
Rafaela Jobbitt*

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**Forced Labour, Public
Hygiene and the
Degredados of S.Tomé in the
Late Nineteenth Century**



CENTRO DE ESTUDOS AFRICANOS
U N I V E R S I D A D E D O P O R T O



Em 1877, foi publicado um livro, em Lisboa, sobre a colónia portuguesa de São Tomé e Príncipe. O seu autor era Manuel Ferreira Ribeiro, um médico com opiniões controversas sobre os habitantes dessa colónia, em particular sobre os brancos, um grupo que incluía igualmente os degredados, indivíduos que tinham sido acusados de cometer crimes e cujas sentenças incluíam muitas vezes trabalho correcional. Este artigo começa por abordar as opiniões do médico sobre os degredados portugueses que ele via como indivíduos que precisavam tanto de reabilitação física como moral. Para ele, a reabilitação através do trabalho não só transformaria os degredados numa força laboral activa, da qual as ilhas precisavam, mas também os transformaria em exemplos ideais de “bons” europeus numa colónia onde os africanos e os mestiços eram dominantes. Ao explorar o discurso deste médico tanto à luz das políticas relacionadas com o trabalho forçado na colónia como das práticas e ideias médicas da altura, este artigo pretende dar uma nova perspectiva sobre este grupo controverso da sociedade santomense durante as últimas décadas do século XIX. Palavras-chave: degredados, trabalho forçado, higiene pública, medicina colonial.

In 1877, a book was published in Lisbon about the Portuguese colony of São Tomé e Príncipe. Its author was Manuel Ferreira Ribeiro, a doctor who expressed thought-provoking opinions about the inhabitants of this colony, in particular about the whites, a group that also included the degredados, individuals who had been accused of committing crimes and whose sentences often included correctional labour.

This paper begins by addressing the doctor's opinions about the Portuguese degredados, whom he saw as individuals in need of both physical and moral rehabilitation. To him, rehabilitation through labour would not only transform the degredados into an able-bodied labour force which the islands needed, but would also transform them into ideal examples of “good” Europeans in a colony where Africans and mixed-blood individuals were numerically dominant. Exploring the doctor's discourse in light both of policies regarding coerced labour in the colony, as well as the medical ideas and practices of the time, the paper aims to shed new light on this controversial group within Santomean society during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: degredados, forced labour, public hygiene, colonial medicine.



In a lengthy report published in Lisbon in 1877, the physician Manuel Ferreira Ribeiro reflected on the state of public health on the Portuguese island colony of São Tomé and Príncipe.¹ Having worked closely with the colony's Board of Health for nearly two decades, Ribeiro lamented the fact that recommendations he and other doctors had made over the years had failed to be implemented fully, and had yet to produce any tangible results. Insisting that the "physical" and "moral" conditions of the inhabitants had instead deteriorated, Ribeiro renewed his calls for a truly comprehensive programme of public hygiene. Such a programme, he argued, would be necessary in order to transform São Tomé and Príncipe into a truly "modern," and ultimately profitable, plantation colony.

Based on a single visit to São Tomé and Príncipe in 1872, Ribeiro's observations are filled with criticisms about the manifest "backwardness" of the islands, a problem which he attributed to two main causes. The first of these causes, he argued, resulted from the insignificant presence of Portuguese settlers in the colony, which he ascribed not only to the lack of large-scale immigration of whites to São Tomé and Príncipe, but also to the high mortality and low fertility rates that seemed to affect the population of the colony in general, and the white settlers in particular.² The second cause had to do with the doctor's opinion that the local inhabitants of the colony did not manifest any willingness to work. A "love for work," Ribeiro stressed, was essential if São Tomé and Príncipe were to fulfill their potential as a prosperous plantation colony. Given the ideas about modern colonization existing in Europe and in the colonies towards the end of the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that this Portuguese doctor linked white immigration with visions of prosperity in São Tomé and Príncipe. Furthermore, he also makes a connection be-

tween Santomeans' lack of desire to work and both the low fertility and high mortality rates which existed in the colony.³ In order to solve these problems, Ribeiro maintained, it was necessary for the colonial authorities of São Tomé and Príncipe to succeed in obtaining the "collaboration" of the local inhabitants who had to be "taught" the virtues of labour. Unfortunately, he not only failed to specify which inhabitants he was in fact referring to, but he also did not elaborate on the means that the authorities should use in order to secure this "collaboration" of the local population of the colony.

What Ribeiro does dwell on in some detail in his report, however, is what work he considered unsuitable for whites who lived in tropical regions like São Tomé and Príncipe. It was his belief that whites should not perform work outdoors "...exposed to the sun and the weather," and that those who did so were placing their health "at risk, even to the point of dying."⁴ Given the doctor's opinions about the type of work that he considered unsuitable for whites, his views about the Portuguese *degradados*, or convicts, of São Tomé seem particularly interesting. This is because, despite being white, the *degradados* were often recruited by the colonial authorities to perform harsh physical work, which, according to Ribeiro, was the cause of the high mortality rate among the convict segment of the population of São Tomé. The fact that they were convicts who had been exiled to São Tomé, instead of voluntary immigrants, placed them in a position where they were not free to offer their services to employers as they wished, and indeed only in some cases had *degradados* succeeded in becoming independent workers. In this sense, they had more in common with the Africans who had been recruited forcibly to come and work in the colony than with the ordinary white settlers. And it was precisely this servile



status of the *degredado* in a slave colony that caused some perplexity to Ribeiro.

The purpose of this paper is to use the doctor's manuscript as a means to analyze the intersection of forced labour, public hygiene and the role of the *degredados* in Santomean society in the 1860s and 1870s. During much of this period, the colonial authorities viewed the convict population as serving a double purpose in colonial São Tomé – contributing to the increase of the number of whites in the colony and providing a much-needed labour force, which explains the calls for greater numbers of *degredados* to settle in the colony in the 1860s and 1870s. The goal of this paper is to see how these objectives were present in particular policies that were proposed and adopted during this period, aimed at making the *degredados* into a more efficient labour force in the colony, as well as into respectable white settlers. If successful, this integration would serve the double purpose of bolstering the presence of the Portuguese in this decidedly "African" colony, and of contributing to the colony's development.⁵

Despite the fact that this paper focuses on the convicts of São Tomé in the late nineteenth century, the colony in fact had a long history of receiving convicts who had been banished from Portugal. Indeed, as Timothy Coates suggests, the colony must be included in any study that looks at the topic of exile in the former Portuguese empire.⁶ Coates suggests that the exile or banishment of undesirable individuals from Portugal was, from the beginning of the Portuguese overseas expansion, a tool of colonization, particularly in areas where the Portuguese presence was negligible. When referring to the seventeenth century, for example, Coates maintains that, "...exile was used as a tool for colonization, to provide manpower where free immigration could not."⁷ When referring to São Tomé and Príncipe in particular,

he states that most histories that have been written about the colony omit the fact that "the *degredados* provided the vast majority – if not 90 to 95 percent – of its European population during early modern times."⁸ In fact, so pervasive was the identification of São Tomé and Príncipe with the presence of *degredados*, that the colony became known as an ideal location for those who had been accused of committing the most serious crimes, a "label that stuck throughout the early modern period and well into the nineteenth century." As a consequence, Coates suggests, "...of all of Portugal's overseas colonies, São Tomé should be the one most closely identified with forced exile."⁹

But once in São Tomé, maintains Coates, the *degredados* were given relative freedom since they could move about freely in the colony, and in some cases were even granted the right to travel abroad, such as to the Mina Coast, where they were allowed to conduct slave raids, or even to Portugal, where they could go for a limited period of time (not exceeding four months).¹⁰ However, this freedom of movement seems to have been progressively curtailed until, by the seventeenth century, those who were apprehended after having left São Tomé and Príncipe could see the length of their sentences doubled.¹¹ Coates asks whether this tendency to restrict the freedom of movement of the *degredados* can be attributed to the possibility that some, if not many, of those who were able to leave the colony never returned to it.¹² Another restriction that he mentions regarding the exiled convicts concerns their ability to assume positions in public office in the colony. Normally, they would be barred from doing so, but in the case of São Tomé it seems as if this restriction was never applied very strictly, since staff shortages in São Tomé's town hall, for example, were frequently so acute that *degredados* were employed there.¹³

As Augusto Nascimento points out, from the



middle of the nineteenth century onwards, the demand for *degredados* grew in São Tomé and Príncipe as the colony experienced great demographic growth, resulting primarily from the influx of African slaves. Throughout this period and into the 1860s, Nascimento maintains, the *degredados* continued to be in great demand as skilled workers, something that is often reflected in the requests that Governors made for greater numbers of convicts.¹⁴ But the demand for *degredados* was not only tied to the colony's labour needs. As was the case with earlier periods of the colonization of São Tomé and Príncipe, the presence of exiled convicts can also be attributed to the Portuguese Crown's desire to strengthen the Portuguese presence in the colony.¹⁵ By the 1870s, the need for convict labour had actually intensified, as the efforts to develop programmes of public works and to speed colonization became a priority for the colonial authorities.¹⁶ In light of this, the influx of *degredados* during this period must be seen in relation to the particular labour needs of the colonial government. As Timothy Coates argues, this "Portuguese system of forced and state-sponsored colonization placed the government (and not private contractors) at the center."¹⁷ This is not to say that only the state used convict labour. However, unlike the African plantation labourers who came to São Tomé and Príncipe to work mostly in the privately-owned plantations, the recruitment of *degredados* was state-managed and state-sponsored, even though there were cases where *degredados* found themselves working for private employers. When Ribeiro wrote about the "wretched" and "miserable" *degredados*, he was mainly talking about those who were employed in the capital, São Tomé, where they were used in cleaning duties, or where they served as helpers in the customs house and in the hospital.¹⁸ In addition, they were used as soldiers in the

colony until at least the third quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ The association between the *degredados* and ordinary soldiers was in fact not new. As Timothy Coates demonstrates, in earlier periods of Portuguese expansion the *degredado* was often described as a soldier, instead of an exile, convict or criminal, even before he left Portugal.²⁰ In the case of São Tomé, this blurring of the convict with the soldier appears to have been a response to the shortage of European soldiers in the colony, especially during times of military crises, such as the first half of the seventeenth century, when the Dutch posed a threat to the islands.²¹ The recruitment of *degredados* during the period covered by this paper raises questions concerning the effectiveness of such a military force and, given that during this time their presence in São Tomé was increasingly seen as a destabilizing factor, it also raises the issue of the concern with public order, which might explain the measures adopted by the authorities in order to restrict their freedom of movement in the colony.²²

In addition to working for the state, the *degredados* were also often hired by planters, who used them as part of their supervisory forces on plantations.²³ In fact, the plantations seemed to offer a degree of social mobility for the *degredados* who, in some cases, succeeded in ascending to managerial positions. During the mid-1870s, however, the plantations in São Tomé and Príncipe were undergoing a process of re-adjustment, due to the legislation that had been adopted to emancipate the slaves. Emancipation had caused the widespread exodus of slaves from the plantations, raising the specter of social turmoil. But to what extent did these changes affect the *degredados*? As Nascimento suggests, instead of stopping the influx of convicts into São Tomé, the colonial authorities reacted by adopting measures designed to increase the level surveillance and



control over them, as well as policies aimed at making better use of convict labour.²⁴

Not surprisingly, Ribeiro's suggestions regarding the "physical" and "moral" rehabilitation of the *degradados* are very similar to the goals set out by the colonial authorities regarding the convicts. In terms of their physical "rehabilitation," the doctor made a number of suggestions ranging from the amount and type of food that the *degradados* should be fed, to how they were housed and what clothes they should wear. Ribeiro stated that his concern was first and foremost to contribute to a decrease in the incidences of disease and mortality among the convicts. But he also justified these improvements to the convicts' diet and housing as an investment on the part of the state, which would be able to reap the financial benefits at a later date from having a much healthier and, therefore more efficient, labour force.²⁵ As for the recommendations concerning the work that they performed, while Ribeiro argued that the *degradados* should become more efficient workers, he also emphasized that they should be barred from performing certain tasks, especially those that exposed them to the harsh tropical climate of the colony. For example, he recommended that the *degradados* who worked in cleaning the city of São Tomé be replaced by a group of fifty "able-bodied natives" recruited specifically for that purpose.²⁶ He also stated that in no circumstances should Europeans engage in what he referred to as "agricultural" work,²⁷ although he later clarified this point when he argued that all the inhabitants of the colony should acquire a "love" for the soil, a love that would result in the proliferation of vegetable gardens and orchards throughout the colony.²⁸

As for the "moral" rehabilitation of the *degradados*, Ribeiro supported the idea of segregating them from other groups of people in the colony. For example, he urged the authorities to seg-

regate the *degradados* from Africans in the prisons. While Africans should occupy the ground floor of the prisons, he stated, the *degradados* should be restricted to the top floor, where he deemed the air to be "better," although he also maintained that this recommendation was largely aimed at preventing the "corruption" and "vices" that would result from the mixing of people of different racial backgrounds in the prisons.²⁹ In addition, Ribeiro applauded the decision made in 1872 to separate the *degradados* from ordinary soldiers in the military barracks.³⁰ This last suggestion raises interesting questions about the possible motivations that underpin his calls for the "moral" rehabilitation of the convicts. Did Ribeiro's concern with the segregation of the *degradados* have more to do with his ideas about their "moral" rehabilitation, or with the need to control them, out of fear that their lack of discipline might influence ordinary soldiers? This fear might in fact have been a main motivating factor, since Ribeiro argued that the soldiers should not have to co-exist with such an "unfortunate school of morality," which the *degradados* represented.³¹ As Peter Beattie argues in the case of Brazil, in colonial times the term *soldado* (private) was used as a euphemism for an exiled convict from abroad, or simply an unmarried man.³² In an article entitled "The House, The Street, and the Barracks: Reform and Honorable Masculine Social Space in Brazil, 1864-1945," Beattie describes how military barracks attracted the attention of doctors in Brazil, who were concerned with the spread of venereal diseases among the soldier/convict population.³³ As he suggests, the army was actually far from being an honourable profession for a man, since only married heads of households were considered "honorable" men in Brazilian society. Beattie gives the example of a Brazilian legislator who argued that the barracks corrupted honest workers who, when exposed "to life in the



barracks, do not return to work or to the countryside, but stay in the cities, becoming not producers but consumers..."³⁴

Beattie's descriptions of attitudes towards military service in Brazil has interesting parallels with the situation in São Tomé and Príncipe, where the blurring of soldiers and *degradados* was also a reality towards the end the nineteenth century. In an attempt to define the role of the *degradado* of São Tomé more clearly, by making their condition in the colony correspond to their situation as convicts in need of rehabilitation, the authorities were perhaps also concerned with the "rehabilitation" of the image of the ordinary soldier.

The discourse advocating the need to rehabilitate the *degradados* also reflected the authorities' concern with the image of Europeaness that the convicts presented in the colony. Ribeiro was aware of this negative image when he suggested, for example, that the *degradados* should not be allowed to lie down on the ground outside, or that they should be properly clothed.³⁵ According to Augusto Nascimento, Governor Gregório José Ribeiro was concerned with the image of the *degradados* even though, as Nascimento suggests, he unfortunately failed to realize that the forced recruitment of the convicts in itself projected a negative image of the Europeans to non-Europeans.³⁶

It was perhaps due to the problematic presence of the *degradados* in the colony then, that Ribeiro enthusiastically supported the plan to take segregation a step further and to create a penal colony in which to house them. According to Augusto Nascimento, in 1873, legislation had put into place a commission with the goal of studying the possibility of creating a penal colony on the state-owned António Vaz plantation in São Tomé.³⁷ Governor Gregório José Ribeiro favoured such a plan, which he saw as essential in moulding the *degradados* into an effective labour force.³⁸ When referring

to the idea of the penal colony, Ribeiro mentions having made a number of suggestions concerning the creation of "model" farms for convicts, which he included in reports that he presented to the colonial authorities in 1869 and in 1871/72.³⁹ He in fact saw himself playing a significant role in these projects since, as he put it, the penal colony had to be built according to the rules of modern colonial hygiene.⁴⁰ For example, the fact that the António Vaz plantation was located at a higher altitude in São Tomé meant that the doctor approved of the choice of location, since he believed that Europeans should only reside in the cooler areas situated in higher altitudes on the island.⁴¹ Even though this project for the creation of a penal colony in São Tomé was not implemented, the plan itself underscores the degree to which it can be seen as a social experiment. For instance, given Ribeiro's views about the redemptive nature of "agricultural" work, his suggestion that the penal colony should have the vegetable gardens and orchards that he so frequently mentions in his report points to desire to put such an experiment to the test. He justifies the existence of vegetable gardens in practical terms by stating that they would help to meet the food needs of the colony, and perhaps even to generate enough surplus for export purposes. But, in addition, he also argues that the nature of the agricultural work itself would transform the *degradados* into future hard-working and respectable colonists.⁴² According to Augusto Nascimento, the project for the creation of the penal colony foresaw that the colonial state would provide the rehabilitated *degradados* (especially those with families) with the financial assistance, land, and tools they needed in order to become independent farmers. If, after a certain period of time, they managed to successfully repay the initial investment that the state had made in setting them up as farmers, and if the land



they had been granted initially was deemed cultivated, then the *degradado* would be considered the owner of the land.⁴³

The initial proposal for the creation of a penal colony in São Tomé failed to take effect, and so would a second project, proposed in 1879-80, one which foresaw the creation of a colony on Príncipe.⁴⁴ In reality, such projects failed to materialize in part due to practical reasons. It would, after all, be difficult to house such a large number of people, especially if the human and financial resources needed to undertake such projects were not available. One of the aspects that contributed to the difficulties experienced in creating a penal colony had to do with the choice of an adequate site. Interestingly, a later Governor of the colony, Melo e Almada, justified his opinion against the creation of a penal colony on Príncipe on the grounds that, for health reasons, it would be difficult to locate a proper site for such a colony.⁴⁵ Perhaps officials like Melo e Almada also came to the realization that, for all intents and purposes, the penal colony would in fact be a prison where the convicts' movements would be restricted and where they would be subject to constant supervision, which would make the costs of maintaining such a prison high, and the chances of achieving the rehabilitation of the convicts low. What people like Ribeiro also failed to realize when they lent their support to the idea of the penal colony was that the *degradados* were individuals with free will, capable of mounting a certain degree of resistance to the authorities. Their supposed transformation into respectable settlers was not compatible with the measures that restricted their freedom of movement or, for that matter, with those that were designed to extract more "efficient" labour from them. Instead, from the adoption of these measures in the mid-1870s, the authorities were faced with the problem of how to deal with the mounting incidences of

escape of convicts from the colony.⁴⁶

But the failure of these projects was not only due to practical reasons. This lack of success also reflected the existence in São Tomé and Príncipe of a certain degree of discomfort with regard to the presence of convicts in the colony, as well as with the work they performed, especially in the aftermath of the adoption of legislation designed to abolish slavery.⁴⁷ This shift in the discourse surrounding convict labour in the colony also reflected the belief that São Tomé and Príncipe needed to attract white wage labourers instead of convict labour, even though such a discourse had its opponents, including the planters of São Tomé and Príncipe who often experienced economic difficulties and who believed that their interests would best be served by the perpetuation of servile labour.⁴⁸

The failure of the integration of the *degradados* into Santomean society at the end of the nineteenth century raises many questions. How, for example, did the case of São Tomé compare to attempts by other European powers to create penal colonies during this period?⁴⁹ To what extent, moreover, did the *degradados* of São Tomé vary from those convicts exiled to other Portuguese colonies? Were the worst convicts in fact sent to São Tomé during the end of the nineteenth century, instead of to other colonies? Were the calls for the use of convicts as colonizers strongest in colonies like São Tomé and Príncipe, where the presence of whites was minimal? Other questions in need of further study include the opinions for and against the deportation of convicts to the colonies in the late nineteenth century, and the extent to which such attitudes and opinions reflected a shift in the beliefs regarding convicts and convict labour in Portugal itself. Could this shift perhaps be attributed instead to the difficulties experienced when trying to integrate and control these individuals in the colonies?



Other possibilities for further research include a comparison between the *degredados* and other “marginalized” groups of people in the colonies, including non-white emancipated slaves and free people of colour. How did the *degredados* interact with such groups? Did this interaction assume forms of cooperation, for example, when trying to escape? Was there also cooperation in other less overt forms of resistance? How did the forms of resistance differ according to gender? When looking at the female convicts or *degredadas*, some of the questions that emerge concern, for example, the type of work they did in comparison to male convicts, and the reasons why there was such a gender imbalance in terms of the convict population of the islands.

My purpose in this paper was not only to draw attention to the issue of convict labour in São Tomé, but also to look at the degree to which the medical opinions expressed by someone like Ribeiro might have influenced the decisions that were made by the authorities regarding the *degredados* who were forced to settle in the colony during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But I can only speculate as to the extent of the doctor’s influence, since he himself lamented the fact the only a few of the recommendations that he and other doctors had made to colonial officials over the years had met with any success at all.⁵⁰ Despite this, Ribeiro continued to be committed to what he described as the “development” and “progress” of the colony. Furthermore, his views, which go far beyond his expertise as a doctor, serve to underscore Martin Shapiro’s opinion that medical care functioned as an instrument of colonization and domination in the Portuguese empire, “facilitating penetration of the colonies, control of the population and economic development.”⁵¹ Ribeiro is perhaps then a good illustration of the role that doctors played in the colonies. His suggestions

on how to improve the “physical” and “moral” conditions of the *degredados* of São Tomé show how his expertise could be compatible with the wider discourse existing in Portugal and in the colonies, which called for the colonies to be “developed” and for Portugal to assume its rightful place among Europe’s “modern” colonial powers.



Notas

*York University

¹The report is entitled *A Província de S.Tomé e Príncipe e Suas Dependências: A Salubridade e Insalubridade Relativa às Províncias do Brasil, das Colónias de Portugal e de Outras Nações da Europa* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1877).

² With regard to the problem of immigration, the doctor called for the Portuguese government to undertake energetic measures in order to encourage the settlement of whites in the colony, by looking for potential immigrants not only in Portugal and in the islands of Madeira and the Azores, but in Brazil and in other parts of the world. As for the low fertility and high mortality rates, Ribeiro maintained that it was the duty of health professionals like himself to find cures for the tropical diseases that victimized so many of the white colonists who settled there, and to advise people in São Tomé and Príncipe on how to lead "healthy" lives. Even though Ribeiro makes dire predictions concerning the decrease of the white population of São Tomé and Príncipe, at the time his report was published the colony's population was in fact increasing dramatically, primarily due to the influx of African slaves, and later contract labourers, to work mostly on the islands' expanding coffee and cocoa plantations. But the presence of these labourers in the colony only seemed to accentuate its decidedly "African" character, a trend that Ribeiro wished to see reversed. For statistics on the evolution of the number of whites in the colony see Augusto Nascimento, "Recolonização, Mutações Demográficas e Afluxo de *Degredados* a S.Tomé no Século XIX," in *História das Ilhas Atlânticas*, vol. 2 (Funchal: Centro de Estudos

de História do Atlântico, 1997): 413-432.

³ Manuel Ferreira Ribeiro, *A Província de S.Tomé e Príncipe e Suas Dependências*, 434.

⁴ Ibid., 546.

⁵ It must be said that attitudes towards the *degre-dados* of São Tomé changed throughout this latter part of the nineteenth century. If during the 1860s the authorities believed that the convicts could be successfully integrated into the colony, where their labour was in great demand, the failure of several projects designed to achieve this integration eventually made them believe that it was necessary to put a stop to the influx of *degre-dados* into São Tomé, a view that is reflected in the decree approved on December 27, 1881, prohibiting the deportation of *degre-dados* into S.Tomé. For the evolution in the official attitudes towards the *degre-dados* of São Tomé, see Augusto Nascimento, "Recolonização, Mutações Demográficas e Afluxo de *Degredados* a S.Tomé no Século XIX," 413-432.

⁶ Timothy J. Coates, *Convicts and Orphans: Forced and State-Sponsored Colonizers in the Portuguese Empire, 1550-1755* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2001), XI.

⁷ Ibid., 116.

⁸ Ibid., XVIII.

⁹ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰ Interestingly, Manuel Ferreira Ribeiro states that it would be beneficial for the white settlers of São Tomé and Príncipe to return to Portugal every three years for six months, so that they could recover from the harsh tropical climate. However, he did not include the *degre-dados* in this category. In *A Província de S.Tomé e Príncipe e Suas Dependências*, 536.

¹¹ Timothy J. Coates, *Convicts and Orphans:*



Forced and State-Sponsored Colonizers in the Portuguese Empire, 1550-1755, 53.

¹².Ibid.

¹³.Ibid., 35.

¹⁴.Augusto Nascimento, "Recolonização, Mutações Demográficas e Afluxo de *Degredados* a S.Tomé no Século XIX," 421.

¹⁵.As Augusto Nascimento states, the decree approved on December 9, 1869 concerning the penal colonies in the Portuguese empire linked colonization with *degreto*. Ibid., 416.

¹⁶.Ibid., 422.

¹⁷.Timothy J. Coates, *Convicts and Orphans: Forced and State-Sponsored Colonizers in the Portuguese Empire, 1550-1755*, 187.

¹⁸.The *degredados* were also hired by employers in the city as domestic servants and indeed Nascimento argues that their status as domestic servants had something in common with domestic slavery. In "Recolonização, Mutações Demográficas e Afluxo de *Degredados* a S.Tomé no Século XIX," 418-419.

¹⁹.Ibid., 416.

²⁰.Timothy J. Coates, *Convicts and Orphans: Forced and State-Sponsored Colonizers in the Portuguese Empire, 1550-1755*, 65.

²¹.Ibid., 77.

²².This concern with restricting their freedom could be tied to the measures that were adopted, for example, with regard to the forcible recruitment of *degredados* who did not find employment and who were therefore regarded as "vagrants" by the authorities. There is a similarity between the vagrancy stipulations affecting the convicts in São Tomé, and those that were applicable to emancipated slaves who, according to legislation approved in 1878, would be considered vagrants if they did not find employment in a period of up to fifteen days, after which they could also be forcibly recruited by the state. For information on the labour legislation adopted in Portugal with regard to the African colonies during the third

quarter of the nineteenth century see Adelino Torres, "Legislação do Trabalho nas Colónias Africanas no 3º Quartel do Século XIX: Razões do Fracasso da Política Liberal Portuguesa," in *Actas da 1ª Reunião Internacional de História de África: Relação Europa-África no 3º Quartel do Século XIX* (Lisbon: Instituto de Investigação Científica e Tropical, 1989): 65-80.

²³.According to Augusto Nascimento, supervisory work on the plantations was a type of work normally rejected by the local free inhabitants of the colony. Furthermore, he suggests that the existence of racial solidarity between the *degredados* and the planters played a role in the latter's preference for *degredados*. In "Recolonização, Mutações Demográficas e Afluxo de *Degredados* a S.Tomé no Século XIX," 420.

²⁴.Even so, the events of 1875 caused a decline in the influx of *degredados* into São Tomé, perhaps motivated by fears concerning public order. Whereas 118 *degredados* came into the colony in 1875, in 1876 that number dropped to 47, even though it would rise again to 118 in 1877. Ibid., 422, 415.

²⁵.Manuel Ferreira Ribeiro, *A Província de S.Tomé e Príncipe e Suas Dependências*, 436-437.

²⁶.Ibid., 490.

²⁷.Ibid., 535.

²⁸.Ibid., 433. This view appears to have derived in large part from the frequent comparisons he makes between Portugal and São Tomé and Príncipe. He often mentions that people in Portugal loved to plant vegetable gardens and orchards, which to him formed the basis for the economic survival of the family unit. He associates the existence of small family-owned and family-worked plots of land with not only the family's economic survival, but also with the level of "morality" and "civilization" in society, since the plots of land were necessary in order to constitute villages. Contrary to what he saw in Portugal, Ribeiro lamented the fact that the



local inhabitants in São Tomé and Príncipe did not plant gardens, but instead allowed vegetation to grow wild, something that he attributed to their "laziness" and "immorality." But he also links the wildness of the vegetation with the "unhealthiness" of the colony and in order to transform São Tomé and Príncipe into a healthier environment, it was necessary to destroy the wild vegetation, replacing it with well-cultivated plots of land. Ribeiro returns to the idea of the plot of land and its "therapeutic" nature time and again in his report, for example, when he recommends that vegetable gardens should be created around the hospital of São Tomé, so that patients there could benefit from working in them, or when he mentions that the penal colony that was supposed to be created in order to house the *degradados* should also have vegetable gardens and orchards. In Manuel Ferreira Ribeiro, *A Província de S.Tomé e Príncipe e Suas Dependências*, 47, 66, 350.

²⁹.Ibid., 408.

³⁰.Interestingly, Ribeiro spends some time describing the decayed condition of buildings such as the barracks in São Tomé. In his opinion, this state of decay depicted a very negative image of the Portuguese as colonizers, and he defended the urgent need to restore many of the colony's public buildings according to the "rules of modern colonialism" and public hygiene since, in his opinion, buildings such as prisons, schools, and hospitals reflected "the level of morality, of civilization, and of progress" in society." Ibid., 387, 404-405.

³¹.Ibid., 436.

³².Peter Beattie, "The House, The Street, and the Barracks: Reform and Honorable Masculine Social Space in Brazil, 1864-1945," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 76/3 (August 1996): 441, 439-473.

³³.Ibid., 442.

³⁴.Ibid., 446.

³⁵.Manuel Ferreira Ribeiro, *A Província de*

S.Tomé e Príncipe e Suas Dependências, 436-437.

³⁶.Augusto Nascimento, "Recolonização, Mutações Demográficas e Afluxo de *Degradados* a S.Tomé no Século XIX," 423.

³⁷.Ibid.

³⁸.Ibid., 422.

³⁹.Manuel Ferreira Ribeiro, *A Província de S.Tomé e Príncipe e Suas Dependências*, 534.

⁴⁰.Ibid., 404.

⁴¹.Ibid., 310.

⁴².Ibid., 437.

⁴³.Augusto Nascimento, "Recolonização, Mutações Demográficas e Afluxo de *Degradados* a S.Tomé no Século XIX," 425.

⁴⁴.Ibid., 424.

⁴⁵.Ibid., 425.

⁴⁶.Ibid., 419, 433. Overall, Nascimento argues that the plans to rehabilitate the *degradados* failed because they did not take into account that the convicts were a "fluctuating" group of people, who either escaped or left the colony once they had served their sentences.

⁴⁷.Ibid., 425. The aspect of the legislation adopted in Portugal regarding labour in Africa seems particularly interesting, since scholars have debated whether or not this legislation was in fact designed to abolish slavery, or if it was simply meant to appear to do so, while perpetuating forms of forced labour in Africa. For instance, Adelino Torres argues that even though the 1878 regulations allowed for forms of forced and coercive labour practices to continue to exist in the Portuguese colonies in Africa, this does not mean that such laws were devoid of any effectiveness. The legislation that was adopted in fact disturbed certain "customs" that had prevailed in the relations between masters and slaves in Africa until this period. For instance, he states that if a more scrupulous curator decided to apply the legislation, this would affect those who could not or did not want to change the manner in which they con-



ceived of the relationship between master and slave, and the way in which they were used to doing things in Africa. In Adelino Torres, "Legislação do Trabalho nas Colónias Africanas no 3º Quartel do Século XIX: Razões do Fracasso da Política Liberal Portuguesa," 73.

⁴⁸.Augusto Nascimento, "Recolonização, Mutações Demográficas e Afluxo de *Degredados* a S.Tomé no Século XIX," 426.

⁴⁹.An interesting comparison could be made with attempts by the French to create a penal colony in places like Guiana, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. According to Colin Forster, the French looked at the Australian example as a good model for a penal colony, one where "work and wise and severe laws had transformed criminals into useful farmers". In the French case, labour was also seen as "redemptive," and both hard work and good conduct on the part of convicts could result in private employment and even in a grant of land. Forster describes how the French attempts to create a penal colony in Guiana failed, not only due to the high incidences of disease and high death rates among the convicts who were forced to settle there, but also due to the opposition they experienced from certain elements in France and in Guiana, where some people argued that the deportation of convicts would affect the status of whites negatively, in a colony where a black slave population was the majority. One of the most vocal French opponents of deportation of convicts to Guiana, Count Barbé-Marbois, argued that the mixture of free and condemned inhabitants would lead to widespread corruption and to a general lack of discipline on the part of convicts. This seems to be an interesting point, since his views seem to echo the concerns expressed in São Tomé and Príncipe regarding the potential damage that the deportation of convicts could do to the image of the Europeans in the colony. However, despite being largely unsuccessful in

Guiana, the French persisted with deportation, including deportation of *forçats* to New Caledonia until 1896. In the Australian case, the transition between penal colony and free society had taken place during 1830s, due to political changes that took place in Britain and to the impact of the anti-slavery campaign. In France and Botany Bay: The Lure of a Penal Colony (Carlton South, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 10, 16-17, 19, 173, 175, 196.

⁵⁰.In the way of illustrating the somewhat limited success of Ribeiro's recommendations, he mentions having included a number of suggestions in a report that was presented to the Governor of São Tomé and Príncipe in 1862, but is critical of the fact that only one of them had been implemented, namely, the moving of the cemetery of São Tomé to a more appropriate location. In Manuel Ferreira Ribeiro, *A Província de S.Tomé e Príncipe e Suas Dependências*, 393.

⁵¹.Martin F. Shapiro, *Medicine in the Service of Colonialism: Medical Care in Portuguese Africa, 1885-1974* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1983), XI.



Autor: Rafaela Jobbitt

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