is probably the most actively discussed example¹¹: as was the case in Santo Antão, residents of rural areas refused resettlement and resisted reorganisation of the agrarian sector by the state. Leander Schneider and Julie Weiskopf have demonstrated the complexities of these cases.¹² There is far less analysis for other new nation-states, and the observations from the Cape Verdean case will provide an interesting analysis in this regard.

In postcolonial African societies, frustration with the behaviour of the state and its agents led to what I will call here “oppositional mood.” Given that such local irritation could usually not find expression in the organisation of new political parties during the decades of authoritarian, single-party rule, historical research needs to focus on expressions of discontent and small acts of resistance, often at a regional level. This is so far not attempted in a systematic way, with the major exception for Kenneth Kaunda’s Zambia, for which Giacomo Macola and Miles Larmer have offered pathbreaking analysis on what Macola describes in an archival quote as exclusion “from the good freedom.”¹³ In the Zambian case, the opposition was more formalised than in Cabo Verde. The experience of Santo Antão will give another important, empirically based example of how the “oppositional mood” could express itself through various, and combined, forms of anger, local resistance, and discontent.

Miles Larmer and Baz Lecocq have called for the diversification of studies on pre- and post-independence nationalism; they argue that a straight-lined, national liberation narrative frequently ignores other priorities and affiliations, including regional sentiment.¹⁴ Indeed, for the moments of multiparty competition under late colonialism, studies on winners and losers amongst local political parties are sometimes detailed and important, as for Tanzania, Guinea-Conakry, and Ghana, although these studies have a tendency to focus on how the future ruling party conquered the

¹¹Emma Hunter, “‘The History and Affairs of TANU’: Intellectual History, Nationalism, and the Postcolonial State in Tanzania,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 45, no. 3 (2012): 367–9; Thaddeus Sunseri, “‘Something Else to Burn’: Forest Squatters, Conservationists, and the State in Modern Tanzania,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 43, no. 4 (2005): 627.

¹²Leander Schneider, “Freedom and Unfreedom in Rural Development: Julius Nyerere, Ujamaa Vijijini, and Villagization,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 38, no. 2 (2004): 344–92; Julie M. Weiskopf, “Resettling Buha: A Social History of Resettled Communities in Kigoma Region, Tanzania, 1933–1975” (PhD Dissertation, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 2011), 260–85.

¹³Miles Larmer, *Rethinking African Politics: A History of Opposition in Zambia* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2011); Giacomo Macola, “‘It Means as if We are Excluded from the Good Freedom’: Thwarted Expectations of Independence in the Luapula Province of Zambia, 1964–6,” *The Journal of African History* 47, no. 1 (2006): 43–56.

¹⁴Miles Larmer and Baz Lecocq, “Historicising Nationalism in Africa,” *Nations and Nationalism* 24, no. 4 (2018): 908–11.

strongholds of its local rivals.¹⁵ For postcolonial African societies, such historical analysis is yet extremely scarce; beyond some spectacular episodes of contestation, like the Senegalese 1968 student revolt, few such historical studies are available.¹⁶ Some of the existing studies focus on specific opposition leaders, providing essential elements on biography and alternative nationalist philosophy; however, historical research also needs to focus on cases where the biographical elements of opposition leadership are far less important.¹⁷ The Santo Antão case therefore gives an outstanding example of how to discuss the alternatives to the nationalist account.

The former Portuguese colonies have some specific characteristics. Early international scholarship on Portuguese decolonisation was overwhelmingly sympathetic to certain anticolonial movements and the regimes that were created out of them. The first generation of scholars had to debunk Portuguese colonial myths and grew up in an environment shaped by the struggle against authoritarian and racist regimes like those of Apartheid South Africa, Rhodesia, or indeed Portuguese colonialism.¹⁸ However, positions glorifying the first postcolonial regimes in the so-called PALOP countries have long since become a problem for critical historical scholarship, as heroic narratives made the finer-grained analysis of postcolonial regimes and administrations — and of their repressive elements — more difficult.¹⁹ A first generation of studies questioning that narrative did not manage to change the more general trend.²⁰ Recent analysis of the Mozambican RENAMO rebellion of the 1980s, thanks to the pioneering efforts of Michel Cahen, Eric Morier-Genoud and others, has been a new milestone in critically scrutinising local experiences of opposition, thanks to the interpretation of new sources.²¹ However, it is also essential to look at cases where the opposition was repressed without the upheavals of a civil war.²²

The Cape Verdean and Santo Antão case embody certain local, specific elements. First, the new state lived with considerable economic constraints and a difficult legacy of Portuguese colonialism, which had been weak in terms of resources and coincided with massive droughts that remained important in the daily life of the archipelago after independence.²³ Between the 1950s and 1974, the late colonial state had accelerated local investments, an experience firmly planted in local

¹⁵James R. Brennan, “The Short History of Political Opposition and Multi-Party Democracy in Tanganyika, 1958–64,” in *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority and Dissidence in Tanzania*, eds. Gregory H. Maddox and James L. Giblin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 250–76; John Straussberger, “Storming the Citadel: Decolonization and Political Contestation in Guinea’s Futa Jallon 1945–61,” *The Journal of African History* 57, no. 2 (2016): 231–49; Richard Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs: The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana 1951–60* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000).

¹⁶Françoise Blum, *Révolutions africaines: Congo-Brazzaville, Sénégal, Madagascar: années 1960–1970* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014).

¹⁷Colin Baker, *Chipembere: The Missing Years* (Zomba: Kachere, 2006); Insa Nolte, *Obafemi Awolowo and the Making of Remo: The Local Politics of a Nigerian Nationalist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Giacomo Macola, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa: A Biography of Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

¹⁸See, as examples, Allen Isaacman, “The Tradition of Resistance in Mozambique,” *Africa Today* 22, no. 3 (1975): 37–50; Gerald Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality* (London: Africa World Press, 1978).

¹⁹In a way, these hegemonic narratives that sociologist Sousa Santos accuses Portuguese historiography on colonialism of, but which are no longer relevant, are certainly important for Lusophone African societies after independence; see for these erroneous claims Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Prefácio,” in *As Guerras de Libertação e os Sonhos Coloniais*, eds. Maria Paula Meneses and Bruno Sena Martins (Coimbra: Edições Almedina, 2013), 9–13.

²⁰See, for example, Michel Cahen, *La Révolution implosée: Étude sur 12 ans d’indépendance (1975–1987)* (Paris: Editions L’Harmattan, 1987); Christian Geffray, *La cause des armes au Mozambique: Anthropologie d’une guerre civile* (Paris: Karthala, 1990).

²¹Milestones in that regard were the chapters in Éric Morier-Genoud, Michel Cahen, and Domingos Manuel do Rosário, eds., *The War Within: New Perspectives on the Civil War in Mozambique, 1976–1992* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2018) and Michel Cahen, “Não Somos Bandidos”: *A vida diária de uma guerrilha de direita: a Renamo na época do Acordo de Nkomati (1983–1985)* (Lisbon: ICS, 2019); and the recent monograph of Andreas Zeman, *The Winds of History: Life in a Corner of Rural Africa since the 19th Century* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), esp. 302–37, 342–50.

²²The experience of the PAIGC as ruling party in Cabo Verde was much more violent in Guinea-Bissau before 1980, see Carlos Lopes, *Etnia, Estado e Relações de Poder na Guiné-Bissau* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 1980).

²³António Carreira, *Cabo Verde (Aspectos sociais. Secas e fomes do século XX)* (Lisbon: Ulmeiro, 1977); José Vicente Lopes, *Cabo Verde: Um corpo que se recusa a morrer: 70 anos contra fome, 1949–2019* (Praia: Spleen Edições, 2021).

memory.²⁴ Second, despite being an interesting case to study the history of changes and continuities in land use, ecological factors, and the creation of an authoritarian regime in a small place, the historiography of Cabo Verde on the contemporary period is generally sparse.²⁵ Sociological and political scientific analysis offered views on social structures, but the dimension of the historical process and historical change did not appear very much.²⁶ Third, existing research tends to reproduce over and over again the political and intellectual deeds of the rare hero of that history, Amílcar Cabral, who died during the anticolonial war, reducing the already tiny field of history of Cabo Verde in the twentieth century to one solitary perspective.²⁷ Historians do not study the history of fissures and tensions that characterise Cape Verdean societies like so many others; instead, like in a recent publication by Miguel Cardina and Inês Nascimento Rodrigues, researchers concentrate on the anticolonial *memory* and the alleged changes in the “memoryscape” after the transition in 1990/91.²⁸ Therefore, after a promising start, exemplified by Michel Cahen’s discussion of the political transition based on observation of the process, historical research on independent Cape Verdean society has practically been paralysed.²⁹

Fourth, existing accounts on the years between 1975 and 1991, like that of Humberto Cardoso, are either strongly politicised, or take the historical past as a mere prelude to sociological observations.³⁰ Moreover, although having become a multiparty democracy, the authoritarian past of the post-independence regime is an uneasy subject for most — and local intellectual engagement prefers consensus subjects like those around leaders such as Amílcar Cabral. After the first years following the regime change, in which the new, MpD-led administration complained that former public sector staff installed by the PAICV was sabotaging the transition,³¹ and in which public officials from the earlier regime accused the new municipal governments to take their revenge on them,³² the wish to discuss the experience became superseded by a feeling of avoiding the discussion of the past. Therefore, discussion of both the authoritarian regime and of the tensions and violence of the regime change around 1990/91 became a relative taboo as a subject, in spite of the abovementioned published accounts decrying the violence under the one-party regime.

The study of repression and opposition in the years of the authoritarian regime in Santo Antão is therefore important to show pathways to analyse post-independence frustrations and opposition not only in Lusophone Africa, but also in postcolonial Africa at large. Although being a small case study characterised by some elements that are typical of Cabo Verde, I hold that the analysis of Santo

²⁴Alexander Keese, “Imagining a Better Future: Anticolonial Protest and Social Debates in Santo Antão, Cabo Verde, 1945–1975,” *Itinerario* 44, no. 1 (2020): 80–104.

²⁵Richard A. Lobban, *Cape Verde: Crioulo Colony to Independent Nation* (Boulder: Westview, 1995).

²⁶Michel Lesourd, *État et société aux Îles du Cap-Vert* (Paris: Karthala 1995); Eurídice Furtado Monteiro, *Entre os senhores das ilhas e as descontentes: identidade, classe e gênero na estruturação do campo político em Cabo Verde* (Recife: Editora UFPE, 2014).

²⁷Exemplary for this trend are the (introductory) articles as results of a recent group research project on Cabral, such as Rui Lopes and Victor Barros, “Amílcar Cabral and the Liberation of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde: International, Transnational, and Global Dimensions,” *International History Review* 42, no. 6 (2020): 1230–7; Victor Barros and Aurora Almada e Santos, “Introduction: Amílcar Cabral and the Idea of Anticolonial Revolution,” *Lusotopie* 19 (2020): 9–35. Those trends follow Patrick Chabal’s classic work, such as *Amílcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People’s War* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²⁸Miguel Cardina and Inês Nascimento Rodrigues, “The Mnemonic Transition: The Rise of an Anti-Anticolonial Memoryscape in Cape Verde,” *Memory Studies* 14, no. 2 (2021): 380–94.

²⁹Michel Cahen, “Vent des îles: La victoire de l’opposition aux Îles du Cap-Vert et à São Tomé e Príncipe,” *Politique Africaine* 43 (1991): 63–78.

³⁰Humberto Cardoso, *O Partido Único em Cabo Verde: Um Assalto à Esperança* (2nd ed., Praia: Imprensa Nacional de Cabo Verde, 2016 [1993]); José Tomaz Wahnnon C. Veiga, *A “Democracia” Nacional Revolucionária: O Projecto Totalitário do PAIGC/PAICV: Cabo Verde 1975–1990* (Praia: Livraria Pedro Cardoso, 2021).

³¹ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 6, Fernando Wahnnon Ferreira, President of the Municipality and Delegate of Government in Paúl; Manuel Nobre Martins, Bartolomeu Cruz; Anísio Oliveira; Jorge Duarte Silva; Salomão Sanches Furtado, *Acta Número Três da Sessão Ordinária do Conselho Deliberativo do Paúl realizada em Trinta e um de Julho do Ano de Mil Novecentos e Noventa e Um*, n.d.

³²Interview with João Augusto Sousa, Boca de Figueiral, 25 Jan. 2018.

Antão after 1975 is therefore significant for future discussions on the wider field. A fine-grained analysis of local archives attempts to reconstruct the emergence of an opposition. High expectations for change combined with resistance to new, sweeping policies and to an unfamiliar rhetoric of class analysis shaped the “oppositional mood.” I will discuss these effects in the following four sections.

Early problems: taking over and antagonising the locals

At first glance, the expansion of PAIGC control over the archipelago’s territory between 1974 and 1976 is difficult to study. Jean Allman’s idea that postcolonial experiences need to be approached through global, dispersed archives seems to be valid for Cabo Verde during the process of transition.³³ An accessible archive of the Cape Verdean presidency was a promise of the administration in early 2016, but the project disappeared together with the initial, provisional inventories.³⁴ In the national archives, the Arquivo Nacional de Cabo Verde, the little-known series of the Prime Minister’s office (GPM) is currently the only archive of a postcolonial ministry or central service.

For the implementation of early PAIGC control in Santo Antão, archival evidence is limited. Information on behaviour of the PAIGC military and administrative elite imported from the guerrilla struggle in Guinea-Bissau and beginning to exert local power, is cursory at best. Episodes like in Praia in November 1975, four months after independence, demonstrating the potential for violence during the conflict between former guerrilla fighters José Lopes da Silva (Jota Jota), Joaquim Pedro Silva (Baró), and Timóteo Tavares Borges (Timóteo), do not seem to be documented for Santo Antão.³⁵ For that island, José Vicente Lopes, in his chronicle of the installation of the independent regime, uses a single oral informant, agronomist António Sabino, who describes violence against the local populations by outsider groups organised by the local PAIGC structure under Eugénio Inocêncio (Dududa). Quoting Sabino, Vicente Lopes indicates internal conflict within the new ruling party, regarding the degree of radical change to impose, but also the failure of radical land reform schemes already in the initial phase of the regime, and at least one popular revolt, in the Garça region. However, the chapter is more than a little vague.³⁶

Early conflict in post-independence Santo Antão was also due to the flight of Cape Verdean officials who had worked within the colonial administration. The nationalist narrative accused the former employees of the colonial regime of being the principal villains: an “aristocracy” of such exiled former officials was described as danger for the national community.³⁷ The position of the inhabitants of Santo Antão regarding the matter is difficult to establish: while being accused of “collaboration,” several former administrators who had fled to Lisbon retained important local prestige through their families, and their forced exile was not necessarily endorsed by local communities. Written evidence only comes from the exiles from Santo Antão themselves, deploring the “hateful and revengeful persecution” by “opportunistic... elements” who basically wanted their posts.³⁸

The rough conditions of the takeover by the PAIGC, the unclear path towards agrarian transformation, and local discontent about the flight of civil servants coming from the island, created complicated and tense political conditions. Commenting on the circumstances in April 1976, Armindo Cruz, then the internal administration delegate for Paúl and representative of the

³³Jean Allman, “Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot Named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History-Writing,” *American Historical Review* 118, no. 1 (2013): 104–29.

³⁴Alexander Keese, “Decolonisation, Improvised: A Social History of the Transfer of Power in Cabo Verde, 1974–1976,” *Portuguese Studies Review* 25, no. 1 (2017): 297.

³⁵ANCV, GPM, cx. 74, João José Lopes da Silva, *Relatório*, 29 Nov. 1975; ANCV, GPM, cx. 74, Joaquim Pedro Silva, *Ocorrência*, 29 Nov. 1975.

³⁶José Vicente Lopes, *Cabo Verde: os Bastidores da Independência* (2nd ed., Praia: Spleen Edições, 2002 [1996]), 480–3.

³⁷ANCV, GPM, cx. 10, Director of National Directorate for Security and Public Order, Ministry of Defence and National Security, to Representative in Lisbon (no. 98/75), 26 Sep. 1975.

³⁸ACMRG-CV, Correspondência diversa – 1977, Manuel António Monteiro to Pedro Pires, Prime Minister of Cabo Verde, n.d. (sent in Mar. 1977), 1.

PAIGC, explained what he noted as increasing complaints about economic and social shortcomings of the new administration. Cruz argued that the “legacy inherited from the colonial regime put the country and in particular the District of Paúl in a chaotic situation.” He also attacked the land-owners on the island, claiming they were unwilling to invest at all. The issue of water channels and their repair, essential for local agriculture, was deemed to be their failure.³⁹ The delegate attempted to find a positive outlook on the situation, creating a kind of euphemistic trope: the political behaviour of the populations was described as “not disastrous,” the comment usually hiding the numerous existing difficulties.⁴⁰ Administrators such as Cruz occasionally put their finger on the early dissatisfaction of Santo Antão’s inhabitants, but also pointed to their “psychological problems”: he accused them of expecting far too much from the postcolonial state.⁴¹

The material difficulties in Santo Antão were very real: many peasants had subsistence problems, and even where the state created employment through public works projects (the so-called FAIMO, *Frentes de Alta Intensidade de Mão-de-Obra*), the average wage corresponded to no more than thirty escudos.⁴² Such public works, flanked by social assistance, involved thousands of islanders, saving them in that initial phase from dangerous situations or out-migration to São Vicente.⁴³ When in 1977 the Cape Verdean state could not pay social assistance in Santo Antão due to economic difficulties, this brought a substantial number of families to the brink of starvation.⁴⁴ Both in rural and urban contexts, frustrations and complaints regarding the lack of public resources therefore were normal in the late 1970s. In remote Santa Isabel, spokesmen of the local peasants insisted that water was disappearing from the area, making an intervention by specialised services necessary to save local agriculture.⁴⁵ But even in cities such as Ribeira Grande, the lack of funds was asphyxiating.⁴⁶ Moreover, in the urban context, teachers accused the administration of disrespecting their work.⁴⁷ At the same time, the new delegates and party hierarchies blamed mid-level officials of the old guard for their poor work standards.⁴⁸

Early discontent was especially vehement where locals were under the impression that the Portuguese late colonial state had offered better conditions.⁴⁹ A particularly sensitive issue was the fishing industry. Fish was an important part of the diet in Santo Antão, and the colonial administration had been tolerant of dynamite fishing, an ecologically disastrous practice banned in theory by the Portuguese administration but clandestinely supported.⁵⁰ After independence, the new regime was more rigid: therefore, in Ponta do Sol’s small harbour in April 1976, 150 local fishermen

³⁹ ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 6, Armindo Cruz, Delegate of Internal Administration in Paúl District, *Análise da situação da Administração Municipal, três meses depois da tomada de posse do Conselho Deliberativo*, Apr. 1976, 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴¹ ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 44, Armindo Cruz, *Relatório Trimestral – Meses (Agosto, Setembro e Outubro – Ano de 1976* (no. 2/976), 25 Oct. 1976.

⁴² ACMRG-CV, 1976 – Correspondência expedida DE no. 1 a 77 (henceforth 1976-CE-DE/1-77), Maurino de Camões Brito Delgado, Delegate of Internal Administration in Ribeira Grande District, to National Director of Education in São Vicente (no. 148/10.03/76), n.d., 1.

⁴³ ACMRG-CV, 1976-CE-DE/1-77, Brito Delgado to National Director of Internal Administration (no. 119/10.06/76), 10 Mar. 1976, 2.

⁴⁴ ACMRG-CV, Confidenciais – Expedidas e Recebidas, 1975 e outros (henceforth C-ER/1975e.ou.), Brito Delgado to Minister of Health and Social Affairs (no. 1/77), 20 May 1977.

⁴⁵ ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 21, Serafim Monteiro, First Secretary of the PAIGC Section of Pombas and Eito, Sector of Paúl; Gregório Alves, *Relatório sobre a Visita a Santa Isabel realizada em 30 de Setembro de 1979*, 1 Oct. 1979.

⁴⁶ ACMRG-CV, ‘1977’, Brito Delgado to National Director of Internal Administration, *Sobre a situação financeira do município da Ribeira Grande.*, 16 Feb. 1977, 1–2.

⁴⁷ ACMRG-CV, 1976-CE-DE/1-77, Brito Delgado to National Director of Education in São Vicente (no. 130/20.09/76), 10 Mar. 1976.

⁴⁸ ACMRG-CV, 1976-CE-DE/1-77, Brito Delgado, *Circular* (no. 45/20.02/76), 29 Jan. 1976.

⁴⁹ António Leão Correia e Silva, “O Nascimento do Leviatã Crioulo: Esboços de uma Sociologia Política,” *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 1 (2001): 59–60.

⁵⁰ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, Portugal (ANTT), PIDE/DGS, Del. CV, NT 5381, Proc. 1, Francisco Roque Almeida Grilo, Political Police Agent, to the Commandant of DGS Delegation in Praia, *Emprego de Explosivos na Pesca em Santo Antão* (no. 3/70-S.R.), 26 Aug. 1970.

angrily protested the impossibility of accessing fish.⁵¹ While these protests were a particularly sharp response, wide groups in Santo Antão were already by 1976 angry about administrative pressures and the behaviour of the forces of order.

The introduction of a new police order and administrative marginalisation

The end of colonial rule in Cabo Verde in 1975 meant the disappearance of the regular civil police, the Portuguese *Polícia de Segurança Pública*. In the principal urban centres of the independent state — Praia and Mindelo — this initially led to a massive resurgence of theft and burglaries, leading the new regime to quickly replace the inefficient militias with a new police force.⁵² In the more remote islands like Santo Antão, this introduction of new regular police forces by the PAIGC and the administration came later, but administrators held it would help to re-establish control.

Introducing the *Polícia de Ordem Pública* (POP) in the island in 1977 led to protest and spontaneous, if low-level, resistance. Drivers of private vans, or even of those belonging to the public sector, transported passengers illegally and for small fees; they refused to stop for or to cooperate with the agents of the police. The unpopularity of the agents opened the gates for denunciation: locals thus reacted to the increasing amount of fines in hopes of seeing the more rigid POP staff removed.⁵³ During certain riots, police interventions to restore the peace were promptly branded by the locals as a mere form of administrative repression.⁵⁴

Administrators and PAIGC/PAICV leaders also criticised the POP, charging them with being too autonomous and not acting in accordance with their own orders.⁵⁵ By the end of the 1970s, this negative vision changed into another, equally negative, perception: administrators now associated the police agents with incompetence, bribery, and growing indiscipline.⁵⁶ The situation was different in the interior of the island, where government agents bemoaned the lack of police staff: in Alto-Mira, in 1978, not a single agent existed to stop the theft of property and violent conflict around opportunities for public work that, according to reports, became a widespread phenomenon in the area.⁵⁷

While locals criticised the police for being overzealous, they discussed the lack of local judicial services as unfair and damaging. Some inhabitants of Santo Antão commented with bitterness on the fact that despite official promises, no judge ever resided on the island. New nominees were in all cases practically instantly transferred to other islands.⁵⁸ This led to further decline in trust in the independent state.

Though they felt the police's attention perhaps too much, the island population simultaneously experienced exclusion from the social benefits that flowed from cooperation with international organisations. In 1985, the National Assembly deputy for the electoral district of São João Baptista, Domingos António Lopes, reported on widespread fury in the Porto Novo district because the vehicles of the Red Cross used for aid provision to malnourished children were supposed to be removed from Santo Antão

⁵¹ACMRG-CV, C-ER/1975e.ou., Delegate of Internal Administration in Santo Antão to National Director of Internal Administration in Praia (no. 1/76), 6 Apr. 1976.

⁵²ANCV, GPM, cx. 10, João Pereira Silva, Director of National Directorate for Security and Public Order, Ministry of Defence and National Security, *Relatório: Recrudescimento de roubos*, 3 Sep. 1975.

⁵³See ACMRG-CV, C-ER/1975e.ou., Maurino de Camões Brito Delgado to Commandant of the Division of the Section of Public Order of the Barlavento, São Vicente (no. 6/77), 28 May 1977.

⁵⁴ACMRG-CV, Pasta Diversos Documentos a Catalogar, 10-P-AH.A, Agnelo Boaventura Silva Leite, Delegate of Government in Ribeira Grande, to Commandant of Squadron of POP (no. 308/2002/81), 31 July 1981.

⁵⁵ACMRG-CV, C-ER/1975e.ou., João Lopes da Costa, POP Commandant, Ribeira Grande, *Relatório Imediato*, 1977; ACMRN-CV, Ano de 1977 – Proc. 20.09 – Relatórios Propostas Informações (henceforth 1977-20.09-RPI), Onildo Melício Pires, President of the Coordinating Committee of Santo Antão in Ponta do Sol, *Relatório*, 21 Sep. 1977, 11.

⁵⁶ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 44, Miguel Henrique Carvalho Silva, Delegate of Government in Paúl District, *Secretariado Administrativo do Concelho do Paúl – Relatório Trimestral – Meses: Outubro, Novembro e Dezembro – Ano de 1979*, 8 Jan. 1980, 11.

⁵⁷ACMPN-CV, Pasta Relatórios, Propostas e Informações – 20.09 (1978) (henceforth P-RPI-20.09/1978), Manuel Duarte, Administrative Agent of Alto Mira, to Delegate of Government in Porto Novo District, *Relatório ... mês de Setembro* (no. 7/78), 30 Sep. 1978, 4–5.

⁵⁸ACMPN-CV, 1977-20.09-RPI, Melício Pires, *Relatório*, 21 Sep. 1977, 10.

and transferred to São Vicente and Santiago. These were mainly rumours, but they fuelled local frustrations.⁵⁹ Thus, while the islanders did not necessarily want a central state presence in the form of the police, they regarded the absence of other state resources and services as outright discrimination — and anger about these conditions visibly built up between the late 1970s and the 1980s.

Internal resistance, active and passive

What local administrators called “agitation” and “malaise” (*mal-estar*) flared up at several moments including in Paúl in 1979. Frequently these instances were reactions to price fluctuations in basic goods or delays in the implementation of social measures.⁶⁰ But while discontent was clearly growing, urban violence in the four principal towns of Santo Antão — Ribeira Grande, Ponta do Sol, Porto Novo and Paúl (Vila das Pombas) — was rare. Conversely, in the interior of the island, the daily life of party officials and administrators became increasingly dangerous, the chances of violent resistance more frequent. Officials had from the outset a difficult job in mobilising support in numerous villages. Already in 1978, workers in Alto-Mira refused to give more than the stipulated amount of time to the construction of new and rudimentary official buildings and complained about high prices and delayed wages. The villagers of Alto-Mira were not receptive to the excuses presented by the administrative agent. They instead protested against doing tasks for the state without proper payment, and insulted members of the local authorities; no one wanted to take the position of local PAIGC delegate.⁶¹ A PAIGC mission from Porto Novo undertaken by Aldéleme explained that the younger residents of the zone were rebellious and withheld rural work.⁶² By 1988, the teams of the district administration travelling in the area for development work, like drilling of new wells, were still greeted with little enthusiasm and refusal to comply with their instructions.⁶³

In Ribeira da Cruz, the party had a more successful role over certain periods in imposing a local structure, but in the first half of the 1980s the social and economic difficulties in the valley notoriously increased. It remained impossible in the context of drought to enforce more discipline in terms of the water regime. As leading figures of the village refused to agree on a distribution plan, villagers did not cooperate with the party, and as the local technical specialist (*fiscal das águas de irrigação*) was said to have deliberately sabotaged the process, Manuel Duarte, the administrative agent, called for urgent intervention from the party.⁶⁴ The technical agent of the Ministry of Rural Development and Fishery in Ribeira da Cruz, Emídio Santos Alves, believed that the problem was due to corruption of the “so-called responsible persons” of the PAICV in the area. Santos Alves complained that they deviated the flow of the drinking water towards the seat of the party and sold these water resources locally.⁶⁵

In 1980, the PAICV section of Passagem and Cabo da Ribeira attempted to present an optimistic picture of party activities in this rural part of the Paúl district. However, in Chão Vaz, Lombinho,

⁵⁹ACMPN-CV, Pasta – 10.07, Domingos António Lopes to President of the National Red Cross of Cabo Verde, 16 Dec. 1985.

⁶⁰ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 44, Miguel Henrique Carvalho Silva, *Relatório Trimestral – Meses: Julho, Agosto e Setembro*, 4 Oct. 1979, 10.

⁶¹ACMPN-CV, P-RPI-20.09/1978, Manuel Duarte to Delegate of Government in Porto Novo District, *Relatório* (no. 7/78), 30 Sep. 1978, 3–5.

⁶²ACMRG-CV, dossier without indication [containing Decisions in Porto Novo District, 1979, starts with document from 27/12/1979], Armindo Santos Cruz, Delegate of Government; João Aqueleu Amado, Administrative Secretary of Porto Novo District, *Conselho Deliberativo de Porto Novo – Extracto da acta Da reunião ordinária realizada no dia 30 de Agosto de 1979* (no. 17/79), 30 Aug. 1979.

⁶³ACMPN-CV, Fichas de Números de Famílias contactadas na Comunidade de Alto-Mira – Relatórios, Maria Aldina Gomes de Melo, *Relatório dos trabalhos realizados em Alto-Mira nos dias 25 e 26 de Abril de 1988*, 2 May 1988.

⁶⁴ACMPN-CV, Pasta Relatórios, Propostas e Informações – 1987, Manuel Duarte, *Postô [sic] Administrativo de Ribeira da Cruz – Relatório Final do ano de 1986* (no. 1), 31 Dec. 1986, 5; ACMPN-CV, Pasta Abastecimento – 20.00 (1987) (henceforth P-Ab-20.00/1987), Manuel Duarte to Delegate of Government in Porto Novo District (no. 66/87), 29 Nov. 1987.

⁶⁵ACMPN-CV, P-Ab-20.00/1987, Emídio Santos Alves, Technical Agent, to Delegate of Government in Porto Novo District (without number), 15 Dec. 1986.

and Chã de Padre, the PAICV “did not have a single militant” and had massive difficulties in rallying support for any order.⁶⁶ For the interior of Janela, and equally in the Paúl district, the local administration and the staff of the party even feared armed resistance. In July 1983, the Neighbours’ Committee of Janela demanded the confiscation of firearms in the region, after local resident Abílio Silva had allegedly damaged a water pipe leading into the more mountainous area, and threatened three members of the committee who tried to punish him; Silva was quoted as saying that “he had confidence in his arms... to annihilate any element of the Party.”⁶⁷ In Paúl, use of water against the orders of the ruling party was interpreted as anti-PAICV sabotage organised by the principal land proprietors.⁶⁸ In the hinterland of Janela, the authorities noted hundreds of cases of theft of administrative property, sometimes through violent action.⁶⁹

Finally, while such escalation was atypical for the cities in Santo Antão, party officials and administrative delegates also believed in clandestine action by enemies of the government in the urban areas. Propaganda spread against the regime was the explanation given for weak party structures even in Ponta do Sol.⁷⁰ Accusations of that kind such as by an army detachment against financial official Bento Antão Lima Oliveira in 1983 — a case that aroused strong interest from the local PAICV — were often arbitrary.⁷¹ However, they show the unenthusiastic mood that also came to reign in the urban centres.

Resettlement, agrarian reform, and violence

Heavy-handed agrarian interventions are central to understanding how anger and frustration with the one-party regime became even more systematic. In ways analogous to the abovementioned Tanzanian case under the Nyerere regime, resettlement was especially damaging. Aguada da Janela, situated in a valley more than four hours away from Paúl on foot or on donkey, had become infertile through lack of rainfall. The inhabitants complained about local conditions and demanded opportunities for infrastructure work.⁷² Local PAIGC units criticised such measures as legacy of colonial mistakes, “without economic viability,” and demanded forced resettlement.⁷³ In 1979, the idea was that the inhabitants of the valley were ready to resettle.⁷⁴ This was an erroneous impression: only a small percentage left the area voluntarily, and the remainder were constantly harassed by administrative pressures.⁷⁵ By 1983, the local Directorate of Social Affairs of Santo Antão

⁶⁶ ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 104, Joaquim Tomás Gomes, *Partido Africano [da] Independência da Guiné e do Cabo Verde – Direcção Regional de Santo Antão – Sector do Paúl – Relatório apresentado pelo Comité de Secção de Passagem/Cabo de Ribeira à 3ª Conferência realizada em 8 de Maio de 1980*, n.d.

⁶⁷ ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 22, Adelino Sousa, First Substitute of the Delegate of Government in Paúl District, to Commandant of the Police Squadron at Ribeira Grande (no. 10/83), 18 July 1983.

⁶⁸ ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 44, Miguel Henrique Carvalho Silva, *Relatório Trimestral – Meses: Outubro, Novembro e Dezembro – Ano de 1979*, 8 Jan. 1980, 2.

⁶⁹ ANCV, Fundo Paúl, SAP, cx. 80, António Jorge M. Monteiro, Rural Development Agent, Development Project in the Eastern Plateau, Água das Caldeiras – Santo Antão, to Regional Director of the Ministry of Rural Development and Fishery (without number), 30 Oct. 1988.

⁷⁰ ACMRG-CV, 30-APP, PAICV – *Documento da Segunda Conferência da Secção da Ponta do Sol realizada nos Dias 24 e 25 de Abril de 1982* (without number), 25 Apr. 1982.

⁷¹ ACMRG-CV, 30-APP, Sergeant Severino Manuel Gertrudes, Military Detachment of Ponta do Sol, to Delegate of Government in Ribeira Grande District, *Envio de uma Participação*, 4 July 1983.

⁷² ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 44, Armindo Cruz, *Relatório Trimestral – Meses (Agosto, Setembro e Outubro – Ano de 1976* (no. 2/976), 25 Oct. 1976, 8.

⁷³ ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 6, Armindo Cruz, Gonçalo Oliveira, Lucas Santos, Antónia Júlia Rodrigues, *Relatório da Delegação que visitou Aguada da Janela no Dia 9.7.77*, 8 Sep. 1977.

⁷⁴ ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 6, António Aires dos Reis Borges, Delegate of Internal Administration in Paúl District, to Director of Internal Administration (no. 310/C.01/79), 21 Apr. 1979.

⁷⁵ ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 44, Miguel Henrique Carvalho Silva, Delegate in Paúl District, *Relatório Trimestral – Meses: Julho, Agosto e Setembro – Ano de 1979*, 4 Oct. 1979, 8; ACMRG-CV, *Pasta Reordenamento da População da Aguada Janela – 1990*, José Joaquim Lima, Delegate of Government in Paúl, Joaquim Tomaz Gomes, and António da Cruz Mota, *PAICV, Sector do Paúl – Acta da Reunião tida lugar com a população de Aguada da Janela* (copy of 1987), 2 Sep. 1984.

had to offer emergency assistance work to the entire valley of Fajã da Janela, as ongoing conditions of drought made local life miserable.⁷⁶ However, the inhabitants of such marginalised regions did not forget the rough treatment by the authorities during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Closer to Porto Novo, access to water was sparse by 1987, as inhabitants of the region only had access to a daily amount of forty litres of water collectively from the nearest *Ribeira*, and had to walk for eight hours with their cattle to get to a safe spring.⁷⁷ The petition of a school boy from the region worked as an incentive to the administration and led to a search of emergency funding, but the promised cistern was not built.⁷⁸ The PAICV regime again planned to resettle these populations. The anger was so massive that after the end of authoritarian rule and the installation of the MpD government in 1991, the new government tried not to enrage the groups menaced by resettlement measures any further and promised them instead future access to additional income from construction work in the coastal area.⁷⁹

While the threat of resettlement from especially arid areas only affected a tenth of the island's inhabitants, the prospect of agrarian reform concerned the huge majority of the population. Rural peasants in Santo Antão were mainly sharecroppers who worked the land in long-standing, frequently oral, agreements tying them to proprietors but also giving a certain degree of leeway, although this is difficult to assess in view of state propaganda against them. While many of these sharecropping peasants appear to have wished for better protection of their rights and better guarantees for their access to water by the end of colonial rule, the installation of land rents and outright land redistribution were less prominent desires. The idea that local peasants resisted the measures because of ignorance is an oversimplification. In fact, the new regime had given little improvement to Santo Antão early after independence, and some landowners who were proteges of the new authorities managed to oust unwelcome sharecroppers from the land they occupied and seize access to source water.⁸⁰ The PAIGC put the blame for difficulties in coping with such rural problems on greedy, "white capitalists" who had formerly "exploited our people" (both Portuguese absentee landowners and "white" Cape Verdeans who had fled to Portugal).⁸¹ However, the lack of serious investment in rural infrastructure disappointed the locals.

Agrarian reform in Santo Antão as a key project of the PAIGC/PAICV regime was supposed to eliminate "feudalism," put local agriculture and landownership on a socialist path, and win over the hearts and minds of distrustful peasants. But the commissions of rural planners in the capital, Praia, worked slowly and were not very flexible. They underestimated conflicts between pro-regime landowners and their sharecropping tenants, like in Chã de Igreja, where smaller peasants like Jaime Tiago Delgado mobilised and petitioned against Joaquim Manuel Xavier, who was characterised as a particularly ruthless proprietor, but whose activities were said to build on corruption in the ruling party and the administration.⁸² Half-hearted administrative interventions before 1981, like in Paúl, prohibiting the subletting of parcels of land, complicated the fragile balance of rural exploitation.⁸³

Lack of confidence in the regime's plans increased further between 1975 and 1981, and on 31 August 1981, in Cocolí, erupted into violence with the authorities and the army opposing protesting

⁷⁶ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 12, José Joaquim Lima to Director-General of Internal Administration (no. 742/26/1983), 27 Dec. 1983.

⁷⁷ACMPN-CV, P-Ab-20.00/1987, Benvindo Costa, Social Worker, *Situação Social da Zona de: Morro de Vento – Problema: Água – Objectivo: Construção de um Depósito* (no. 66/87), 8 Aug. 1987.

⁷⁸ACMPN-CV, P-Ab-20.00/1987, José Curcino Fortes, Morro de Vento, to Delegate in Porto Novo District, 22 July 1987, 1–2.

⁷⁹ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 16, Alcídio José Gonçalves Tavares, Delegate of Government in Paúl District, to Cabinet of the Prime Minister, *Projecto de Reordenamento da População de Aguada* (no. 40/32/91), 25 Jan. 1991.

⁸⁰Keese, "Future," 93–4.

⁸¹ACMRG-CV, 1976-CE-DE/1-77, Brito Delgado to João Tomás Leocádio (no. 144/20.01/76), 16 Mar. 1976.

⁸²ACMRG-CV, 1976-CE-DE/1-77, Brito Delgado to PAIGC Sector of Garça, Chã de Igreja (no. 126/20.09/76), 11 Mar. 1976, 1–2.

⁸³ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 20, *Projecto de Decreto-Lei sobre o Arrendamento Rural*, n.d. [1977].

peasants. This left several tortured and subsequently imprisoned, with one detained protester succumbing to the effects of torture. The regime reacted by taking a whole list of potentially oppositional peasants into custody. This key episode in the recent history of Santo Antão is nevertheless difficult to study: as sociological discussion, Zenaida Delgado dos Santos addressed it in an MA thesis relying on local, anonymised interviews; this author sees a lack of mediation and local misunderstandings as motive of the upheaval, and insists on the lack of peasant organisation with regard to the incident. The study underestimates the degree of “oppositional mood” and irritation already present.⁸⁴ As painful memory, the 31 August 1981 incident was more recently documented in a well-researched article based on witnesses, by Jorge Montezinho, a journalist working for the Cape Verdean newspaper *Expresso das Ilhas*.⁸⁵ The event also appears, without much detail, in accounts of leading figures or sympathisers of the MpD.⁸⁶ An important potential source consisting of the internal reports of a Red Cross mission visiting the prisoners of the incident is yet not accessible.

Even so, historical research can say a lot about the failures of agrarian reform and the shock waves that violent repression sent. In principle, the leading group of the PAIGC/PAICV and local administrators and party leaders had imagined a successful implementation of the reform transforming sharecroppers into tenants and later into small owners — and breaking the power of proprietors. Early discontent was frequently explained by the stubbornness and ignorance of the islanders.⁸⁷ In 1976, Maurino de Camões Brito Delgado, delegate of Internal Administration in Ribeira Grande, insisted that the conflicts regarding land and water were the Achilles heel of the ruling party’s consolidation of power; successful agrarian reform would therefore mean success for political control despite all other remaining social and economic tensions.⁸⁸ Party and administrative officials had identified proprietors as the principal villains of rural life. Therefore, the reform was to benefit sharecroppers and gain their support for the PAIGC/PAICV.⁸⁹

After the violence deployed in 1981, party leaders called for a better organisation of propaganda to prevent similar situations.⁹⁰ The mood of rural populations continued to be poor after the brutal repression, with administrative reports on “reconciliation,” like in Paúl, being rather artificial.⁹¹ In the region of Ribeira Fria, in the mountainous interior of the Porto Novo district, the authorities tried to show the benefits of agrarian reform with respect to proprietor Vitorino João Fernandes. The latter had between 1975 and 1983 refused to transform the existing sharecropping agreements into land rents. By 1981, he had even tried to force the sharecroppers out of his land through ever more restricted access to water. The administration sentenced him on 24 September 1983 to accept rent agreements and to pay compensation.⁹² The landowner refused and took advantage of the fact that the pre-independence agreements with the sharecroppers had only been made in oral form,

⁸⁴Zenaida A. Delgado dos Santos, *A Reforma Agrária em Cabo Verde: Estudo de Caso no Concelho da Ribeira Grande de Santo Antão* (unpublished MA thesis, Univ. de Cabo Verde, Praia, 2011), 73–9.

⁸⁵Jorge Montezinho, “Reportagem Especial: Lembrem-se do 31 de Agosto,” *Expresso das Ilhas*, 4 Sep. 2015, <https://expressodasilhas.cv/exclusivo/2015/09/04/reportagem-especial-lembrem-se-do-31-de-agosto/45718>.

⁸⁶Cardoso, *Partido Único*, 117–8; Onésimo Silveira, *A tortura em nome do partido único: o PAICV e a sua polícia política* (Mindelo: Edições Terra Nova, 1991); Veiga, “*Democracia*,” 132–41.

⁸⁷Keese, “Future,” 92–4.

⁸⁸ACMRG-CV, 1976-CE-DE/1-77, Brito Delgado to National Director of Internal Administration (no. 478/10.07/76), 23 July 1976, 1.

⁸⁹ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 44, Armindo Cruz, *Relatório Trimestral – Meses (Agosto, Setembro e Outubro – Ano de 1976* (no. 2/976), 25 Oct. 1976, 2–3.

⁹⁰ACMRG-CV, Correspondências expedidas – 81, Agnelo Boaventura Silva Leite to Delegate of the Government (no. 126/20.08.CC/81), 8 Oct. 1981.

⁹¹ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 44, José Joaquim Lima, First Secretary of PAICV Committee of Sector of Paúl, *Situação Política no Sector durante o 1º Semestre do Ano em Curso*, 7 July 1982.

⁹²ACMPN-CV, Pasta Agricultura – 20.01 (1987) (henceforth P-Ag-20.01/1987), Pelópidas T. de Melo, President of the District Committee for the Agrarian Reform in Porto Novo, to Office of the Deputy Minister to the Prime Minister in São Vicente (no. 367/10.01/86), 30 July 1986.

slowing down the process.⁹³ In 1987, the local delegate in Porto Novo sent the police and an agronomist into the area of Jorge Luís to force landowner João Miguel Ferreira to accept a rental contract with his sharecroppers and to pay compensation for withholding access to water; the conflict had been vigorous since 1984 and Ferreira had previously ignored two administrative verdicts.⁹⁴ The narrative offered time and again by the agrarian reform commissions and the PAICV was one of landowners refusing to give up their power over sharecroppers, and actively damaging the latter.⁹⁵

Oral testimony holds that the massive problems the agrarian reform faced in Santo Antão, referred to as “troubles” (*perturbação*), were not readily understandable, as the party and the government attempted to modernise rural life and the situation of peasants.⁹⁶ But the local archives show that in the majority of regions, the peasants did not sympathise at all with the reform, and that the 31 August 1981 violent repression confirmed fears against the administration and the PAICV. By early 1982, the delegate of the government in Ribeira Grande, Agnelo Boaventura Silva Leite, called for an urgent reestablishment of the popular militia units, which were widely defunct, to better deal in the future with popular unrest like during the Cocolí episode.⁹⁷

While the history of the 1981 violence cannot currently be written considering missing archival records and given its status as a difficult topic, its repercussions can be found in open defiance of the one-party government. An episode from Chã de Igreja in 1986 shows how sensitive local memories were. A local spokesman of the peasants in the area, António José Monteiro, a former prisoner in 1981, confronted the government agent and threatened him with “civil war” if the regime again attempted to impose the agrarian reform in the region. The agent bemoaned a lack of local militia, and he tried to get police agents from as far as Ribeira Grande.⁹⁸ The administrator in Paúl called for more sanctions against the “agitators” and opposition leaders to save the agrarian reform.⁹⁹ As the archives confirm, agrarian reform had failed, and it even contributed to strengthened opposition to the local authorities and the PAICV.

Reacting to general decline

In the second half of the 1980s, social conditions in Santo Antão reached a tipping point. The ranks of the discontented consisted not only of the early opponents of the regime, those who had been antagonised by local social mismanagement and the implementation of agrarian reform, and the victims of repression, but also now both the frustrated employees of the public service on the one hand, and peasants experiencing further declining conditions on the other.

In 1985, the public company responsible for food importation, the Empresa Pública de Abastecimento (EMPA), warned that the lack of water to use within the storage facilities was a grave problem for the preservation of grain.¹⁰⁰ In terms of distribution, the stores were increasingly empty, and the more remote places, like Tarrafal de Monte Trigo, were devoid of practically all

⁹³ACMPN-CV, P-Ag-20.01/1987, De Melo to Delegate of Government in Porto Novo (no. 80/CRA/PN/86), 16 July 1986.

⁹⁴ACMPN-CV, P-Ag-20.01/1987, Luciano da Silva, President of the Committee for Agrarian Reform, Porto Novo, to Director of the Office for the Agrarian Reform (no. 09/01.CRA/87), 23 May 1987.

⁹⁵ACMPN-CV, P-Ag-20.01/1987, District Committee for the Agrarian Reform in Porto Novo, *Acta da Reunião Ordinária da Comissão* (no. 01/RAPN/86), 30 Mar. 1986.

⁹⁶Interview with João Augusto Sousa, Boca de Figueiral, 25 Jan. 2018.

⁹⁷ACMRG-CV, 30-APP, Agnelo Boaventura Silva Leite to Captain Sotero Fortes, responsible for the popular militias in the Ribeira Grande District (no. 50/30/82), 22 Jan. 1982.

⁹⁸ACMRG-CV, 70 – Divs 05, Ramiro Miguel Oliveira, Administrative Agent, to “Comrade” Police Commandant of Santo Antão in Ribeira Grande, *Relatório dos acontecimentos do dia 22 de Agosto de 1986*, 23 Aug. 1986, 1.

⁹⁹ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 44, José Maria Ramos, President of the Commission for Agrarian Reform in Paúl District, to Delegate of Government in Paúl District (no. 124/CRA/86), 15 Dec. 1986, 1–2.

¹⁰⁰ACMPN-CV, P-Ab-20.00/1987, Samuel dos Santos Lima, Delegate of the Empresa Pública de Abastecimento, to Delegate of Government in Porto Novo District (no. 0010/DL.PN/5.0.2/D/06), 23 Mar. 1985.

goods over certain periods.¹⁰¹ Adelino Sousa, the government delegate in Porto Novo, bemoaned speculation regarding grain seeds and demanded intervention from the Ministry of Agriculture, without much success.¹⁰² The end of publicly funded construction work on new stores and offices of the EMPA in Porto Novo pushed some 300 workers into unemployment in that city.¹⁰³ Delayed payments and bad conditions on the labour sites led to frequent violence, with the overseers constantly communicating their frustration about the situation.¹⁰⁴ Exemplary for the downturn in conditions of officials is the petition of Mário da Silva Melo, employee of the Ministry of Rural Development and Fishery in the region of Ribeira da Corujinha, about a four-year lack of access to drinking water and bathing facilities in his house, making life for him and his large family impossible.¹⁰⁵

Drought from 1984 made the situation in some parts of the island, especially in the areas close to Porto Novo and in the Ribeira das Patas, increasingly unbearable. The decision of the Cape Verdean government to disband the public work sites from 1 September 1987 therefore served as a further catalyst of widespread anger. Workers in the Ribeira felt their subsistence was threatened, and in panic petitioned the local party cell, whose secretary hastily promised to support their claims.¹⁰⁶ Adelino Sousa, normally a stern opponent of any protests and petitions, recommended rethinking the government's decision.¹⁰⁷ In Lajedos, the local committee of residents complained that the decision plunged them into poverty and even famine.¹⁰⁸ However, the Cape Verdean state had no resources to distribute; everything that was attempted was just patching over the cracks. For the locals in large parts of Santo Antão, what was seen as weak performance in resolving social issues was just another proof of the incapacity and neglect of the PAICV regime.

Conclusion

José Vicente Lopes, in his short commentary on Santo Antão's history in the first years after independence, holds that the island was ultimately "pacified" by the regime.¹⁰⁹ This is certainly an erroneous assumption. Much to the contrary, the local accounts of the administration, often supplemented by correspondence with populations on the island, and comments by certain representatives of the social elite, and technicians and specialists in the regime's service show that hostility towards the PAIGC/PAICV regime was growing. The rural populations in the interior especially were disappointed by initial patronage and rural policies that were locally interpreted as corruption. They had hoped for investments and social improvements rather than for plans for agrarian reform expressed in the terminology of class struggles. This led in places like Alto Mira or Chã de Igreja, and more generally in wider rural regions in the mountain valleys, to an early refusal to cooperate with the regime. Their inhabitants rejected membership in the party, and in the later period of authoritarian rule, they sometimes threatened agents of the regime with violence. The ten percent of the islanders who lived in increasingly dry zones felt harassed and menaced by the constant plans for resettlement. In the cities and closer to the main roads,

¹⁰¹ACMPN-CV, P-Ab-20.00/1987, Simão Lourenço Évora, for Directors' Council of the Consumers' Pre-Cooperative of Tarrafal de Monte Trigo, to Delegate of Government in Porto Novo District (no. 1/86), 7 Jan. 1986.

¹⁰²ACMPN-CV, P-Ag-20.01/1987, Adelino Sousa, Delegate of Government in Porto Novo District, to Director-General of the MOAVE in São Vicente (no. 575/10.01), 2 Oct. 1987.

¹⁰³ACMPN-CV, Pasta Trabalho – 10.06 (1987), Domingos António Lopes to Prime-Minister of Cabo Verde, 17 Mar. 1987, 1.

¹⁰⁴ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 22, *Memorandum respeitante à Ilha de Santo Antão – Assunto: Desenvolvimento Rural*, May 1986.

¹⁰⁵ACMPN-CV, P-Ab-20.00/1987, Mário da Silva Melo to Delegate of Government in Porto Novo District, 10 Jan. 1986.

¹⁰⁶ACMPN-CV, Pasta Trabalho – 10.06 (1987) (henceforth P-T-10.06/1987), Manuel dos Reis Ramos, First Secretary of the Section Committee of the PAICV to Delegate of Government and Secretary of the PAICV in Porto Novo District, *Informativo* (no. 12/87), 26 Aug. 1987.

¹⁰⁷ACMPN-CV, P-T-10.06/1987, Adelino Sousa to Ministry of Local Administration and Urbanism (no. 492/10.06/87), 28 Aug. 1987.

¹⁰⁸ACMPN-CV, P-T-10.06/1987, Herculano António Rodrigues, President of the Comissão de Moradores (Neighbours' Council) of Lajedos, to Delegate of Government in Porto Novo District, Sep. 1987.

¹⁰⁹Lopes, *Cabo Verde*, 482.

residents responded with hostility to the activities of the new POP from 1977 and to the feeling of being deprived of essential services on the island.

Two processes reinforced the lingering anger in Santo Antão. Violence during the agrarian reform attempts, culminating in 1981, cemented rural opposition. A majority of the island's populations rejected agrarian reform due to a lack of trust after the experience of the regime's early post-colonial rural policies; that was certainly more powerful as a motive than any effects of ignorance used as explanation by Delgado dos Santos.¹¹⁰ Second, decreasing means for social assistance made it even more difficult for the regime to counter discontent.

Despite differences with other postcolonial authoritarian regimes and contexts, the case of Santo Antão offers some useful insights that might illuminate conditions in other places. In the first instance, early expectations played a decisive role. Populations that had experienced moderate but real socioeconomic improvements under late colonial rule expected an even better performance after independence, and — for Santo Antão — the first years after 1975, being characterised, in the local narrative, by mismanagement and corruption, undermined trust and made it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for islanders to accept the existence of a benign party or regime programme. In Santo Antão, this experience was relatively common; one would need to analyse why in other Cape Verdean islands the successes and disappointments of the early regime years were more balanced.

Local administrations attempted to impose the management of development and welfare issues following a programme that, in the Cape Verdean case, while being shrouded in socialist rhetoric and meant to distance itself from Portuguese authoritarian late colonialism, was somewhat close to certain development measures the colonial rulers had opted for — reminiscent of Weiskopf's or Sunseri's long-term perspectives bringing Tanzanian colonial and postcolonial experiences into one framework. At the same time, the PAIGC/PAICV regime was unprepared for resistance and therefore unable from the early disappointments onwards to mobilise substantial grassroots support against protests and in favour of the PAIGC/PAICV. The idea to tie the locals to party orders through a militia system basically failed, as local enthusiasm was too scarce. Where the army had to be brought in, like during the 31 August 1981 experience, this had disastrous consequences. A second such incident, this time in Chã de Igreja, seems to have been narrowly avoided in August 1986. This time, the local protesters were prepared to face massive repression, and directly threatened with armed resistance — which shows the radicalisation of the “oppositional mood” in some rural regions.

Finally, the agents of the regime and the leaders of the party seem to have stuck to the belief that “agitation” and naivety were practically the only reasons for growing opposition in Santo Antão. Mostly, they set the problem in a narrative of conspiracy by those clinging to “feudalism,” hence the ideological importance of agrarian reform which many islanders interpreted negatively. That conspiracy narrative continued to dominate until the very end of authoritarian one-party rule. Still, in the lead-up to multiparty elections, PAICV leaders tended to believe that mobilisation against their party in Santo Antão was the work of manipulation by big landowners. The landowners were imagined to be working to build local opposition to further their goals: “ignit[ing] the fire of class struggle” and “prompting their dependant tenants to join the emerging [opposition] political movements” against the vanguard party. Indeed, according to this narrative, the big landowners were “leading political work in the midst of the frustrated youth, some delinquents and disorderly elements,” “beguiling the people,” and “using false claims” in order “to deceive the unsteady sector of the population.”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰Delgado dos Santos, “Reforma Agrária,” 72.

¹¹¹ANCV, F-Paúl, SAP, cx. 104, *Mensagem do 1º Secretário do Sector do Paúl do PAICV por Ocasão da Abertura da IV Conferência Extraordinária* [sic], Jul. 1990.

Events in Santo Antão in 1990/91 demonstrated that this was a gross underestimation of the “oppositional mood” against the authoritarian regime and a misreading of its origins. This entrenched hostility fuelled the landslide electoral victory of the opposition in the January and February 1991 elections. Similar underestimations of the “oppositional mood” can likely be found in other cases of analysis, and should be subject to scrutiny in further research on opposition in postcolonial Africa.

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