



## **Welcome message to the readers of the *Research Bulletin* of the Antonio de Noli Academic Society**

EDITORIAL, By Marcel Balla, M.A. (Boston University)

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*This is the first editorial to be published in the Antonio de Noli Academic Society Bulletin so I thought it would be a good idea to give some background of the society with regard to the objectives of our research publication.*

I would like to welcome our readers to the *Research Bulletin* of the Antonio de Noli Academic Society. The society will focus on research that clarifies missing information about the discovery of Cabo Verde and its discoverer Antonio de Noli<sup>a</sup>.

The society believes that this period of history which began in the 15th century was a major period in world history, especially as it pertains to the development of western civilization before and after the discovery of America by Columbus. There were many developments that were undergoing dramatic evolutionary changes due to the impact made by the explorations of the sea under the leadership of Prince Henry the Navigator. These explorations continued after Prince Henry's death in 1460 by both Spain and Portugal.

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<sup>a</sup> A summarized account of the research aims of the Society is found in the Website of the Antonio de Noli Academic Society, Nr 5. Mission & Aims. *The Scientific aims of the society* [<http://adenoli.wordpress.com/mission-aims>].

Unfortunately much of this history has been written without a debate on the role played by Cabo Verde and Antonio de Noli. There may be many explanations for these omissions, for example, the Portuguese controlled the early history of the discovery period and for some unknown reason, they never really projected this phase of history into the classrooms of the world in the way that Spain did. Perhaps this is part of the Portuguese character, which has been ingrained in their psyche for centuries. This situation can be better understood, when we take into account the fact that very little information was available to the world about the discoveries made by Portugal until EXPO 98.

During the EXPO 98 exhibitions, new research had been produced that showed that Portugal had made many contributions to the discovery period that had gone without recognition over the centuries, while Spain was generally regarded as the most proficient sea power of this period. Once researchers started taking a closer look at Portugal, they realized that Portugal was more advanced than Spain during this legendary period of history and this helps to explain Portugal's conduct when the Treaty of Tordesilhas was made in 1494. In this treaty, most critics agree that Portugal had privileged information which allowed for the creation of Brazil as a Portuguese colony.

It may also be true, that there existed internal problems within the Royal Family of Portugal that may help to explain why different navigators were given credit for the discovery of Cabo Verde.

The best American encyclopedias, for example, had little or nothing to say about the discoverer of Cabo Verde in the mid 20th century. There are still other situations, whereby important Portuguese navigators simply disappeared from the contemporary writers publications during this period.

Diogo Cao was one such navigator, who discovered Angola and opened up the route to South Africa for Bartholomew Dias, in the 1480's and just disappeared from the history books without a trace.

Both of these navigators Cao and Dias were contemporaries of de Noli and directly involved in the history of Cabo Verde.

It seems that Spain was given most of the credit for much of the discovery period of history because of the accomplishments of Columbus. However, as we shall see, the fame and legends of Columbus were based on his tenacity to defy the mindset of the Portuguese Crown. Ironically, very little was said about the contrasts between Columbus' voyage in 1492 and that of Vasco da Gama in 1497/8.

This is a major issue that is currently being explored by researchers today. All indications are that the Portuguese Crown had very good reasons to deny Columbus funds for his request to sail west to the New World. Those reasons will be explored by this bulletin, because there are strong possibilities that Antonio de Noli may have been a very important factor in the decisions and attitudes of the Portuguese. And it is virtually a certainty, that Cabo Verde played a major role in this matter.

Naturally, history and historians have been focusing on Columbus, because, after all, he reached America, an accomplishment that despite all the controversy did in fact change the direction of world history. Little is said about Columbus and Portugal other than to say that he married a Portuguese woman who was related to the Royal Family from Madeira and that he learned his seafaring skills in Portugal while sailing on Portuguese ships.

Since American and world history was written without much reference to Portugal and almost nothing about Antonio de Noli, it becomes apparent that a major phase of history has been missing at the very beginning of the discovery period, decades before the advent of Columbus. It seems as though that due to the confusion of naming the discoverer of Cabo Verde and the date when it was discovered, it became sort of a non-event in historical terms and became merely a footnote in history, if it was mentioned at all. Many attitudes are now changing regarding Cabo Verde, because it now plays an important role in the world as an example of a poor nation that has evolved from its status as a poor nation to an emerging nation and is no

longer treated as a third world country stuck in permanent poverty, but rather as a poor nation that is making significant progress.

This new status brings new researchers to the archipelago to study its history and culture. This is an important factor in the development of the Antonio de Noli Academic Society. New revelations suggest that Antonio de Noli was a very interesting historical figure and warrants further research to **discover accurately who he was and define more accurately what in fact he accomplished**. These are some of the issues that the society will address.

There are many other areas of concern, such as claims being made by some writers and organizations about Cabo Verde however without documentation to support their arguments. All of these issues need clarification, if we are to get to the bottom of this investigation. Although the fact-based clarity which research has achieved on the issue of the navigator place of birth<sup>b</sup>, there are still the question of where did Governor Antonio de Noli die, and amid which circumstances. No documentation has been found to date.

All of these questions are important in understanding the history of Cabo Verde as well as the history of Genoa, Noli and many other nations as well. Researchers have been trying for centuries to uncover the mysteries of Columbus and they are still working on this project. Obviously, Columbus was a central figure in the creation of the New World and western civilization, but there has been very little interest in connecting him to Cabo Verde or Antonio de Noli. There are good reasons to believe that Columbus may have played a role in Cabo Verde during the rule of de Noli.

The bulletin is open for scientific debate based on rational investigations to pursue the process of cultural development, e. g., the development of the *Crioulo* culture and sociological and social anthropological factors in the base of cultural identity

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<sup>b</sup> See for instance manuscripts and sources described in Ferrada-Noli, Rosetti and Brigati (2010) "Returning to Italy. A research study on the early descendants of Antonio de Noli in Cesena and Genoa 1497 – 1597" *Research Bulletin of the Antonio de Noli Academic Society*, Genoa, Italy, 2010. Vol. 1, Nr 3, p. 79-97

formations based on a societies own values and cultural production. It will also discuss the impact that the discovery had for Cabo Verde and the New World. This impact will be discussed from the very beginning of the discovery of the islands to the present day; due to the evolutionary aspect of this impact; which can be seen in the cultures in many areas of the world today.

Hopefully, those scholars who are working directly with institutions that are involved with the teaching and research of Cape Verdean history will find it in their interests to share their knowledge with the society in order to refine this history. Some other issues that need to be explored are:

1. The question of slavery and the role played by Cabo Verde during and after the rule of de Noli.
2. Accounting for those products such as animals and plants that were believed to have been cultivated and tested in Cabo Verde before being transferred to America. There are many such examples including cotton, sugar cane, tobacco, palm trees and horses, to name a few.
3. What is the connection of England to Cape Verdean history, especially in the early years when England was colonizing America? Did Cabo Verde play a role in this phase of English history?

There are many other questions and issues that need to be examined in order that Cabo Verde should have a better representation of the historical values which are generally attributed to the development of the New World.

In the meantime, it should be noted that Cabo Verde is undergoing radical change in the treatment of its history. Ribeira Grande de Santiago is currently being excavated by archeologists to determine the past history of this old city which was the first European city below the tropics. It was also recently designated as a world heritage site by UNESCO and thus it is starting to attract international funds to learn the secrets of the beginning of the New World.

Finally it should be noted that Cabo Verde is commemorating 550 years of history, this year – 1460-2010. Thus, this becomes an excellent opportunity to learn more about this important phase of history and hopefully this bulletin will contribute to that end. Readers' comments are welcome, and they should address their comments per email to [adenolias@gmail.com](mailto:adenolias@gmail.com), or to the Society addresses indicated in the Website <http://adenoli.wordpress.com/>.