

11 Who is the combatant?

A diachronic reading based on Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe

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Introduction

How have post-colonial states shaped the figure-archetype of the combatant? Drawing on a cross-cutting analysis of two countries – Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe – which had no experience of the armed struggle within their territory, this chapter will examine how the category has been diachronically defined, produced, and negotiated over time through specific modes of memorialisation and silencing. It will argue that the changes that can be observed in the “combatant” reveal a mnemonic expansion that reclaims the discursive and moral traits generally associated with this figure – namely those related to notions of heroism, resistance, sacrifice, and suffering – and extends them to other sociopolitical and temporal sites. Hence, although the category of the combatant – often coinciding with that of the hero – mainly refers to the context and chronology of the liberation struggles, it would acquire its own plasticity and be mobilised and expanded to refer to other historical periods.¹

Cape Verde and S. Tomé and Príncipe have intertwined colonial and post-colonial histories that can be viewed from a comparative perspective. Firstly, there is the fact that they are both small African island countries that were formerly under Portuguese colonial rule, having been established as important trading posts for the trafficking of enslaved subjects taken by Portugal from Africa to Europe and the Americas. In addition, they have both lived through anticolonial processes rooted in histories of colonial violence – e.g., the famines in Cape Verde and the Batepá massacre in S. Tomé – but also in narratives of the many forms of resistance produced by colonial domination. They share one other characteristic: unlike Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea, the independence process did not involve armed conflict within the archipelagos. Nevertheless, in these countries, the liberation struggle is celebrated as the prelude to national independence. There are also some similarities between their post-colonial political trajectories: in both cases, the liberation parties – the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde/the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAIGC/CV) and the Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe (MLSTP) – suffered major defeats in the first multiparty elections in 1991, which had an impact on the meanings associated with the notion of the “combatant”.

The central focus that this figure has acquired in the process of building the post-colonial state and in the memory of anticolonialism is not exclusive to Cape Verde and S. Tomé and Príncipe. In East Timor, various authors have noted how the dominant narrative of the past revolves around the “combatant”. Whether hero or martyr, the category is often used identically when celebrating former experiences of resistance, evoking “a code of reciprocity in which those who suffer to bring something forth must be repaid”.² In independent Namibia, Becker, and Metsola mention the existence of a hegemonic nationalist grand narrative which foregrounds the armed struggle and its leading figures, emphasising their role as “heroic liberators” and determining the distribution of resources and state power.³ Moreover, in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique, and Angola, the combatant who occupied high-ranking positions during the struggles (each with their own particular representations and hierarchies) is one of the key figures through whom the state is legitimised and the nation imagined.⁴

In Cape Verde and S. Tomé and Príncipe, as in some of these other contexts, the concept has been expanded, both formally and informally, to include other men and women who played different roles in the struggle (or even outside it). Hence it is of interest here not only to identify changes in the meanings of the concept but, above all, to reflect on the meanings of these changes. How has the figure of the combatant acquired social and political significance? Which legal, discursive, economic, and citizenship hierarchies produce this category, especially when it is institutionalised by the approval of its own statutes? Finding answers to these questions through an analysis of the mechanisms for recognition and compensation – whether financial, symbolic, or other – awarded by the state to the “combatant”, together with the sociopolitical uses and mnemonic appropriations of this category, will provide other interpretative keys for examining the memorialisation of the liberation struggles in Cape Verde and S. Tomé and Príncipe.

The “combatant” in Cape Verde

Although Cape Verde’s independence was not the result of armed struggle in the archipelago, it was a direct consequence of the war fought by the PAIGC in Guinea for the liberation of both territories. This means that many Cape Verdeans were involved – in different ways – in the national liberation struggle. Several joined the armed struggle in Guinea, while others were involved in mobilisation and clandestine activities in Cape Verde and Portugal, some of whom were arrested as a result. Others engaged in diplomatic and political work in exile, either in European or African countries (e.g., France, Holland, and Sweden or Senegal, Algeria, and Conacy).⁵

Hence in the early post-independence years a memory of the struggle was formed that was composed of discursive, visual, and political spaces in which the valorisation of this past prevailed, although not without periods of some popular protest. Rejecting colonial symbols (a measure explored in detail in [Chapter 6](#) of this volume), independence brought its own pantheon of national heroes, namely the heroes of the liberation struggle, a set of key figures and individuals who were

predominantly senior combatants and therefore considered worthy of respect and honour. Cláudio Furtado describes them as the “uncommon ones”, i.e., those whose experiential references were directly connected with the legacy of the struggle.⁶

In these years, certain qualities were ascribed to the combatants which distinguished them from other Cape Verdean citizens. They were celebrated in the press, in music, in national holidays, in the words of the national anthem and in political discourses as “the best sons of Cape Verde” or “the most honourable sons of the land” because they had given their lives – or sacrificed years of their youth – to the anticolonial cause. They were also referred to as “liberators”, largely in recognition of their role in the victorious struggle against Portuguese colonial rule. This memory became established, although not without some dispute, as the generator of cultural capital, prestige and recognition, attributed both to the PAIGC and those of its members who had fought in the struggle.

Under the single-party PAIGC/CV regime, the “combatant” emerged structured and framed, both symbolically and morally, within a grammar of heroism and sacrifice (and, in some cases, martyrdom as well), activated for the purposes of political legitimation, among other reasons. The hegemony of the combatants would become visible in the dispute over positions in the leadership structures of the PAIGC even before independence, as early as March 1975. Of the 32 members appointed to the National Commission of Cape Verde (CNCV – *Comissão Nacional de Cabo Verde*), the most important party-political decision-making body, 19 were combatants from the armed struggle, 15 of whom occupied the top positions in the hierarchy. The five names in the Permanent Secretariat of the CNCV were all prominent combatants from the “old guard”, that is, historical leaders of the PAIGC.⁷ In the first decade of independence, the ruling elite – those in positions bearing the highest level of responsibility within the state institutions (ministers, the head of state, the president of the National Assembly, etc.) – had the armed struggle as their key reference, as well as memories of the famines and resistance to colonialism as formative milestones, among others.⁸ These combatants served as a repository for the political legitimacy of the independent nation, underpinning a symbolic hierarchy which granted them the status of super-citizenship as the representatives of a country that would not exist without them and their contribution.

In the case of Cape Verde (and, in different ways, Guinea), the hierarchies of power and citizenship were confronted with the existence of a supreme hero, Amílcar Cabral, who had been given the title of “Founder of the Nationality” on the eve of Independence Day, 5 July 1975, and was a constant presence in those early years. Through “direct contact with the legendary hero”, the combatants who fought alongside him would become “a kind of priesthood of this sacred knowledge [the ideas of Cabral]”.⁹

One of the most important strands in the ongoing politics of exalting the memory of the struggle would materialise in a political and symbolic grammar structured around the creation of a specific legal statute establishing the “Liberation Struggle Combatant” (hereinafter the LSC) as a national figure who merited protection and homage from the state.¹⁰ The first law to officially approve the Statute of the Combatant dates from 1989.¹¹ However, since 1980 this title had, on occasion, been

formally recognised, mainly in the case of historic figures from the armed struggle, some of whom had become leading figures in the independent state. Only two of the 32 names listed up to this point had not been in the PAIGC's combat zones in Guinea and/or the movement's logistical, strategic, and political bases in neighbouring Guinea Conakry. The strict definition of the combatant contained in this first statute followed the affirmation of war credentials as the source of political and social legitimation in the early years of independence. On the one hand, the statute explicitly restricted this status to those who had fought for the PAIGC – excluding militants who had not been organically linked to the liberation movement, or members of other political projects – while prioritising activities developed in an “active, ongoing” manner. The wording of this latter criterion, which presupposed exclusive dedication to the struggle, could potentially obstruct the recognition process or even the eligibility of militants who had been engaged in clandestine activities, among other cases.

Thus, a significant number of LSCs recognised in Cape Verde prior to 1991 largely correspond to one concrete profile: men who had been involved in the war in Guinea via the PAIGC in posts of responsibility and/or command, many of whom had subsequently played key roles in the political and social geography of the archipelago following independence. The LSC Statute approved in 1989 is therefore a text which acknowledges the symbolic importance of certain individuals in the history of the nation, providing them with conditions that dignify their past history of dedication and combat. However, due to the processes it instituted for the recognition and definition of who might be eligible as a combatant, the same statute would exclude other political paths followed during the struggle. It was also a symbolic instrument for the reproduction, legitimation and sustainability of political power after 1975, valuing the armed struggle and endowing it with a foundational role in building the independent nation.

The PAICV was defeated in the 1991 elections, which were won by the Movement for Democracy (MpD – *Movimento para a Democracia*) with a large majority. In the same year, the law on the LSC Statute was revised.¹² Whereas the first text had been more restricted, with the advent of the multiparty system the definition of its potential beneficiaries was significantly extended. During the 1990s the changes made to specific legislation concerning the combatant allowed for diversification in terms of mobilisation and forms of participation in the struggle for independence, reflecting the ongoing mnemonic transition.¹³ This no longer necessarily implied involvement in the armed struggle or membership of the PAIGC, thus reflecting the wide range of political experiences that had shaped the national liberation struggle in Cape Verde, from the reasons for joining it to the different types of activities carried out and the time dedicated to the cause, or even to different relationships with the PAIGC cells and the party itself after independence.

The process of achieving party-political legitimacy for the new government unfolded within this new mnemonic context. A significant number of the founder members of the party which won the elections in 1991 consisted of a group of post-independence PAIGC dissidents, some of whom were associated with Trotskyism and had been politicised during the clandestine struggle in Portugal. In a

dichotomous and antagonistic act against the historic leaders, they produced themselves as dual “combatants”, firstly as LSCs, since some of them had taken part in the struggle for national independence, although usually from positions – held clandestinely in Portugal or the archipelago – that were not considered to be at the top of the combatant hierarchy as defined by the First Republic.¹⁴ In addition, and more importantly in this context, they also defined themselves as combatants for democracy, since they understood that the “true” liberation of the archipelago had not been accomplished until the 1991 elections, at their instigation and as a result of their pressure.

The flexibilisation of the criteria in the statute and the activation of a series of memorialisation practises had social, political and cultural impacts on the ways in which the historical PAIGC/CV combatants were, in part, perceived. These impacts materialised in the form of the conflicting representations of them that were produced, ranging between legitimation and delegitimation: they were no longer seen solely as liberators and national heroes, but also as “lords of the islands”, who were “intolerant” and “autocratic” and had been attributed a moral status which some considered unjust and self-imposed.¹⁵ These negative reactions, mainly targeting the “Guinea combatants”¹⁶ who, as previously noted, were representative of the path taken by a significant number of leaders in the immediate post-independence period and during the time of the single-party system, are elements in a process of decentralising the status of the armed struggle in the Cape Verdean imaginary. This process benefited from the fact that there had been no war on the islands and therefore its experiences had not been inscribed in the memory of the majority of the population but also, in part, because the hegemony of the combatants – in some cases socialised in other contexts and separated from everyday life on the islands for many years – was configured, in a certain sense, as fragile and contextual.

As part of the continuing discussions on the politics of memory and silence associated with the combatant, from the 1990s onwards (auto)biographical memoirs would be published, focussing on the different forms of Cape Verdean participation in the liberation struggle. Hence the fight for the production and imposition of a narrative of the nation and a historical memory of the struggle was pursued less by means of historiography and more by its political and social protagonists, via biographies, autobiographies, essays or interviews which aimed to establish what should be considered relevant for the history of contemporary Cape Verde.¹⁷ Initially this involved sectors such as clandestine activists and political prisoners who had previously been considered to have less of a public profile or received less recognition from the state and were therefore demanding adequate recognition for their particular category of combatant. Later, in particular, during the 2000s, it also included some of the protagonists from the armed struggle and other political actors who were not from the PAIGC. Through these memorial products, the aim was not only to evoke and include certain perspectives and experiences associated with the past of the struggle, but also to produce a more plural archive which enabled institutionalised narratives of the process that had led to national independence to be negotiated and reconfigured.

However, in terms of legislation, the major changes only took place in 2014, the year before the 40th anniversary of independence.¹⁸ Law 59/VIII/2014, of 18 March, broadens the scope of application of the LSC statute to explicitly include former political prisoners with a definition that is different from the more general one applied to LSCs but equivalent in terms of symbolic and legal value. The introduction of a pension of 75,000 Cape Verdean *escudos* (roughly 680 euros) for LSCs who had no other income, or as a supplement to the pensions of those whose entitlements amounted to less than this, once again reinforced criticism of the statute in certain sectors. Although the new law was crucial to dignifying certain combatants who were living in extremely precarious circumstances, it also contributed to the emergence of other debates. On the one hand, this remuneration was intended to provide recognition of a symbolic status of exception for LSCs within the narrative of the nation, in a country where the minimum wage in 2018 was 13,000 *escudos* in the private sector (roughly 118 euros) and 15,000 *escudos* (roughly 136 euros) in the public sector, these amounts could lead to accusations of privilege in comparison to the rest of the population. On the other hand, it would also contribute to reinforcing the sense of trivialising the image of the combatant, as expressed by some of those who had fought for years in Guinea or lost part of their youth as prisoners. It also raised another question that had often been debated since the appearance of the first statute, associated with the nature of the contribution to the struggle, on which the law was either comprehensive or else not very explicit, namely the minimum level of sacrifice and dedication required for an individual to be considered to merit the title of LSC.

These disputes over memory find parallels in two of the most significant cases of negotiating the perceptions of who is (or is not) a combatant and national hero and recognising the various causes for which it is deemed valid to have fought on behalf of the nation – whether political, cultural or social. In recent years, actions performed in the context of combat and the actions of those who resisted Portuguese colonialism and the everyday adversities of the archipelago *before* and/or *outside* the context of the liberation struggle have sometimes been cited as equivalent. The speech by Jorge Carlos Fonseca, the President of the Republic at the time, delivered at the ceremony in honour of the LSCs on 20 January 2018 is an example of this.¹⁹

On this occasion the president emphasised “tenacity, courage and commitment” as the values praised by the nation on 20 January, the date which served “as a temporal marker for honouring, through the National Heroes, all those, whether well-known or anonymous, who dedicated themselves to the cause of liberation”. In the same speech, Jorge Carlos Fonseca stressed that the country had built itself up internationally “as the expression of a fighting people who, throughout history”, have known how to “face and overcome a wide range of difficulties”. The message he conveys is that, in the face of different challenges in different contexts, it is the “tenacity, courage and commitment” of the Cape Verdean that endures, given that “the struggle for survival and for the affirmation” of its people “has been arduous, just as it was very challenging for the combatants on the military and political fronts, whether clandestine or not, [...] to confront the colonial regime and its allies”.

In this speech, which symbolically recognises the same quality of heroism in the LSC and the anonymous population fighting adversities in the archipelago, Jorge Carlos Fonseca reinforced his position of non-partisan harmonisation of the past of Cape Verde, thus steering the “national hero” status, celebrated on 20 January, away from the profiles of individuals with profiles linked solely to the national liberation struggle or to military experience. By seeking out the discursive features of the figure of the combatant and applying them to other actors, a narrative of the nation which foregrounds the idea of “combat” is substantiated.

There is another case which is even more relevant to this discussion. In 2019, legislation was introduced to create a financial pension for Cape Verdeans who had been opposed to the single-party regime in São Vicente and Santo Antão, in 1977 and 1981, respectively, and had been involved in confrontations with the authorities.²⁰ The preamble to this law, citing the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the possibility of historical reconciliation, states that it is imperative for state justice to proceed with reparations for possible abuses and arbitrary acts committed against Cape Verdean citizens under the First Republic, which were considered to be particularly serious in São Vicente and Santo Antão in the above-mentioned years. The right to a monthly pension was thus established for the beneficiaries of this law (providing exactly the same amount as the pension attributed to the LSCs).²¹

The legally defined financial compensation is a political gesture that equates, on the one hand, to establishing a symbolic equivalence between these figures and, on the other hand, to the activation of a strategy of party-political confrontation which takes the image of the combatant as one of its focal points. Hence, the opponents of the single-party regime, whose form of opposition was now officially sanctioned as a sacrifice made for the development of the nation, were no longer merely perceived as victims but also as fighters for freedom and democracy. Jorge Carlos Fonseca, commenting on the text of the law he had promulgated, explicitly made this comparison:

On the one hand there is the representation of independence, of those who fought for independence, the heroes of independence; on the other hand, those who fought against the single party, for democracy and for freedom, who would be the heroes of freedom and democracy. I myself once expressed this in terms that were controversial, although symbolic, stating that while there were liberation struggle combatants *for* the homeland, there were also liberation struggle combatants *in* the homeland (our italics).²²

This excerpt is particularly significant in terms of the ways in which the party-political powers and their representatives have been mobilising the concepts of heroism, suffering and resistance that underpin the notion of the combatant, thus removing it from its specific historical context. In doing so, a levelling out of different events, and thus their importance and consequences for the history of the nation, unfolds, interfering in the way in which Cape Verdeans socialise the different versions of national history and the past of the struggle in particular.

The “combatant” in São Tomé and Príncipe

On 12 July 1975, when the national flag was raised for the first time and Manuel Pinto da Costa, who would become the country’s first President, gave his inaugural speech in the *Praça da Independência* (Independence Square) in the capital of the new Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe, the message was one of revolution and unity. The symbolism embedded in the speech, delivered in the presence of hundreds of Santomeans and a Portuguese delegation, emerged within the framework of a long history of colonial oppression and a period of troubled months on the islands following the 25 April in Portugal (which continued almost until the official proclamation of independence).

In the archipelago, the prevailing narrative for this era became the one that was written and disseminated by the movement which was engaged in the political struggle and which was not only recognised by the Portuguese authorities as the favoured interlocutor in negotiations regarding the transition to independence, but also as the legitimate representative of the Santomean people, namely the Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe (MLSTP – *Movimento de Libertação de São Tomé and Príncipe*). This symbolic and discursive political hegemony, constructed during the months prior to the formal declaration of independence and afterwards consolidated under the single-party regime which governed the country from 1975 to 1991, was extended to the historical leaders of the MLSTP and its predecessor, the Committee for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe (CLSTP – *Comité de Libertação de São Tomé and Príncipe*), which had been engaged in the political and diplomatic struggle in exile and returned to the archipelago with the legitimacy to guide and direct the path of the independent nation, a nation heir to the centuries-old symbolic resistance of its people.²³

Augusto Nascimento observes that, after 1975, “induced by the hegemony of the MLSTP, the country tended to identify itself” with the movement, although “the history of the country was far more plural”.²⁴ Hence in the early years after independence, the presence of other political associations in the territory after 25 April 1974 would be forgotten. In this context, the *Associação Cívica Pró-MLSTP* (Pro-MLSTP Civic Association) stands out. Created in São Tomé and Príncipe in June 1974, in the absence of the members of the original party in the territory, it aimed to function as its branch in political implementation.²⁵ During that month, successively more than 20 young students arrived from Lisbon to wage the political struggle. They had been politically socialised by the ideas of Pan-Africanism, Black Power, Marxism, and Maoism. This group of young people was committed to organising a series of measures to raise political awareness among the population, ranging from strikes and demonstrations to boycotts to commercial shops. This created a climate of fear among the Portuguese residents and led to clashes with the colonial authorities, who threatened to bring forward the date for the elections established in the Algiers Agreement signed on 26 November 1974, and cut off Portuguese funding for the islands, among other measures.²⁶ Given the situation, the Secretary General of the MLSTP at the time and future head of state of the archipelago, Pinto da Costa, made an early return to São Tomé and Príncipe

in March 1975, whereupon he dissolved the *Associação Cívica*, leading to the more or less forced departure of some of its members from the territory.²⁷

It then became partially or totally silenced during the single-party regime led by the MLSTP, so that the latter would emerge as the only symbol of liberation from colonial rule. This was not unconnected to the way in which São Tomé and Príncipe had gained independence, without resorting to armed struggle. The legitimacy of the MLSTP and its leaders rested mainly on two axes. On the one hand, there was the symbolic association between the CLSTP/MLSTP leaders and the figure-archetype of the guerrilla “with no weapons at hand” but who was also a freedom fighter, as the national anthem “*Independência Total*” (Full Independence) proclaims. On the other hand, there were the legendary founding narratives constructed around the duality of heroism and sacrifice which were considered the precursors of the archipelago’s anticolonial resistance, such as the 1953 Batepá massacre, celebrated as the catalyst for Santomean nationalism.²⁸ The first official celebration of 3 February, the date which marks the start of these events, known at the time as “Martyrs of Colonialism Day”, took place in 1976, one year after the islands became independent. Over time, the political performance of this historic event assumed a rhetoric of bonding and reconciliation, based on promoting a spirit of national unity and reinforcing the idea of a people proud of their history of struggle. This is clear from the actual name chosen for the day, for example: whereas the initial title “Martyrs of Colonialism Day” focussed on the suffering of the Santomeans as victims of colonial oppression, in 1980, when it was renamed “Liberation Heroes Day”, the emphasis shifted to the courage and determination of the population who fought to conquer independence. The reproduction of models of suffering and bravery in this and other commemorations, especially those organised by the ruling elite, anchored the project for the political legitimation of the MLSTP in the territory, associating its leaders, many of whom were descendants of the victims of the massacre, with a lineage of perseverance and opposition to Portuguese colonialism.²⁹

Assimilating the events of 1953 into a nationalist narrative of resistance, unity, and heroism is an option that seeks to reinforce the communitarian sense of Santomean society after independence. In fact, the years of the single-party regime corresponded to a phase of national reconstruction, a process which, amid great socioeconomic and political difficulties, implied the affirmation and valorisation of a collective and shared identity. However, given the insularity, the size of the territory and the “personalisation” of politics, among other factors, this attempt to produce a uniform concept of the nation was always surrounded by disputes on various levels, whether ideological, political, cultural, or generational, to name but a few.³⁰

With the transition to multiparty democracy and the defeat of the MLSTP in the 1991 elections, some of the former members of the *Associação Cívica* and other dissidents from the liberation party returned to join the ranks of the new ruling party. A process of negotiating the anticolonial legacies and social positions of the (former) exiled leaders of the MLSTP – regarded as the historic combatants in the struggle – began, holding them responsible for the economic instability on the islands. However, the figure of the most distant and virtually undisputed heroes

remained, including Amador, the leader of a slave revolt in the sixteenth century, nowadays considered a key figure in the archipelago's resistance against colonial oppression. His image has featured on the Santomean *dobra* since 1977,³¹ a public holiday was declared in his honour (4 January, "Amador Day") in 2004,³² his bust stands in the gardens of the National Historical Archive, and in some schools, he is regarded as a "hero who fought for independence".³³ In November 2018, a statue of Amador, roughly three metres high, was erected in the centre of the capital, commissioned by the then Minister of Culture who, on the day it was unveiled, stressed the former's pioneering role in the struggle for liberation and the duty of all Santomeans to continue on the path set by their ancestors.³⁴

It is through this developing path that the discussion and recognition of the role of the *Associação Cívica* during the anticolonial struggle has found space to resurface in recent years, coinciding with the return of its protagonists to the political arena. Hence, a set of conditions can be identified which are more favourable to the emergence of a renewed interest in the issues of the struggle, national independence and, consequentially, the problematisation of its history and actors, evident in the dissemination of documentaries, essays, poems, memoirs and principally interviews, mainly in online newspapers. This new phase in the country, which has a greater focus on development and overcoming economic difficulties on the archipelago, has coincided with the inclusion and involvement of agents who had previously been rendered invisible in the process of remembering the liberation struggle.

In 2005, accompanying the re-emergence, in public space, of memories of the role played by the *Associação Cívica* in the liberation struggle, the legal text creating the Statute of the Liberation Struggle Combatant, previously omitted from Santomean legislation, was ratified for the first time. It explicitly refers to the reason for deciding to formalise a specific statute after so many years of independence: to correct the omissions and injustice to which the former combatants had been condemned, many of whom were living without dignity, in poverty, and had remained unknown to younger generations of Santomeans.³⁵ Unlike its counterpart in Cape Verde, this statute does not stipulate a starting point for engaging in the struggle, although it does provide a hierarchical typology of three categories of eligible combatants, corresponding to different benefits, defined in descending order of importance: the founders and leaders of the ex-CLSTP and MLSTP, the leaders of the *Cívica*, and citizens who had proved, on a local level, to have played an outstanding role in mobilising the population to achieve the objectives of the struggle for national independence.

While, on the one hand, for the former members of the *Associação Cívica* the law restores the symbolic role they had played in the struggle, which they had demanded should be recognised, on the other hand, the text itself materially and symbolically distinguishes between the roles of the protagonists in this process, providing three scales for remunerations that configure different hierarchies of value and fail to provide the same benefits for all, thus producing what can be considered "minor combatants". Moreover, this official recognition does not cover the survivors of the Batepá massacre, who publicly expressed their displeasure at not

being considered for the same benefits granted to the CLSTP/MLSTP and *Cívica* members, justifying this by their symbolic and moral evocation as “combatants” and “heroes” and by the imaginary of the massacre as a driving force behind the anticolonial struggle.³⁶ This claim expresses, among other things, a desire to see their experiences of suffering and resistance recognised as just as valid as those of the nationalists and, in some sense, the recovery of a particular identity (or status) associated with bravery and sacrifice, which they consider merits greater recognition by the political powers.

Conclusion

The evolution of legislation and public representations of the combatant in Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe reflects the political, social, and economic changes in the two countries and reveals the narrative centrality of this figure in both archipelagos. Since there was no pre-colonial past to return to, the legitimacy of the first governments in the two countries would initially be based on the anticolonial origins of the independent state and its protagonists. Later, in particular, after the processes of transition to multiparty systems in the 1990s and the significant defeats of the liberation parties in the elections, the notion of the combatant would not only encompass a broader combination of the various forms of participation in the anticolonial struggle, but would also become associated with those who had faced what is considered to have been the autocratic and oppressive measures of the single-party regimes.

In more recent years the concept has acquired an even broader meaning, seeking to establish a consensus on the various biographical landmarks of the nation and on what may be considered contributions to national history, first and foremost in relation to those who resisted Portuguese colonialism and daily adversities *before* and *beyond* the struggle for liberation. While, on one hand, this shapes a narrative of the nation which foregrounds the ideas of “struggle” and “combatant”, this attempt to introduce a semantic and moral equivalence for the anticolonial combatants, the agents involved in the processes of democratisation and, to a more, or less, abstract degree those who resisted the actions of the coloniser over time, would appear to shift the national narrative away from the specific framework of the liberation struggle and the figure of the LSC, thus decontextualising and depoliticising it.

In this sense, the state has established itself as one of the key actors in the creation and maintenance of the “combatant” and the “struggle”, as well as the category of “national hero”, subject to different hierarchies.³⁷ Naturally, an analysis of the role of the state and political-institutional space cannot be separated from the most diverse and multifaceted dynamics of appropriation and remembrance of this past, driven by a wide range of factors. They are primarily related to a search for legitimacy on the part of new governments, but also to the financial and symbolic claims presented by different associations and collectives for benefits equivalent to those granted to combatants. In addition to the resignification of the notions of the “combatant” and the “struggle” arising within a specific economic and political agenda, historical, and identitarian questions must also be taken into

consideration. We would tentatively identify these as the following: the inexistence of armed fronts during the struggle (and its consequent destabilising effects) within both archipelagos; the fact that these are small island nations in which the political scenarios are highly fragmented and polarised; a certain post-colonial disillusionment with the unrealised promises of the struggle, which makes it easier to tone down the anticolonial foundations of the figure of the combatant. Although the idea of the “combatant” is still the moral compass used to evaluate and recognise contributions to the national history of the two countries, it is no longer defined solely within the strict chronology of the liberation struggle, but is used operatively with the aim of recognising the entire past and present of the struggles experienced by the people of Cape Verde and S. Tomé and Príncipe as equally relevant. It is within the performative power of the concept – which intervenes in the social processes of constructing post-colonial political subjectivities and acts on notions of suffering and resistance – that the mnemonic potential of the “combatant” resides.

Notes

- 1 Part of the argument in this chapter was developed in Miguel Cardina and Inês Nascimento Rodrigues, *Remembering the Liberation Struggles in Cape Verde. A Mnemohistory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), and in Inês Nascimento Rodrigues, “As múltiplas vidas de Batepá: memórias de um massacre colonial em São Tomé e Príncipe (1953-2018),” *Estudos Ibero-Americanos* 45, no. 2 (2019): 4–15.
- 2 Elizabeth G. Traube, “Unpaid Wages: Local Narratives and the Imagination of the Nation,” *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 8, no. 1 (2007): 10. See also Lia Kent and Rui Graça Feijó, eds., *The Dead as Ancestors, Martyrs, and Heroes in East Timor* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021).
- 3 Heike Becker, “Commemorating Heroes in Windhoek and Eenhana: Memory, Culture and Nationalism in Namibia, 1990–2010,” *Africa* 81, no. 4 (2011): 520, and Lalli Metsola, “The Struggle Continues? The Spectre of Liberation, Memory Politics and ‘War Veterans’ in Namibia,” *Development and Change* 41, no. 4 (2010): 589–613.
- 4 See Muchativugwa Liberty Hove, “Strugglers and Stragglers: Imagining the ‘War Veteran’ from the 1890s to the Present in Zimbabwean Literary Discourse,” *Journal of Literary Studies* 27, no. 2 (2011): 30; Sabine Marschall, “Commemorating ‘Struggle Heroes’: Constructing a Genealogy for the New South Africa,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, no. 2 (2006): 176–93; the chapter by Natália Bueno and Bruno Sena Martins in this volume; Nikkie Wiegink, “The Good, the Bad, and the Awkward. The Making of War Veterans in Postindependence Mozambique,” *Conflict and Society: Advances in Research* 5 (2019): 150–67; Vasco Martins and Miguel Cardina, “A Memory of Concrete: Politics of Representation and Silence in the Agostinho Neto Memorial,” *Kronos: Southern African Histories* 45, no. 1 (2019): 46–64.
- 5 Ângela Benoliel Coutinho, *Os Dirigentes do PAIGC. Da fundação à rutura. 1956–1980* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2017), and José Vicente Lopes, *Cabo Verde. Os Bastidores da Independência* (Praia: Spleen Edições, 1996).
- 6 Cláudio Alves Furtado, *Gênese e (Re)produção da Classe Dirigente em Cape Verde* (Praia: Instituto Caboverdeano do Livro e do Disco, 1997), 119.
- 7 Lopes, *Cabo Verde*, 391.
- 8 António Correia e Silva, “O Nascimento do Leviatã Crioulo: esboços de uma sociologia política,” *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 1 (2001): 56 and Coutinho, *Os Dirigentes*, 50–51.
- 9 José Carlos Gomes dos Anjo, *Intelectuais, Literatura e Poder em Cabo Verde. Lutas de Definição da Identidade Nacional* (Porto Alegre/Praia: UFRGS/NIPC, 2002), 219.

- 10 The expression “Combatentes da Liberdade da Pátria” can be translated literally as “Combatants for the Freedom of the Fatherland”. However, for ease of reading, we have chosen to use only “Liberation Struggle combatant”.
- 11 Law 46/III/89, *Boletim Oficial da República de Cabo Verde* (hereinafter B.O.), no. 27, July 13.
- 12 Law 15/IV/91, B.O. no. 52, December 30.
- 13 See Chapter 6 of this book.
- 14 “5 de julho. Foi há 19 anos,” *Novo Jornal de Cabo Verde*, no. 161, July 5, 1994.
- 15 E.g., “Acabar com o PAICV e fazer justiça,” *Voz di Povo*, no. 1091, May 18, 1991; “O PAICV e a lei de Parkinson,” *Voz di Povo*, no. 1108, June 27, 1991; “PAIGC/PAICV na agonia,” *Voz di Povo*, no. 1216, March 21, 1992; “MpD – Modelo da Liberdade em Cabo Verde,” *Novo Jornal de Cabo Verde*, no. 16, April 21, 1993; “Cape Verde vive agora nova era histórica,” *Novo Jornal de Cabo Verde*, no. 42, July 21, 1993.
- 16 An expression with negative connotations frequently used to describe PAIGC leaders who had spent several years in Guinea (when it was under Portuguese rule) or Guinea-Conakry, very often intended to suggest that they were out of touch with the reality of the islands.
- 17 Cláudio Furtado, “Cape Verde e as quatro décadas da independência: dissonâncias, múltiplos discursos, reverberações e lutas por imposição de sentido à sua história recente,” *Estudos Ibero-Americanos* 42, no. 3 (2016): 879–82.
- 18 Law 59/VIII/2014, B.O. no. 20, March 18.
- 19 “Discurso de o Presidente da República Jorge Carlos Fonseca, na Cerimónia de Homenagem aos Combatentes da Liberdade da Pátria,” *Presidência da República de Cabo Verde*, January 23, 2018, <http://presidencia.cv/arquivo/1649>.
- 20 Law 67/IX/2019, B.O. no. 94, September 6.
- 21 By July 2020, a list of victims had been approved, which included 51 who were eligible for the pension or pension supplement in São Vicente and Santo Antão. Cf. B.O. no. 12, January 31, 2020, 2–3, and B.O. no. 81, July 9, 2020, 1642.
- 22 “Jorge Carlos Fonseca: ‘Somos um país com um processo democrático irreversível,’” *Expresso das Ilhas*, no. 685, January 14, 2015.
- 23 Constitution of the Republic, published in the *Diário da República* (D. R.) no. 39, December 15, 1975. See also, Gerhard Seibert, “A política num micro-estado. São Tomé e Príncipe, ou os conflitos pessoais e políticos na gênese dos partidos políticos,” *Lusotopie* 2 (1995): 239–50.
- 24 Augusto Nascimento, “A construção de São Tomé e Príncipe: achegas sobre a (eventual) valia do conhecimento histórico,” in *Como fazer ciências sociais e humanas em África*, eds., Teresa Cruz e Silva, João Paulo Borges Coelho and Amélia Neves de Souto. (Dakar: Codesria, 2012), 171–94.
- 25 Augusto Nascimento, “A inelutável independência ou os (in)esperados ventos de mudança em São Tomé e Príncipe”, in *O Adeus ao Império. 40 anos de descolonização portuguesa*, eds. Fernando Rosas, Mário Machaqueiro, and Pedro Aires Oliveira (Lisboa: Nova Vega, 2015), 175–90.
- 26 Seibert, “A política num micro-estado”, 239–50.
- 27 Nascimento, “A inelutável independência”, 187.
- 28 The events that started on 3 February 1953, nowadays celebrated as a national holiday on the archipelago, were responsible, on the orders of the Portuguese governor Carlos de Sousa Gorgulho, for the deaths of an unknown number of *forros*, the main ethnocultural group on the islands, who had refused to work as contract labourers on the coffee and cocoa plantations as they were not bound by the *Estatuto do Indigenato* (Indigenous Statute). The history of Santomean nationalism considers the massacre to be its starting point or, in other words, the event that legitimised the formation of the CLSTP in 1960 by an exiled *forro* elite, later renamed the MLSTP in 1972. Cf. Seibert, “A política num micro-estado,” 239–50. On the political and cultural mobilisation of the memory of the massacre over time, see Inês Nascimento Rodrigues, *Espectros de Batepá. Memórias e*

- narrativas do «Massacre de 1953» em São Tomé and Príncipe* (Porto: Afrontamento, 2018).
- 29 Gerhard Seibert, *Camaradas, Clientes e Compadres. Colonialismo, Socialismo e Democratização em São Tomé and Príncipe* (Lisboa: Vega, 2002).
- 30 Seibert, “A política num micro-estado,” 239–50.
- 31 Cf. Decree Law 27/77, D.R. no. 38, September 22, 1977 and Decree-Law 18/97, D. R. no 6, August 4, 1997.
- 32 Law 6/2004, D.R. no. 10, October 8.
- 33 Gerhard Seibert, “Tenreiro, Amador e os angolares ou a reinvenção da história da ilha de São Tomé,” *REALIS* 2, no. 2 (2012): 21–40, and Nascimento, “A construção de São Tomé,” 179, 190.
- 34 “Presidente inaugura estátua do Rei Amador, a figura emblemática da história são-tomense,” *Agência STP-Press*, November 2, 2018.
- 35 Law 6/2005, D. R. no. 17, August 1, 2005.
- 36 “Sobreviventes do Massacre de Batepá recebem apenas 300 mil dobras por ano cerca de 14 euros,” *Têla Nón*, February 4, 2009, and “Pensão mensal para dignificar os mártires da liberdade,” *Têla Nón*, February 4, 2020.
- 37 However, it is important to note that legislative gestures do not always materialise in practice – either because they extend no further than the paper they are written on or because the entitlements of the potential beneficiaries are conditioned by a set of circumstances that cannot be covered in detail here.

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