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## **“Things Haven’t Been the Same for 500 Years...”: Reflections on Integration and Identity Constructions of Angolans in Portugal<sup>1</sup>**

### SUMMARY

The article explores the integration and identity constructions of Angolans in Portugal as perceived by Angolan association leaders in the host country. The findings are the result of multi-sited ethnographic research and in-depth, semi-structured interviews carried out in Portugal during a four year period (a first phase in 2004–2005 with further follow-up periods in 2006 and 2007) with leaders of Angolan associations. Set within the frameworks of identification and integration concepts, the article starts by theoretically examining and reviewing these topics. The second part of the text is dedicated to the revision of Portuguese/Angolan relations through time, aiming to shed light on how centuries of contact between the two countries divided Angolan society, leading to the creation of Angolan sub-communities as is very much evident in the migratory waves of Angolans to Portugal. In the third part, the empirical analysis, the author first analyses host/guest cultural differentiation and host-society acceptance. In addition, strategies of integration and identity as preferred and adopted by the Angolan community in Portugal are examined. The author argues that, despite the 500 years of a turbulent relationship with Portugal and Portuguese culture, Angolans in Portugal feel that centuries of contact have left a cultural imprint on their identity. As a result, in the present day, these Angolans do not see themselves as Angolans exclusively, but are instead a hybridity of cultural references drawn from both their Angolan and Portuguese worlds, propagating that this is a process containing very positive aspects.

KEY WORDS: Angolans, Portugal, integration, identity, post-colonialism

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The intrinsic characteristics involved in migration processes, as well as the forms of integration activated by immigrants when settling into the new country, will influence the way they are inserted into and perceived by the country’s

<sup>1</sup> This paper results from the author’s DPhil thesis entitled *Immigrant Associations, Integration and Identity: Angolan, Brazilian and Eastern European Communities in Portugal* (Sardinha, 2009) concluded in 2007 at the University of Sussex and supported by a Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Fellowship.

social milieu. From one perspective, the new context immigrants find themselves in might lead to the alteration of identity patterns as a result of the adaptation experiences encountered in the “new” physical, social and cultural space (Kolm, 1980; Saint-Maurice, 1997). On the other hand, immigrants might be interested in preserving the elements that identify them as a collective group or community. It might be their goal to maintain their position as separate from “mainstream society”; to segregate themselves in order to preserve what defines them.

Integration and identity constructions as a process, however, are not always a one-sided affair – exclusively under the control of the immigrants. It is important to remember that aspects of an immigrant groups’ integration into a given host society equally results from the extent to which that host society will permit immigrants to insert themselves into the “mainstream” through its policies, programmes and integration initiatives. Different models of integration will often influence the degree to which a migrant community will either assimilate or separate themselves. Furthermore, the degree of ethno-cultural differentiation – including culinary, dress, and disciplinary habits, just to name a few – may create distancing between the immigrant group and the host society. Integration and identity structures – the key concepts under analysis in this study – are thus dependent on the above variables.

This study delves into these very issues, utilising Angolans in Portugal as the subject group to be analysed. The research findings result from fieldwork carried out in Portugal in 2004–2005 with further periodic follow-up stints in 2006 and 2007. The analysis is based on 27 in-depth, semi-structured interviews<sup>2</sup> with individuals at the helm of Angolan associations in Portugal,<sup>3</sup> focusing on issues of community insertion, differentiation, and the identity constructions of Angolans in Portugal. In providing a “privileged” voice to Angolan association leaders, I am aware that by maintaining this exclusivity, I am equally running the risk of presenting a one-dimensional argument, as the views of “rank-and-file” Angolan community members as well as members of the host society, may be obscured. However, it is important to point out the importance of these individuals as “community insiders”. Finding themselves in “middlemen” positions – between the Angolans and the host society – these individuals play crucial roles as intervening actors in defending immigrant rights and in promoting and lobbying for their communities’ well-being.

<sup>2</sup> A number of the interviewees also take up other civically active positions in Portugal both inside and outside the Angolan community, including holding political positions at either the local and national levels, active membership in trade unions as well as key players in anti-racist and development NGO’s. Outside of Portugal, some also maintain ties to Angolan political parties.

<sup>3</sup> This includes association presidents, vice-presidents and other individuals holding directorial posts.

That implies that they also possess an “inside track” when it comes to community concerns. This stands out as the foremost reason that the gathering of opinions from these individuals is fundamental.

That said, reflecting on narratives collected from carefully selected association leaders, this article sets out to address two central questions:

1. What patterns of integration and identity strategies are preferred and adopted by Angolans in Portugal?
2. How are Angolans socially and culturally different from Portuguese society and how are these differences accepted (or not) by the host society?

## 2. THEORISING IDENTIFICATION AND INTEGRATION

Identity is frequently viewed as an intangible concept, possessing various definitions and theoretical usages in academic circles. Through time, questions related to immigrant insertion have generated a number of theoretical perspectives. In the scholarly literature, concepts commonly looked at include: assimilation, incorporation, accommodation, acculturation, absorption, adaptation, inclusion, not to mention integration. Although I cannot trace and reconstruct (let alone deconstruct) the meaning and context of all these concepts here, I feel it is important briefly to framework the debate on the broader concept of integration, with which many of the concepts previously mentioned tend to overlap.<sup>4</sup>

In defining integration, Audrey (2000: 6) explains that it can be defined as the interaction between newcomers and an existing population through which aspects of culture are adopted and shared. It is argued that to a certain degree, integration entails the learning of, and adjustment to, society’s values, processes that bind the individual to society, creating belonging and loyalty. It is assumed that in order for integration to take place, the individual being integrated must be accepting of being integrated. Integration, however, is also dependent upon a number of conditions on the part of the receiving nation, best summed up as the “openness” of the host society to immigrants and the differences these individuals bring with them. An often popular way of expressing that a liberal society is “inhospitable to difference” is to say that it is “assimilationist” (Barry, 2001: 68-71). Assimilationist theory, however, is not always a positively viewed concept among theorists and researchers (Portes and Borocz, 1989; Soysal, 1994; Rex, 1996; Parekh, 2000; Barry, 2001). A common sentiment is that it’s often not clear what immigrants and minorities are to be assimilated into. As explained by Parekh:

<sup>4</sup> Various authors (Bauböck, 1998; Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000) explain that integration is a preferable concept precisely due to its flexibility, which permits it to function as an umbrella concept. For the purpose of this study, the concept will be applied in this sense.

*The assimilationist assumes that society has a coherent and unified cultural and moral structure, [which] is rarely the case. Although the moral and cultural structure of a society has some internal coherence, it is not a homogeneous and unified whole. It varies with class, religion and region, is made up of diverse and even conflicting strands, and consists of values and practices that can be interpreted and related in several different ways. The assimilationist ignores all this, and either offers a highly abridged and distorted view of national culture or equates it with that of the dominant group (Parekh, 2000: 197).*

Integration research traditionally concentrates on two distinct insertion trajectories: pluralist integration (right to ethno-cultural preservation) and assimilation. Within this debate, the reality is that the place of immigrant minorities in democratic nation-states is distinguished by vital contradictions that transverse the two trajectories. The failure to make immigrants into full citizens, undermines the inclusive principle of democracy and leads to divided societies while, at the same time, political inclusion without cultural assimilation may undermine cultural and national identity – a crucial factor of integration in nation-states. So while on one hand we are reminded that assimilation politics requires that immigrants abandon their cultural identity in favour of that of the host nations, on the other ethno-cultural identification of a group also plays a pivotal role in determining the degree to which immigrant minorities will interact and integrate into the receiving society.

So once in the immigration country, a pivotal question becomes: how are immigrant identities (re)formed? Hall (1992) defends that, more often than not, immigrants draw on different traditions, harmonizing old and new without assimilating or abandoning the past. It is also common for individuals to compound identities in order to satisfy their needs and objectives in the host society. As argued by Elliott and Fleras (1992: 148): “Our capacity for multiple identities, diverse loyalties, and numerous and overlapping memberships ensures an identification with the past over a range of situations and circumstances. It is the identification with select aspects of that cultural lifestyle – not the degree or intensity of involvement – that is crucial”. In order to cope with multiple worlds, “hyphenated identities” are thus created (Rex, 1987; Bhabha, 1994; Pang, 2000). As suggested by Rex (1987), hyphenated identities tend to highlight the problematic nature of collective attachments: the clash of interests experienced by translocal groups which arise from their multiple and multi-scale attachments and commitments. The stress is always on the hyphenation of ethnic identities to the exclusion of other forms of identification.

Summing up, we then take our cue from Faist (2000: 215) who argues that immigrant identities and culture “cannot be seen as baggage or a template, nor as something to be figuratively packed and unpacked, uprooted (assimilationists) and

transplanted (cultural pluralists)". Adaptation and identity make-up is dependent on a variety of variables ranging from external influences to the degree of differences among immigrants and the host societies, to the degree to which difference is welcomed. Some of these variables will be contemplated here in relation to Angolans in Portugal.

### 3. SETTING THE SCENE: A BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTE OF PORTUGUESE/ANGOLAN RELATIONS

In order to discuss Portuguese/Angolan relations as they exist today, it is first important to review past relations between the two. The Portuguese arrived in present-day Angola (at the time, the Kingdom of Kongo) in 1483, declaring Angola a Portuguese colony in 1575 and possessing power over the territory until 1975.<sup>5</sup>

During its long rule in Africa, despite the lop-sided population proportions throughout their African colonies (up until the 1900's the Portuguese white population of Angola accounted for less than one per cent of the population)<sup>6</sup> (Collelo, 1991), Portugal subscribed to the notion that the native population was obligated to assimilate naturally into Portuguese society and culture. The start of the twentieth century, however, would see the establishment of new conceptions of citizenship, rights and levels of integrations that would curb previous processes of assimilation. The first two decades would witness the passing of laws and regulations requiring a certain level of education to hold specific government positions, effectively excluding those of mixed race (*mestiços*) from accessing them. In 1921, the colonial administration divided the civil service into Portuguese and African branches and assigned *mestiços* and the very few African *assimilados*<sup>7</sup> to the latter, thereby limiting their chances of moving up in the social and bureaucratic hierarchy. This legal framework particularly led to considerable disaffection among *mestiços*, who, up till then, had tended to identify with whites rather than with Africans (Collelo, 1991).

Under the standards established by Salazar's *Estado Novo*,<sup>8</sup> legislation passed between 1926 and 1933 conceived a new conception of "African", establishing norms to be met by black Angolans in order to qualify for certain citizenship rights. The new legislation defined black Angolans as separate from the population, labelling them *indigenas* (*indígenas*). Under the new rules,

<sup>5</sup> Angola became an annexed Portuguese territory in 1655 and was incorporated as a province of Portugal in 1951.

<sup>6</sup> The mulatto population is not included into these numbers.

<sup>7</sup> *Assimilados* (the assimilated) defines those black Angolans who were educated and integrated into Portuguese society and culture.

<sup>8</sup> *Estado Novo* (New State) was the name given to the Portuguese authoritarian regime.

only those who learned to speak Portuguese, who took up qualified job positions in commerce or industry, and who behaved as Portuguese citizens were classified as *assimilados*. This ideology would be fortified during the 1950's and 60's through Gilberto Freyre's (1953a, 1953b) notion of *lusotropicalism*, based on the belief that the miscegenation among all the races would produce a unified and robust race and enable everyone to attain opportunities within society. *Lusotropicalism* would be further used by the Portuguese colonial regime to legitimize its claims in Africa against growing anti-colonial pressures. *Estado Novo*'s interpretation of *lusotropicalism*, as a justified ideology within Portuguese colonialism, was translated by the practice of assimilating black African elites into what Angolan scholar and political figure Mário de Andrade (1958, XII) termed "a second class of Portuguese", while those belonging to the black under classes would not have access to certain privileges and rights. This very form of segregating some, assimilating others, was a mere political manoeuvre from which the coloniser could legitimately guarantee privileges against the colonised peoples (Andrade, 1958; Neto, 1997). Furthermore, as Andrade wrote in 1955 in the article "Qu'est-ce que 'le tropicalismo'?"<sup>9</sup> (in Pereira, 2000), it was a way of maintaining a barrier between the levels of life of the two populations (assimilated and not), and a way of making sure that the political-economic power would not be disputed against the Europeans. In 1950, of an estimated African population of 4 million in Angola, there were less than 31,000 *assimilados* (Collelo, 1991).

Against the Portuguese supremacy, the first nationalist movements first appeared in the 1950's, making organised demands for rights, and initiating diplomatic campaigns throughout the world in the fight for independence. Refusing to accede to the nationalist's demands of separatism, the Portuguese regimen provoked the armed conflict known as the Colonial War in 1961.<sup>10</sup> After nearly a decade and a half of conflict, Angola officially gained independence on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, 1975, resulting from the 1974 coup d'état ("25<sup>th</sup> of April Revolution") in the metropole's capital city of Lisbon against the Portuguese regimen. That year Portugal's new leaders began a process of democratic change at home and started to grant its former colonies' independence.

In consequence of the "25<sup>th</sup> of April Revolution" and the resulting decolonisation process, major inflows of *retornados*<sup>11</sup> returned from the African colo-

<sup>9</sup> Andrade authored this paper under the pseudo name Buanga Fele.

<sup>10</sup> In this struggle, the principal protagonist were the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), founded in 1956, the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola), which appeared in 1961, and UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), founded in 1966.

<sup>11</sup> *Retornado* is the Portuguese word for returnee. Those individuals who returned to Portugal from the former African colonies are referred to by this term.

nies taking up residence in Portugal (Silva et al., 1984; Fonseca, 1990; Fonseca and Cavaco, 1997). With these never before seen migration flows involving Portugal and its now former colonies, it is estimated that anywhere between 500,000 to 800,000 individuals made their way to Portugal, two-thirds of whom came from Angola (Pires et al., 1987; Rocha-Trindade, 1995).<sup>12</sup> Being that since 1961, from a legal and theoretical perspective, all subjects of the Portuguese colonial space were citizens of Portugal, this implied that free mobility to the coloniser country was available for all. This would lead to major implications during the post-colonial period.<sup>13</sup>

Accustomed to being a country of emigration, Portugal thus began to witness the start of a migration turn-around towards the end of the 1970's (Baganha and Góis, 1999; Lopes, 1999; Baganha et al., 2002).<sup>14</sup> Continuing into the 1980's and 90's, immigration continued to witness a major increase, primarily of populations originating from the Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP).<sup>15</sup> Unlike the economically-driven immigration flows that characterised their colonial counterparts, however, Angolan emigration differed, being instead closely linked to social-political factors such as the social instability and climate of insecurity experienced in Angola (Possidónio, 2005). These socio-political factors and insecurities (incited by the process of decolonisation and the civil war that followed) brought about two different immigration waves to Portugal, composed of individuals of different classes, qualifications and citizenship rights. These two flows are defined as the *decolonisation wave* (post-1974) and the *civil war wave* (early 1990's),<sup>16</sup> the former made up primarily of *retornados* and, to a lesser extent, Luso-Angolans (*mestiços who either*

<sup>12</sup> For an in-depth analysis on the post-decolonisation integration of the *retornado* population in Portugal, see Pires et al. (1987).

<sup>13</sup> In respect to the concession of Portuguese nationality, from the legislative point of view, Law 37/81 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October and Law-Decree 322/82 of the 12<sup>th</sup> of August established the norms concerning the loss of nationality based on *jus sanguine* principals of citizenship. The principal logic behind this norm was to curb the migration tendency from the former Portuguese colonies to Portugal.

<sup>14</sup> The "25<sup>th</sup> of April Revolution" also came at a time when the oil crises of the mid-seventies led central and northern European countries to restrict the entry of new immigrants and even to encourage the return of immigrants and their families to their countries of origin (King, 1993; Malheiros, 1996). As a result, Portuguese out-migration to these countries, which had been numerically significant since the 1950's, was drastically reduced (Rocha-Trindade, 1995; Baganha and Góis, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> PALOP is a Portuguese acronym which means African Countries of Portuguese Official Language (*Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa*). The PALOP countries are: Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and São Tomé e Príncipe.

<sup>16</sup> Although quite insignificant in number compared to the other two groups, a third group could also be outlined, *university student immigration*, a continuous flow that dates as far back as the 1940's (Associação Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1997). Supposedly a flow of a temporary nature, many ended up staying in Portugal, integrating well into Portuguese society.

*possessed an Angolan mother or Portuguese father*)<sup>17</sup> and *indigenous* Angolans (possessing Portuguese citizenship but no family ties in Portugal); the latter consisting primarily of *indigenous* Angolan refugees escaping the ensuing civil war – a group, in large part, characterised as young and unqualified, with few or no resources or social network ties in the host country.<sup>18</sup>

Taking these sub-communities into consideration, distinct paths of insertion into Portuguese society are identified. While the *retornados* are, in large part, now well-integrated into Portuguese society, it is those who occupy the lower socio-economic ranks that experience the greater difficulties (primarily consisting of the Luso-Angolan element of the first wave and the indigenous Angolans belonging to both waves). Furthermore, although the greater part of the debate in this study focused on these latter individuals, it is also essential to point out that the association leaders spoken to for this study transverse all of the aforementioned sub-groups and classes with the Luso-Angolan categorisation being the most representative.

Lastly, it is also important to point out that, according to official statistics, as of 2008, there were 27,619 Angolans in Portugal (accounting for six per cent of the immigrant population) making this community the fifth most represented in Portugal after Brazilians (106,961 / 24 per cent of the immigrant population), Ukrainians (52,494 / twelve per cent), Capeverdeans (51,353 / twelve per cent), and Romanians (27,769 / six per cent). This number, however, is not representative of the Angolan community on Portuguese soil. For an unknown number of former residents of Angola residing in Portugal – above all *retornados* and Luso-Angolans – although they may be identified as Angolans, they hold Portuguese citizenship. In the present day, post-decolonisation statistical data is not clear when it comes to distinguishing those born in the former colony (Angolan naturals) and resident foreigners (Angolan nationals). In fact, this has not been the case since statistics information on this issue was collected by the Ministry of Internal Administration (MAI) and the National Statistics Institute (INE) in 1981 (Baganha and Góis, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> The concept of “Luso-Angolan” has been adapted from Machado (1994). This population is the result of high levels of racial miscegenation due to the significant number of marriages between native Angolans and Portuguese settlers. Possidónio (2005: 44) maintains that it was this group of individuals that laid the foundations for the migration flows from Angola to Portugal and who subsequently ensured the consolidation and persistence of these flows. The Luso-Angolan population is thus pivotal to my analysis due to the fact that this group has maintained close ties to Angolan immigrants.

<sup>18</sup> Traditionally characterised as being different from its PALOP counterparts, Baganha and her colleagues (2002) explain that these differences have steadily decreased, highlighting that the characteristics of the Angolan community have come to resemble the typical characteristics of the economic migration flows from Africa – young, over-representation of labour migrations, lower levels of formal qualifications and predominance of occupations in unskilled activity sectors such as construction, house cleaning and cafés and restaurants.



#### 4. GROUP DIFFERENTIATION: IDENTIFICATION AND HOST-SOCIETY ACCEPTANCE

Integration is a process to be carried out in different ways, often dependent on cultural and social characteristics, perceptions, values. This considered, the aims of this section are two-fold: first, to show how the Angolan community in Portugal is perceived as socially and culturally different from Portuguese society; second, how these differences are accepted (or not) by the host society, and if this acceptance (or lack of it) differs in relation to other immigrant groups.

Most interviewees expressed the opinion that socio-cultural differences between Angolans and the Portuguese are few. They took the view that the coloniser/colonised relationship that was imposed on Angolans during the 500 years in which the Portuguese were present in Angola, forced Angolans to assimilate:

*We had a Portuguese education and we weren't allowed to speak our dialects. That is why we lost our languages and our dialects... The schools were for the assimilated and for the Europeans. If you wanted to go to school, there was no other choice – you had to assimilate. The Portuguese turned us into Portuguese. That is why many Angolans don't care about being a part of an association of this nature (an Angolan association) because they don't feel Angolan. They have felt Portuguese all their lives; even before they came here they felt Portuguese...* (Interviewee 9, female).

According to many of the respondents, the most significant socio-cultural difference between Angolans and the Portuguese lies in the way Angolans express themselves in comparison to the host population: more communicative, outspoken and energetic. The Portuguese, in fact, are seen as being more morose:

*Angolans, in general, are very agitated people who like music, who like to speak in a loud manner and like to express themselves. Portuguese society, on the other hand, is melancholic; "Fado"<sup>19</sup> is an example of that. We have "Kizomba"<sup>20</sup> and "Kuduro"<sup>21</sup>, the Portuguese have "Fado". I think that says it all (Interviewee 14, male).*

<sup>19</sup> *Fado* is a Portuguese music genre characterised by mournful tunes and lyrics. *Fado* songs are universally sorrowful, often conveying messages of nostalgia, longing, sadness, pain, as well as happiness and love.

<sup>20</sup> *Kizomba* is a popular style of Angolan dance and music known for its sensual flow and mix of African rhythms. Although it originated in Angola, it was disseminated to other PALOP countries where other variations exist.

<sup>21</sup> *Kuduro* is characterised as an up-tempo, energetic music and dance from Angola influenced by other Afro-rhythms, namely: *sungura*, *kizomba*, *semba* and *ragga* music. Dance-wise, it takes its influences from *ragga*, hip-hop and other Afro-based music and dances.

In this quote, the interviewee utilised music and dance styles to make an analogy of how the two societies differ, referring to the Angolan population as sensual, up-tempo and energetic, and the Portuguese as sad and gloomy individuals, similar to *Fado* music. This outspoken way of being and behaving, however, is also perceived as a drawback to community integration. As another respondent put it:

*Angolans speak in a loud manner. They are an anxious people who make demands; they demand more rights, demand being treated equally, and so on. This makes them less favoured in a lot of sectors and in a lot of things in life (Interviewee 19, male).*

Now in order to exemplify the closeness of their community to Portuguese society, the respondents compared their own group to other PALOP groups in Portugal, highlighting that while the other communities maintain strong cultural traits that set them apart from the Portuguese, their own community does not possess any significant cultural elements that differentiate them. The following quotes illustrate this:

*... in comparison to the Capeverdeans for example, one thing you'll notice is that they are proud of their culture and there is more solidarity between them here in Portugal. They are different from us in the way that they are more culturally aware of themselves. They speak Creole to each other and they maintain that solidarity and close contact with each other. It's probably due to the fact that they're islanders cut off from other people and cultures. Angolans, on the other hand, aren't like that (Interviewee 12, male).*

*The Guineans, for example, if they're in a group of people and Creole is not the spoken language, they will back off from that group. They identify with Creole more so than they do with Portuguese. If there are two of them in a group they will speak Creole among themselves. Also their religious faith is very different which also sets them apart (Interviewee 13, female).<sup>22</sup>*

Even though the interviewees considered socio-cultural differences (in comparison to Portuguese ways) to be quite low when compared to other PALOP communities, when it comes to the acceptance of Angolans by the receiving society, quite the opposite is expressed. The coloniser/colonised mentality that persists, combined with perceptions and stereotypes held by the Portuguese towards Angolans, was brought up by one particular respondent to explain how Angolans are not well accepted:

*Portugal and Angola – because of decolonisation; because the Portuguese (residents) were expelled from Angola – had their backs turned to each other during*

<sup>22</sup> It is estimated that 55 per cent of Guineans are Animists, 40 per cent are Muslims and the remaining five per cent are Christians.

*the war. The Portuguese returned from Angola feeling very hurt. Angola was a goldmine for them. Since the independence of Angola, the mentality of a lot of Portuguese has been: 'what are you doing here if you didn't want us there?' This attitude has reflected on the treatment of the Angolan community here. Portugal started by not legalising many Angolan citizens here and those who were legalised were made to pay higher legalisation fees which they still do. Angolans are hit by a double discrimination here in Portugal. On one side they are seen as people from a country rich in resources. 'They don't need anything, so what are they doing here?' is what Portuguese people think. Obviously that is not true. We are one of the poorest countries in the world. Then we are discriminated against for having the reputation of being vain – that we don't like to work – and because of that we are stereotyped and employers will prefer workers from other countries (Interviewee 16, male).*

This quote refers to the Portuguese stereotype of Angolans as not being disciplined workers, a label that has been strengthened by the coming of other immigrant groups who compete in the similar job markets (e.g. construction and domestic labour) and are positively viewed as conscientious and hard workers. In turn, it is felt that this has created further discrimination towards the African populations in general:

*We don't like to see ads in newspaper that say: "Worker needed for this or that job, Eastern European preferred". That is just saying they prefer the worker to be white. It has nothing to do with what that worker can or cannot do. Africans, and especially Angolans, are branded more so than Brazilians or Ukrainians when it comes to their socio-economic integration. The Portuguese now prefer them to us (Interviewee 12, male).*

This extract mentions yet another variable seen as a drawback to community acceptance – skin colour. Racist and ethnocentric attitudes become a factor when the host society, or certain sectors of it, does not allow minorities to assimilate and compete on equal footing (Rocha-Trindade, 1995). Consequently, Africans suffer the consequences of racist attitudes; something "white immigrant communities" do not suffer.

Moreover, when it comes to the treatment of Angolans by Portuguese society, the representatives feel that their community is at the bottom of the hierarchy when compared to other immigrant groups:

*I can point out various types of differences: first, anything of good the Eastern European community does of good is news. The Calouste Gulbenkian Founda-*

*tion now works for the equivalency of academic diplomas for this population<sup>23</sup> when we Angolans sent out thousands of students to universities in the former Soviet Union, Cuba and other places, and our community never got this treatment here in Portugal. The Africans are now trying to ride on the coat-tails of the Eastern Europeans. As well, it has now become fashion to provide language classes for Eastern Europeans but there has never been any preoccupation concerning the Africans here that don't speak Portuguese. With the Brazilian community, there is more tolerance and why? Because it's the land of soap operas, the land of the Brazilian accent which is sweet and cute. They even get their own legalisation process like they're different from everyone else in this situation. With the Capeverdean community as well, there is a differentiated treatment when compared to other PALOP countries. They are the only PALOP country who gets to vote in local elections,<sup>24</sup> there's been all this talk lately of having them join the EU, and it's well known that they were "the right hand of the Portuguese during colonialism" (Interviewee 26, male).*

It is therefore expressed with some bitterness that the special attention given to more recently arrived immigrant groups has never been given to the Angolan community in Portugal. This is exemplified in the way Portuguese society gives preferred treatment to other groups through the setting up of special accords, rights and programmes.

To conclude this section, and with the aim of creating a bridge to the section that follows, I ask the question: how can these responses be interpreted? A hasty reading of the analysis provides a litany of stereotypes, clichés, prejudgments and jealousies which may or may not be valid. Accordingly, I do sustain that these perceived differences and opinions concerning community acceptance are of particular importance when it comes to the integration of third-country nationals and should be taken into consideration by all parties involved – immigrants, host society institutions, etc. – especially when it comes to formulating service strategies or designing integration programmes. Additionally, it is also essential to question just how these perceptions, differences, prejudgements, etc. might end up formulating or influencing identity strategies. The next section delves into this line of enquiry.

<sup>23</sup> The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation along with the Catholic Church organisations *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* and the Jesuit Refugee Services, in collaboration with the Lisbon Faculty of Medicine, Fernando Fonseca (Amadora-Sintra) Hospital and the Lisbon Superior School of Nursing Francisco Gentil Pole, with the financial backing of the EU Equal Community Initiatives Programme, initiated, in 2002, two professional integration programmes aimed at Eastern European doctors and nurses. These programmes are known as the Professionalisation of Immigrant Doctors Support Project (*Projecto de Apoio à Profissionalização de Médicos Imigrantes – PAPMI*) and the Immigrant Nurses Professional and Academic Qualifications Equivalency Project (*Projecto de Equivalência de Habilitações Académicas e Profissionais de Enfermeiros Imigrantes – PEHAPEI*).

<sup>24</sup> This is owed to a reciprocity agreement between Portugal and Cape Verde.

## 5. IDENTITY STRATEGIES: ASSIMILATION VS. PRESERVATION

At first glance, assimilation and identity preservation they may appear to be opposing target objectives. However, with further scrutiny, it becomes a matter of fact that both are coping mechanisms that may be co-opted to play equal roles in the immigrants' survival in the new society (Jenkins and Sauber, 1988). Taking this point into consideration, I set out to explore patterns of integration and identity strategies as preferred and adopted by Angolans in Portugal. I presuppose *identity preservation* and *assimilation* as being two extreme categories of integration: preservation signifying retaining one's socio-cultural identification and the core elements and competences of that culture; assimilation implying the acquisition of the core elements and competences of the culture and society to which immigrants migrate.

In order to secure comparable responses on adaptation strategies, I used as a measuring tool a list of 14 fixed items in the interviews carried out, and encouraged debate around these very topics. These consisted of the seven items assumed as being related to identity preservation:

1. retaining native language and/or way or speaking,
2. retaining cultural forms,
3. passing on customs and language of the native country to future generations,
4. passing on customs and culture to the host society,
5. celebrating Angolan commemorative days,
6. belonging to an Angolan association,
7. maintaining close relations with other Angolans,

and seven related to assimilation:

1. learning (or adapting to) Portuguese as it is spoken in Portugal,
2. adapting to Portuguese cultural forms,
3. celebrating Portuguese commemorative days,
4. getting involved with Portuguese organisations,
5. blending socially and culturally into Portuguese society,
6. obtaining Portuguese citizenship,
7. voting in Portuguese elections.

The respondents were asked to check on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 4 how important they felt each item was for their community members.<sup>25</sup> The legend in

<sup>25</sup> I am aware that a discussion based on scale score measurements of identity preservation and assimilation, in this case, has some limitations. Two points of criticism are worth highlighting: first the

response to the items was: 1 = not important, 2 = moderately unimportant, 3 = moderately important, and 4 = very important. Although the items were presented in a counter-balancing manner in the interview schedule, I analyse them here according to their functions, either as an “identity preservation” item or an “assimilation” item (as listed above).

Table 1 outlines the mean scores of the items listed as well as the mean scores under the two category areas – identity preservation and assimilation. In a general observation of the mean scores (3.10 for identity preservation and 3.59 for assimilation), what becomes clear is the fact that respondents scored both identity preservation and assimilation in the range of “moderately important” to “very important”, responses that might at first sight be contradictory. A closer look at the individual items reveals a number of particularities. For example, I draw attention to the higher averages under the “assimilation” items such as learning the Portuguese language, adapting to the cultural forms and patterns of the host society, blending in socially and culturally with members of the host society; this in comparison to the desire to retain the native language and/or way of speaking, passing on the customs and language of the native country to future generations or the importance of maintaining close relations with other Angolans. Although identity preservation and assimilation are seen as important, assimilation is given greater importance in these contradictory items. Moreover, worth highlighting is the importance given to obtaining citizenship and voting rights, seen as important variables in becoming equals in the receiving society.

*Table 1: Identity preservation and assimilation item mean scores*

<b>“Identity preservation” items</b>	
Retaining the native language and/or way of speaking	3.07
Retaining cultural forms	3.30
Passing on the customs and language of the native country to future generations	3.19
Passing on customs and culture to the host society	2.93
Celebrating Angolan commemorative days	2.89
Belonging to an Angolan association	3.11
Maintaining close relations with other Angolans	3.19
<b>Overall mean score</b>	<b>3.10</b>

sample can be considered too small being that there were 27 interviewees; second the ethnic leaders are asked to reflect on their community, this as opposed to asking community members directly.

<b>“Assimilation” items</b>	
Learning (or adapting to) to Portuguese as it is spoken in Portugal	3.85
Adapting to Portuguese cultural forms	3.70
Celebrating Portuguese commemorative days	3.30
Getting involved with Portuguese organisations	3.11
Blending socially and culturally into Portuguese society	3.74
Obtaining Portuguese citizenship	3.74
Voting in Portuguese elections	3.70
<b>Overall mean score</b>	<b>3.59</b>

But what factors and reasons serve to explain the greater assimilation tendency? These can be explained by aspects pertaining to *time* and *space*. First, the respondents feel that their communities' assimilation into Portuguese society is a process that has been occurring for centuries (since Angola became a Portuguese colony). Second, the immigration process – with many having been in Portugal since the 1980's and 1990's, engaging themselves with issues pertinent to their integration into the host society – has led many to feel that they have become “more Portuguese” and “less Angolan”. Thirdly, a general consensus among the leaders is that the majority of Angolans don't think of returning to Angola, preferring instead to make their lives in Portugal. Expanding on these reasons, one interviewee explained the following:

*(...) many have been here a long time; they no longer feel the problems or issues of their homeland. When they want to eat muamba, they eat muamba; it is here for them. The issues of their homeland become weekend conversations held around a few drinks, but they are no longer problems for them. This is because their version of Angola was the Angola that existed in the 60's or the 70's, different from the way Angola was in the 80's and 90's; the way it is now. From the moment that an individual leaves his homeland, his homeland becomes part of his past and the longer that person is away, the vision of his homeland becomes diluted. If I've been away from my homeland for a decade I know less about it than the Portuguese tourist who just returned from there last week. We have mental images of the way it used to be: there was this field there and there was that house over there, but they haven't seen that field or that house in years, so who knows, maybe that field and that house aren't even there anymore. So “my Angola” now only exists in the festivities I go to, in the food I eat once in a while, and in the stories of the past, but I no longer live the dramas and the problems*

*that exist, that I know nothing about. Now we must forget our homeland and get connected to the battles here, with those we share our neighbourhoods with. We must incorporate ourselves in the battles for our new spaces, our neighbourhoods, our workplaces. Angola is music and dancing and food, and so every weekend we celebrate that. If you're poor, you celebrate it in the shantytowns, in the re-housing projects. If you belong to the bourgeoisie, they will recognise the same culture* (Interviewee 22, male).

The above description falls into what Elliott and Fleras (1992) coin “week-end ethnicity” or what Halter (2002) refers to as “the part-time indulger in ethnicity”. One’s ethno-cultural identity, in this case, becomes secondary to that of “everyday life” encountered in the host country – in the workplace, in the neighbourhood, where he/she lives, etc. Conversely, the ethnic culture becomes a recreational occupation to be enjoyed as a free-time activity. It is felt that, with the passing of time, Angolans have acquired certain practices and behaviours associated with those of the host country. Yet, beyond these assimilative tendencies, these immigrants have also retained an emotional relationship with their culture of origin. In this case, what actually exists is a voluntary affiliation with cultural symbols (Gans, 1996) when it comes to preserving the ethno-cultural identity. This affiliation works as a strategic resource that permits community members to negotiate and enrich their lives within a pluralistic environment. The continued ethnic bonds, according to John Rex (2002: 109), helps to provide immigrants with an emotional and moral home which protects them from a situation of *anomie*, this while giving them the organisational means for collective action in support of their rights.

Also worth noting from the above quote are the residues of class and race divisions created during Portuguese occupation of Angola, this caused by the white Portuguese ruling class’ control of who was assimilatable and who was not. For those considered “uneducated black Angolans”, this characteristic has continued through their lineage, carried on in the emigrant setting in Portugal. These are today’s poor Angolans who live in the shantytowns or re-housing projects. In addition, although miscegenation was the order of the day during the colonial era, not all *mestiços* benefit from the white side of their lineage, as not all possess the privilege of being born into a well-off family (Venâncio: 1996). The *mestiço population*, who may also be referred to as Luso-Angolans, have, therefore, transversed class divisions. Well-marked and defined by the societal groups that existed in Angola before 1974, it is felt that today these class differences are very much alive (Neto, 1997), as the defined heritage of Angolans in Portugal is still treated by some (above all, the bourgeoisie) with what Venâncio (1996: 17) terms “a regal nostalgia of tropical paternalism”.



In further analysing the question of identity strategies, it also becomes apparent that integration into Portuguese society (or lack of it) influences the way the strategies are swayed. Arguments presented by the interviewees tended to fall under what Schrover and Vermeulen's (2005) coin as "offensive" and "defensive" social integration strategies.<sup>26</sup> The "offensive" argument includes the integration side of the issue; calling for rights to legalisation, labour, housing, education, health, etc. The "defensive" point-of-view relates to homeland identity retention and ethno-cultural preservation, and the rights and freedom to transmit that identity. The general argument is that the "defensive" side of the equation will be given greater attention only if the "offensive" side is first resolved:

*It is difficult to live in a country and to ignore the culture of that country. The mentality of the Angolan community here is: "I am Angolan and that is my identity. At the same time I'm going to integrate and take advantage of what the host society has to offer". I think a lot of people will shed their identity, or at least not show it publicly if that means being accepted and gaining more rights (Interviewee 13, female).*

Accordingly, from an "offensive" standpoint, the integration models promoted by the interviewees are also what shape the integration tactics and demands made by community members. Key words in their intervention include: legality, equality, rights, acceptance and respect. If these key components to integration are not acquired and people are not viewed as equals, cultural identity and cultural preservation takes a "backseat" to these variables, perceived of being of greater value to the insertion process.

From the "defensive" viewpoint, the respondents stand firm on defending the freedom to maintain, practice and transmit ethnic identities. Feeling heavily marked by historical, colonial relations and often holding a bitter perspective concerning the past and the loss of many key cultural elements, a number of interviewees reflected on what 500 years of Portuguese presence in Angola did to their ethno-cultural identity, pointing out that the way the Portuguese went about assimilating Angolans into Portuguese society should provide a lesson on how *not* to integrate people:

*What Portugal tried to do during the 500 years they were in Angola should never happen. They did everything to assimilate the population into becoming Portuguese. That is impossible because that means cutting out our roots, and when you do that, people stop being what they are because they are forced, but don't become what you want them to be either because it's against their will.*

<sup>26</sup> Schrover and Vermeulen's (2005) utilise the offensive/defensive dichotomy to describe the two opposing roles carried out by immigrant associations.

*Who are we to try to change the way others are? (...) In South Africa they segregated people ... no mixing. In Angola they forced us into becoming Portuguese; to speak Portuguese in order to eradicate our languages. They did a good job. Many of our dialects (dialectos) are gone. That is a crime! (...)* (Interviewee 12, male).

This narrative echoes the consequences of *lusotropicalist* ideologies as applied by the Portuguese colonial presence in Angola and the subjugation of Angolan cultural components in the name of assimilation. As Neto (1997: 322) points out, *lusotropicalist* inheritances were not always imposed by colonial coercion. Often they were assumed voluntarily, as positive values, or as a way of removing colonial barriers. Thus, the voluntary eradication of identity traits was often utilised as a strategic weapon (Pang 2000), as the alteration of one's ethnic identity would be compensated with the acquisition of social promotion and specific rights.

In the present day, a variety of ways in which ethno-cultural identity issues should be handled were equally articulated, with the interviewees expressing a range of efforts to help maintain the community's ethnic identity. In large part, what was mutually agreed on was the importance of cultural freedom of choice, expression and transmission. Although ethno-cultural preservation is viewed as being important, also highlighted was the fact that ethno-cultural identity should not be viewed as a variable to be utilised as a defence mechanism to support community segregation. In fact, the general consensus is that the ethno-cultural identity and the elements that go into making up that identity is to be shared with society-at-large. Also highlighted is the importance of amalgamating different cultural elements in order to become a part of the whole, a process many feel has taken place and will continue to take place with the passing of time; going on from one generation to the next. To exemplify this argument, I cite a chosen excerpt – one respondent's perception of integration that defends the need for "*bits of assimilation*" within the frameworks of liberty:

*Integration has to be, on one hand, a bit of assimilation, such as the case of Angolans who have been here for a long time, that have assimilated their lifestyles, their values, their culture, into that of being Portuguese. This happens with time. People are also aware that they live in this society; that they have to behave according to the social patterns of this society. They must assimilate into those patterns and norms. But outside of those norms, they turn to their own culture and are proud of displaying that culture and the fact that they are Angolan and African. So they dress in their traditional clothing, organise their own spaces and environments with symbols of their Angolan and African origins. They practise and feel their identity without feeling threatened. They live within a Portuguese mass culture but preserve their own culture as individuals.*

*With time, there are integration dynamics that go through a process of assimilation and there are those that go through a process of cultural co-existence. We (the association) defend the freedom to have this choice; the freedom to bring individuals who share the same culture, or who respect that culture, together to celebrate it (Interviewee 27, male).*

Two additional points evident in the above statement are, first, the call for a division between the “Angolan or African world”<sup>27</sup> and the generalised “Portuguese world”, where the community member is a transient, free to circulate between the two; and second, the autonomy to identify or participate in a culture (or in certain elements of a culture) one may choose. It can thus be argued that a “dual identification” is, in large part, the favoured ideal. Taking “the best of what both worlds have to offer” was a sentiment echoed in various narrations, one that universalises what is most desired. Ultimately, what is advocated is the creation of “hyphenated identities” and, above all, the right to be able to acquire that hyphen.

Consequently, what emerges from this analysis may seem at first sight paradoxical. I refer to the parallel commitment of retention of ethno-cultural forms, while simultaneously supporting people to settle and integrate into Portuguese society. What is witnessed is neither a cut-and-dried rejection of Portuguese society, nor an open-armed espousal of it, while, simultaneously, the majority of the association leaders propose that the most effective route to contented settlement and active contribution to the host society via the fostering and promotion of their ethnic identity under a flag of equal rights, freedoms and respect. There is awareness that culture – and therefore identity – should not be unilateral but instead a trade-off of experiences and practices including both the immigrant groups as well as the society that hosts them.

Obviously various purveyors exist; different sets of loyalty and influences which will also ingrain themselves into the ethno-cultural make-up of an individual. Community members will thus end up acquiring “multiple subject positions” (Cohen, 1997). In the long-run, a homogeneous image of identity will end up being non-existent. With the cultural interactions that take place and the influence of this interaction in negotiating identity strategies, what is created is what Bhabha (1994) coins a “third space” of identity belonging, defined by the union of the multiple “worlds”. The “bits and pieces” taken, from the various identity options, come together to create this “third space”. The ultimate result is the amalgamation of the two primary identities: the ethnic identity alongside that of the host countries.

<sup>27</sup> The interviewees often referred to their African identity as much as their Angolan identity which, in this context, can also be perceived as a more generalised black identity. Reference to such a generalised categorisation is frequently driven by the way Africa is perceived by the people of the host country, who tend to view a common African or black culture or folklore tradition.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Within the kaleidoscope of issues relating to diversity discussed, two key issues emerge: first, the centrality of the twin concepts of identity and integration; second, the asymmetry of social relations and identification between Angolans and the host society. What seems to exist is that of “cultural closeness”, on one hand, and “socio-political distancing” on the other. Furthermore, Portuguese/Angolan relations have provided a case study marked with a turbulent history. Characterised by forced assimilation in the past and problematic integration processes in the present, these are undoubtedly key variables to consider when it comes to the differentiation and identity formation of Angolans in Portugal. Thus, while Angolan leaders feel that 500 years of Portuguese presence in the lives of their fellow countrymen have led to cultural proximity, variables such as political relations between the two countries, racial and class divisions, as well as lack of equal citizenship rights, it is felt have equally led to the disfavouring of Angolans in Portugal.

That said, I have attempted here to answer the question: what patterns of integration and identity strategies are preferred and adopted by Angolans in Portugal? First, even though assimilation and identity preservation may, at first glance, seem opposing goals, both are viewed as being simultaneously viable. Integration is seen as being part of Portuguese society in terms of equal rights and duties. When it comes to moulding identity, however, it is argued that immigrants shouldn't have to abandon their cultural roots in order to integrate into Portuguese society. The acquisition of components from both the ethnic and Portuguese cultures is felt to be idyllic. As Kivisto (2001: 568) states: “...migrants forge their sense of identity and their community, not out of a loss or mere replication, but as something that is at once new and familiar – a *bricolage* constructed of cultural elements from both the homeland and the receiving nation”. This is very fitting to Angolans in Portugal.

From the analysis of the findings, therefore, it is evident that retaining ethnic and/or national identity and seeking integration into the systems of the host country are not antithetical. If desired and achieved, both efforts may complement each other in the struggle for a satisfactory co-existence in the new environment. The majority of the respondents recognised the need for community members to adapt in order to survive, and to take up aspects of “being Portuguese” in order to do so. If a “hyphen” is to be used to amalgamate the “double-identity worlds” the immigrants find themselves in, however, it is also important to contemplate to what extent a hyphenated identity may be utilised for the purpose of systemic identification – for the purpose of acquiring survival resources – more so than for immigrants to truly define themselves.

In conclusion, Portuguese/Angolan relations have provided a case study marked with a turbulent history. Characterised by forced assimilation in the past and recent problematic integration processes between the two societies, undoubtedly these have been highlighted as central factors when it comes to identifying and debating differentiation and identity formation strategies of Angolans in Portugal. Accordingly, drawing on these issues, I have sought here to draw some conclusions that will hopefully prove useful in understanding the insertion and well-being of Angolans in Portuguese society.

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João SARDINHA

## »Stvari su se promijenile u petsto godina...«: razmišljanja o integraciji i izgradnji identiteta Angolaca u Portugalu

### SAŽETAK

U članku se istražuju integracija i izgradnja identiteta Angolaca u Portugalu onako kako to vide voditelji angolskih udruženja u zemlji primitka. Nalazi su rezultat multilokacijskoga etnografskog istraživanja i dubinskih, polustrukturiranih intervjuva vođenih u Portugalu tijekom četverogodišnjeg razdoblja (prva faza od 2004. do 2005. te tijekom 2006. i 2007.) s voditeljima angolskih udruženja. Postavljen unutar okvira identifikacijskih i integracijskih koncepata, članak počinje njihovim teorijskim propitivanjem i pregledom. U drugom dijelu daje se revizija portugalsko-angolskih odnosa tijekom vremena, čiji je cilj objasniti kako su stoljeća dodira između dviju zemalja podijelila angolsko društvo i dovela do stvaranja angolskih podzajednica, što je posebice vidljivo u migracijskim valovima Angolaca u Portugal. U trećem dijelu, empirijskoj analizi, autor najprije analizira kulturne različitosti između zemlje podrijetla i zemlje primitka te kako društvo zemlje prihvaća doseljenike. Nakon toga istražuje strategije integracije i identiteta kojima angolska zajednica u Portugalu daje prednost i koje je usvojila. Zaključuje da usprkos petsto godina turbulentnih odnosa s Portugalom i portugalskom kulturom, Angolci u Portugalu osjećaju da su stoljeća dodira ostavila kulturni biljeg na njihov identitet. Posljedica je toga da danas Angolci ne vide sebe isključivo kao Angolce, nego su hibrid kulturnih odnosa proizašlih i iz angolskoga i portugalskog svijeta. Autor smatra da je to proces s vrlo pozitivnim aspektima.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: Angolci, Portugal, integracija, identitet, postkolonijalizam

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## “As Coisas não têm sido as Mesmas em 500 anos...”: Reflexões sobre a Integração e Construções Identitárias dos Angolanos em Portugal

### SUMÁRIO

O artigo explora a integração e a construções de identidades de angolanos em Portugal recorrendo às perspectivas expressas por líderes de associações angolanas presentes no país de acolhimento. Os resultados apresentados resultam de uma pesquisa etnográfica multi-situada, recorrendo a entrevistas semi-estruturadas realizadas em Portugal durante um período de quatro anos, (um primeiro período decorreu entre 2004-2005, a que se seguiram fases de aprofundamento entre 2006 e 2007) com líderes de associações angolanas. A argumentação recorre aos conceitos fundamentais de identificação e integração, que serão teoricamente examinados e debatidos no início deste artigo. Uma segunda parte do texto é dedicada a uma breve revisão das relações Portugal/Angola em termos temporais, tendo por objectivo dar a conhecer como os séculos de contacto entre os dois países dividiu a sociedade angolana, conduzindo à cria-



ção de sub-comunidades angolanas evidente nos fluxos migratórios para Portugal. Na terceira parte, a análise empírica, pretende-se, em primeiro lugar, analisar as diferenciações culturais bem como os processos de aceitação por parte da sociedade anfitriã. Em segundo lugar, avalia-se as estratégias identitárias e de integração adoptadas pela comunidade angolana em Portugal. Argumenta-se que apesar dos 500 anos de uma relação turbulenta com Portugal e com a cultura portuguesa, os angolanos em Portugal sentem que os séculos do contacto deixaram uma marca cultural na identidade angolana. Em consequência, os angolanos em Portugal hoje em dia não se vêem exclusivamente como angolanos, mas antes um resultado algo híbrido de referências culturais angolanas e portuguesas, propagando que este é um processo com aspectos positivos.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Angolanos, Portugal, integração, identidade, pos-colonialismo