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## **Pessimistic History: Santomean Identity, Pessimism and History in two 19th century texts**

This paper adds to the scholarly literature about the Santomean past by analyzing the specific language used in the 19th century texts written by José Joaquim Lopes de Lima and Raimundo José da Cunha Matos. By considering the literary techniques employed by these two writers, the paper can elucidate the literary trends that became entrenched as standard ways of writing and thinking about São Tomé. In particular, Matos and Lima presented images and language of varying societies on São Tomé island, but they wrote about these as a singular colonial society. Their singular island society came to define the idea of “São Tomé” for foreign readers and local people.

Palavras-chave: São Tomé, literature analysis, intrigue, disorder, decadence

## **História Pessimista: Identidade Santomense, Pessimismo, e História em dois textos do século dezanove**

Este trabalho contribui para a literatura académica sobre o passado santomense, analisando a linguagem específica utilizada nos textos do século 19 escritos por José Joaquim Lopes de Lima e José Raimundo da Cunha Matos. Por considerar as técnicas literárias empregadas por estes dois escritores, o papel pode elucidar as tendências literárias que se tornaram entrenchados como formas padronizadas de escrever e pensar sobre São Tomé. Matos e Lima apresentou imagens e linguagem de diferentes sociedades em São Tomé ilha, mas eles escreveram sobre estes como uma sociedade singular colonial. Sua singular sociedade passou a definir a idéia de “São Tomé” para os leitores estrangeiros e habitantes locais.

Keywords: São Tomé, análise de literature, intriga, desordem, decadência

## Introduction

This paper, part of an in-progress dissertation chapter, is about what specific intellectual features were added to the idea of “São Tomé” by Raimundo José da Cunha Matos and José Joaquim Lopes de Lima in the early nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> While these two writers could be separated they will be discussed here in the same context because their contributions to the idea of “São Tomé” have historically been considered in relation to each other. The main reason for this is that Lima’s book drew heavily on Matos’s relatively obscure account. Lima’s book was more popular, but because Matos’s was based on personal experience on the island it lent authority that Lima’s account would not have otherwise had. The conclusion is that these men both added to the intellectual history of São Tomé in two ways. First, they added specific language that became enmeshed with the idea of São Tomé. São Tomé was understood from the earliest times as a fertile paradise that was as diseased as it was beautiful. Also, the political documents from the first couple of centuries demonstrated that social conflict was a norm. To these ideas Matos and Lima added specifically the pessimistic glosses of São Tomé as a place of disorder, intrigue, and decay. Second and perhaps more importantly, the paper concludes that Matos and Lima, rather unwittingly, added an intellectual coherency to the idea of São Tomé that had not been publicized previously and did not reflect the experience of living on the island among the social dissensions.

## Raimundo José da Cunha Matos – Intrigue and Disorder

The first person to systematically investigate Santomean history in the 1800s was Raimundo José da Cunha Matos. Matos, born 2 November 1776 in Faro (Portugal), joined an artillery regiment when he was fourteen years old. He served in active duty from 1793-96 and attained the rank of *marechal do campo* (the highest rank in the Brazilian army) in 1834. Besides his military accolades Matos was recognized as an astute observer and historian of the places where he lived and served including Rio de Janeiro, Goyaz, and São Tomé and Príncipe. Matos was stationed in São Tomé and Príncipe from 1798-1817 serving in a variety of posts on both islands, including governor on Príncipe. While living in Príncipe (1809-11) Matos married a local woman and produced children (including Coronel António Henriques da Cunha Matos).<sup>2</sup>

Raimundo Matos lived in São Tomé towards the end of the period that historians call the “great [economic] fallow” (1644-1858) and his short exposition of the island and its people reflects that general sentiment of São Tomé as lacking. His estimation that São Tomé was economically and politically lacking closely mirrors that of an eighteenth-century Portuguese administrator on São Tomé, Lucas Pereira d’Arújo

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the conference organizers for allowing me to include this paper as part of the conference proceedings despite the fact that I was unable to attend in person due to a series of last-minute grave family problems.

<sup>2</sup> There are numerous accounts of Raimundo José da Cunha’s life and career in Portuguese sources. Most of the Portuguese sources derive from Lopes (1841). A very thorough summary of his career that focuses on the Santomean component is in Mello (1948). In English the longest description of his career that I am aware of is in Adams (1900, p. 281). The entry for RJ da Cunha Matos was written by US born naturalist Herbert H. Smith who researched the flora and fauna of Brazil.

e Azevedo. (Azevedo, 1978) But, the content of Matos's history defers to an earlier eighteenth-century text written by São Tomé native Padre Manuel do Rosário Pinto because he used that text as primary source material.<sup>3</sup> Matos's *Chorographia Historica das Ilhas de S. Thomé e Príncipe, Anno Bom e Fernando Pó* (hereafter *Chorographia Historica*) assembles the historical narrative of Pinto with Azevedo's emphasis on what São Tomé lacked as well as his own experiences on the island.<sup>4</sup> What Matos offered most to the intellectual history of São Tomé, besides adding information that occurred after Pinto's account ended, was a new vocabulary to describe the island and its people. Two particular words are very prevalent in Matos's text: disorder (*desordem*) and intrigue (*intriga*).

The *Chorographia Historica* was first written in 1815, though it was not published widely until 1842, which seemed to be a very difficult historical moment in São Tomé's history. With the Portuguese crown having to flee Brazil in 1808, the British were basically free to enforce their naval prowess in the Gulf of Guinea and they systematically weakened Santomean slaving. Santomean sugar was no longer a valuable commodity on the world market, and Matos noted that by 1797 only one sugar mill on the island was still operational (1963, p. 141). Most of the island's agriculture was for subsistence purposes or to provide foodstuffs for passing ships. Although coffee had been introduced to the island around 1800 and had become the leading export crop, it was still not bringing much wealth to the island. Matos left in 1817, five years before the other nineteenth-century cash crop (cacao) would be introduced. Further, as a military man and politician, Matos was a first-hand witness to the decay of both military and political facilities and the disarray of finances and records.

A few examples of the extent of Matos's glosses on São Tomé's history and society as disorderly and full of intrigue are necessary to illustrate the point about how much his words have impressed the writers who followed him. One passage about Santomean society in the late 1500s is worth quoting at length because it set the context in which Matos wrote the rest of his historical narrative.

Already the intrigue of those ages spewed (*vomitavam*) the infernal poison that infected the new colonists, and their successors, like them, who repeated personal grievances at the feet of the royal throne, accusing each other of the most atrocious crimes. They not only construed themselves as arrogant, and intractable, but also wanted to affect independence, and sovereignty over the heads of the immense [numbers of] slaves that they controlled (*dispunham*). Murders, arsons, assaults, kidnapping, robberies, armed violence against public officials, contempt (*despreso*) against the governors or captains, all was put into practice by the powerful inhabitants of São Tomé, true little princes (*regulos*), and tyrants of their country. With their riches they did commit unheard of cruelties, and acts of rebellion that only cowardice or [personal] interest let go unpunished (Matos, 1905, p. 6).

<sup>3</sup> Manuel do Rosário Pinto (2006, p. 34) Father Atanásio Lopes da Cruz had a worn and mutilated version of Pinto's text that he bequeathed to his son who eventually offered it to Matos.

<sup>4</sup> Matos (1905) The book had multiple publications in 1815, 1842, 1905, 1916, and as a testament to its historical usefulness Governor Custódio Miguel de Borja ordered that it be published (in small sections) in the colony's *Boletim Oficial* between January 1880 and March 1882. I will cite the 1905 (3<sup>rd</sup>) edition.

Matos went on in the next paragraph to write that public officials, especially those in charge of public funds and record keeping often used their position to benefit themselves and their friends, and harm rivals. After mentioning a few other abuses, Matos wrote “Honesty went often (*andava muito*) in disuse in this Island” (1905, p. 7).

Matos applied his judgmental tone to the entire history of São Tomé focusing, as stated earlier, on various forms of intrigues and disorder. Writing of the power struggle between Bishop Quintanilha and Governor Coelho de Carvalho in 1613 Matos claimed, “The disorder (*desordens*) between the two powers [church and state] did not cease...” (1905, p. 12). Bishop Luiz de Barros was not only hindered by the government, but also clergy, for example the disorder (*desordens*) of canon Gaspar Pinheiro who was selling slaves illegally in 1619 (1905, p. 13). Matos wrote of the infamous political and personal struggles between Manuel do Rosario Pinto and Lucas Pereira d’Arújo e Azevedo as ‘disorders’, ‘seditions’, and ‘intrigues’ (1905, pp. 31–2). When King José I moved the colonial capital from São Tomé to Príncipe (Santo António) in 1755, the reason was ostensibly because Príncipe was healthier, however Matos commented that the healthy climate of Príncipe was exaggerated and that the real reason the king had to move the capital was because he was “attentive to what was present” (i.e. intrigues and disorder) in São Tomé (1905, p. 33). Matos implied that the relatively more serene political climate of Príncipe was conflated with a biologically less-deadly environment. For Matos the real problem was a lack of noble virtues on São Tomé going all the way back to the exodus of planters to Brazil, which was concentrated after Amador’s revolt in 1595 in which many sugar plantations were burned and the colonial government was severely threatened by the runaway slave uprising. Even Amador’s rebellion, for Matos, was a result of the disorders between the clergy and politicians because it occurred after a bishop was excommunicated, thus leaving a power vacuum that Amador seized upon. Matos seems to agree with foreign visitors to the island in the early 1600s who predicted the “total ruin” of the island after the planter nobility fled (1905, p. 11).

For Matos, the history of São Tomé could be described as filled with intrigue and disorder because the people themselves were filled with intrigue and disorder. It is unsurprising that Matos referred to the Angolares as “barbarous” given that they lived outside of the cities, were descendants of runaway slaves, and in the past had occasionally attacked plantations (1905, pp. 8–9). However, he frequently spoke of the Portuguese colonists as inherently bad as well. Bishop Luiz de Barros allegedly had “an indomitable spirit of intrigue” (1905, p. 12). For Matos, the actions of a person defined their character. Writing about the people of São Tomé he stated, “Some of them are descendants of the old nobility of São Tomé. We should not look to their appearance, but to their conduct and services; nature makes us equal, and [it is] merits that distinguish us.”<sup>5</sup> From this line it is evident that Matos was judging personal value on almost medieval ideals of the nobility as a virtuous example for society. But with the early aristocracy emigrating, Matos did not find very many people in the annals of São Tomé whose actions could be considered meritorious. Instead, an

<sup>5</sup> “Uns e outros são as ascendentes da antiga nobreza de S. Thomé. Não devemos olhar ao seu principio, mas ao seu comportamento, e serviços: a natureza fez nos iguaes, e os merecimentos são quem nos distinguem” (Matos, 1905, p. 3).

“arbitrary and despotic mode of governance” was preferred there while “royal service” and “zeal” were used as covers for all sorts of malice and abuses because “intrigue ruled all of the orders”(1905, pp. 24–5). The problem was that in the small space of São Tomé, where the high mortality rate frequently left seats of power (ecclesiastic, political) vacant the personal stakes for struggle were high. Matos wrote,

When I read the history of São Tomé, I almost always observe the fatal game of ‘Nation against nations’<sup>6</sup> or between regular and secular clergy. I see that they did not understand in that time (just as many still do not understand) the proper limits of jurisdictions because the governor wanted to be prelate, the clergy wanted to be governor, the treasurer wanted to be a soldier, and all of them wanted to be everything (1905, p. 17).<sup>7</sup>

## José Joaquim Lopes de Lima - Decadence

In 1844 the Portuguese politician and former interim Governor of Portuguese India José Joaquim Lopes de Lima published his expansive statistical analysis of the Portuguese colonies entitled *Ensaios Sobre a Statistica das Possessões Portuguezas...* (Hereafter *Ensaios*). Book 2, divided into two Parts, was devoted to São Tomé and Príncipe.<sup>8</sup> Lima’s text continues to be one of the most influential works about the island. Because the *Ensaios* was so widely published it was used as the basis for later writings, however Lima went into the archives to derive his material and for the recent material about São Tomé he adopted not only the facts but also the language of Matos. That is, Lima gave a very public form to Matos’s pessimistic expression.

However, not all of Lima’s negativity was borrowed from Matos. The Portuguese were under attack intellectually from other European powers (mostly Britain) who viewed them as irrational. Rochelle Pinto argued that, “While the production of racial categories had begun much earlier, the mid- to late-nineteenth century in Portugal saw these categories being rerouted through institutions, laws, and texts for the organization of information about the colonies that would respond to the European demand for the scientific and rational colonialism that Portugal was said to lack” (Pinto, 2010, p. 322). Pinto cited Lima’s work as the exemplar of this Portuguese attempt to carefully and rationally delineate racial and colonial power structures. The very title of his book, (translated as) “Essays about the Statistics of Portuguese Possessions,” suggests an extremely rational and categorizing attempt to marshal evidence about the Portu-

<sup>6</sup> “Nation against nations” is “Gens contra gentem” in Matos’s text (p. 17), which is a Latin line taken from the Old Testament and referenced by Jesus in the New Testament. (Isaiah 2:4 and Luke 21:10). The prophet Amos envisioned the end times as peaceful when the whole world would recognize the Jewish God as Lord and he would judge them all justly. Isaiah 2:4 (New International Version) “He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” From the Latin (Vulgate Bible) “et iudicabit gentes et arguet populos multos et conflabunt gladios suos in vomeres et lanceas suas in falces non levabit gens contra gentem gladium nec exercebuntur ultra ad proelium.” (Italics mine) The New Testament version is less optimistic. In it Jesus describes for the apostles the violent and tumultuous struggles during the end times before his final resurrection. “Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” From the Latin, “tunc dicebat illis surget gens contra gentem et regnum adversus regnum.” (Italics mine) Given Matos’s sensational language regarding the contentiousness of Santomean politics, a reference to apocalyptic conflict is unsurprising and seems more likely than a reference to a peaceful vision of humanity.

<sup>7</sup> “Quando leio as memorias de S. Thomé, quasi sempre observe o fatal jogo de ‘Gens contra Gentem’ ou seja entre ecclesiasticos, ou entre seculares. Parece que não se conheciam n’aquelle tempo (assim como ainda agora muitos não conhecem) os justos limites das jurisdicções, porque o governador, queria ser prelado, o cabido queria ser governador, o ouvidor queria ser soldado, e todos ells queriam ser tudo.”

<sup>8</sup> The other books included Cape Verde, Angola, Mozambique, Goa, and Timor/Macau and their surrounding territories.

guese colonies into a single, usable format.<sup>9</sup> According to Pinto this, “accumulation of information and its appropriate showcasing worked as a discursive defense against the decline in number and profitability of Portugal’s colonial holdings across the world” (p. 322). Thus, Lima’s pessimism was directed both at islanders, in the sense that he was involved in a project of creating and reifying racial boundaries where people living on São Tomé were less than the Portuguese, and at the Portuguese for losing profitable colonial possessions (i.e. Brazil in 1822) and following an irrational form of colonialism. In terms of the intellectual history of São Tomé, it is perhaps less important why Lima wrote a largely negative text and more important that he continued and solidified the long history of writing about the island focusing on concepts like irrationality (and its myriad synonyms), a sense of ‘lacking’ (culturally, economically...), and to these he added overtly racialized concepts of society and power.

Lima’s emphasis for writing a response to accusations of Portugal as backwards and irrational led him to focus heavily on getting the facts right. Freely admitting that he had not visited the island and understanding the lack of authority that entailed, Lima described the source material that guided him as, “carefully chosen official documents, narratives chosen from competent authors and from trustworthy visitors [to the island]” (Parte I p. 45). His data from the early period of Santomean history was based on the authority of well-established Portuguese historians and chroniclers like João de Barros, Garcia de Resende and Rui de Pina. For more specific data about the island itself Lima relied on the *Navegação de Lisboa à Ilha de São Tomé* by an anonymous Portuguese pilot (Caldeira, 2000) and documents held in the Livro da Ilha (“Book of the Island”) in the Torre de Tombo archives. Lima contradicted the data provided by a source if better data was available. For example, even though he frequently cited Matos’s “true and interesting” book that was “abundant with facts and news collected from good sources,” the dates, particularly for the 16<sup>th</sup> century, did not “match with those Torre de Tombo records, which I have faithfully followed” (1844, Parte I p. xiii).<sup>10</sup> Regarding the issue of King José I moving the colonial capital to Príncipe allegedly because it had a healthier climate (again, 1755), Lima followed the King’s assertion. He disputed those, like Matos, who claimed that Príncipe was not healthier than São Tomé and, in particular, refuted a publication from Madrid that claimed Príncipe was actually “more unhealthy” (1844, Parte I p. xiv).<sup>11</sup> What truly makes Lima’s analysis so strong, and why historians continue to rely on it, is his inclusion of statistical data and analysis of that data. His data, reprinted from the Imprensa Nacional, date mostly between the mid 1830s and 1842. His tables included statistical information about population<sup>12</sup>, a chronological list of governors (from 1586) and other officials (from 1600), military personnel, Bishops at the São Tomé See (since 1534), various economic charts relating mostly to imports/exports and total receipts, and a list of convicts (*degradados*) sent to São Tomé. His book also contains the most accurate

<sup>9</sup> The translation of the title provided is a literal translation. Perhaps a more proper translation into English would be, “Statistical Survey of the Portuguese Possessions” or “The State of the Portuguese Possessions” because Lima’s text is much more of a statistical analysis than what is usually considered as standard for an essay.

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 1 in Lima.

<sup>11</sup> See footnote 1 in Lima.

<sup>12</sup> Broken down by parishes/districts, gender, race, free/slave status.

map of São Tomé from that time.

Together with his reliance on authoritative sources and rational presentation of facts, Lima used carefully crafted language to construct a rational image of São Tomé. He knew the power of language dating back to his time as a pamphleteer in Brazil during the constitutional monarchy movement of the early 1800s (Schultz, 2000). During that movement the critics of absolutist government knew that in order to change government a new language was needed to shape public interest. Kirsten Schultz argued that for all of the pamphleteers, “To be a constitutionalist... was to speak as a constitutionalist” (p. 17). In Brazil Lima had argued that instead of a new political language, constitutionalists needed to reclaim the “genuine meaning” of political language that absolutist politicians had “transformed only to deceive” (Schultz, 2000, p. 18) To this end he created a dictionary, and a subsequent supplement to that dictionary, of the new rhetoric of liberalism that sought to reclaim both the original meaning of political words as well as the original human rights that absolutism corrupted.<sup>13</sup> Twenty-three years after his writing dictionaries Lima still claimed the “national interest” as his literary agenda while manipulating language to highlight the causes of social and economic decline in São Tomé (Lima, 1844, Parte II, p. 45).

With a better understanding of Lima’s manipulation of language, the double pessimism (about both São Tomé and Portugal) expressed in carefully chosen words in his text exhibits his idea of São Tomé as a colonial tragedy, the very opposite of ‘progress’ that was so important in the nineteenth century. São Tomé was a colony ruled by self-interested absolutists (*roça* owners – the local Camara) that had been abandoned by Portugal regardless of its earlier (and potential) wealth. In his words, “With arms crossed we [the Portuguese] have done nothing to enjoy what is left” of the economic potential of São Tomé (Lima, 1844, Parte II, p. 45). And, for Lima, the fortunes of São Tomé were tied to those of Portugal. He argued that with the death of King João III in 1557 (which began a tumultuous period for the Portuguese monarchs), the “decadence” of the island began and included pirate attacks and rebellions (1844, Parte II, p. 8). A “chain of sinister events” engulfed both the island and the monarchy in the early 1500s that led to the Portuguese crown being claimed by Spain in 1580 and from “opulence to the mean state” that now defined São Tomé (1844, Parte II, p. 9.). The power vacuum created by a foreign royal power and fleeing islander nobility left São Tomé to the “feuds and partialities of the overly powerful proprietors ... and the fatal inability of poorly chosen officials” (1844, Parte I, p. xii). Plantation owners were not the only absolutists. The Italian Capuchins established a house on the island in 1648 and had a “monarchic power”(1844, Parte I, p. xiv). Clearly, Lima’s constitutionalist stance led him to understand São Tomé as a colony abandoned by Portugal and left in control of persons with unchecked power.

Beyond the language and description of abandon and absolutist power, Lima also added perhaps the most widely repeated word in the historiography to the idea of São Tomé: decay (*decadencia*). Relying as he did on Cunha Matos, Lima observed plenty of ‘intrigues’ and ‘disorders.’ He wrote that what led King José to move the

<sup>13</sup> José Joaquim Lopes de Lima, *Diccionario Circundatico Ou Explicação Das Phrazes Dos Circundas [...]* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1821); José Joaquim Lopes de Lima, *Suplemento Ao Diccionario-Circundatico [...]* (Rio: Imprensa Nacional, 1821).

capital to Príncipe in 1753 was an “uninterrupted series of disorders (*desordens*), intrigues (*intrigas*), and confusions (*desconcertos*)” (1844, Parte I, p. xiv). But with his emphasis on statistical information, that is the quantifying of people and commerce, Lima could only note that São Tomé seemed to be in a perpetual state of being less than it had been. With the ambitious planter class leaving, São Tomé was a “country sick of itself, and headed to decay (*decadencia*)” (1844, Parte I, p. xii). He summarized the “single narrative” of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as “the progressive decadence of these islands” (1844, Parte I, p. xv). The sugar-plantation society that the first productive cultivators had built into opulence was abandoned by them following internal attacks and upheaval in Portugal, ruined by the absolutist and incompetent ruling elite<sup>14</sup> that filled the power vacuum, and unfortunately the “mean faculties of the poor cultivators”<sup>15</sup> determined that they could produce nothing more than basic foodstuffs to sell to passing (foreign) ships.

The emphasis on decadence in nineteenth-century Portuguese writing is typically discussed by scholars as relating to the latter decades particularly in works by Teófila Braga, Antero de Quental, and João Pedro de Oliveira Martins, but all of those men admittedly derived their perspective from Portugal’s greatest historian, Alexandre Herculano, who wrote fiction and non-fiction in the early nineteenth century that taught the Portuguese people about their own past with widely acclaimed literary style.<sup>16</sup> During Lima’s time there were others besides Herculano utilizing the language of decay notably the Prime Minister Sá de Bandeira who occasionally spoke of the African colonies as in decline due to corrupt colonial officials and Lima Leitão (doctor, politician, and writer) who argued colonial decline was due more to unjust colonial politics than corrupt people (Marques, 2006, p. 199). If decadence was a common theme, at least a current one, during the 1820s and 30s in Portugal it cannot be said that Lima invented the use of the term in reference to São Tomé. However, once he applied the term to the written idea about São Tomé it was followed almost without question by all later writers until the present time.<sup>17</sup>

So far this paper has focused mostly on how the Matos and Lima shared a similarly pessimistic view of the Santomean past and present, however by the time that Lima was writing in 1844 race was becoming an increasingly rigidified and political issue so that his emphasis on decadence was expressed in racial terms that were not as overtly prevalent in Matos’s work. In 1815 Matos certainly understood society as separated into social groups, and skin color had long been noted in Portuguese texts. In this class structure, the markers of social stratification were divided along lines of merit, not race (at least not ostensibly). So, as quoted above, Matos could argue that, “nature makes us equal, and [it is] merits that distinguish us.” The intrigues and disorders on São Tomé were due to individual actions and personal moral failings.

<sup>14</sup> Lima identified the various groups in this elite as the ecclesiastical, colonial, and local (*Senado da Camara*) officials calling them an “oligarchy of various colors, that has ruled with the flame of Discord the way Rome maintains itself with the flame of the Vestments” (Lima, Parte I, p. xiv).

<sup>15</sup> Here the ‘poor cultivators’ are clearly the Forros – descendants of slaves freed in the early 1500s (Lima, 1844, Parte I, p. xvi).

<sup>16</sup> In fact, probably the most famous work on Portuguese decadence from the time was Quental’s paper “Causas da Decadência dos Povos Peninsulares,” (24 May 1871) delivered at the famous Lisbon Conference, which sought to systemize many of Herculano’s theses.

<sup>17</sup> One example will suffice. Writing about the Portuguese-British agreement to end slaving, the last lucrative economy in São Tomé, Neuma Brilhante recently surmised that the 1815 law “would seal the complete decadence of the island” (Brilhante, 2009, p. 93). “A proibição do tráfico estabelecida em 1815 selaria a decadência completa da ilha.”



However, Lima argued in 1844 that the decadence of São Tomé was linked inherently to humans with an understanding of a rigid biological hierarchy that indicated intelligence and social utility. Lima felt that a general pattern of darkened skin tone on São Tomé was reflective of increasing social decay. “It is true however, that since the beginning of the 18th century (at least) there has been a progressive diminishing (and more noticeably in the 19th century) not only of the white population, but also the creole (*parda*) population, which shows clearly the decadence of the country and the lack (*falta*) of the necessary mixing of the races...”<sup>18</sup> The black Forros, members of a group of African slaves that had been freed in the early 1500s and were Portuguese citizens, needed to be replaced by a “race less indolent and corrupt,” even if that meant increasing the number of Portuguese convicts on the island (Parte I, p. 85).<sup>19</sup> Apparently for Lima any white persons, even criminals, who could help to lighten the skin tone of children in São Tomé, might thereby reverse the descent into decadence. Though modern scholarship is very attuned to the historical process of ‘othering’ latent in colonialism, the Portuguese in the early 1800s were a special case because they essentially considered themselves as the ‘others’ to the British. Given the context in which both men lived, when Portugal was faced with the loss of Brazil and pressure from the British to suppress the slave trade, it is unsurprising that both men saw ruin and decay in the island, Matos while living in Príncipe and Lima when he studied the Lisbon archives and official statistics.

## Conclusion – “São Tomé”

This paper claims to demonstrate links between Matos’ and Lima’s writings and identity formation. But, beyond linking the racialization of politics to literature, little about a specific identity has been said. Which identity was being created in these texts? Forro identity, Angolares identity, creole identity, and even local Portuguese identity were all described. Local food and ritual customs (among other cultural activities) for the various groups were noted by both Matos and Lima, and yet they do not appear here. What this paper, hopefully, has demonstrated is that while Matos and Lima were explicitly describing social life on the island between various groups, they were also creating another category for outside audiences. Their descriptions of “São Tomé” implied a coherency that would not have made any sense to islanders involved in the contentions. Only in a single written work, read by outsiders with virtually no context about the island, could all of those social conflicts be understood as part of a unified society. In fact, many comments by the authors themselves suggest that the idea of one society was incorrect. They both emphasized that large planters lorded over their own lands like tyrants or “little princes” – hardly a cohesive image of society even among those who considered themselves Portuguese. In simpler terms, Matos and Lima witnessed (in person or in archives) island societies, but they wrote

<sup>18</sup> “É certo porém, que desde o principio do seculo 18 (pelo menos) se tem ali observado uma diminuição progressiva (e mais sensivel no seculo 19) não só da população branca, como tambem da população parda, o que demonstra evidentemente a decadencia do paiz, e a falta do tão necessario cruzamento das raças...” (Lima, 1844, Parte I p. 84).

<sup>19</sup> Lima also called for *degradados* to be sent from his former colonial post, Goa. Little evidence needs to be provided about how Europeans viewed Africans negatively. For another example by Lima, see his descriptions of the “barbarous” peoples of Dahomey (p. 88-9).

about an island society. The intellectual coherency of “São Tomé,” and by extension a Santomean identity, were created in their earliest widely publicized forms by Matos and Lima. Whether the pessimism about the island came from locals or from Portuguese visitors, the idea of São Tomé and local society was to be burdened with the language of intrigue, disorder and decay for over century.

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