INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL
SOUNDSCAPE OF FLORES ISLAND

LUÍS HENRIQUES

I have been interested in studying the presence of music in my home village’s church for years. Since my specialty is the study of plainchant and polyphony in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries and now it is gradually focusing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was an important step in my musicological production. Access to some historical sources that I had previously overlooked gave me this long-awaited opportunity to perspective a new approach to the practice of music in Flores’s religious institutions.

Work has begun with the Convent of St Bonaventure in Santa Cruz, which was founded in 1642. I have contributed with a chapter (in Portuguese) for a collective studies book on the monastic equipments, their use and spirituality, on the first decades of the convent. After the patron – Santa Cruz’s vicar
Ignácio Coelho – left the land and payments to build a Franciscan convent in the village, and oratory was created by a confessor and a preacher who came from Terceira Island (the head of the Province). It was gradually built with dormitories, refectory and the church which was rebuild at least two times (the work is available at Humanities Commons). Besides the convent there were also three parishes in Flores at the time – Santa Cruz, Lajes and Ponta Delgada – from which the first one is now with some amount of documentation. Later, the parishes of Lomba and Cedros were also created at about the same time as that of the Fajãs.

The last decade of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century saw the creation of several new parishes in Flores Island, mostly because the existent three were could not handle the vast territory and the number of new villages. So, in 1706 the parish of the Fajãs was created, and in the second half of the eighteenth century a new and wider church was built in Fajãzinha.

Although not a collegiate church, historical references point towards the presence of a group of clerics that could secure the singing of daily offices and the solemnization of Mass with plainchant in the upper-choir of the church. This was particularly important during Holy Week.
The new Historical Soundscape studies have provided with an important opportunity for studying Flores’s soundscape from the sacred perspective. This will focus in the above-mentioned parishes with several articles I am now preparing to submit (all in Portuguese...) and, although no musical sources are known to have survived until this day, the practices and transposition of other well-referenced examples in the archipelago may contribute to the better understand of how things were done musically in Flores.