



Ideology, science, and people in Amílcar Cabral

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Abstract

The present article contributes to the debate on how historians and social scientists perceive and understand relations between ideology and science, which are often seen as realms belonging to rival kingdoms. Following an analysis and critical positioning vis-à-vis Cabralian studies, the text examines how scholars of Cabral have portrayed his agronomic activities. It then undertakes a genealogical analysis of the Cabralian concept of people and suggests that the emergence of this concept in Cabral's discourse derives from the intersection of the development of anti-colonial nationalist thought in the former Portuguese Empire and the development of agrarian studies in metropolitan Portugal.

Keywords: Amílcar Cabral (1924-1973); agrarian studies; anti-colonialism; science; people.

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This discussion of writings by and about Amílcar Cabral (1924-1973) begins with a brief account of his biographical background. Going on to examine certain interpretive tendencies visible in Cabralian studies, I open a window from which we can observe and discuss something of the past of one of the most renowned figures in contemporary African history. With the intention of contributing to the debate surrounding an issue of more general historical and historiographic interest, that is, relations between science and ideology, I then take a critical and complementary look at how these studies have understood Cabral's scientific training. As I trace the roots variously attributed to the Cabralian concept of people, I explore both the emergence of anti-colonial nationalist thought in the former Portuguese Empire and the development of agrarian studies in metropolitan Portugal.

Amílcar Cabral and Cabralian studies

Amílcar Cabral had just turned 20 when he arrived in Lisbon in 1945. Born in 1924 in the territory of what is now Guinea-Bissau, he and his family had moved to the archipelago of Cape Verde, along the western coast of Africa, when he was still young. He did so well in his studies there that the Portuguese government awarded him a college scholarship, and so he headed to the capital of what was then the empire, where he attended the University of Lisbon's School of Agriculture (Instituto Superior de Agronomia, ISA). In his early years in Portugal, Cabral spent a good deal of time at the Casa de Estudantes do Império, built in 1944 to receive students from colonial territories. He engaged in opposition movements that sought to bring down the Salazar dictatorship and kept up with the events that heralded the arrival of a postcolonial world, including the independence of India in 1947 and the Chinese Revolution in 1949. It was only in the 1950s that political activities began playing a greater role in his life. Following his graduation from the university, he started doing agrarian research, for example, conducting soil studies in Angola, where he worked with Botelho da Costa and Ário Lobo de Azevedo, and collaborating with the Research Brigade on Plant Protection of Overseas Products (Brigada de Estudos de Defesa Fitossanitária dos Produtos Ultramarinos). In tandem, Cabral began attending a series of political meetings, which culminated in the 1956 foundation of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde, PAIGC), an organization that he was to head over the course of the long war against Portuguese colonialism (1963-1974).

Cabral was assassinated in January 1973 under circumstances that have never been fully clarified, and he witnessed neither Guinea-Bissau's declaration of independence nor the fall of the longest-standing European colonial empire, marked by the Portuguese Revolution on April 25, 1974. Yet his name is indelibly linked to this historical outcome, and countless scholars worldwide have done biographical studies on him, some before his death. We can safely say that Cabral has been the object of incomparable attention among twentieth-century Portuguese political figures and even among other anti-colonial leaders who fought the Portuguese Empire.

Some of the scholarship on Cabral has shown particular appreciation for the historical weight of his political activities. This is notably the case with his foremost academic biography, *Amílcar Cabral: revolutionary leadership and people's war*, by Patrick Chabal (1983). A leading

figure in so-called Lusophone studies since the publication of this work, Chabal placed special emphasis on the strategic reversal adopted by the PAIGC in the late 1950s. After August 3, 1959, when some fifty people were killed by the colonial forces in their efforts to halt a dockworkers strike in Bissau, the most active PAIGC units decided to retreat from the city. In the aftermath of what has become known as the Pidjiguiti massacre, militants like Cabral headed into the interior, where they tried to recruit forces and develop a new strategy for fighting colonialism. Cabral's activities in this war of liberation are often recognized as a decisive factor in both military and diplomatic terms, and Chabal was particularly emphatic in this regard.¹ Arguing in favor of biography over approaches that he labeled structuralist or Marxist – which he saw as devaluing human will as a determinant historical factor – Chabal assigned major importance to the figure of Cabral and especially to his role as a political and military leader.

Chabal proffered his biographical representation of Cabral as a man of action in contrast with other authors who, in their studies of the top PAIGC leader, stressed the singularity of his thought. The latter tendency has grown stronger in recent years within the framework of the theoretical approach to the question of culture in postcolonial studies, where Cabral is mandatory reading. For example, the recent *Routledge companion to postcolonial studies* states:

A theorist rather than a creative writer, Cabral has become an important figure in postcolonial studies for his analysis of the process of decolonization in English-language collections such as *Return to the Source* (1973) and *Unity and Struggle* (1980). He has thus become a Lusophone counterpart to Frantz Fanon, who wrote primarily about Algeria's traumatic war of independence against France (1954-62), and to Anglophone writers/independence leaders, such as Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya) and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) (Murphy, 2007, p.67).²

A certain canonization of Cabral's thought or theoretical production can likewise be traced to sources other than postcolonial studies. Some studies portray him essentially as one of the great theoreticians of military strategy, alongside Clausewitz or Nguyen Giap (Chaliand, 1982). Others reserve a special place for the Cabralian idea of culture within the history of Marxism, comparing him to Antonio Gramsci or Paulo Freire (Marrocu, 1998; Pereira, Vittoria, 2012). Be that as it may, any of these past and present framings of Cabral's thought and ideas (and other examples could be listed) are susceptible to the critique lodged by Chabal in the early 1980s. Even though Chabal's own study devoted one chapter to what he called Cabral's political and social thought, the biographer voiced misgivings about analyses like those of Ronald Chilcote (1968), a U.S. researcher who in 1968 published an article meaningfully entitled "The political thought of Amílcar Cabral" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. In Chabal's mind, studies like Chilcote's erred because they tended to force a heterogeneous body of texts to fit into a principle of unified whole, even though Cabral had written his texts under diverse circumstances and for diverse ends (Chabal, 1983, p.167).

Arising from the biographical background of Cabral's biographers, the discord between Cabralian scholars provides good guidance when researching him.³ In my own interpretation, I hope to avoid two pitfalls. The first is the temptation to insinuate that Cabral's texts form an *oeuvre*. This is in part what happens in approaches that underscore his theoretical inclinations and mold him in the image of an author who is possibly on the verge of canonization,

where he would be abstracted out from the vicissitudes of his experience as a militant. The second is not giving due weight to the importance of intellectual activity in Cabral's life. This consideration is not always present in some studies on him, starting with Chabal's biography, where the overriding view is that language is a secondary political reality, as evinced when the biographer states: "Cabral was primarily a man of action. His political leadership is best understood by looking at what he did rather than at what he said" (Chabal, 1983, p.167).

It is with these considerations in mind that, later in these pages, I offer a contribution to a genealogy of the concept of people in Cabral's discourse. When I chose to focus my analysis on a concept, in line with the conceptual history developed by Reinhart Koselleck and the Bielefeld School, my purpose was to re-ascribe to words the importance that others have denied them; it is clear to me that if the concept "people" describes, identifies, and objectifies a given reality, it concomitantly creates, activates, and subjectifies this same reality (Koselleck, 2011). Concurrently, in undertaking this analysis from a genealogical approach, to borrow terms close to Michel Foucault (1979), I practice a history of ideas where ideas emerge less as a product of original thought than as a constitutive element in a series of relations with other subjects and objects. In the present article, while endeavoring to uncover the manifold historical relations lying at the root of the Cabralian concept of people, I focus mainly on the relations established between this concept and other discursive practices. My aim is to discover what an author means to say when he utters a given word, but, consonant with the shift fostered by Pocock, Skinner, and the Cambridge School, I also construe this act of utterance as part of a linguistic context that enfolds the author's very intentions (Pagden, 1987). I am thus especially attuned to the intertextuality of the concept of people, that is, to the fact that the Cabralian concept finds broad resonance in the semantic universes of contemporary political ideologies but also displays meanings circumscribed to the realm of scientific knowledge.

My approach here may owe much to my contact with certain theoretical proposals, particularly those that grew out of Foucaultian expressions like "technology transfer" (Foucault, 2000, p.333), but also to my contact with empirical material on the case under analysis, such as the following statement by Luíz Cabral, PAIGC militant and leader: "he [Amílcar Cabral] spoke about the struggle in the same way that he would speak about agriculture" (Chabal, 1983, p.53).

Science and ideology in Cabralian studies

According to historians who have analyzed the colonial war in Guinea, one of the prime factors behind the PAIGC's political and military success was its skill in adapting to its environment. As Cabral's biographers would have it, among other *raison d'être*, this adaptability reflected the discernment of the biographee himself, a discernment that was refined over the course of his career. After he finished his bachelor's degree in 1952, with a thesis focused on the township of Cuba, in the Alentejo region of southern Portugal, Cabral spent the following years working in agronomy and returned to Guinea as assistant director of the Agricultural and Forestry Services (*Serviços Agrícolas e Florestais*). In 1953, he headed a small team that conducted a census of rural Guinea at the request of the Portuguese

government, which was thus following through on a pledge to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (Cabral, 1956), in turn part and parcel of the international pressure brought to bear on Portuguese colonialism following World War II. Cabral's biographers point to this survey as one of his most important experiences. Chabal (1983, p.48) writes: "The opportunity to travel all over Guinea and to talk to the villagers was a crucial experience for Cabral, who, having been educated in Cape Verde and Portugal, had until then little real knowledge of Africa." For around five months in 1953, Cabral and his small team traveled Guinea, gathering information and data to form a statistical series on the country's rural economy, while simultaneously acquainting themselves with local social dynamics and daily life. The knowledge of the land and people that Cabral gleaned through this experience would prove decisive to understanding the country's economic and social structure as well as its political and cultural circumstances, and during the war years this accumulated knowledge would play a hand in the military success of the PAIGC (Rudebeck, 1974; Borges, 2008). In its war strategy, the PAIGC combined military action plans with the backdrop of economic, social, and cultural networks that sustained the guerrillas and at the same time replaced the colonizing State in the governance of land and population, anticipating a form of postcolonial government. The PAIGC thus made surprising use of the personal contacts and knowledge acquired by its leader in the early 1950s, when he was an agronomist and not a guerrilla, at the service of the colonial State and not fighting colonialism.

This relation between the practice of scientific inquiry and political and military strategy invites us to ponder the overall question of whether types of knowledge and political action can be reconciled. It should be pointed out that the question has not stirred much interest among Cabral's biographers, not even those who delved more deeply into the meaning of his scientific training – the case, as mentioned earlier, of Patrick Chabal and also of Mário Pinto de Andrade and Pablo Luke Idahosa. In his biography, Chabal contends that it was Cabral's scientific training that accounted for his more practical than theoretical understanding of politics, an understanding that Chabal (1983, p.168) sees as more realist in nature: "He was basically a realist. His approach was empirical and pragmatic. He had been trained as a scientist and had worked for 15 years as an agronomist before committing himself fully to nationalist politics. This experience, and the practical approach to reality which it required, remained a dominant influence on his personality." If it is possible to concur with Chabal's interpretation up to a certain point, I diverge from him when he portrays science as a factor that divested Cabral of ideological influences, a type of influence that the biographer views as pernicious. Chabal's interpretation draws from an overly rigid separation between science and ideology, as if the distinction between things and words were replicated within the very domain of words themselves, based on the assumption that scientific terminology unveils reality while ideological categories veil it. This type of division effectively constrains Chabal's analysis of Cabral's scientific training. This is the case, for example, when Chabal points to Cabral's bachelor's thesis as a contribution that helped innovate the study of soil erosion, in that his analyses blended elements of the country's economic structure and its social structure. Yet Chabal ascribes the reasons for this blending solely to the scientific realm, as if genealogy could not consign science to any realm other than science itself. Chabal says (1983, p.39): "Although in parts of the thesis Cabral uses loose Marxist notions, what emerges most clearly

from the study is the emphasis on a proper scientific approach.” Chabal, who rejects the notion of any contamination between scientific terminology and ideological categories, argues that Cabral did not rely on abstract notions, which were plentiful in Marxism-Leninism and its jargon, but spoke instead of “economic, social, political, and cultural reality” (p.65). In short, Chabal (p.186) states that Cabral “conceived of theory as a description of reality rather than merely as a speculative exercise,” but the biographer himself shares this conception of theory and, accordingly, assumes that Cabral’s discourse is free of any ideological bias – as if the very act of breaking empirical reality into “economic, social, political, and cultural” were not in itself historically determined by a given scientific culture.

Furthermore, Marxist-Leninist ideology, in tune with Marx’s division between infrastructure and superstructure, was in no way a stranger to this same scientific culture. Consider how Mário Pinto de Andrade (1974) had analyzed the relation between types of scientific knowledge and political action in Cabral, even before Chabal published his biography. An Angolan intellectual, sociologist, and militant, Andrade was one of the first to write about Cabral, whom he knew well. In *A guerra do povo na Guiné-Bissau*, a small book released in Portugal in 1974 that comprises texts already published elsewhere, Andrade has the following to say about “Recenseamento agrícola da Guiné:” “in addition to the survey, the study undertook a deeper analysis of socioeconomic structures, identified the stage of social and cultural development, and revealed mechanisms of exploitation – in short, it uncovered historical reality.” He soon adds: “But [Cabral] could not have accomplished this endeavor if his knowledge and technique had not first been informed by a conceptual apparatus: ‘historical materialism’” (Andrade, 1974, p.20; emphasis in original). Let us pause to consider Andrade’s interpretation. On the one hand, like Chabal, Andrade maintains that “Recenseamento agrícola da Guiné” exemplifies a practice of knowledge that made it possible to access the analyzed reality. On the other hand, unlike Chabal, Andrade maintains that this knowledge is possible because of, and not in spite of, Cabral’s adherence to Marxism. In other words, for Andrade, historical materialism is less the name of an ideology than of a science. Like many followers of historical materialism, Andrade deemed the method scientifically superior to others, which he saw as falling prey to the ignominy of idealism and ideology.

We can in fact glimpse similarities between Chabal’s anti-Marxist positivism and Andrade’s positivist Marxism, as we can recognize a further concurrence: both detect signs of foreignism within ideology. Chabal says that one of Cabral’s virtues lies in the fact that he did not leave himself open to foreign models and ideas in his political line but instead drew from its own history; in Chabal’s (1983, p.142) own words, his ideology “relied essentially on its own history and not on foreign ideas or models”. Andrade (1974, p.VII), on the other hand, argues that it was under the influence of the Portuguese Communist Party (Partido Comunista Português, PCP), and informed by the ideological conceptions of a Eurocentric Marxism, that the PAIGC made the mistake of investing in urban struggle in the latter half of the 1950s, a strategy it was only to correct after the Pidjiguiti massacre.

It is only in the writings on Cabral published by Pablo Luke Idahosa, professor at York University in Canada, that we find a less paradoxical way of looking at science and ideology. In the opinion of Idahosa (2002), who published a seminal article entitled “Going to the people: Amílcar Cabral’s materialist theory and practice of culture and ethnicity” in the journal

Lusotopie, Cabral's agrarian writings were meant both to conduct a survey of a "culture of production" and to arrive at a "sociology of identity formation and development." According to Idahosa (2002, p.41):

although Cabral's descriptive-interpretative agronomic surveys came out of a need to depict the agrarian bases of the colonial commodity economy, it was also rooted in his own moral developmentalism, where technique is an instrument of popular welfare, and within which one can see both a culture of production and the foundations of a sociology of identity formation and development.

In Idahosa's reading, it is not merely scientific knowledge that allows one to access reality by imbuing political orientation with realism, as we saw in Chabal's interpretation. Rather, it is a certain political and ideological conception, which permeates scientific practice and carries it beyond any of its proposals. In the eyes of Idahosa, although Cabral's scientific work responded to a request by colonial power and was at the service of the colonial economy, his political ideology meant that his scientific work effectively satisfied concerns of a different political, or at least moral, tenor (Idahosa, 2002, p.36): "Cabral's compilation of facts and statistics obviously was not purely academic scholarship, but reflected his concern for his first-hand view of what he believed was the existing experiences of the colonised."

Keeping with Idahosa's perspective, we could say that scientific activity is determined by political and ideological purposes and counter-purposes. This circumstance forces scientific disciplines to become the object of a history that cannot be merely an internalist history of science, that is, a history in which the origin of more and better scientific knowledge lies solely in the development of scientific debate itself. The political and ideological factors in Cabral's scientific work must also be taken into account, starting with the fact that his familiarity with Marxism and his humanist leanings spurred him to bring the social and the economic to bear on a study of the natural environment. However, Idahosa's analysis also has important limitations. Specifically, he risks reducing the history of science to the history of struggles for political and ideological determination, forgoing the need for a history of the scientific field itself. In other words, in Idahosa's analysis, ideology determines science, while the opposite apparently is not as admissible. If, in the judgment of Chabal (or of Andrade), science serves as a means of revealing reality in crystal-clear fashion and of shedding light on political action in the sense of realism, liberating it from ideological obfuscation, then science, from Idahosa's perspective, tends to be guided by political and ideological orientations – as if the vicissitudes of the scientific field were a secondary chapter in the general history of these orientations.

I diverge from Chabal's and Andrade's interpretations as well as from Idahosa's. While I do appreciate the many empirical and analytical elements presented in their work, I would situate Cabral's scientific work within a dual frame: that of the history of science and that of the history of political ideologies. To this end, I raise such questions as: Does "pure academic study" also concern itself with "the real experiences of the colonized?" And I would answer this question in the affirmative. If colonial science sought to objectify natural resources and soil qualities, it nevertheless did not ignore what it saw as social and human in nature, as in recent work on science under the Portuguese Empire following World War II

(Castelo, 2012, 2014; Ágoas, 2012). Further, thanks to likewise recent work on the history of sociology in Portugal, by Frederico Ágoas, we also now know that agrarian studies formed one of the roots of the discipline of sociology in Portugal. Over the course of the century, including the period of the dictatorship, part of those studies shifted away from the practical administration of agricultural matters, first to analyses within what was already the realm of political economy and, second, to the development of disciplines like agrarian geography and rural sociology (Ágoas, 2010, p.199). It can be said that this tendency to “sociologize” a portion of agrarian knowledge found some expression in Cabral’s scientific journey. This is apparent in his bachelor thesis, a study that bore witness to a shift in the field of pedology, when the latter discipline took on ecological concerns, in the sense of concern not only for land, flora, and fauna but also for men and their social relations. It can thus be said that Cabral and his agrarian studies played a certain role in the broader process of the sociologizing of agronomy. In other words, in my view it is not exactly a matter of disagreeing but rather of agreeing with Idahosa (2002, p.43) when he says: “While there is never a one-to-one correspondence between production and culture for Cabral, he did want to assert that there is an important affinity between the way in which people produce and their outlook on life and the world.” But I would cast this affinity as a product of both Cabral’s political and ideological motivations and his professional and scientific path, as we will now see in regard to the genealogy of the Cabralian concept of people.

“People” in Amílcar Cabral

The following thesis gains shape in Cabral’s agrarian texts, written mostly in the 1950s: to the extent that the economic progress of Guinea depends upon the progress of agriculture, it depends not only on the “adaptability of a number of industrializable, high-yield crops to the agricultural and climate environment” but also on the creation of “conditions that in both human and physical terms allow the resources offered by the environment to be valorized and used integrally for the good of the progress of Guinea” (Cabral, 1959, p.349). Accordingly, writing in an article released in the journal *Agros*, published by the University of Lisbon’s School of Agriculture, Cabral (1959, p.350) also held that “the access of Guineans to technical agricultural learning in particular and to instruction in general” should be fostered, alongside “an agrarian structure, based on local traditions, commensurate with the progressive development of its populations.” In other words, looked at from Cabral’s agronomic viewpoint, questions that might be deemed strictly natural in tone had to be considered, but so too did the human and social facets of this nature, consequently requiring the technical training of individuals and the molding of the agrarian structure to local specificities.⁴

The desire for reform that inhabits Cabral’s agrarian texts may be regarded from two different angles. On the one hand, it can be taken in the context of the ethical role that he assigns to agronomists, which is clear when he states that these professionals “should work doggedly, against all obstacles, to raise the level of the life of rural populations” (Cabral, 1959, p.350). This notion about the role of the agronomist reveals a humanist conception of science and also of culture in general and technique in particular. On the other hand, the ambition for reform expressed in Cabral’s writings – which is the result of a humanist idea

that derives in part from a political and moral order (which we may deem either inherent to science, as in Andrade's analysis, or imposed on science, as in Idahosa's) – likewise evinces a more general process: a mounting incorporation into economics of social and human elements and of the scientific knowledge devoted specifically to the latter. In this light, we can say that when Cabral (1951, p.15) appealed to the human responsibilities of science and scientists, he was critiquing the intellectual who retreats from the world to cloister himself in an ivory castle (to borrow the terms of the controversial anti-Fascist intellectuals of the 1930s), as he was also signaling the growing entwining of the realms of political ideology, scientific knowledge, and economic production, an entwining that is further suggested by the flexibility and multifunctionality of certain concepts.⁵

It is precisely in one of Cabral's agrarian texts that he makes his first attempt to define the concept of people. In "Acerca da contribuição dos 'povos' guineenses para a produção agrícola da Guiné" (On the contribution of the Guinean 'peoples' to the agricultural production of Guinea), published in 1954 in the *Boletim Cultural da Guiné Portuguesa*, Cabral offers some thoughts on the rural survey that he led in 1953. He criticizes the fact that agronomic analyses in the field of pedology (the topic of his bachelor thesis) were too caught up in the primacy of territory-population and, for the first and quite likely only time, he tries to arrive at a definition of the concept of people. Cabral (1954, p.776) says it is not enough "to consider the factor 'population' when deducing differences in the contribution to the entire cultivated area," but that it is just as necessary to incorporate another factor, which he will call "people." Cabral (p.776) writes: "A 'people' with a given population can cultivate a larger (or smaller) area than that which is cultivated by another with a larger (or smaller) population. This suggests that it is important to study the features of family agriculture (agricultural technique, cultivated area, productivity) in order to ascertain the economic value of each 'people'."

The emergence of the word "people" in Cabral's agrarian writings is of no surprise to anyone who reads his discourse in the light of its most immediate political and ideological context. Most especially in the 1940s, "people" is a word that came to the fore in the semantic universes circumscribing Cabral's political life. The word is notable in the framework of the various anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles that marked the period immediately following World War II, as in the expression "people's war," associated with Chinese Maoism. It also became one of the most oft-heard designations for the political subject in anti-fascist discourse in Europe, as apparent in the brief statistical record on the case of Portuguese Communism that I compiled, where the word "people," alongside others like "democracy," figures larger in the years immediately following 1945.⁶ This can be understood as an evolution of consent, and even a deliberate one at that, if we take note of the changes that transpired from the first to the second half of the twentieth century in the heart of Marxist theorization concerning national questions. In 1908, the Marxist Rosa Luxemburg (1988, p.39) wrote:

When we speak of the 'right of nations to self-determination,' we are using the concept of the 'nation' as a homogeneous social and political entity. But actually, such a concept of the 'nation' is one of those categories of bourgeois ideology which Marxist theory submitted to a radical re-vision, showing how that misty veil, like the concepts of the 'freedom of citizens,' 'equality before the law' etc., conceals in every

case a definite historical content. In a class society, 'the nation' as a homogeneous socio-political entity does not exist. Rather, there exist within each nation classes with antagonistic interests and 'rights' (emphasis in original).⁷

In the latter half of the twentieth century, on the other hand, we find the following definition in Álvaro Cunhal (1974, p.214), chief leader of the PCP:

In the era of imperialism, Lenin took Marx and Engels' expression ['Workers of the world, unite!'] and recast it as 'Workers and Oppressed Peoples and Nations of the World, Unite!' Today, as the anti-imperialist struggle spreads across the world, deposing the colonial system, Lenin's words are especially opportune. Through the national liberation movement, the unity of the international working class and of its greatest creation and fortress – the socialist camp – will lend undefeatable momentum to the forces of revolution (emphasis in original).

In this context, it is reasonable to presume that when Cabral utters the word "people" (and the same could be said about other anti-colonial militants), he is embracing the strategy of national political mobilization that found footing in nineteenth-century liberalism and twentieth-century European Marxism, both of which endeavored to identify a subject that was at once unifying – that is, capable of merging a nation's internal ethnic and social differences – and fracturing – that is, capable of sustaining a nation against an external enemy (Neves, 2008, 2009).

Similarly, Cabral's use of the word "people" reflects the echo of literary movements and projects like the Cape Verde magazine *Claridade*, first released in 1936 (Alberto Carvalho, 1998). But, as we have seen, it was precisely within the framework of his agrarian studies that Cabral worked to arrive at a conceptual definition of people. Science reveals itself here as a valuable arena for determining the names of the collective subject and for debating the significance of these names. In the specific case of agronomy, words like "population" and "people" were sometimes brought into play as a way of objectifying and subjectifying social relations and/or relations within a national community. In this particular area, Cabral's positions cannot be disassociated from coeval developments within pedology in the colonial context – and especially the international role of studies by his teacher Botelho da Costa (Sousa, 1971) – just as they should also be viewed as fruit of a longer-running historical process. Take the case, also studied by Ágoas (2010, p.298), of the scholarship conducted at the University of Lisbon's School of Agriculture in the 1920s, in which the demographic connotation of population is complemented by a "demological" connotation that ties in with an economic and social dimension, which is strictly naturalist. In the article "População: importância do seu estudo dentro da economia" (Population: the importance of its study within economics), printed in 1927 in the institute's student magazine, *Agros*, the student author wrote: "Agriculture is effectively one of those branches in which man, in order to exercise his activities, 'needs to better and more deeply know the environment in which he lives and the population that lives therein'" (Benoliel, 1927, p.130; emphasis in original). While still working with the concept "population," here we note the cry for a science aimed at the human and social factors in production, that is, for knowledge that advances simultaneously toward quantifying products and investigating the subjectivity of producers. Citing the 1927 article again: "What

is the main production factor? Who is the tireless organizer of circulation? Who regulates the division of production? Who, in short, is the obligatory consumer of the bulk of the wealth created through production, made available to him through circulation, and falling to him through division?" Here is how the question is answered: man, who is "an atom within the enormous, incomparable, complex whole that makes up the population, of this collective being with its own life, its movements, its periods of energy and of decline" (Benoliel, 1927, p.128-133). Finally, it should be noted that after Cabral defines "people" in his late 1950s agrarian writings, he re-infuses the term "population" with the meaning formerly reserved for "people." In a compilation of lectures given in 1969 to members, militants, and soldiers of the PAIGC, entitled *Análise de alguns tipos de resistência* (Analysis of some kinds of resistance), Cabral (1975, p.34) states that "every land has its own natural wealth and population, which is a land's greatest wealth, in that it develops its capacity to work and produce its natural wealth, extant or potential, and the means of producing."

Certain important features of the Cabralian concept of people must thus be highlighted. As in other types of anti-imperialist nationalisms, like streams with affinities to Maoism, Cabral's understanding of people displays an identity that is at once cultural and political. Similar to the distinction between civil model and ethnic model of nation, drawn by Anthony Smith (1986) and others, the concept of people is often assigned primarily either a political or a cultural meaning. In the former case, there is a tendency to understand "people" as the locus of the sovereign will of the nation and therefore defined in the figure of the citizen, while in the latter the "people" are seen as the genuine depositary of national tradition and therefore ascribed to the figure of the peasant (Leal, 2010). In Cabralian discourse, the two meanings tend to coincide, so that the political subject is found precisely in the countryside. It is in this sense that we can speak of the politicality of the Cabralian idea of culture.

But what may well distinguish Cabral's "people" is precisely the fact that his conception grows out of practices of conceptualization typical of agrarian knowledge, lending his understanding of people not only a political and cultural meaning but an economic and social one as well. In this respect, it is particularly meaningful that Cabral (1954), in some passages of his agrarian writings, drives home the fact that he is not talking simply about "people" but about "peoples," in the plural. From the perspective of a history of political ideas, we could say that Cabral's use of the plural pays witness to his intention to define an ethnic diversity that combines with the idea of national unity, blending cultural specificities and political unity. Yet the plural might also be understood as indicative of a strategy for mobilizing production that demands an analysis of the workings of the various parts of society as a complex. Take Cabral's call to bring agro-economic projects in line with local traditions. His ambition here stemmed from humanist concerns, like the need for innovation to respect tradition, but also from the desire to make certain the various dimensions of human life and society have a bearing on the productive process.

It is also here that Cabral's idea of culture gains singularity. Effectively, this idea does not only address political recognition but is also sensitive to economic and social change. The Cabralian idea of culture contains political and national meanings that are quite often emphasized in studies of Cabral, but economic and social meanings can be detected as well. As Cabral (1999, p.141) was later to state, "the liberation movement [must] place primordial

importance not only on the general features of the culture of the dominated society but also on the features of each social category,” for “it is there that culture achieves its fullest meaning for each individual: understanding and integration with one’s environment, identification with society’s basic problems and aspirations, acceptance of the possibility of change in the direction of progress.” This process of “socializing” and “economizing” culture was one of the reasons why Cabral (1999, p.133) at times warned about culturalist temptations: “identity is not an immutable quality, precisely because the biological and sociological data that define it undergo constant evolution.”

Final considerations

References to “people” often hold a central place in Cabralian studies. Expressions like “*guerra popular*,” “people’s war,” and “going to the people” form the titles of works by scholars like Patrick Chabal, Mário Pinto de Andrade, and Pablo Luke Idahosa. It is, however, less common for attention to be paid to the historicity of the emergence of the concept of people in Cabralian discourse. This was the issue addressed in the second half of the present article, where it was shown that this conceptualization reveals how the paths of ideological and scientific meanings intersect. We must understand what separates the realms of science and ideology but also what they have in common. At the same time, as mentioned in the first part of the article, Cabralian studies must pay greater heed to the context of the economic incorporation of scientific knowledge, of which Cabral’s political and cultural thought is part.

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NOTES

¹ Dadda (1993) presents an analysis that places less weight on the figure of Cabral in the overall panorama of the anti-colonial struggle in Guinea. Two recent biographies related to Cabral are also worthy of note: Tomás (2007) and Sousa (2011). Although they add little to the debate on the topic at hand in the present article, they provide other, new information on a number of aspects of Cabral’s life.

² See also the recent book by Rabaka (2009), in which Cabralism is placed in preferential relation to what the author calls the African tradition in critical thought.

³ My interest in Cabralian studies grew out of my interest in Cabral himself and my consequent need to delve more thoroughly into scholarship on him. The gamut of biographical interpretations that I encountered during this pursuit aroused in me yet another historiographic interest. The present article is in part a reflection of this circumstance, which I intend to focus on more specifically in a future article, along the lines of existing meta-biographical research, for example, that regarding Alexander von Humboldt (Rupke, 2008) and Oliveira Martins (Maurício, 2005).

⁴ For a rather thoroughgoing description of Cabral’s agrarian writings, see Paulo Campbell Franco (2009, p.113-137).

⁵ Carlos Cardoso engaged in a similar exercise regarding the concept of development in Cabral. Cardoso (2005), however, does not undertake a genealogical analysis of the concept but filters Cabral’s thought through the concept of development as defined by the United Nations.

⁶ An analysis of the headlines of all news reports published from 1930 to 1974 in the newspaper *Avante!*, historically the main organ of the PCP, revealed a sharp upswing in the use of the word “people” in the years

immediately following World War II. For example, while the word appeared in 2.38% of the headlines in 1936, by 1946 the figure had risen to 9.18% and hovered there until the close of the decade.

⁷ English sourced from: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1909/national-question/ch01.htm>. Access: 5 Dec. 2016.

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