

CABO VERDE: GULAG OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC: RACISM, FISHING PROHIBITIONS, AND FAMINES¹

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[Off São Tiago Island, March 1456] We found so great a quantity of fish that it is incredible to record.²

[Praia, São Tiago, April 1816] The strictest precautions are taken against the evasion of slaves on board foreign vessels that touch here, and particularly by not allowing boats of any kind to the inhabitants, the want of which gives to the port the appearance of a deserted settlement.³

I

Numerous species of fish swim in Cabo Verdean waters, and the two streams of the Canary Current flowing past the archipelago nourish some of the richest marine resources on the globe. Yet, for centuries Portuguese colonial officials leagued with plantation owners to prohibit Cabo Verdeans from owning fishing craft and other vessels to prevent the escape of slaves, mutinous soldiers, exiled criminals, and political deportees. Denied the bounty of the sea and afflicted by multi-year droughts, tens of thousands of destitute people perished during famines. Cabo Verde during Portuguese rule was a gulag.⁴

¹I am grateful to Christopher Fyfe, Deirdre Meintel, and Joseph C. Miller for commenting on a preliminary draft. I dedicate this paper to Christiano José de Senna Barcellos and António Carreira, indefatigable pioneering scholars who “spoke truth to power.”

²G.R. Crone, trans. and ed., *The Voyages of Cadamosto* (London, 1937), 65.

³J.K. Tuckey, *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire* (London, 1818), 20.

⁴“Gulag” is the abbreviation for the Main Administration of Collective Labor Camps and Colonies, gulag passing into English usage with the translation of Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956: an Experiment in Literary Investigation* (London, 1986).

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II

The ten islands and eight islets in the horseshoe-shaped archipelago are of volcanic origin, specks of rock projecting to the surface from deep Atlantic waters (map 1). First sighted by Europeans during the 1450s, the uninhabited archipelago was named with reference to the latitude of Cape Verde, the westernmost part of the African continent some 600 kilometers to the east. Some islands were indeed “green” when first colonized, but their reckless exploitation rapidly and irreparably damaged fragile ecosystems.

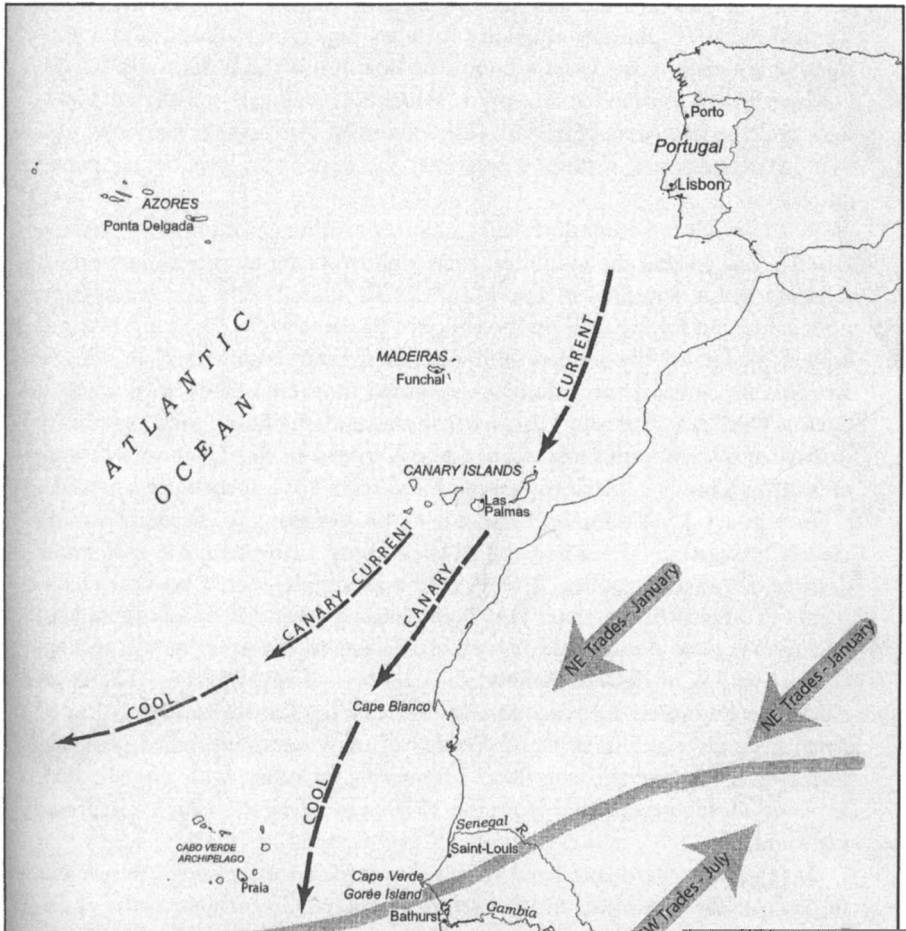
The Cabo Verde archipelago spans the latitudes of the Sahel and southern Sahara, with similar sparse and irregular rainfall regimes. The archipelago is sited along the northernmost margins of the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), where the cool rain-bearing winds of the South Atlantic seasonally collide with hot dry winds coming from the Sahara. What precipitation the archipelago may receive is borne by Atlantic winds that blow weakly and unpredictably from the southwest from July to October—for Cabo Verdeans “the time of possible rainfall.” Rains may fail for a year, or several years, and droughts and famines can afflict a few islands or the entire archipelago.

Most favored are the Sotavento group (Leeward Islands), which receives sufficient precipitation in non-drought years to cultivate crops—and for malaria-bearing mosquitoes to breed along stream beds and ecological niches. Most years, rainfall is limited to a few days in August and September, when 20% to 50% of annual precipitation may come in heavy squalls causing flash floods that erode the land. The runoff from denuded and porous sandy soils constitutes an irretrievable loss of land and water resources, unless soils are contained by laboriously constructed terraces.

During the remainder of the year, the high peaks of Brava, Fogo, and São Tiago capture moisture condensing from clouds that pass across the islands without precipitating rainfall. These mountainous islands have steep slopes separated by narrow valleys creating mosaics of micro-climates. The Barlavento group (Windward Islands) receives less rainfall, and moisture is quickly evaporated by the desiccating northeasterly winds blowing from the Sahara. In some years Sal and Boa Vista receive no precipitation, and São Vicente, Santa Luzia, and the southern slopes of Santo Antão and São Nicolau are almost waterless.⁵

The Cabo Verde archipelago is located at the crossroads of the Atlantic between the continents of Africa and South America, strategically sited to

⁵Emilio F. Moran, “The Evolution of Cape Verde’s Agriculture,” *African Economic History* 11(1982), 67-72; Deirdre Meintel, *Race, Culture, and Portuguese Colonialism in Cabo Verde* (Syracuse, 1984), 18-23.



Map 1. Currents, Trade Winds, and ITCZ around Cabo Verde Archipelago

serve as an entrepôt for Portuguese trading voyages to West and West Central Africa, a plantation colony for growing tropical crops, and a supplier of provisions for vessels bound to Brazil and the Indian and Pacific oceans. Prince Fernando, Afonso V's brother, was granted the archipelago, and the first settlers of São Tiago included Portuguese, Genoese, and Flemish adventurers; reprieved convicts; and Sephardic Jews fleeing persecution.

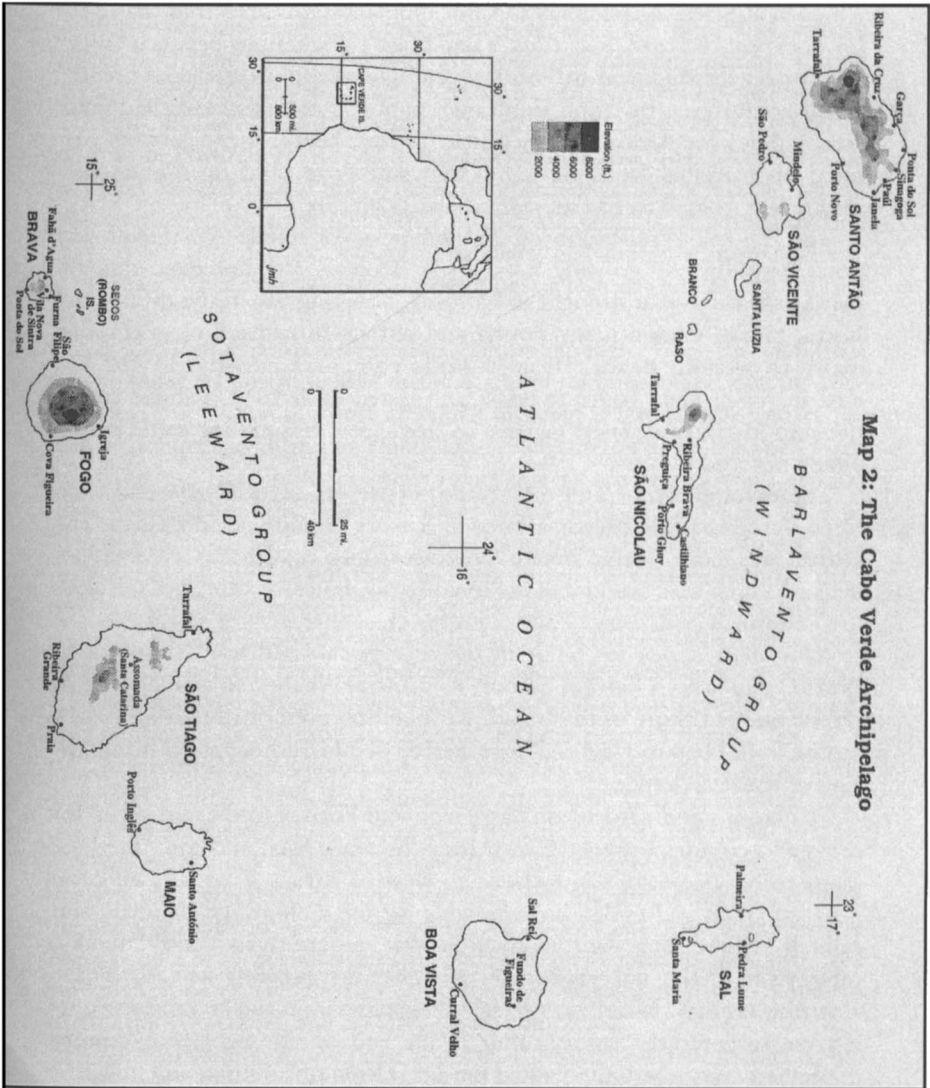
In 1466, when Fernando failed to recruit a sufficient number of settlers, Afonso V accorded the inhabitants the right to trade anywhere in western Africa, except Arguim on the Mauritanian coast. Only six years later, after he began selling trading monopolies to contractors, the king rescinded his pledge to the settlers and restricted their commercial privileges. Regardless, enterprising colonists expanded their commerce with western Africa. Outlaws, they and Luso-African descendants based their commerce in African communities instead of Cabo Verdean ports. Their vessels were crewed by grumetes, African seamen hired from coastal societies (map 2).

In January 1518 Manuel I forbade Cabo Verdeans to dispatch trading vessels to western Africa because of their competition with the merchants granted royal monopolies. This decree was supplemented by two enactments in March of the same year commanding lançados (resident traders) to leave western Africa, and enjoining African rulers either to kill recalcitrant lançados or deliver them to the captains of royal vessels. The royal edicts were ignored by lançados, by African landlords, and by co-opted royal officials residing in Cabo Verde, all of whom suppressed information concerning the thriving illicit commerce, including with French, English, and Dutch vessels that from the 1530s visited western Africa in growing numbers.

Many Cabo Verdeans lived in western Africa for extended periods as traders, soldiers, priests, and government officials, returning to the archipelago with dependents and slaves. This two-way flow of people creating kinship ties and cultural syncretism was no less significant with respect to western Africa, where over the centuries Luso-Africans became increasingly numerous and assertive with respect both to African landlords and resident Portuguese. Crioulo, combining Portuguese and West Atlantic languages, early became the language of the inhabitants of the archipelago as well as the language of trade along the western African littoral.⁶

Portuguese, Genoese, and Castilians granted estates by the Portuguese crown on the islands of São Tiago and Fogo imported slaves from western

⁶George E. Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers; Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630* (Boulder, 1993), 144-54, 190-92. Luso-Africans are Africa-born mulattos living in African communities, as distinguished from pardos, mulattos born in Cabo Verde.



Map 2. The Cabo Verde Archipelago

Africa in augmenting numbers to labor on plantations and from the 1510s for re-export to Brazil. São Tiago's and Fogo's plantations produced sugar and cotton for shipment to Portugal and aguardente (sugar cane brandy, called grogue/grog by Cabo Verdeans), panos (cotton textiles), and other commodities for African trade. Cattle, horses, goats, and pigs were pastured on marginal lands on São Tiago and Fogo, and on islands with insufficient rainfall to sustain plantation agriculture.

The reckless exploitation of the archipelago's fragile ecosystems was exacerbated by the growing numbers of humans and domestic animals. During the three-year drought of 1580-83, afflicting São Tiago, Maio, and Brava, famine caused many deaths and settlers threatened to migrate en masse to western Africa. Drought years continued into the 1590s. The next major drought began in 1609 and lasted until 1611. Famine conditions on São Tiago caused masters to free slaves whom they could not or would not feed.⁷

The royal governor and the bishop whose jurisdiction extended from Cape Verde to Cape Palmas resided at Ribeira Grande on São Tiago. The settlement's name ("large stream") derives from a rivulet that watered gardens and orchards, sustaining the inhabitants. For four centuries the shallow roadstead at Ribeira Grande was the chief entrepôt for slaves brought from western Africa for labor in the archipelago and trans-shipment to Brazil. Fogo lacks a natural harbor; its principal roadstead is at São Filipe on the western shore of the island. Royal edicts prescribed that all vessels sailing from Fogo to western Africa had to obtain authorization from officials at Ribeira Grande.

Plantations and gardens on São Tiago and Fogo served as nurseries for seeds and cuttings brought from Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas, many to be successfully introduced to western Africa. Two African cultigens, sorghum and millet, were suitable for the archipelago's climate and rainfall regime, but their cultivation was progressively, and fatefully, replaced by maize imported from the Americas, possibly as early as the sixteenth century. Maize was widely disseminated in the archipelago during the seventeenth century, and by the end of the eighteenth century maize had everywhere supplanted the cultivation of sorghum and millet.⁸

Cabo Verdeans' predilection for an unsuitable grain crop resulted time and again in failed harvests and dependence on food imports. Maize requires a minimum of 600 mm of rain during the growing season, com-

⁷*Ibid.*, 163-64; K. David Patterson, "Epidemics, Famines, and Population in the Cape Verde Islands, 1580-1900," *IJAH* 21(1988), 299, 304.

⁸A. Teixeira da Mota and António Carreira, "*Milho zaburro* and *milho maçaroca* in Guinea and in the islands of Cabo Verde," *Africa* 36(1966), 73-84.

pared to drought-resistant varieties of sorghum (375 mm) and bulrush millet (250 mm). Maize harvests are frequently meager, and fail during drought years. Regardless, Cabo Verdeans' preferred food is maize-based cachupa, made of dried kernels pounded in African-derived mortars or ground in Portuguese-derived mills, exemplifying the dual Cabo Verdean heritage. Besides boiled maize meal, cachupa's ingredients include vegetables and meat, as available. Other staples are jagacira, a bean dish, and pirã, made with manioc. Oranges, bananas, pineapples, papayas, guavas, and other fruits are cultivated, depending on islands' rainfall and micro-ecologies.⁹

The toll of environmental degradation mounted over the centuries, exacerbated by unsustainable farming and herding practices and the consequences of droughts, some of which afflicted a few islands, others the entire archipelago. Ruinous plantation agriculture on São Tiago and Fogo rendered the islands increasingly vulnerable to storm and wind erosion that depleted topsoils, lowered water tables, and caused much land to become infertile and desolate. Goats and pigs loosed on islands with sparse rainfall relentlessly browsed vegetation to near-extinction, their herders subsisting in penury. Multi-year droughts precipitated famines, some to claim thousands of the archipelago's inhabitants. Regardless, population losses from famines and disease epidemics were quickly restored by high birth rates and ongoing imports of African slaves, which continually reinforced the African attributes of the archipelago's population.

The archipelago's inhabitants subsisted almost entirely on agriculture, consuming little seafood. Denied use of boats, Cabo Verdeans were restricted to shore fishing along the few coves, reefs, and shoal waters. Catches were small and locally consumed. There were few possibilities to market salt-preserved or sun-dried fish, for the archipelago's destitute inhabitants had no money or commodities to barter. So impoverished were people of all social groups except Portuguese colonial administrators and plantation owners that for centuries there was practically no money in circulation, no shops, and no inter-island commerce.

In a famous morna, the Fogo poet Pedro Monteiro Cardoso likened the precarious circumstances of rain-deprived Cabo Verdeans to the fate of Tantalus in Hades: "[d]estiny bound you to the cruel affliction of Tantalus: the waves caress your neck and you die for lack of water."¹⁰ "And die for want of boats to catch fish," Cardoso might have added.

⁹Moran, "Cape Verde's Agriculture," 81-83; Ilídio do Amaral, *Santiago do Cabo Verde: A Terra e os homens* (Lisbon, 1964), photographs XLVII B and XLVIII A and B; Nelson Eurico Cabral, *Le moulin et le pilon* (Paris, 1980), photograph facing page 96.

¹⁰Norman Araujo, *A Study of Cape Verdean Literature* (Wetteren, 1966), 55. The morna, the archipelago's renowned art form, expresses the soul of the people in poetry, music, and dance. Whether derived from the African heritage, or sharing Portuguese antecedents, mornas are uniquely Cabo Verdean, expressing the sorrows and longings of

III

Cabo Verde's racially categorized social structure derived from the archipelago's settlement as a plantation colony and way station for the shipment of slaves to Brazil. The small branco (white) population comprised landowners and merchants and their families born in Cabo Verde, a few Portuguese officials and military officers and their families, and *degredados*, Portuguese soldiers and citizens exiled for criminal behavior and political activities. Enslaved and free *pardos* (mulattos) comprised a second social category. *Escravos* (slaves) originated from numerous societies in western Africa. *Pretos livres* were freed slaves. Numbers and proportions of these groups varied considerably from island to island.

The branco oligarchy was fragmented according to place of birth and associated social pretensions. The few peninsula-born Portuguese, including those born in the Azores and Madeiras, arrogated a "super-white" status. These included the governor and his entourage; the chief administrative and judicial officials; military officers; the bishop administering the diocese of Cabo Verde and western Africa; other Portuguese clergy; and a few merchants.

Lower in social ranking were whites born in the archipelago whom peninsula Portuguese derisively called *brancos da terra*. Their humiliating status derived from the definition of the Portuguese kingdom as comprising mainland Portugal and the "adjacent" islands of the Azores (1,500 kilometers distant from Lisbon) and the Madeiras (1,000 kilometers distant from Lisbon), archipelagos first sighted in the fourteenth century and settled in the fifteenth. Fatefully for Cabo Verdean-born *brancos*, their archipelago was sighted a century too late or was kilometers too distant (2,700) to be designated part of metropolitan Portugal.¹¹

Among *brancos da terra*, elite status was asserted by the descendants of the fifteenth-century settlers on São Tiago and Fogo who received land grants (*morgadios*) from the Portuguese crown. Males heading São Tiago's and Fogo's landed families were collectively known as *morgados*, referring to first-born or oldest sons who were heirs to entailed estates. The practice of primogeniture, not abolished until 1864, kept *morgadios* intact, with younger sons constrained to enter trade, the military, or the clergy. The other islands in the archipelago were retained by the crown, and Portugal's kings exercised the prerogative of transferring islands from

a downtrodden people passionately attached to the harsh environments of their archipelago homeland. Christopher Fyfe, "The Cape Verde Islands," *History Today* 31 (May 1981), 8.

¹¹H.V. Livermore, *A New History of Portugal* (Cambridge, 1969), 1.

one member of the nobility to another. Capelas were lands belonging to the Catholic Church, properties which augmented over time from bequests.

Landed proprietors and their families constituted less than 5% of the archipelago's population, but they owned or controlled virtually all the cultivable soils, pastures, salt pans, and what few other resources islands possessed. Besides owning slaves, they held in subjection many pardos and pretos livres as tenant farmers, employees, and servants. Landlords' dominance was ensured by control of the militias (*segunda linha*), enrollment in which was obligatory for able-bodied males.

Morgados fiercely guarded their prerogatives as landowners and brancos. "Blood lines" were held at a premium and family properties maintained by endogamous marriages, cousins marrying cousins and uncles marrying nieces. Unmarried brancas were closely chaperoned, and if no acceptable partner was available, a woman might remain solteira (unmarried). Peninsula Portuguese and other Europeans arriving in Cabo Verde as colonial officials, traders, seafarers, or political exiles were avidly courted by morgado and other branco families as husbands for their daughters. While morgados and brancos jealously guarded the chastity of wives and daughters, they sexually exploited parda, escrava, and preta livre women, the offspring enhancing their reputations for virility and for being masters of numerous dependents. Besides legitimate and illegitimate children, landlords' households included dependent relatives, teachers, priests, a variety of branco hangers-on, free and unfree pardos and pretos, and escravos. Portuguese clergy exercised considerable influence among brancos, especially by consecrating marriages to ensure that children would inherit land and other property.

The pretensions of morgado families escalated as time passed. Many lived slothful and self-indulgent lives. The morgado oligarchy and other brancos became less "white" as time passed, but branco color sensitivities permeated all groups, encoding numerous categorizations of pigmentation. Racism did not preclude a branca from marrying a pardo who had contrived by some means to acquire wealth, most often in the slave trade. Such an individual was colloquially known as a branco de dinheiro ("white from having money").

Degredados (exiles) were Portuguese condemned to transportation overseas. These included soldiers dispatched to the Praia garrison, men cashiered from their regiments for indiscipline and criminal behavior. They were scandalously maintained, poorly disciplined, often unpaid for months at a time, and sporadically mutinous. Yet their racial status was that of peninsula-born brancos and their military status was primeira linha (regulars); consequently, they held themselves arrogantly superior to

the archipelago's brancos, as well as pardos and pretos. Most civilians banished to the colonies were criminals, usually habitual offenders convicted of crimes such as homicide and robbery, but during the 1820s and 1830s numerous men and some women were exiled for political activism.

Pardos originated as illegitimate children of land owners, merchants, and priests who victimized subordinate pardas, pretas livres, and escravas. The offspring, free and unfree, were sometimes raised in their fathers' households allowing them opportunities to learn branco social and cultural practices, including a smattering of education along with legitimate children. Kinship affiliations and the unchallenged influence and control of resources exercised by morgados and other brancos constrained pardos to identify their interests with brancos and alienate them from free blacks and slaves.

Pardos of free status disdained to do "slaves' work" and flaunted what branco status attributes they were permitted, such as wearing articles of European clothing and taking the names of the morgados who were their landlords and often their biological fathers. Masters' names were also adopted by slaves or imposed on them. Free men might become small landholders, craftsmen, traders in hamlets and small towns, low-ranked government officials, and priests. Some pardos sought their livelihoods in western Africa as traders; others were dispatched as militiamen and artisans to serve in Guiné's praças and detached garrisons. The poorly-educated indigenous clergy persuaded few pardos or pretos to attend mass, consecrate marriages, or record births, but the abiding fear of death by famine caused parents to baptize children in hopes of ensuring their salvation.

Most pretos ("blacks") were slaves. They were differentiated as natu-rais, slaves born in the archipelago; boçais, recently acquired from Africa, who spoke their own languages (boçal: "ignorant, "uncultured"); and ladinos, who had learned to speak Crioulo and might be baptized. Slaves' conditions of servitude and prospects depended on whether they were held in transit intended for shipment to Brazil or were purchased for labor in the archipelago.

Most slaves were held on São Tiago and Fogo. Slaves on morgadios worked six days for their masters, the seventh day they might cultivate food for themselves. Besides farming and herding, men who were skilled weavers fabricated the famed Cabo Verdean panos, cotton textiles woven on narrow looms derived from western African models. Slave women cleaned and carded cotton and made thread. On the desiccated islands of Maio, Boa Vista, and Sal, slaves collected salt and brought donkey loads to vessels, herded sheep, goats, and pigs, and cultivated whatever would grow along rivulets and crevices moistened by water seeping from barren hillsides. São Tiago was known for badius (Portuguese vadio: vagrant,

idler), runaway slaves who eked out a precarious existence in remote valleys.

The lives of many pretos livres (“free blacks”) were little better than those of slaves, and in famine times generally worse, for lack of masters or patrons concerned with their welfare. Few pretos livres could acquire land. Most lived a marginal and precarious existence as sharecroppers, their impoverished lives relieved by little besides sex, *aguardente* when it was available, and the distractions of religious holidays during which they might be allowed to participate in festivities. Such were the circumscribed lives of pretos livres and escravos dwelling in the interior of São Tiago that during their brief life spans they might never view the sea, though nowhere on the island is the ocean more than fifteen kilometers distant. Poorly nourished in the best of times, and bereft of resources during famine times, many pretos livres and escravos were wasted by malnutrition and infected by dysenteries, malaria, tuberculosis, syphilis, gonorrhea, and other diseases for which the only available remedies were treatments derived from their African heritage.

Individuals who died during famines ineluctably correlated with social status. Brancos and better-off pardos possessed gardens, fruit trees, and livestock and owned valuables they could barter for available food. During multi-year droughts they might flee to the grudging bounty of relatives dwelling on less afflicted islands. Destitute pardos and pretos livres died, or survived, as fate might decree. Escravos were sold, perished, or fled their masters in search of sustenance. After famines, replacement slaves from western Africa and high birth rates restored the archipelago’s populations until the next dying-off. Slavery was abolished in 1864, but landowners contrived to dominate and exploit emancipated slaves entrapped as sharecroppers.

Malaria, which prevailed in marshy areas of São Tiago and Fogo after rains, and yellow fever and other diseases brought to the archipelago via ships were shared more equitably by all social groups, as were venereal diseases. Chronic malnutrition and illnesses, as much or more than brancos’ coercive practices, perhaps account for the remarkable circumstance that neither escravos, pretos livres, nor pardos, separately or acting in concert, ever organized an insurrection that was a serious threat to the branco oligarchy.

The nexus—economic, social, and cultural—between Cabo Verde and western Africa was fundamental to historical developments in both places. Intrinsic to the Cabo Verdean heritage is the continuing flow of African captives for enslavement in the archipelago and trans-shipment to Brazil. New arrivals reinforced and sustained knowledge of western African languages, social practices, and cultural patterns among the archipelago’s

inhabitants of all social groups. Consequently, Cabo Verdeans were invaluable auxiliaries for Portuguese shipmasters and traders, whether engaged in shipboard commerce or settled ashore in African communities. Numerous brancos and pardos sought their livelihoods in western Africa, to return later to the archipelago with family members and slaves. As time passed, the populations of Cabo Verde and the coastal and riverine trading communities of western Africa increasingly shared kinship and social and cultural attributes.

In Cabo Verde slaves and their children were the principal repositories of western African traditions. Many male and female captives had fished in rivers, creeks, and lagoons along the western African littoral, and some men had been seafarers and traders engaged in riverine and coastwise commerce, expertise few were able to put to use in Cabo Verde. Women and men knew how to cultivate numerous crops, and some men were skilled herders. Women brought African methods of food preparation, medicinal uses of numerous plants, and child-rearing practices. Music, songs, rhythms, dances, folktales, and religious beliefs were incorporated in the ongoing syncretism of African and Portuguese heritages.¹²

IV

Accounts of European shipmasters, naval officers, brigands, naturalists, and other scientists cited here are organized according to the following periods: 1580s-1670s, when Portugal's commerce with Cabo Verde and western Africa became increasingly vulnerable to European rivals; 1680s-1750s, years when European men-of-war, merchantmen, piratical craft, and fishing vessels en route to the Grand Banks visited the archipelago in growing numbers; 1755-1778, when the Companhia Geral do Grão Pará e Maranhão monopolized the archipelago's commerce; from 1778 to 1835, when royal administration was reasserted with the establishment of the Province of Cabo Verde e Guiné; and after 1835, when a Liberal minister of marine and colonies appointed a governor who sponsored fishing craft and inter-island commerce.

European and American seafarers cited following routinely recorded in their logs and journals information and perspectives absent or suppressed in Portuguese records. Most notable concerning the subject of this paper are visitors' reports concerning the prohibition of fishing craft and other vessels and about famine conditions. Mariners' logbooks and journals record bountiful fish catches offshore and in harbors and roadsteads. They

¹²António Carreira, *Cabo Verde; Formação e Extinção de uma sociedade escravocrata, 1460-1878* (Lisbon, 1972), 259-94; Meintel, *Race*, 73-101; Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*, 143-66.

describe and sketch Cabo Verde's ports and roadsteads and record information about prevailing winds, ocean currents, and depths of anchorages. Shipmasters invariably describe communicating ship-to-shore in their own yawls and rowboats. Ships' officers and passengers visiting ashore describe militiamen posted to guard against inhabitants stowing aboard vessels, relate experiences dealing with governors and other officials, and record details about the availability and costs of water and provisions.

In contrast, Portuguese colonial officials and military officers cited here are remarkable for what they not address in their accounts. Not one of them records that Cabo Verdeans were forbidden to possess boats. Not one of them acknowledges any connection between the unexploited potential of the archipelago's marine resources and the deaths by famine of thousands of inhabitants during droughts. All refrain from naming or attributing responsibility about anything to anyone in authority.

V

During Spain's subordination of Portugal from 1580 to 1640, Spain's enemies became Portugal's enemies. French, English, and Dutch naval forces and merchant adventurers mounted sustained assaults on Portugal's maritime networks and places of trade around the globe. Ribeira Grande was pillaged in 1582, 1595, and 1598, and numerous Portuguese and Luso-African vessels were captured in the archipelago's waters and along the coast of western Africa. In 1640 the Portuguese drove out their Spanish overlords, but border conflicts continued until February 1668, when Spain recognized Portugal's independence and signed a peace treaty.

Salt was Cabo Verde's inexhaustible resource, and during the sixteenth century foreign vessels began loading salt at Maio, Boa Vista, and Sal. Unpolluted Atlantic seawater flooding salinas during high tides, desiccating winds blowing from the Sahara, and cloudless sunshine for days on end produce sparkling salt in fabulous amounts. So numerous were English cod fishers bound for the fishing grounds off Newfoundland that Maio's chief anchorage became known as "Porto Inglês" (today Vila do Maio). The island's few and destitute inhabitants who loaded bags of salt on donkeys to convey to vessels received derisory compensation, generally food and cast-off clothing to protect from the relentless sun and wind during the daytime and the ensuing nighttime chill. Foreign coins were rejected as of uncertain value, and because there was nowhere to spend them. The only other commodity the inhabitants had to barter was dried and salted goat meat.¹³

¹³T. Bentley Duncan, *Atlantic Islands: Madeira, the Azores and the Cape Verdes in Seventeenth-Century Commerce and Navigation* (Chicago, 1972), 184-90.

The renowned English buccaneer and author William Dampier visited São Tiago in 1670, before the inhabitants of the island were ravaged by the drought and famine years of the 1680s, and before Portugal lost much of its merchant marine and navy during the War of the Spanish Succession.

[Praia] in peaceable Times especially is seldom without Ships; for this hath been long a Place which Ships have been wont to touch at for Water and Refreshments, as those outward-bound to the *East-Indies*, *English*, *French*, and *Dutch*; many of the Ships bound to the Coast of *Guinéa*, the *Dutch* to *Surinam*, and their own *Portuguese* Fleet going for *Brazil*, which is generally about the latter end of *September*: but few Ships call in here in their return to *Europe*.¹⁴

VI

Portugal's wealth, merchant marine, and navy were greatly reduced by disastrous participation in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) which involved Portugal, Spain, England, France, and other European states and curtailed maritime commerce. Alliance with England resulted in the progressive subordination of Portuguese commerce to English interests. English merchants affiliated with Lisbon firms dispatched vessels to Cabo Verde, Cacheu, and Bissau for licit and illicit commerce, generally to the detriment of Portuguese, Cabo Verdean, and Luso-African trading interests and Portugal's customs revenues. Numerous European merchant vessels and warships sailing Atlantic sea lanes resorted to São Tiago and other islands for trade and to replenish water and provisions. The Portuguese navy dispatched no ships to patrol the archipelago, enabling pirates of many nationalities to pillage the defenseless inhabitants, a menace that continued until the 1820s.

In September 1683 William Dampier visited Sal aboard an unnamed vessel. Dampier and shipmates ranged the island, where they observed only a few goats and shot flamingos feeding and nesting in the salinas. There was little more to record:

There are not above 5 or 6 Men on this Island of *Sal*, and a poor Governor...[who] told us there had not been a Ship in 3 Years before. We bought of him about 20 Bushels of Salt for a few old Cloaths: And he begged a little Powder and Shot.¹⁵

¹⁴William Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World* (New York, 1968), 60.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 57.

From Sal, Dampier's ship sailed to a roadstead on São Nicolau (probably Preguiça), where the governor and several other inhabitants came on board. After cleaning the ship's hull and filling water casks, the buccaneers sailed to Maio, intending to purchase provisions, but were not allowed to land because the previous week an English vessel had seized the governor and several others and obtained cattle in ransom, but nonetheless carried off the men. Dampier remarks that one of his shipmates from Bristol had previously visited Fogo on a trading vessel and spotted ambergris near the vessel, but had been unable to collect it.¹⁶

A French squadron commanded by Admiral Duquesne-Guitton bound for the Indian Ocean anchored at Praia in March 1690, the last of the drought and famine years that began in 1685 and claimed around 4,000 lives on São Tiago.¹⁷ Robert Challe and other members of the expedition who traveled to Ribeira Grande observed malnourished and dispirited inhabitants living in the blighted landscapes, subsisting on small black beans that grew wild, a few vegetables from garden plots, and fruit surviving on trees with no green leaves. Challe was astonished to learn that the inhabitants consumed no fish because they lacked row boats and launches, yet the sea around the island abounded with fish and the crews of the expedition's vessels caught a great many.¹⁸

Robert Challe's observation that São Tiago's inhabitants had no fishing craft is explained by Capt. Thomas Phillips, who resorted to Praia in December 1693 to refit the *Hannibal* after battling a French warship. Phillips extolled the fishing in Praia harbor:

There is in this bay great plenty of fish, and very good. With our hooks we catch'd them as fast as we could hale them in; but with our sayne, which we hal'd two or three times in the little sandy bay near the east point coming in...we caught such quantities, that our men not being able to eat them all, they dried and salted abundance.¹⁹

Yet Phillips saw no vessels at São Tiago's chief ports:

They are so jealous of the inhabitants going off with ships that call here, that they do not keep a boat in the island, at least I saw none here [Ribeira

¹⁶Ibid., 58-59.

¹⁷Patterson, "Epidemics," 304.

¹⁸Frédéric Deloffre and Melâhat Menemencioglu, eds., *Journal d'un Voyage fait aux Indes Orientales (1690-1691) par Robert Challe, écrivain du roi* (Paris, 1979), 138.

¹⁹Thomas Phillips "Journal of a Voyage Made in the Hannibal of London, Ann. 1693, 1694, from England, to Cape Monseradoe in Africa" in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels* (6 vols.: London: Churchill, 1732), 6:187-88.

Grande] nor at St. Jago town [Praia]; and a guard is kept constantly along the marine while ships are in port, to prevent it.²⁰

Phillips described the guards posted at Praia:

When we arriv'd we found a dozen of half-starv'd soldiers attending our landing; they had each a long sword and a lance, and they look'd more like skeletons than men, and so very ragged,...²¹

Visitors to São Tiago and other islands cited following record similar descriptions. The port and anchorage guards invariably were local militiamen, not Portuguese "regulars," because foreign shipmasters disdained to take aboard debilitated pardo and preto militiamen lacking nautical skills and unable to understand commands, but short-handed captains might recruit a European. Portuguese *degradados* were ever on the lookout to escape the archipelago.

At Ribeira Grande, the governor dunned Phillips for his elegant walking stick while he negotiated supplying livestock. He, like other governors, arrogated an exclusive right to sell cattle, demanding payment in specie. When Phillips invited the governor to dine aboard ship, the latter refused, explaining that the inhabitants would prevent his boarding a foreign vessel from concern that he might be captured by pirates who would exact livestock and foodstuffs as ransom to obtain his release, as had previously occurred.

São Tiago's inhabitants were permitted to trade goats, vegetables, and fruit, invariably bartering for clothing in lieu of money, for which they had no use. Phillips observed women wearing panos and was told that panos were a valuable commodity in West African trade, but none were offered to him for sale. Phillips was informed that English vessels bound for the Newfoundland banks loaded salt at Maio, and that some English vessels en route to the Americas visited Boa Vista, São Nicolau, and São Vicente to obtain donkeys for sale at Barbados.²²

In January-February 1699, a French squadron commanded by Jacques Gouin de Beuchesne visited the archipelago to reprovision en route to South America. An engineer named Duplessis painted views of Ribeira Grande and Praia, outlines of several islands, various types of birds, and a dramatic depiction of a tuna pursuing a school of flying fish taking flight to avoid capture. Duplessis' journal is a paean to the abundance of fish in

²⁰Ibid., 187.

²¹Ibid., 184.

²²Ibid., 186-88.

the archipelago's waters: off Maio, an "infinity" of fish in shoals; off São Nicolau, "all night long we observed the sea full of fish;" and anchored at Praia, several sweeps of the seine trapped "beaucoup de poisson" and some turtles. Visiting Brava, the French were informed that no vessel had arrived for trade during the past two years and that because a launch from Fogo had not come on its scheduled annual visit, mass had not been celebrated during the past six months for lack of wine.²³

Many slaves died on São Tiago and other islands during famine conditions between 1704 and 1712. The islands most vulnerable to droughts were Maio, Boa Vista, and Sal, where human and animal populations ever waxed, waned, and expired. Around 1705 Sal was deserted, but in 1713 Sal and Maio had "great numbers" of wild horses and Maio additionally had a "much greater multitude of wild goats." Renewed drought conditions forced almost all the inhabitants of all three islands to seek refuge on São Tiago and Fogo, presumably by importuning shipmasters of vessels resorting to their islands for salt. The waters of all three islands had fish in plentiful numbers, but European visitors do not record the inhabitants possessing fishing craft or using fishing lines.²⁴

When Amédée-François Frézier visited São Vicente in February 1712 en route to the South Seas aboard the *Saint-Joseph*, he remarked on a great number of whales in the bay, many species of fish ("hay infinidad de peces"), and numerous turtles which inhabitants of Santo Antão came every year to hunt for food and for trade. Frézier records no vessels, nor explains how the Santo Antão men crossed the strait between the islands.²⁵ When Capt. George Roberts visited the archipelago 1723-24, Santo Antão was the hereditary estate of the Marquis das Minhas, recently become Marquis de Ghome, who dispatched a vessel to the island each year to "bring home the Profits of it." In 1724 two Portuguese priests administered São Antão for the marquis.²⁶

São Tiago, São Nicolau, Maio, Sal, Boa Vista, and Fogo were afflicted by drought conditions between 1719 and 1723, so severe that inhabitants of Maio, Sal, and Boa Vista were compelled to abandon their islands. A

²³Françoise et Jean-Michel Massa, eds. *Duplessis; Relation Journalière d'un Voyage fait en 1699 par M. de Beauchesne aux îles du Cap-Vert* (Rennes, 2004), 38, 43, 64, 70.

²⁴Patterson, "Epidemics," 305-06; George Roberts, "Account of a Voyage to the Islands of the Canaries, Cape de Verde, and Barbadoes, in 1721" in Thomas Astley, ed., *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (4 vols.: London, 1968), 1:629, 633, 635, 637, 639. Roberts' account in the third person incorporates considerable information recorded by other seafarers and may have been written by Daniel Defoe, who compiled a history of pirates under the *nom de plume* of Charles Johnson.

²⁵Miguel A. Guerin, trans. and ed., *Amadeo Frezier; Relación del viaje por el mar del sur* (Caracas, 1982), 22-27.

²⁶Roberts, *Account*, 675, 679.

yellow fever (?) epidemic on São Tiago in 1731 killed some 2,000 people, including many colonial officials. São Nicolau was afflicted with famine in 1738-40, and Santo Antão suffered many deaths from a yellow fever (?) epidemic in 1742. In 1748-50 Fogo and “probably all other islands” experienced high mortality during a major famine. In 1754-55 all islands experienced “enormous mortality.”²⁷

Capt. George Roberts’ account relates his experiences during the years from 1722 to 1725 while engaged in inter-island commerce. Roberts arrived at Sal aboard the sloop *Margaret* in mid-October 1722, the season when a multitude of huge green turtles resorted to the island to lay their eggs and were preyed on by Frenchmen, who dried and salted their flesh to sell in the West Indies, taking the shell to France. French and other mariners sometimes collected ambergris left by sperm whales. Fish “abounded” off the west coast of Sal, and were also plentiful off Boa Vista and Maio.

At Sal, Roberts encountered some sixty blacks from São Nicolau who had been deposited on the island to capture turtles and preserve their meat to take to São Nicolau where famine conditions prevailed. Their vessel had sailed to Boa Vista to load salt, and having awaited ten weeks for its return, the men offered Roberts half of their harvest of turtles and ambergris for returning them to São Nicolau. Uncertain of the circumstances, Roberts deferred a decision, and carried only six of the men and two women and a baby to São Nicolau. When Roberts anchored at Tarrafal, a Portuguese priest claimed ownership of the missing sloop and asserted that some of the blacks were his slaves and others were hired. Roberts does not record the names of the priest, sloop, or captain, but subsequently relates that the vessel had been seized by pirates.²⁸

From Tarrafal, Roberts sailed to the port of Preguiça, where he contracted with the Portuguese priest to return to Sal to collect the people and turtle meat, but before he could sail, three pirate vessels captured his sloop and pillaged São Nicolau’s inhabitants. The pirates stripped the *Margaret* and prevailed on the mate to join them, abandoning Roberts with the derelict sloop and two youths. Roberts recruited seven black seamen, including a pilot named “Nicolau,” and sailed the patched and barely seaworthy *Margaret* to the island of Brava, where the sloop was swept past the entrance to Furna Bay and foundered on rocks at Ponta do Sol.²⁹

There Roberts and his crew received unstinting assistance from the local black inhabitants, likewise branco families at the principal settlement

²⁷Patterson, “Epidemics,” 299, 304.

²⁸Roberts, *Account*, 599-603, 633-39.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 599-615.

(today known as Vila Nova Sintra). The island's inhabitants possessed no vessels, and only two ships had visited Brava during the past seven years—an English vessel whose captain had purchased some hogs, and a Portuguese vessel transporting slaves from São Nicolau to Brazil that sought to replenish water supplies, but was driven off by a storm.

Ponta do Sol's black inhabitants salvaged Roberts' broken vessel, including the anchors. Roberts, a non-swimmer like many English seafarers, marveled at the aquatic skills of men and women who could dive five and six fathoms and who asserted that they could remain afloat on the ocean for several days. Using salvage from his sloop *Margaret* and the wreck of a boat belonging to the governor which had lain derelict for two years and possessing only a few tools, Roberts and the blacks were able to construct a *balandra*, a small boat with a single mast, and sail it to Furna, Brava's chief port.³⁰

From Furna ("cavern"—an extinct crater), Roberts sailed with a crew of six blacks and a small boy across the turbulent sea to Fogo where he acquired the services of two African carpenters originally from Saint-Louis in Senegal, who had spent five years in Nantes learning their trade. Necessary timber being unavailable on Fogo, Roberts carried the carpenters and a few passengers back to Furna, where in two months' time the carpenters refitted the *balandra*.

Next, Roberts sailed to Fogo to return the inhabitants he had carried to Brava, laid in provisions and water, and after being stymied for many days by the prevailing NE winds rounded the northern coast of São Tiago to arrive at Maio, where he bartered (unidentified) goods from Fogo (and Brava?) for a cargo of salt. At Maio the Brava crewmen abandoned the vessel, fearful that Roberts intended to transport the salt to Barbados, where he would sell them as slaves. Roberts afterwards was able to engage a seaman from São Nicolau and another from Santo Antão. The latter persuaded Roberts to sell the cargo of salt at Santo Antão, where they might recruit men to take to Sal to kill turtles for sale at São Nicolau where food was scarce.

The plan failed due to the NE winds, which compelled Roberts to sail south along the coast of São Tiago, bartering salt for maize, plantains, bananas, coconuts, and other foods. Next Roberts sailed to Boa Vista to load salt, where there arrived an English slave sloop transporting the bishop of São Tiago, the *visitador geral*, and their attendants on a tour of the archipelago, after which the *visitador geral* intended to visit Portuguese settlements in West Africa.³¹

³⁰Ibid., 619-26, 676-77.

³¹Ibid., 624-26.

From Boa Vista Roberts sailed to Porto Ghuy, São Nicolau, “the chief island for asses,” where he bartered salt, measure for measure, for maize. Then disaster struck—a storm drove his balandra ashore to break apart. Roberts was hospitably treated by the local priest and inhabitants while he experienced a serious illness. After recuperating he was conveyed to Praia on an English vessel, whence he took passage to Lisbon on an English slaver, to arrive in London the latter part of June 1725.³²

Roberts’ detailed narrative attests to the untapped potential of intra-island commerce. Had Portuguese colonial officials permitted Cabo Verdeans to engage in inter-island exchanges, they might have transformed the archipelago’s subsistence economies and participated advantageously in foreign commerce. With salt from Maio, Boa Vista, and Sal, and acquisition of boats, fishermen could have preserved fish to sell to vessels bound to Africa and the Americas, and trade between islands might have spared thousands of lives during droughts.

VII

A resurgence of Portuguese commerce with Cabo Verde and western Africa was promoted by the self-aggrandizing initiative of the Marquis of Pombal, first minister and de facto ruler of Portugal during the reign of José I (1750-1777). Pombal organized the *Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão* for the purpose of supplying slave labor to spur the exploitation of sugar plantations in northeast Brazil. Pombal induced the pliant José I to grant the Maranhão company generous privileges, including a twenty-year monopoly of commerce with the Cabo Verde archipelago and the coast of West Africa from Cape Blanco to Cape Palmas, disregarding the protests of Portuguese and Cabo Verdean traders. The *Companhia*’s twenty-year charter was to begin with the dispatch of its first vessel in 1756, but the company did not formally undertake administrative responsibility in Cabo Verde and the presidios in Guiné until 1757. Implementation of the monopoly began one year later, during which the *Companhia*’s agents arrogated superiority over governors and other royal officials.³³

The *Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão*’s administration of Cabo Verde was preceded by a spate of droughts and famines. In 1738-40 circumstances on São Nicolau reportedly were so dire that people resorted to cannibalism. Santo Antão had many deaths in 1748 due to a combination of famine and epidemic disease. A drought began in 1753 that afflicted all the islands and caused “enormous mortality” during 1754-55.³⁴

³²Ibid., 625-27.

³³Antônio Carreira, *As Companhias Pombalinas de Navegação, Comércio e Tráfico de Escravos entre a Costa Africana e o Nordeste Brasileiro* (Bissau, 1969), 29-242.

³⁴Patterson, “Epidemics,” 304, 306.

Fortuitously for Pombal and Portuguese investors, the Seven Years' War (1756-63) enabled the *Companhia* to prosper while French and British slavers curtailed their trade with Africa. After the capture of France's trading establishments at Saint-Louis and Gorée in May 1758, the British Navy commanded south Atlantic shipping lanes, enabling Portuguese vessels to navigate safe from attacks by French naval vessels and privateers. Many of the manufactured goods traded by the *Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão* were acquired from English firms established in Portugal, representative of the expanding economic links between Portugal and Britain. The *Companhia's* objective of shipping large numbers of slaves to Brazil was largely achieved, with more than 28,000 captives shipped between 1757 and 1777, most of them from Cacheu and Bisau.³⁵

In 1770 Cabo Verde's administration was transferred from Ribeira Grande to the port of Praia, reflecting the decline of the plantation economy and the colony's growing dependence on maritime commerce. The settlement and a fort were sited on a plateau that commands the half-moon shaped harbor, a remnant of a partially collapsed volcanic cone. In comparison to Ribeira Grande's small cove, Praia's bay offers greater protection for vessels from storms, except during September and October, the possible months of rainfall, when violent gales blowing from the south might drive vessels ashore and endanger seafarers landing and embarking in the shark-infested waters. A bay with many shallows, vessels anchored hundreds of meters from shore.

When São Tiago had seasonal rains, and for some months afterward, potable water for Praia's inhabitants and visiting ships was collected from a pool some forty meters from the beach fed by a stream flowing from several springs behind the plateau. When the pool was dry or too low, ships' casks were rolled from the beach to draw muddy brackish water from wells sunk in swampy ground fronting the bay. These stagnant marshes were breeding places for mosquitoes, vectors for malaria and yellow fever. The pestilential swamps were not drained until 1877.³⁶

During the *Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão's* monopoly, its agents ruthlessly exploited Cabo Verde's inhabitants, commandeering archil, panos, aguardente, foodstuffs, and other supplies regardless of droughts and famines. Numerous Cabo Verdeans were recruited as soldiers, laborers, and clerks for service in the praças and detachments in Guiné. Construction of the fort of São José de Bissau cost more than 2,600 lives, most of them Cabo Verdean laborers.³⁷

³⁵Brooks, *Eurafricans*, 252-257.

³⁶Duncan, *Atlantic Islands*, 175, 234-235.

³⁷Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford, 1970), 246-47.

During the 1760s and 1770s Cabo Verdeans were afflicted anew by droughts and famines. In 1764 there were famine conditions on Boa Vista, São Nicolau, and Santo Antão, but the inhabitants received some provisions from São Tiago. Rains completely failed in 1772, and during 1773-75 all islands were afflicted by a famine that caused more than 20,000 deaths. The Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão's agents exacerbated shortages and contributed to famine-caused deaths by their requisitions of provisions for the Companhia's vessels, and some of São Nicolau's maize harvest was sold to the Canary Islands. Taking advantage of the dire circumstances, visiting shipmasters bartered food for at least 136 slaves. The captain of a Dutch vessel purchased several families who sold themselves into slavery to escape death by starvation.³⁸

Vessels resorting to Praia for water and provisions were constrained to deal exclusively with the Companhia's agents. Georg Forster, a scientist who participated in Cook's second voyage, reported on the expedition's visit to Praia in August 1772 when there was an "extreme shortage" of provisions. Forster comments that the Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão "perfectly tyrannizes over the inhabitants, and sells them wretched merchandize at exorbitant prices." He adds that the "better sort" of Praia's inhabitants "wear ragged European cloaths, which they have obtained by barter from ships that touched here, previous to the establishment of the monopolizing company."³⁹

Beginning in the late 1760s or early 1770s, American whalers hunted in the archipelago, and some harpooned whales were towed ashore where islanders helped process the carcasses. To escape lives of penury and oppression, Brava men accepted derisory wages encouraging whaler captains outward bound to the south Atlantic and Pacific to resort to the island to hire seamen. As time passed, Brava men (known as "Black Portuguese") contrived to bring wives to settle in Nantucket, New Bedford, and other Massachusetts towns.⁴⁰

IX

The Companhia de Grão Para e Maranhão's tenaciously enforced monopoly ended in 1778 and was briefly succeeded by the Companhia para o Monopólio do Comércio nas ilhas de Cabo Verde, Bissau e Cachéu (1777-86).⁴¹ In 1778 the monarchy established the Province of Cabo Verde e Guiné. More than 1,000 kilometers of ocean separated Cabo Verde from

³⁸Patterson, "Epidemics," 304, 306-08.

³⁹Georg Forster, *A Voyage Around the World* (2 vols.: Honolulu, 2000), 1:34, 37.

⁴⁰Carl N. Haywood, "American Whalers and Africa" Ph.D., Boston University, 1967), 57-62; Meintel, *Race*, 47.

⁴¹A.H. de Marques, *História de Portugal* (2 vols.: Lisbon, 1972) 1:628.

Guiné, the littoral between the Gambia and Pongo rivers where Portuguese, Luso-African, and Cabo Verdean traders contended with European and Eurafrikan rivals.

Praia, the capital, was the residence of the governor and his entourage, the *ouvidor* (principal magistrate), and other Portuguese officials and their retinues. The fort constructed on the ridge overlooking Praia's anchorage was garrisoned by Portuguese soldiers (*tropa da linha*). The first royal governors were challenged by rebellious morgados, who fostered civil disturbances that governors lacked the means to suppress. Deprived of naval vessels, governors were effectively marooned on the island of São Tiago. When in 1778 Governor António do Vale de Sousa e Menezes complained to his superiors that capitães-móres flouted his orders, and requested a vessel and funds necessary to visit islands in the archipelago, the unhelpful reply from Lisbon was that he should order the recalcitrants to come to Praia and submit themselves to his authority. Intrinsic to Cabo Verde's political and social realities was that the capitão-mor of each island was acknowledged the "king" of his demesne.⁴²

Owing to Portugal's chronic disastrous finances, government disbursements were restricted to the salaries of governors and a few senior officials. The Province's administration was to be financed from customs duties, impossibility of which ensured the colony's impoverishment and stagnation. Customs authorities collected little revenue, particularly in Guiné where local Portuguese and Luso-African traders connived with shipmasters to evade duties by whatever means, including bribery and intimidation. Successive governors were bereft of funds to support the colony's civil, military, and ecclesiastical establishments, to maintain buildings, forts, and other government property, and to succor Cabo Verde's destitute inhabitants in times of droughts and famines.

To increase revenues, and for personal enrichment, governors ignored royal decrees forbidding foreign vessels to engage in commerce. Consequently, vessels sailing Atlantic sea lanes visited Praia in growing numbers to resupply water and provisions. With more reliable rainfall during the 1780s, São Tiago exported numerous cattle, donkeys, and mules to plantations in the West Indies. In 1788, of 202 vessels visiting Praia, only 32 were Portuguese.⁴³

The archipelago experienced droughts and famines from 1785 to 1792. More than 800 people died on São Antão, and São Tiago's population experienced augmenting hardship.⁴⁴ During these years seafarers reported

⁴²Christiano José de Senna Barcellos, *Subsídios para a História de Cabo Verde e Guiné* (7 vols.: Lisbon, 1899-1913), 3:74, 81.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 3:111-112.

⁴⁴Patterson, "Epidemics," 305, 308.

capturing large numbers of fish outside, and inside, the port of Praia with nets and seines. When the schooner *Lapwing* visited 25-30 July 1791, Anna Falconbridge reported the crew caught “a superabundance of fish” in Praia roads, this at a time when food was especially scarce following the recent visit of a European fleet. São Tiago’s inhabitants wanted payment for provisions in wearing apparel rather than money.⁴⁵

By the time Sir Erasmus Gower visited Praia in November of 1792, the 1790-92 drought had rendered most of São Tiago’s inhabitants destitute, some having died and others having somehow escaped to other islands. The governor nonetheless allowed the sale of provisions to visiting vessels, extorting half the price of cattle sold at Praia. Gower remarks,

This bay had, for several years, been frequented by ships bound to the southward, as bullocks, sheep, hogs, goats, poultry and fruits were abundant and reasonable. Fish were likewise taken by the seine, which is a large net cast into the sea, and hauled afterwards ashore, supplying enough, at once, for whole ships’ companies. An excellent kind of rock cod was, likewise, caught from the rocks with rod and line.

There was ample water for foreign seafarers from the spring-fed rivulet at the governor’s residence some three kilometers inland. This privileged glade sustained a flourishing garden and orchard.⁴⁶

São Tiago’s inhabitants remained destitute after the 1785-92 drought and famine conditions. Abijah Northey, Jr., master of the brig *Augusta*, visited Praia in July 1804. “Instead of Merchants I found nothing but Beggars from the Governor down to the lowest Negro on the Island. Such a compleat picture of Poverty I never beheld.” Northey recorded only one vessel in the harbor: a small schooner owned by an Irishman “who got his liveing by tradeing from St. Jago to the Isle of Mayo.”⁴⁷

Maió’s estimated population in 1807 comprised only 451 people: one branco, 200 pardos, 50 pretos livres, and 200 escravos. São Tiago had the archipelago’s largest estimated population: 14,200, comprising 200 brancos, 6,000 pardos, 6,000 pretos livres, and 2,000 escravos. This was reckoned to be only half of São Tiago’s population in 1730—the island had been depopulated by the droughts and famines in 1749, 1773-75, and 1790-91.⁴⁸ From 1809 to 1814 renewed drought conditions afflicted Boa

⁴⁵Christopher Fyfe, ed., *Anna Marie Falconbridge; Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone during the Years 1791-1792-1793* (Liverpool, 2000), 55-58.

⁴⁶George Staunton, ed., *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (2 vols.: Philadelphia, 1799), 1:64-67.

⁴⁷Norman R. Bennett and George E. Brooks, *New England Merchants in Africa; a History Through Documents, 1802-1865* (Boston, 1965), 15.

⁴⁸R.J. da Cunha Matos, *Compêndio Histórico das Possessões de Portugal na Africa* (Rio de Janeiro, 1963), 46, 50.

Vista, Maio, and São Tiago, causing inhabitants to flee their islands to Fogo and São Nicolau.⁴⁹ Names and nationalities of vessels that transported people are not recorded.

Reports by two long-serving island commandants submitted to the government in Rio de Janeiro in March 1813 are remarkable for making no reference to the ongoing drought and its dire consequences for the archipelago's inhabitants. Aniceto António Ferreira, the Azorean commandant of Boa Vista since 1787, details agricultural productivity, island-by-island. He states that there are "a lot of fish" in the archipelago's waters, records nothing about fishermen or fishing craft, but mentions the activities of American whalers from Nantucket. Ferreira is not averse to presenting data: he lists by nationality the number of vessels that traded at Boa Vista from 1804 to 1811 and the quantities of salt, hides, and live animals purchased.⁵⁰ Manuel Alexandre de Medina e Vasconcelos, the Madeiran commandant of Fogo since 1797, contributed a short report suggesting measures for improving circumstances in the Cabo Verde archipelago and at Bissau and Cacheu. Vasconcelos addresses finances, agriculture, soldiers, primary schooling, and other topics, but nothing whatsoever concerning fish and fishing.⁵¹

In April 1816 Capt. J. K. Tuckey of the Royal Navy visited São Tiago, commanding an expedition to explore the Zaire river. Tuckey noted the absence of vessels at Praia:

The strictest precautions are taken against the evasion of slaves on board foreign vessels that touch here, and particularly by not allowing boats of any kind to the inhabitants, the want of which gives to the port the appearance of a deserted settlement.⁵²

Tuckey also remarks that

[a]lthough the most rigid catholics, the inhabitants seem to make fish a very small portion of their general food, a single boat alone going out to fish in deep water; and the few fish we observed on shore were taken as we understood by hook and line from the rocks. The [commandant of São Tiago], however, learning that we had hauled the seine with some success, let us know that it was customary to pay him the compliment of a dish of fish, which through ignorance we had omitted.⁵³

⁴⁹Patterson, "Epidemics," 305, 308.

⁵⁰António Carreira, *Descrições Oitocentistas das Ilhas de Cabo Verde* (Lisbon, 1987), 47-71.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 75-78.

⁵²Tuckey, *Expedition*, 20.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 32.

Tuckey is unsparing in describing the governor, the commandant of São Tiago, and members of their entourages who importuned the British officers for gifts. He describes Praia:

With the exception of half a dozen houses of the chief officers, which are plastered and white-washed, and of the church, which is without a spire, and externally resembles a barn, this capital of the Cape Verde islands consists of three rows of hovels, constructed of stones and mud, and thatched with branches of the date tree, and chiefly inhabited by negroes. Ragged militiamen posted as sentries bore muskets without locks and the gun barrels lashed to the stocks.⁵⁴

Regarding the purchase of provisions, the governor and commandant exacted money for livestock, while the inhabitants engaged in barter for their produce:

For bullocks and sheep, bills and cash alone are taken; but all other stock, as well as fruit and vegetables, which usually belong to negroes, may be most advantageously procured in exchange for any articles of wearing apparel, or for blankets.⁵⁵

Dr. Christen A. Smith, Professor of Botany at the University of Christiania and a foreign member of the expedition, commented:

All the provisions that are brought to market pass in a manner through the hands of the governor, and their price is enhanced by the duty, which is applied to the defraying the expenses for maintaining the garrison and the civil government.⁵⁶

Smith ventured off Praia's desiccated plateau some kilometers into the interior of São Tiago and observed valleys and ravines where springs, rivulets, and rills supported a variety of crops and fruit trees and herds of cattle, sheep, and goats browsed in highland pastures sustained by mountain mists.⁵⁷ As on other islands, São Tiago's people and livestock multiplied when there was rainfall, to be decimated during droughts.

Tuckey's observation about the prohibition of vessels is acknowledged by a Portuguese army officer stationed on São Tiago during the 1810s. In his treatise on the archipelago, Manuel Róis Lucas de Senna succinctly

⁵⁴Ibid., 13-17.

⁵⁵Ibid., 35.

⁵⁶Ibid., 248.

⁵⁷Ibid., 240-247.

states that fish are “not scarce” in the sea around the archipelago, but “there are no fishermen.”⁵⁸ Senna does not address why this is so, nor suggest what remedial measures might be undertaken. Absurdly, military officers and colonial officials dispatched to Cabo Verde were compelled to eschew their homeland’s marine-based cuisine. Codfish (*bacalhau*: “our faithful friend”), Portugal’s staple food, have for centuries been caught on the Grand Banks by Portuguese fishermen 3,500 kilometers from Lisbon, yet Portuguese living in Cabo Verde together with other inhabitants could not catch fish swimming a few meters offshore.

After 1808, when participation in the slave trade was made unlawful for citizens of Britain and the United States, slavers resorted to Boa Vista, where Manuel António Martins supplied Portuguese vessel registries and other documents to prevent capture by British and American naval vessels. Martins, a consummate opportunist, became the richest and most powerful person in the archipelago. Renowned as the “Bonaparte of the Islands,” he adroitly cultivated influence with Portuguese officials dispatched to the archipelago, with foreign visitors, and with Lisbon merchants and government officials.⁵⁹ In 1817 Britain coerced Portugal into signing a treaty banning Portuguese and Cabo Verdean slaving north of the equator, but the slave trade linking western Africa, Cabo Verde, and the Americas was not suppressed until the 1840s, with corrupt governors and subordinate officials exacting bribes from participants. Unfortunately for the inhabitants of Cabo Verde, the illicit commerce provided no taxable revenue for the archipelago.⁶⁰

António Pusich arrived as governor in December 1818 with a mandate to promote fishing as a means to relieve the poverty of Cabo Verde’s inhabitants. Pusich had unusual qualifications and conflicting professional and personal motivations. Of Italian nationality, born in the republic of Ragusa (modern-day Dubrovnik), Pusich married a Portuguese aristocrat, Dona Ana Maria Isabel Nunes, and acquired Portuguese citizenship and a commission in the Portuguese navy. From 1801 to 1811 Pusich and his family resided at Ribeira Brava on the island of São Nicolau in a post especially created for him: naval superintendent for Cabo Verde.⁶¹

In 1803 Pusich compiled a *mémoria* describing the island of São Nicolau; in 1808 a hydrography of Cabo Verde; and in 1810 a second *mémoria* treating the entire archipelago. Pusich’s hydrography describes ocean currents, prevailing winds, and provides considerable information on

⁵⁸ António Carreira, ed., *Dissertação sobre as Ilhas de Cabo Verde 1818 por Manuel Roiz Lucas de Senna* (Praia, Cabo Verde, 1987), 59.

⁵⁹ Barcellos, *Subsidios*, 3:261.

⁶⁰ George E. Brooks, “Samuel Hodges, Jr., and the Symbiosis of Slave and ‘Legitimate’ Trades, 1810s-1820s,” unpublished paper.

⁶¹ Barcellos, *Subsidios*, 3:266; Carreira, *Descrições Oitocentistas*, 18-20.

Cabo Verde's ports and roadsteads, including the availability of provisions and water. There is passing reference to fish in the waters off each island, but the only specific information concerning fishing is mention that the inhabitants of São Nicolau and Santo Antão resort to the islets of Branco, Raso, and Santa Luzia in small craft (*barcos*) to catch fish and collect archil (a moss-like lichen used in dyes). Pusich does not record who owned or crewed the fishing craft. São Antão is noted for having trees used to construct boats.⁶²

Pusich's 1810 *memória* incorporated numerous passages from the 1797 *Ensaio* published by João da Silva Feijó, a Brazilian naturalist who visited Cabo Verde in the 1780s. In one paraphrased section, Pusich repeated Feijó's assertion that fish are plentiful in the archipelago's waters, yet Cabo Verde's inhabitants fished onshore with poles or in small launches only when in dire straits from famine. Allegedly, it was not because Cabo Verdeans didn't like fish—they were "gluttonous" when fish were available—it was because of their "incorrigible laziness."⁶³ Like Feijó, Pusich does not relate that Cabo Verdeans were forbidden to possess boats, or that morgados and other brancos extorted labor and produce from pardos and pretos as well as exploiting escravos. Except for brancos and a few pardos, no one had money to buy fish, and barter exchanges would not enable fishermen to acquire and maintain boats, sails, nets, tools, and other necessities. Pusich nonetheless asserted that fishing could provide a great part of the inhabitants' subsistence, as was the case for the Canary Islands and many other places, and that fresh, dried, and salted fish would provide an important branch of commerce.⁶⁴

Following a decade of residence in Cabo Verde, Pusich served in Brazil where his family resided at the royal court in Rio de Janeiro. In February 1818, when he applied for the governorship of Cabo Verde e Guiné, Pusich submitted a *mémoria* with recommendations for improving circumstances in the Province. He endorsed the proposal of a group of traders in Cabo Verde for a government-sponsored fishing company with a twenty-year monopoly. Pusich asserted that fish were as plentiful in the archipelago as salt, and that the company would provide many people with a livelihood, create an export commodity, and be a "school for sailors."

⁶²*Ibid.*, 66, 68, 70-71, 93, 98, 105-06, 109.

⁶³Antônio Carreira, ed., *Ensaio e Memórias Económicas sobre as Ilhas de Cabo Verde por João da Silva Feijó* (Lisbon, 1986), xxxiv, 65; for the complete text of Pusich's 1810 *Mémoria* and commentary, Orlando Ribeiro, "As Ilhas de Cabo Verde no principio do século XIX," *Garcia de Orta* 4(1956), 605-34. In his 1803 *Mémoria on São Nicolau*, Pusich carps that São Jorge, the island's chief roadstead, is commonly called Preguiça ("indolence"). *Ibid.*, 629.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 616.

Pusich does not name any of the traders who might participate in the proposed monopoly company.⁶⁵

Pusich's practiced adroitness, his wife's aristocratic connections and friends at court, and a dearth of candidates willing to serve in Cabo Verde facilitated Pusich's acquisition of the governorship he sought. Pusich, his family, and colonial officials were transported to Praia on an English vessel chartered by Manuel A. Martins, who received personal thanks from João VI. Prior to leaving Rio in October 1818, Pusich received instructions to suppress the slave trade in accordance with the recently signed Anglo-Portuguese treaty, but he was not supplied with naval vessels or other resources appropriate to the task. Pusich did, however, receive funds to promote fishing as a means to alleviate the poverty of Cabo Verde's inhabitants. In May 1819 Pusich organized a fishing company, with Manuel A. Martins and his associates on Boa Vista prominently involved. The funds were soon dissipated, causing enmity between Pusich and Martins.⁶⁶ Squandering money aside, Martins and other slaveholders had reason to prevent Cabo Verde's inhabitants from acquiring access to vessels they might use to escape the archipelago.

The same month he launched the fishing enterprise, Pusich sought permission to establish a privileged non-slaving commercial company, himself among the privileged. The proposed company, which the government rejected, was to be administered by two unsalaried fort commandants: João Pereira Barreto at Cacheu and Joaquim António Matos at Bissau, both slave traders. Soon after Governor Pusich appointed Matos the acting commandant of Bissau, Matos married Pusich's daughter.⁶⁷

Portugal and, ineluctably, its colonies entered a turbulent era of political, social, and cultural transformations in 1820 when the Porto garrison mutinied, that of Lisbon joined, and representatives of Portugal's social and religious constituencies assembled to draft a constitution. In 1822 João VI accepted the invitation to return from Brazil as a constitutional monarch, leaving his eldest son Pedro as Brazil's ruler. Carlota, João's Spanish queen, and her second son Miguel refused to swear loyalty to the constitution, and went into exile. In 1822 Pedro was acclaimed the constitutional emperor of an independent Brazil with the title Pedro I.⁶⁸

In Cabo Verde Manuel A. Martins was pre-eminent among opportunists who sought to exploit political changes in Portugal to personal advantage. Informed of the army mutinies and ongoing political transformations in Portugal, on 21 March 1821—seven months after the Porto

⁶⁵Carreira, *Descricoes Oitocentistas*, 133-34.

⁶⁶Barcellos, *Subsidios*, 3:230, 234, 236, 262-63, 266, 268, 275.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 239.

⁶⁸Livermore, *New History*, 260-64.

garrison mutinied—Martins organized a demonstration at Sal Rei on behalf of liberals and the constitution and against the “despotism” of Pusich. The initiative at Sal Rei was followed several weeks later at Praia, where the inhabitants combined with the garrison’s soldiers to compel Pusich and his entourage to retreat to Maio, whence several months later he sailed to Lisbon on a vessel belonging to his son-in-law Joaquim António de Matos, the principal slave trader at Bissau.⁶⁹

Manuel A. Martins became the most influential member of a five-member junta that supplanted Pusich. During visits to Portugal as a delegate to the constituent assembly, Martins lobbied influential politicians. Two years of laissez-faire junta rule dominated by Martins ended in January 1823 with the arrival of Governor João da Mata Chapuzet. Nine months later the Praia garrison mutinied, the soldiers having gone unpaid for six months. Chapuzet fled with his family and staff to Boa Vista to take refuge with Manuel A. Martins. In January 1824 the arrival of a relief vessel bringing troops enabled Chapuzet to return to Praia and complete his term as governor.⁷⁰

With the death of João VI in 1826, Pedro I succeeded to the throne of Portugal as Pedro IV. He refused to leave Brazil, and renounced Portugal’s throne in favor of his seven-year old daughter Maria II (1826-53) on condition that the Cortes accept an amended version of the 1822 constitution and that his younger brother Miguel should act as regent and in due course marry Maria. On his return to Portugal, Miguel rallied reactionary nobility and leading clerics, causing thousands of liberals to flee the country for asylum in England. In 1828 Miguel abolished the constitution and had himself proclaimed king. Maria II fled to England and civil war ensued, liberals seizing control of the Azores in 1829.

In 1831, Pedro I abdicated as emperor of Brazil in favor of his son Pedro II (1831-89) to join the liberals in England on behalf of his daughter Maria. In July 1832 a liberal expedition organized with the support of Britain and France captured Porto. The Miguelists were defeated and in September 1833 Maria was restored to the throne. In April 1834 Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal formed an alliance that drove Miguel into exile. A political amnesty enabled thousands of liberals to return to Portugal, including several shiploads from Cabo Verde.⁷¹

While Portugal was distracted by political transformations and civil strife, government officials paid little attention to the colonies, least of all Cabo Verde e Guiné. Cabo Verdeans were spared serious drought condi-

⁶⁹Barcellos, *Subsidios*, 3:250-51, 260-61, 275.

⁷⁰T. Edward Bowdich, *Excursions in Madeira and Porto Santo, during the Autumn of 1823, while on his Third Voyage to Africa* (London, 1825), 179-84.

⁷¹Livermore, *New History*, 268-77; Barcellos, *Subsidios*, 4:3.

tions during the 1820s, to be afflicted in the 1830s by one of the most disastrous famines ever recorded: the catastrophic 1830-33 drought desiccated all the islands in the archipelago and killed an estimated 30,000 people. Bereft of assistance from Portugal, many more would have died had not Americans dispatched relief vessels.⁷²

In 1833, after years of lobbying Portuguese politicians, Manuel A. Martins was appointed prefect of Cabo Verde e Guiné, heading a civilian administration, and took office at Praia in February of 1834. Martins' tenure as prefect was brief. One of his first initiatives was to disband the archipelago's militias, the chief instrument of morgado and branco domination. São Tiago's enraged morgados had their revenge a year later after a company of ex-Miguelista soldiers mutinied, assassinated their officers, and sacked Praia. The mutineers' control of Praia lasted only a few days, most fleeing the archipelago on captured vessels after pillaging Brava. The morgados reassembled their disbanded militia, asserted control over Praia, and imprisoned Martins on charges that he had collaborated with the Miguelista rebels. Less than two weeks later, a British warship enabled Martins to return to Boa Vista, supplanted by a three-man junta that served until the arrival of a military governor.⁷³

Martins' successor, Gov. Joaquim Pereira Marinho, arrived in Cabo Verde in September of 1835 aboard the brig *Tejo*. Marinho was allocated 4:00\$000 réis for the colony's most urgent expenses in the wake of the calamitous 1830-33 famine. En route to São Tiago, he dispensed 1:000\$000 reis at Boa Vista for an establishment intended to upgrade the qualifications of Cabo Verde's military. Indubitably, Manuel António Martins was prominently involved in disbursing the sum.

Four days after landing at Praia, Marinho reboarded the *Tejo* to tour the archipelago and learn at first-hand the consequences of the famine. Persuaded of the potential of the archipelago's fish resources, Marinho successively instituted fishing companies on Santo Antão, São Vicente, São Nicolau, and Brava. At Santo Antão where some fishermen possessed launches, Marinho inaugurated three fishing companies: at Ponta do Sol e Sinagoga (where Jewish Miguelista supporters from the Azores had settled), Paúl e Janela, and Garça. One company received a cannon from the *Tejo* to defend the island against pirates. Next, Marinho sailed to São Vicente, where its 200 inhabitants were given a launch from the *Tejo*. Remarkably, on the first day, the fishing company caught 273 large fish.⁷⁴

⁷²Patterson, "Epidemics," 305, 309-10. Inhabitants of São Vicente survived by catching fish, and Manuel A. Martins imported rice and millet from the Gambia River to sell to the inhabitants of Fogo and Brava (Barcellos, *Subsidios*, 3:395, 399, 402; 4:2.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 4:49, 53-60, 92, 107.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 4:107, 109-11.

In a 5 November 1835 dispatch to Visconde Sá da Bandeira, the minister of marine and colonies, Marinho reported his intention of organizing *corpos de pescadores* on every island, with 27 fishing craft employing 336 men. Marinho detailed their organization, rules, and regulations which received Sá da Bandeira's approval before he was replaced as minister. With his patron out of office, Marinho was supplanted by Domingos Correia Arouca, who was transported from Lisbon to Cabo Verde aboard Manuel A. Martins' brig *Dois Amigos*. After Governor Arouca debarked at Praia, he canceled all of Marinho's initiatives, including the fishing companies, asserting that the archipelago's revenues were grossly inadequate to fund Marinho's grandiose schemes.⁷⁵

Marinho sailed to Guiné, where he remained until political circumstances in Portugal changed to his advantage. In September 1836, part of the National Guard joined a popular demonstration in support of restoring the Constitution of 1822, and this "September Revolution" restored Sá da Bandeira's political fortunes and his reappointment as minister of marine and colonies, in which capacity he served from 1837 to April 1839, and again in 1845. Marinho was reinstated as governor of Cabo Verde e Guiné, and served until 1839.⁷⁶

The fishing companies terminated by Arouca were not officially reorganized when Marinho returned to Cabo Verde. The sailors evidently found it more remunerative, however, to engage in intra-island commerce than to catch fish for people without money to pay them. Henceforth, long-boats and sloops plied between islands transporting people, maize, vegetables, fruit, domestic animals, salt, and small quantities of imported merchandise and, one supposes, fish caught in transit.⁷⁷ Concerning imported goods, São Tiago was the emporium for the Sotavento Group, Boa Vista for the Barlavento Group.⁷⁸ Most Cabo Verdeans subsisted in such penury that only landowners, government officials, and a few townspeople could afford imported goods of whatever description. Small sailing craft, often old with rotted timbers and barely seaworthy, were the principal means of inter-island travel and communications until well into the twentieth century.

Fishing long remained a marginal enterprise in the virtually cashless economies of the archipelago. José Joaquim Lopes de Lima records that

⁷⁵Ibid., 4:111, 118-19, 124-25.

⁷⁶Ibid., 4:124-25, 155; Livermore, *New History*, 282-83.

⁷⁷José Conrado Carlos de Chelmecki and Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, *Corografia Cabo-Verdiana, ou Descrição Geographico-Historica da Provincia das Ilhas de Cabo-Verde e Guiné* (2 vols.: Lisbon, 1841), 2:6-7, 62-63. The authors do not identify the owners or sailing routes of these boats. The frontispiece of volume 1, depicting Praia's harbor, shows two small sailing craft beside a man-of-war.

⁷⁸José Joaquim Lopes de Lima, *Ensaio sobre a Statistica das Possessões Portuguezas* (Lisbon, 1844), 45.

the inhabitants of Brava and São Nicolau were reputed excellent seamen. Some also engaged in fishing, but rarely in successive days due to laziness, “their dominant vice.”⁷⁹ Lopes de Lima, knowingly or not, repeats the same canard as Feijó and Pusich and, like them, does not mention that few people could afford to purchase fish.

Horatio Bridge, an American naval officer, visited Santo Antão in September 1843 and remarked how men and women at Janela practiced an unusual type of fishing:

The people are all negroes and mulattoes. Male and female they are very expert swimmers, and are often in the habit of swimming out to sea, with a basket or notched stick to hold their fish; and thus they angle for hours, resting motionless on the waves, unless attacked by a shark. In this latter predicament, they turn upon their backs, and kick and splash until the sea-monster be frightened away.⁸⁰

Bridges’ observations concerning the aquatic skills of black fisher folk are similar to those reported by Capt. Roberts at Brava more than a century earlier. Yet, the circumstances at Janela are puzzling: Bridge observed a “canoe” in the village, and trees growing along the small ribeira that might have been used to construct a row boat or a raft. Bridge does not record observing any fisher folk or watercraft at Paúl a few kilometers northwest of Janela, but describes an impoverished fishing community with boats at Ponta do Sol on the north side of the island.⁸¹

X

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the saga of roller-coaster demographics continued: high death rates during famines with high birth rates during intervening years. There were drought conditions on different islands in 1850-51, 1853-155, and 1856-59. A major drought that afflicted the entire archipelago from 1863 to 1866 claimed an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 victims.⁸²

During the 1860s’ drought years, colonial officials exploited the circumstances to transport Cabo Verdeans to Guiné, where they established small plantations growing sugar and peanuts. There were minor droughts across the archipelago in 1875-76, 1883-86, 1889-90, 1896-97, and 1899-1900.⁸³ Famines in 1903-04, 1920-21, and 1941-43 and 1947-48

⁷⁹Ibid., 110.

⁸⁰Horatio Bridge, *Journal of an African Cruiser* (London, 1968), 25-27.

⁸¹Ibid., 27-32.

⁸²Patterson, “Epidemics,” 305, 310-12.

⁸³Ibid., 305, 312-313.

claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Cabo Verdeans, and compelled tens of thousands more to escape the archipelago as both forced and free migrants.

Forced emigration was organized by the colonial government to supply “contract” labor for the exploitation of Portugal’s tropical colonies. Between 1900 and 1970, some 80,000 Cabo Verdeans were shipped to the plantations of São Tomé and Príncipe, and more than 7,000 to Angola and Mozambique. Laborers earned only pittance for years of toil, and many died or returned home in ill-health.⁸⁴

Free migrants flocked to America aboard sailing ships. More than 18,000 Cabo Verdeans entered the United States between 1900 and 1920, when restrictive legislation curtailed immigration. During the same period, over 9,000 Cabo Verdeans departed for Portugal, Latin America, and Africa, followed by another 10,000 during the 1920s-1940s. More than 130,000 people left the archipelago between 1950 and 1973, principally for Portugal, where men filled the jobs of conscripts dispatched to Guiné, Angola, and Mozambique, and a few to Cabo Verde, in futile wars against liberation movements; and replaced Portuguese who avoided the draft by becoming migrant laborers in France and other European countries.⁸⁵

Two of Cabo Verde’s worst-ever famines occurred in 1941-43 and 1947-48, killing an estimated 45,000 people. The augmenting disaster was not reported in the Portuguese press, and no food was dispatched by countries fighting World War II. Rev. Everette Howard, a Church of the Nazarene missionary, reported that half the population of Fogo perished, but he and other foreigners were forbidden by the Portuguese authorities to report deaths or to use the word “famine.” Howard remarks that fish were plentiful and easily caught, but Fogo’s fishermen refused to risk their lives sailing decrepit craft in dangerous shark-infested waters without compensation.⁸⁶

Following World War II, the Canary Current was exploited by fishing fleets from around the globe, among others Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Cuban, and Korean. Japanese leased rights to fish archipelago waters, and landed frozen tuna at Mindelo where crew members took liberty. Since

⁸⁴António Carreira, *Migrações nas Ilhas de Cabo Verde* (Lisbon, 1977), 148-252; Carreira’s research is translated and edited, with the addition of an index, by Christopher Fyfe, as *The People of the Cape Verde Islands; Exploitation and Emigration* (London, 1982), 101-79.

⁸⁵Carreira, *Migrações*, 63-148; Fyfe, *Cape Verde Islands*, 42-100; Marilyn Halter, *Between Race and Ethnicity: Cape Verdean American Immigrants, 1860-1965* (Urbana, 1993).

⁸⁶Carreira, *Migrações*, 238; Basil Miller, *Miracle in Cape Verde; The Story of Everette and Garnet Howard* (Kansas City, 1950), 13, 53-54.

Cabo Verde's independence in 1975, economic circumstances have been transformed by remittances from labor migrants, by retirees cashing social security checks, by infrastructure and reforestation projects funded by international programs, and by increasing tourism. Fishermen launch boats from numerous ports and beaches, and Cabo Verdeans in growing numbers can afford to purchase fish caught offshore and tuna from the Canary Current. Indeed, tourists are advised: "Staples include rice, potatoes (ordinary and sweet), beans, maize, squash, pork and—invariably—tuna."⁸⁷

⁸⁷Jim Hudgens and Richard Trillo, *The Rough Guide to West Africa* (New York, 2003), 417. For photographs of fishermen and their brightly-painted boats see, e.g., Michel Renaudeau, *Cape Verde Islands* (Paris, 1978), 55, 134-39, 150-51, and Françoise and Jean-Michel Massa, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique et bilingue: Cabo Verde/Cap Vert* (Rennes, 1996), facing lxiv and 90.