

Um Portuense em África: Notes for a Biography of a Luso-African Archive

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Abstract

This article draws on my ongoing research into the life and archive of A.F.F. da Silva Porto (1817–1890), a trader-traveler who lived in nineteenth-century West Central Africa. Comprising a series of volumes of notes and various other manuscripts, the archive is currently in two Portuguese institutions. By historicizing this archive, I unravel Silva Porto's messy writing process and argue that the volumes known as his diaries correspond to distinct literary projects. I then problematize the classification practices related to the traders in Viye and argue that, as a Luso-African archive, it is a privileged observatory of the dynamics of migration and creolization associated with trade in the region.

Keywords

Silva Porto, trade, Luso-Africans, archive, Viye, Angola

Resumo

Este artigo baseia-se na minha investigação em curso sobre a vida e o arquivo de A. F. F. da Silva Porto (1817–1890), um comerciante-viajante que viveu na África Central Ocidental oitocentista. Composto por uma série de volumes de notas e vários outros manuscritos, o arquivo encontra-se hoje em duas instituições portuguesas. Ao historicizá-lo, deslindo o processo confuso de escrita de Silva Porto e sugiro que os volumes conhecidos como os seus diários correspondam de facto a projetos literários distintos. Problematizo então as práticas de classificação relativas aos comerciantes no Viye e argumento que, enquanto arquivo luso-africano, é um observatório privilegiado das dinâmicas de migração e criouliização associadas ao comércio na região.

Palavras-chave

Silva Porto, comércio, Luso-Africanos, arquivo, Viye, Angola

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Introduction

The history of commerce is that of the communication between people.

- Montesquieu

The epigraph above is doubly suggestive for the present text. Firstly, it allows me to take Montesquieu to West Central Africa and introduce António Francisco Ferreira da Silva Porto (1817–1890), a long-distance trader who lived and travelled in the region from 1839 until his death in 1890. This is because the epigraph was not taken directly from *The Spirit of Laws* (1748) but from a book published later by a Portuguese liberal politician and writer² that was part of Silva Porto’s library in Viye,³ an African polity and trading center on the eastern edge of the central highlands, more than three hundred miles from the port city of Benguela. This book was often a source of inspiration and moral reflection to Silva Porto in his writings about his commercial activities and travels, his relations with the political authorities and the diverse people involved with the long-distance caravan trade in Viye, and more generally, his daily life. Despite not having found a direct reference to Montesquieu’s quote, it is likely that Silva Porto came across it and thought along similar lines. Commenting on trade towards the eastern part of the Upper Zambezi in 1853, he wrote:

Ivory is exchanged for cloth, *roncalba*,⁴ brass wire, conch, and *mandés* or *pandés*,⁵ with the parties coming from the land of the Bisa, an essentially trading people, similar to the Bianco people. Thus, the African continent is explored by the natives from both the East and the West coasts, meeting in the center at several points. And to what, if not to cosmopolitan commerce, do we owe such a portent? Because it travels the world and flourishes where it is protected.⁶

Indeed, the epigraph captures something of the spirit of the time. Thus, secondly, it is also an indicator of the larger African historical context, which Silva Porto saw as highly connected and characterized by the movement and encounter of different peoples resulting from “cosmopolitan commerce,” therefore not as an unknown and remote place inhabited

² Bastos, J. J. R. (1847). *Collecção de pensamentos, maxims e proverbios*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional.

³ I am following the most common spelling of toponyms adopted in recent English publications.

⁴ White ceramic beads.

⁵ A type of shellfish from the Indian Ocean.

⁶ Biblioteca Pública Municipal do Porto (BPMP), Ms. 1235, p. 345. All translations are my responsibility.

by isolated people, tropes that would characterize later colonial views of the continent. Yet, contrary to Montesquieuan ideas on commerce and peace, the increase in commercial contacts associated with the transatlantic slave trade and the opening of trade in the interior in the second half of the eighteenth century was accompanied by an intensification of violence and wars (Candido 2020; Childs 1949: 147). Silva Porto himself commented on how “the history of commerce in the interior” was one of instability, violence and conflicting economic and political interests, resulting in cyclical changes in the routes taken by trade caravans.⁷ The impact of these transformations on the ground, especially in the interior, in the circulation and migration of people and the corresponding cultural and political reconfigurations, as well as Silva Porto’s views on (and practices associated with) the slave trade, abolition, and continuing practices of enslavement, are some of the topics that can be explored from his composite archive. Assembled over five decades of an itinerant life across West Central Africa, this archive is divided today between two Portuguese institutions, the public library of Porto (BPMP) and the Geographical Society of Lisbon (SGL).

This article’s contributions are made along two fronts. Firstly, I build upon the debates about archives as sites of knowledge production that have expanded remarkably over the last three decades to historicize Silva Porto’s archive.⁸ I draw particular inspiration from Nicholas Dirks’s (1993) approach to the collection of documents assembled by a British officer in India on the eve of British rule to make sense of the ambiguities and messiness that can characterize personal archives and the situations in which they were assembled.⁹ Far from being a static, coherent, and organized whole, Silva Porto’s archive is a messy and unstable assemblage of various documents. This is not strange in the debates about archives, especially personal ones, but what interests me here is understanding in what terms this messiness becomes relevant. The archive’s inextricable character and the analytical challenges it raises point precisely to this instability and ultimately to Silva Porto’s own itinerancy, to his status as a migrant, a trader, and a traveler in nineteenth-century West Central Africa. By regarding it as a Luso-African archive, I call attention to the context in which Silva Porto’s archive came into being. It highlights these histories of movement, migration, and cross-cultural contact associated with trade during this period. In this direction, as a second front of contributions, I argue that it is a privileged observatory of the dynamics of migration and creolization associated with long-distance trade in Viye. These dynamics have been observed

⁷ BPMP, Ms.1238, p. 20.

⁸ This literature is extensive, but see the collection *Refiguring the Archive*, edited by C. Hamilton and others (2002).

⁹ For other biographical approaches to archives, see Nuttall (2002) and Randolph (2005).

by other scholars working in West Africa and West Central Africa, usually with a focus on coastal regions.¹⁰ As one of the few known archives of the many traders established in African trading centers like Viye, it offers the chance to extend this research further into the interior and to compare it with other Luso-African and trading communities in areas closer to the coast and the colonial power. It provides a unique prism that extends over five decades.

The article is divided into three parts. The first introduces Silva Porto through a discussion of the way he identified himself in the title of what he thought would be his *magnum opus*. The second part sketches the biography of the archive and pays particular attention to the volumes known as his diaries. Silva Porto's profuse habits of writing resulted in eighteen volumes of notebooks covering the period between 1846 and 1890. I examine how he conceived and circulated his manuscripts, questioning the perspective that sees them as two parallel series (Santos 1986: 15) and arguing that they reflect distinct literary projects instead. Building upon this analysis, in the third section, I explore the categories and practices of classification emerging from the archive and highlight its potential for a study from below of the trading diaspora and Luso-Africans in the social and cultural history of Viye.

My analysis, firstly of an outsider source, demonstrates that this was a relatively autonomous group composed of men occupying certain positions in trade and their descendants with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. It also shows that their classification as *moradores* implied a hierarchy that placed those men at the head of the group, rendering others, who would be considered their dependents, invisible. Furthermore, when crossing their positions in trade with their categorization as "Black," "*pardo*," "*cabodo*" [*caboclo*] and "White," it indicates that while anyone could be a trader and clerk, those categorized as White and mixed heritage tended not to be recruiters (*pombeiros*). However, when confronting this source with Silva Porto's writings, these categories do not emerge as relevant, as these immigrant traders were commonly referred to as foreign or locally born *brancos*. This suggests other mechanisms of sociability and belonging at work within the trading community in Viye. A final aspect of my exploratory analysis of the archive regards language crossings. Silva Porto's writings show a mixture of Portuguese, Kimbundu, and Umbundu, which might be another indication of the group's sociocultural profile. Indeed, the archive offers the potential to observe locally relevant linguistic practices and social categories; to render visible those who were also part of this community, such as women, porters or servants/enslaved;

¹⁰ Philip Havik (2013) offers a good conceptual and historiographical discussion on cross-cultural trade and brokerage, covering both West Africa and West Central Africa. I will refer to other scholars in the third section.

to explore individual trajectories; and to characterize the group's composition and grasp its entanglements with the local African political authorities and the host society.

Um Portuense em África

In the mid-1860s, Silva Porto decided to entitle his writings *Viagens e apontamentos de um portuense em África*. The idiosyncratic nature of the title's second part is a good place to begin unpacking some of the biographical and cultural meanings associated with how Silva Porto identified himself. The choice of the demonym *Portuense*, i.e., an inhabitant of Porto, cannot be reduced to an expression of Silva Porto's attachment to his birth city. It points to a much more interesting process of cultural exchange that reveals Silva Porto's life trajectory and identity.

In 1836, aged nineteen and having lived in Brazil for seven years, Silva Porto adopted the name of his hometown as his surname to distinguish himself from other people in Bahia surnamed Silva (Cordeiro 1891: 3). But this distinctive function of the name¹¹ would only acquire the idiosyncratic sense implied in the title after he crossed the Atlantic three years later.¹² In 1839, already in Luanda and after working for some time as a clerk in two taverns, Silva Porto decided to join one of the long-distance trading caravans that often arrived and departed from the city.¹³ So he began his career as a *sertanejo*, a term that described itinerant traders in the interior (*sertão*). In 1840, he established himself in Viye, an African polity and by then an established trading center with a resident community of migrant traders connecting Benguela (and at times Luanda) to the markets in the highlands and East Central Africa. Silva Porto arrived in Viye at an opportune time, marked by a cycle of expansion of trade and an increasing number of immigrant traders involved. According to the tradition he recorded, Viye had been politically constituted in the seventeenth century, and its population resulted from people migrating from the South and the Northeast who had settled and mixed

¹¹ Adopting toponyms as surnames was part of the repertoire of Lusophone naming practices (Pina Cabral 2008). Interestingly, the other famous Silva Porto, the naturalist painter António Carvalho da Silva Porto (1850–1893), also added the city's name to his surname.

¹² Silva Porto lived in Rio de Janeiro for six years and then moved to Bahia, from where he left to Luanda. Both his moves, from Portugal to Brazil and from Brazil to Angola, were part of larger migratory movements in this period. For a historical overview of Portuguese migration to Brazil, with a section on the nineteenth century highlighting the political and social unrest in Portugal in the late 1820s as push factors, see Newitt (2015). In turn, Silva Porto's move to Angola paralleled that of many individuals born in Brazil involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Candido 2013b).

¹³ He made a first trip to Luanda in 1837 but returned to Bahia after losing contact with his companion. One year later, he embarked again, never to return to Brazil (BPMP, Ms.1238, p. 51).

with those living in the region.¹⁴ This population was also shaped by their involvement in multi-scale trade dynamics, which earned it Silva Porto's label of a "cosmopolitan people."¹⁵

Viye's political expansion and connection with the trans-Atlantic slave trade meant that many of these contacts occurred in contexts of violence, subjugation, and raids.¹⁶ The end of the eighteenth century brought intensified contacts with the Portuguese, following a series of military campaigns and the attempt to establish an official presence in the highlands through the creation of a settlement named Amarante.¹⁷ In 1791, according to Silva Porto's records, António Francisco da Conceição, a Brazilian trader from Bahia, had been nominated by the governor-general to occupy the post of "capitão-mor e juiz da provincia do Bihé," with the task of attracting "vassals" and expanding the "dominions" of the Portuguese crown by "the just and gentle means of peace, justice and commerce."¹⁸ After a period of hostility towards foreign traders in the early nineteenth century, the 1830s saw the election of a new sovereign, Mbandua, more favorable to traders,¹⁹ as well as a new Portuguese (nominal) authority with the appointment of Francisco José Coimbra, a trader of Goan descent from Caconda.

Like most immigrant traders in Viye, Silva Porto established his own settlement (*povoação*), which he improved and expanded over time. In writing, he referred to it as Belmonte, a name given by a fellow *sertanejo*, evocative of the beauty of the surrounding landscape, but the local population called it "Proto" or "Porto" since traditionally all *povoações* of some size had the name of their founder or chief.²⁰ Thus, to resume the argument above, Silva Porto had adopted the name of his land of birth to distinguish himself in Brazil, but later this distinction occasioned that, according to local political traditions, his surname became the identifier of his place, turning Porto into a Luso-African toponym. Identifying as a *Portuense* captured this meaning, almost becoming a self-referential adjective. Furthermore, the choice of *Portuense* is also significant considering its likely alternative, *A Portuguese in Africa*. It indicates that the way Silva Porto idealized his connection to Portugal did not prevail over his identity ties with his native Porto and his African Porto, i.e., Belmonte. This idiosyncrasy does not mean that Silva Porto did not hold strong convictions

¹⁴ According to Silva Porto, the population of Viye was a "mixture of the Ganguella, Mohumbe, Quimbangalla and Quimbunda races" (BPMP, Ms.1235, p. 98).

¹⁵ BPMP, Ms.1235, pp. 111–112.

¹⁶ About the connection between the people in the central highlands and trade, see especially Miller (1997).

¹⁷ On the establishment of civil settlements during this period, see Madeira Santos (2019).

¹⁸ BPMP, Ms.1236, pp. 124–125.

¹⁹ BPMP, Ms.1235, pp. 100–101.

²⁰ Silva Porto explains this in one of his vocabularies (BPMP, Ms.1237, p. 75).

about what the Portuguese colonial project should be and the benefits of its extension to the central highlands. Nevertheless, as the military occupation of the central highlands only took place at the time of his death, he never wrote with any certainties or support derived from an effective colonial presence in Viye.

Biographical Sketch of Silva Porto's Archive

What I am referring to here as Silva Porto's archive corresponds to what exists today in the Public Library of Porto and the Geographical Society of Lisbon. The collection in Porto includes thirteen bound manuscript volumes, with 4,664 numbered pages, whereas the collection in Lisbon is larger and more diverse. Overall, it contains five bound manuscript volumes;²¹ a 75-page manuscript entitled *Memorial de Mucanos*, which consists of an account of the reparations Silva Porto had to pay for various crimes and offences committed by people who were part of his settlement, according to the local legal and political customs; more than sixty smaller manuscript notebooks, with a variable number of pages, including travel accounts, vocabularies, and different notes; a wealth of correspondence, including two bound volumes with copies of the official correspondence concerning the 1877–1880 scientific expedition,²² two other bound volumes with more copies of Silva Porto's correspondence, and fifteen folders with hundreds of letters sent by Silva Porto but mostly received by him; several other separate documents; and finally, photographs and personal objects. These vast and rich materials contain elements that could help us imagine what once constituted Silva Porto's archive and library in Viye, which included not only the book from which Montesquieu's quotation was extracted but many others he comments on the text. A thorough study of his correspondence alone might allow the identification of other documents and similar archives, namely of other traders or even of the court of Viye and other polities in the region. This article, however, focuses only on what is accessible today in the two institutions mentioned above.

Scholars of West Central Africa have known Silva Porto for many decades and drawn from his archive in their analysis of long-distance trade and the region's political history.²³

²¹ Contrary to the BPMP volumes, which are all in reasonably good conditions, some at the SGL are not. Access to the first is now restricted.

²² The expedition aimed at studying the area between Angola and Mozambique, and involved Alexandre de Serpa Pinto, Hermegildo Capello, and Roberto Ivens. Two major publications came out of it: Serpa Pinto's *Como eu atravessei África* (London, 1881); and H. Capello and R. Ivens' *De Benguella às terras de Iácca* (Lisbon, 1881). The correspondence refers to the assistance provided by Silva Porto, who was living in Benguela at the time.

²³ From Isaac Schapera's editions of David Livingstone's journals to the works of many scholars from the 1960s onwards, namely Jan Vansina, François Bontinck, Jean-Luc Vellut, Linda Heywood, John Thornton, Joseph C.

Part of the brief sociohistorical contextualization of Viye presented in the first section was based on Silva Porto's archive, showing his interest and efforts in collecting, interpreting, and recording this type of information. Although I cannot expand here on the ways he came to write about the region's social and political history, it is a critical dimension of the use historians have made of his writings, even if sometimes to express their reservations. Missionary and anthropologist G. Childs, for example, who worked in the central highlands during the colonial period, doubted the information provided by Silva Porto (for instance, about the political genealogy of Viye) as it did not conform with that of other more recognized observers such as the explorer A. Serpa Pinto and the missionary John Tucker (Childs 1949: 172).²⁴ Nevertheless, these were later observers. If we consider that literacy was part of the dynamics of trade in Viye, as attested by the letters in the archive, what distinguishes Silva Porto from other traders was not the practice of writing and recording events relevant to the control of commercial operations but rather his tenacity and archival zeal. Both show that Silva Porto was, to some extent, convinced of the importance of his writings.²⁵ The closest and most widely used source in the historiography is the book published by the Hungarian trader Lázló Magyar (1818–1864), who lived in the region between 1849 and 1857.²⁶ Official colonial sources for the region are not as abundant as those for coastal areas such as Luanda or Benguela, given the weakness of the colonial presence in Viye until the end of the century. The same applies to ecclesiastical and missionary sources, as Catholic and Protestant missions only established themselves there in the 1880s.

Considering its size and potential, his archive remains a relatively underexplored source, especially if considered as a whole.²⁷ Two sets of challenges help to explain this. The

Miller, Malyn Newitt, José C. Curto, Beatrix Heintze, Maria Emília Madeira Santos, or Mariana Candido (I refer to some of their works throughout the text). J. Vansina (2004) and more recently J. Hogan (2014) have also used it (what does “it” refer to here?) in their arguments about the political history of the regions east of the central highlands, namely the Upper Zambezi, to where Silva Porto travelled several times throughout his life. My research into Silva Porto's archive emerged from my participation in Jack Hogan's project aiming to produce an English scholarly edition of his travel accounts to the Upper Zambezi (forthcoming).

²⁴ For more recent discussions see Candido (2013a) and Thornton (2020), who also raises questions about Silva Porto's information regarding the political history of Viye.

²⁵ He did publish some of his travel accounts during his lifetime, first in the Angolan official gazette and the periodical of the Overseas Council (1850s and 1860s), then in the bulletins of the geographical societies of Lisbon and Porto (1880s).

²⁶ This book was first published in Hungarian and then in German in 1859. Rumours of a Portuguese translation circulate, but I do not know who is responsible for it. For a selection of texts recently translated to Portuguese, see Magyar (2019). For an overview of Magyar's trajectory, see E. Sebestyén (2015).

²⁷ Among the authors who have used it more extensively are Linda Heywood (1984) and M. E. Madeira Santos (1986), and more recently Constança Ceita (2014) and I. S. Gonçalves (2021). Heywood and many other scholars, especially anglophones, rely mostly on some of the material at the SGL and the three existing published editions. Madeira Santos' edition covers only the first three chapters of the first volume at the BPMP,

first concerns issues of access and time, leading most researchers to resort to the existing editions of Silva Porto's writings, which, valuable as they are, correspond to only a limited portion of the whole. Related to this is the lack of an updated catalogue of what is at the SGL. Although there are at least three descriptions of the archive (the most recent was published in 1977), they are not well known to researchers.²⁸

The second set of challenges concerns the text itself. Silva Porto's handwriting is reasonably legible, although Luciano Cordeiro, one of the founders of the SGL who received Silva Porto's materials after his death, thought it was "tight" and "tortuous," "reminiscent of zigzags through closed forests" (Cordeiro 1891: 5). The main difficulty emerges from a degree of syntactical incoherence that renders some parts difficult to understand. In addition, the vocabulary reflects a cultural and linguistic mixture between mainly, but not exclusively, nineteenth-century Portuguese, Kimbundu, and Umbundu, which can be demanding to read and merits its own analysis. It reflects Silva Porto's life, namely his education, migratory experience in Brazil, and, on the other side of the Atlantic, and his reading habits. Silva Porto had an advanced understanding of Kimbundu and Umbundu, and he possibly spoke a mixture similar to the written text, almost a "creole language," in Cordeiro's words (1891: 5).

In addition to these challenges, further issues arise regarding the series of volumes with his notes, starting with correctly characterizing and dating them. Although I cannot elaborate on their analysis here, I want to highlight three critical aspects for an understanding of the archive. The first contradicts the perspective that the volumes in Porto and Lisbon constitute two parallel versions of the manuscript, with the latter being the draft and the former the more polished version. The second aspect is that they reflect a combination of genres, including travel accounts, diary entries of periods when he was not travelling, biographical and ethnographic vignettes and chapters, vocabularies, comments on books and newspaper articles, and copies of correspondence and official documents. They are an archive within the archive, which raises the question of whether seeing them as "diaries" (*diários*) captures the richness and complexity of the text. My analysis suggests that seeing them as diaries does not capture the complex and changing ways Silva Porto conceived his writings. Making sense of this complexity is the third aspect because the volumes reflect three distinct literary projects emerging at different times. As such, the SGL collection is not

although her introduction shows her wider knowledge of the archive. Finally, Ceita and Gonçalves's theses show a broader use of the archive, although the latter's chronology ends in the 1860s.

²⁸ The first is included in L. Cordeiro (1891), the second was published on the initiative of António da Silva Rego (Cunha, 1961), and the third was undertaken by Maria Cristina Neto and included in the 1977 edition, *Catálogo-amostra evocativo do primeiro centenário da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa (1875–1975)*, pp. 129–130.

incomplete, as it has been hypothesized, and cannot be seen as a parallel version of the BPMP (Santos 1986: 15).

Briefly, Silva Porto's first literary project was a travel book. It included a series of five travel accounts and a chapter on "native customs and habits," which he entitled *Cinco viagens ou costumes e usos gentílicos*. It was written between mid-1846 and 1856, and Silva Porto tried to publish it in Lisbon. It is unclear what happened to this manuscript, but it was possibly similar to SGL's first volume. The second project was what Silva Porto named *diário dos meos apontamentos*, "diary of my notes," which he began on 25 October 1860. Only two of the eighteen volumes bear this title, one in the SGL, starting on 25 October 1860 and ending on 31 July 1862, and the other in the BPMP, which continues from 1 August 1862 until 20 April 1866.²⁹ These two volumes include uninterrupted daily entries covering Silva Porto's life during these years, including a period between January and September 1863 during which he lived in Benguela, and several journeys, namely to Benguela and to Bulozzi or Lui as he always wrote. Finally, the third project was what became known as *Viagens e apontamentos de um portuense em África*, which resulted from Silva Porto's decision to revise his work in 1866. The motivation behind it is unclear, but he had recently read Major Gamitto's *O Muata Cazembe*, the account of the 1831–1832 expedition to Kazembe, published in Lisbon in 1854. This reading likely inspired him to resume the idea of publishing a travel book. Shortly afterwards, he decided to change its title to *Viagens e apontamentos*. He writes about this in the first entry of what would otherwise be the third volume of the *diário*, which was then also renamed *Viagens e apontamentos*.

The new title already points towards a larger literary project taking shape, which two years later, in 1868, went beyond a simple revision and became a fusion of all his writings, i.e., his first work (the travel book) and the *diários* that had just been renamed *Viagens e apontamentos*. His motivation was again connected to one of his readings, this time a book published in Lisbon under the title *Exame das viagens do doutor Livingstone* (Lacerda 1867). It was the first time that Silva Porto came across what David Livingstone had written about their meeting sixteen years earlier.³⁰ Lacerda's vehement argumentation against Livingstone's pioneering claims and portrayal of the Portuguese and their continued involvement with the slave trade left Silva Porto no other choice but to pen his reply. The same day he finished writing his comments, he began that larger literary project.³¹ In February 1869, he began

²⁹ These are SGL's supposed second volume and BPMP's Ms.1237.

³⁰ See especially chapters 9 and 12 of Livingstone's *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857).

³¹ He began writing this reply in September 1868, while in the Upper Zambezi, and finished by the end of January 1869 in Viye, sending the manuscript to Lisbon for publication shortly afterwards. The SGL has a

rewriting the new *Viagens e apontamentos de um portuense em África*, his *magnum opus*. This initial momentum, however, faded in the face of the immensity of the task of going through everything he had written thus far. The revision of the first book alone took Silva Porto more than three years to finish. In the meantime, he was still writing the other *Viagens e apontamentos*, the diaries, by then on the sixth volume. In the end, he only revised the text until 3 June 1864, roughly halfway through the second *diário*.³²

In sum, the revised *Viagens e apontamentos de um portuense em África*, which today correspond to the first, second and third (“3 bis”) volumes at the BPMP,³³ were written roughly between 1869 and the 1870s, although they cover a period from 1846 to 1864. In turn, the unrevised *Viagens e apontamentos* constitute a sequence that flows from the *diário* starting on 25 October 1860 to the tenth volume ending on 13 March 1884.³⁴ These are not structured in chapters like the others because they are, after all, a continuation of Silva Porto’s *diário dos meos apontamentos*, even if their writing was influenced by the motivations and contingencies associated with the other literary projects. At the end of 1884, Silva Porto traveled to Portugal and donated the ten volumes to the Commercial Geographical Society of Porto. The last three volumes were written after this. The eleventh is unique because it was written three times, with copies sent as gifts to the Government of Benguela and the Geographical Societies of Porto and Lisbon. The last two volumes cover the final three years of Silva Porto’s life. He still managed to send the twelfth volume to Porto in February 1890, but the last one was brought to Portugal and handed to the SGL after Silva Porto’s death.³⁵

Historicizing Silva Porto’s archive and unravelling his messy writings as conforming to different literary projects emerging at different times contribute to a better understanding of the source. It cautions against the propensity of assuming a diary entry date as the date of writing, which can be problematic since the first three volumes of the Porto collection were written after the subsequent three, although they cover prior events. It also draws attention to issues of interpretation and vocabulary changes associated with the revisions that cannot

manuscript entitled *Apontamentos sobre a obra do Ex.mo Senhor D. José de Lacerda, ao Exame das viagens do Dr. David Livingstone por um Portuense*, which was published later by L. Cordeiro (1891).

³² BPMP, Ms.1237.

³³ BPMP, Ms.1235, 1236, 1238.

³⁴ This sequence is constituted by SGL’s manuscript identified as the second volume, followed by BPMP Ms.1237, 1239, 1240, 1241, 1242, 1243, 1244, and 1245.

³⁵ The circulation of Silva Porto’s papers and mortal remains after his suicide in the context of the military occupation of Viye is an important part of the historicization of the archive, but it was not possible to include it here. A series of four opuscula published by the SGL after his death, as well as other documentation at the Overseas Historical Archive in Lisbon, contain information to support that analysis. About Silva Porto’s death, much remains to be said, but see Santos’s insights (1991).

be addressed here. Nevertheless, these projects have in common that they were all written by Silva Porto in West Central Africa, either in Viye, Benguela, or while travelling. Thus, along with the rest of Silva Porto's archive, they reflect the characteristics of the changing and moving African worlds he inhabited.

A Luso-African Archive: Exploratory Notes

Building on the archive's biographical sketch elaborated above, this section serves as a research program aimed at exploring the archive's potential for a study from below of the trading community of which Silva Porto was part during almost all his life. Some of the questions guiding this future research include the following: who was part of that community? How was it constituted at the crossroads between trade and the movement of people, languages, cultural habits, and things? Which practices and forms of sociality characterize it? How did they relate to the hosting society? How did it change over time?

While scholars such as L. Heywood (1984) and M. E. Madeira Santos (1986) paved the way for this research, they did not engage in historicizing the archive nor examined in depth the categories and practices of classification emerging from it. This is one way to begin answering the questions raised above. The trading community in Viye during the early years of Silva Porto's residence in the 1840s can be grasped thanks to a survey undertaken by Joaquim Rodrigues Graça, a trader and resident in Golungo Alto (above the Kwanza), who was there between 1843 and 1846.³⁶ The title of the survey indicates the social diversity of this trading community and the categories used to classify people—"Map of the residents of the province of Bihé, natural children of the Portuguese who emigrated from the two markets of Benguela and Luanda, as well as from other *presídios* [fortresses] and districts, in addition to the itinerant traders that are established here."³⁷

The reference to "natural affiliation" alludes to the children of unofficial marriages between African women and Portuguese immigrants coming from multiple places besides Benguela and Luanda, as well as other itinerant traders. Graça listed by name an impressive number of one hundred *moradores*,³⁸ whom he characterized according to origin, employment, place of residence, and "quality" (*qualidade*). The latter described a physical attribute (skin

³⁶ A partial version of Graça's text was published in 1855 in the periodical *Annaes do Conselho Ultramarino*, but the full manuscript was published later by the SGL (Graça, 1890).

³⁷ Vellut analyzed this document in his article on the "Luso-African frontier" (1972), as did other scholars (Dias 1998; Santos 1986). About the political significance of Graça's diplomatic mission to the Lunda capital, see I. C. Henriques (1997: 107).

³⁸ Yet the number must have been much higher, as Graça reported that most had not turned up (1890: 395).

color) according to four classificatory terms: *preto*, *pardo*, *branco*, and *cabodo*.³⁹ The vast majority of this resident trading community was composed of men whom Graça considered “Black” (54), followed by those of mixed heritage (42), hypothetically the “natural children.” In terms of origins, they were primarily locals from Viye (52), who in turn were mainly *pardos* (27) and *cabodos* (4), which indicates later generations of immigrant traders of Portuguese or Brazilian extraction. But there were also traders from Ambaca (16), Golungo Alto (11), Luanda (7), Pungo Andongo (5), trading centers, colonial administrative and military posts on the hinterland of Luanda, and finally Caconda, the fortress and trading post to the southwest of Viye (3). Finally, six were identified as “White,” four coming from Lisbon, one from Madeira, and one from Porto, who was evidently Silva Porto.

Besides showing how socially diverse the trading community in Viye was in the 1840s, the survey identified those one hundred men as one particular social group. The categories used reveal the interplay between who classifies and what/who is being classified, so their examination furthers our understanding of how they operated in Viye, a context historically marked by the interaction between people with different cultural backgrounds.⁴⁰ The people listed by Graça composed a heterogeneous group with four things in common: they were all men with Lusophone names, considered *moradores* of foreign origins (even if these origins were in the past, as in the case of the immigrants’ descendants), and involved in trading activities. Graça considered three trade-related occupations: *negociantes*, i.e., traders who made up the majority of the group, also known as *sertanejos*; *agências*, a term that probably referred to men responsible for recruiting porters, commonly known as *pombeiros*;⁴¹ and finally, fewer in number, there were *caixeiros*, i.e., clerks or bookkeepers.

From this analysis, we can grasp something about the division of labor within the group. Men from different origins and “qualities” could become *negociantes* and *caixeiros*, but the same did not apply in the case of *agências*, who were all “qualified” (i.e. categorized) as “Black.” Thus, we can infer that trade was associated with some upward social mobility, as

³⁹ Vellut pointed out that *pardo* referred to people of mixed European and African heritage, with a lighter skin tone, while *cabodo* was likely a misspelling of *caboclo*, a term used in Brazil for people of mixed European and indigenous heritage, but here meaning people of darker skin colour (1972: 125).

⁴⁰ About the need to historicize categories, see the approach adopted by P. Mark in his study of Luso-Africans in precolonial Senegambia (see also Horta and Mark 2018; Mark 2002), or R. Williams’s contribution to the edited volume *Creole societies in the Portuguese colonial empire*, also highlighted in the introduction by the editors (Havik and Newitt 2015). Another relevant discussion on categories can be found in the work of António Hespanha, whose last book provides a relevant overview of the topic of who identified and was identified as “Portuguese” during the overseas expansion (Hespanha 2018 & 2019).

⁴¹ Other scholars who have used Graça’s survey do not provide any clarification about this term (Santos 1986; especially Vellut 1972), but Silva Porto uses words such as “agenciar” and “agencia” in reference to the recruitment of porters by *pombeiros*. See, for example, BPMP, Ms.1236, p. 269 or Ms.1240, p.2 09.

men from different origins and “qualities” could become traders and clerks. However, at the level of *agências*, i.e., *pombeiros*, the fact that all men were “qualified” as “Black” suggests that those otherwise categorized tended not to do this work. Another question can be raised about who is missing from the survey and why. Other people involved in trade, such as women, porters, servants, or enslaved people, were not listed possibly due to status, meaning they were not considered *moradores* (but their dependants).⁴² At the same time, there were other traders, *pombeiros*, and clerks in Viye who were also not listed because they were not *moradores*, but worked within the realm of the sovereign and the country’s political elites. This points to the autonomy attributed to this group of migrant traders vis-à-vis the Viyen society. One final revealing aspect of the list concerns the category “qualidade,” mobilized by Graça based on an empirical ascription of the terms *preto*, *pardo*, *branco*, and *cabodo*. As mentioned above, most *moradores* were considered “Black,” but there were a significant number of mixed-heritage people and six “Whites.” It is not difficult to assume that the second group were the “natural children” of older immigrants of European extraction with African women. However, we cannot rule out that some of those Graça considered “Black” could also be descendants of or related to those unions, especially those listed as being from Viye. This nuance raises the question of the relevance of such distinctions and the person making them, and Graça was indeed an outsider on an official mission. So other questions arise: was this perspective consistent with local practices of categorizing people in Viye? Were these categories used, and if so, were they used similarly? How was this group of immigrants and their descendants, resident in Viye and involved in trading, perceived locally?

Silva Porto’s archive is a rich source for exploring these issues further because it contains countless detailed narrations of multiple people involved in trade, not only *moradores*. Many of the names on Graça’s list appear in his writings, making it possible to research their trajectories and experiences.⁴³ However, the richness of the archive also lies in the access it provides to a perspective that is different from other more official colonial or outside sources. It is significant that terms such as *pardo* or similar were used in official sources

⁴² Jill Dias argued that the term *morador* appeared in nineteenth-century sources to designate a heterogeneous group of people, which included “Blacks not subject to the collective authority of the *sobas*” and dispensed from the service as porters,” which seems to confirm my inference. The term could also be applied to “*mestiços* and whites living in the interior,” “descendants of white Portuguese soldiers, merchants or convicts who, for more than two centuries, had flocked to the interior.” Finally, Dias added that their use of European clothing and shoes occasioned their identification by African populations as “whites” (Dias 1998: 359). See below my discussion of Silva Porto’s use of this terminology.

⁴³ M. E. Madeira Santos initiated this research (1986). F. Bontinck (1976) and B. Heintze (2004) developed similar works on the trajectories of intermediaries, interpreters, and Luso-Africans who were mentioned in the publications of Africanist explorers.

concerning other regions, as discussed by M. Candido (2008) for the case of the Caconda censuses or C. Madeira Santos (2019), but are practically absent in Silva Porto's writings. In turn, the most common way in which Silva Porto referred to traders was through the word *brancos*, articulated in various expressions, such as *brancos naturais do paiz e europeus* or *brancos estranhos e naturais do paiz* (respectively, “native and European whites” or “foreign and native whites”). In one of his vocabularies, Silva Porto explained that the word for “white” was “Quindér or Xindér,” which was given to Europeans and their descendants.⁴⁴ “Foreign whites” were the immigrant traders who were able to create their own settlements in Viye, like Silva Porto, and their offspring were “native whites” regardless of their “quality.”⁴⁵ Further analysis is needed about second-generation traders coming from other trading posts outside Viye and how they were perceived; likewise regarding the place of women and other people who composed the *povoações dos brancos*, especially enslaved people and servants, their backgrounds and social trajectories; not to mention the group's interactions with the “Bianos,” whom Silva Porto described as the “children of the *soba*,” a “cosmopolitan people,” itself also very heterogeneous as mentioned in the first section.

Much remains to be studied about this group from a critical analysis of Silva Porto's Luso-African archive, including which other cross-cultural practices characterized the group, such as language, religion, or norms associated with the regulation of social and economic life. Considering linguistic practices, Silva Porto's writings show a mixture of several languages, mainly Portuguese, Kimbundu, and Umbundu, as mentioned above. His transit between these languages is remarkable. Often words introduced as Portuguese were not part of the official lexicon, demonstrating their incorporation in the local use of the language—for example, *capata* is described as “the *Portuguese* term here applied to the inebriating drink prepared from maize cobs”;⁴⁶ or the word *libata*, “*Portuguese* term here applied to settlements [*povoações*] in general,”⁴⁷ whose translation to Umbundu is also provided as “himbo or

⁴⁴ BPMP, Ms.1235, p. 173. Reflecting on a later period, I. Dulley mentions the adoption of the term *ovindele* (“whites”) by *assimilados* (a legal status during the colonial period defining “civilized natives”) and notes its opposition with *ovimbundu*, “Black,” the ethnonym which would later classify people from this region (Dulley 2010: 66).

⁴⁵ In a particularly insightful article, F. Bontinck examines how Europeans were designated in many Bantu languages, highlighting the problem of translating “mindle” (sing. “mundele,” from the Kikongo) into “white.” He explains—as other authors have done (see reference to Jill Dias above)—that many Africans designated themselves and were designated in this way because they dressed like Europeans and spoke a European language. More precisely, they were seen as “Black Europeans” or “Europeanized Blacks.” The generalization of the translation into “white” added an equivocal meaning to the description of these people, as it happens here in the case of Silva Porto, who unfortunately does not clarify how common the Portuguese word “branco” was in relation to corresponding terms in the locally used languages (Bontinck 1995).

⁴⁶ BPMP, Ms.1235, p. 6; italics added.

⁴⁷ BPMP, Ms.1235, p. 12; italics added.

quimbo,” challenging the expectation that this latter language would be preferential among those living in Viye, including the trading community, as it was the predominant language of the region.⁴⁸ Thus, another facet of the research potential of Silva Porto’s archive regards the field of socio-historical studies of African languages and language contact in this region.⁴⁹

The analysis of these practices allows us to understand the processes of mixture and distinction that characterized Luso-Africans and their social interactions in Viye during this period. Many of these topics are raised and discussed in the historiography on social groups and identities in contexts historically marked by contacts between Portuguese or other immigrant and local African populations, particularly in West and West Central Africa, and the term Luso-African has become somewhat consolidated to refer to them.⁵⁰ This historiography goes back several decades and has intersected with debates on creolization in the Atlantic world, so the case of Viye is worth exploring in dialogue with it.⁵¹ Its relevance lies, to a large extent, in the possibility of advancing M. Candido’s (2018) discussion regarding how the processes of creolization also affected the interior. The history of Viye was marked from early on by the movement and crossing of people with diverse backgrounds, as well as by multi-scale trade dynamics. The arrival and establishment of foreign traders, namely those of European and Brazilian extraction, from the end of the eighteenth century onwards was not a novelty from the local point of view. Traders like Silva Porto were always on the move, looking for business opportunities, but they also relied heavily on having suitable domestic arrangements, including functioning establishments and trusting relationships, and, in sum, on their successful insertion within the local society.

Conclusion

As my research into the life and archive of Silva Porto progresses, many questions emerge along the way. Can we speak of a Luso-African community in Viye? When and how was it constituted? Who was part of it, and how did it change over time? How was Silva Porto integrated into it, and what can we learn about it from his archive? Approaching the

⁴⁸ On the distinctive character of Umbundu, see Childs (1949: 169).

⁴⁹ See, for example, the volume *Language Contact in Africa and the African Diaspora in the Americas* (2017) or O. Zwartjes’s (2011) chapter on African languages analysing three grammars of Kongo, Kimbundu, and Sena. I thank the reviewers for these and other bibliographical suggestions. On Angolan Portuguese see Inverno 2018.

⁵⁰ Among the alternatives advanced by some authors are “Afro-Portuguese” (Dias 1998; Newitt 2008) or “Afro-Lusitanian society” (Heywood 2002). For a discussion on terminology see B. Heintze (2011).

⁵¹ Among some of the key contributions are Candido 2013a; Dias 1998; Ferreira 2006; Green 2012; Havik and Newitt 2015; Heintze 2004 & 2005; Heywood 2002; Mark 2002; Miller 1988; Newitt 2008; Vellut 1972.

archive as a Luso-African archive is an innovative way of researching these questions, as it emphasizes the archive's hybrid and plural nature.

This article's first contribution was to provide a historicization of Silva Porto's archive, which departed from a discussion of the idiosyncratic way he identified himself as a *Portuense* in the title of his *magnum opus*. I unraveled some of the archive's messiness and Silva Porto's writing process, clarifying many points neglected by other scholars, such as that the volumes known as his diaries correspond to distinct literary projects, written, rewritten, and circulated at different times with different motivations. The biographical sketch of the archive was then the basis for the second contribution, which regards its potential for a study from below of the trading community established in Viye. My analysis of Graça's survey showed that it was a group headed by men classified as *moradores*, with diverse backgrounds, characterized by a division of labor between traders, clerks, and recruiters, and some degree of social mobility in the first two occupations. In turn, my contrasting of the categories mobilized by Graça to classify these traders according to "quality" with Silva Porto's writings showed that they were not as relevant locally. Other mechanisms of identification and belonging, perhaps more fluid, seem to enter into play when seen from an insider's perspective.

Silva Porto's archive does not allow us to observe everything about what it reveals; its analysis requires other articulations, both in terms of sources and comparative historiography. That said, it does constitute a privileged observatory of the multiplicity of perspectives and cross-cultural practices associated with the experience of Luso-Africans in Viye in the nineteenth century. Those perspectives include those who were rendered invisible in the survey, such as women, porters, servants, and enslaved people. The archive allows for an exploration of individual trajectories within this community as well as outside it. It also allows for an understanding of cultural and linguistic crossings that characterized the trading community and the Viyen society. While allowing for a discussion of the man, who would later, after his death, become a colonial martyr and a symbol in the discourses on the Portuguese colonial project, the archive is also larger than Silva Porto himself.

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Received for publication: 15/06/2022

Accepted in revised form: 15/10/2022

Recebido para publicação: 15/06/2022

Aceite após revisão: 15/10/2022

Bionote/Nota Biográfica

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