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## Portuguese in the cane: the racialization of labour in Hawaiian plantations

Cristiana Bastos

## SAILING BEYOND EMPIRE: THE PORTUGUESE AS A LABOUR FORCE

The identification of the Portuguese as intrepid sailors crossing oceans and bridging the world, as praised in Camões' epic poem *Os Lusíadas* (The Lusíadas), has been central to a historical narrative that merges sea travel, trade, conquest, knowledge, empire and nation. Yet sailing, I shall argue in this article, was also about a variety of endeavours other than opening the way to empire. Sailing could also be embarking as a stowaway, travelling immense distances on improbable fishing boats, joining the crews of passing whalers, being kidnapped ashore, enslaved, enduring the galleys or being sent off to faraway plantations as labour. More often than not, sailing overseas was a way to escape poverty, abuse, oppression, misery and distress. And that – sailing away from their homes, looking for a better life, running from destitution – was what many Portuguese men and women did over extended periods of time. Their routes hardly corresponded to an imperial strategy for Portugal. They often contradicted it.

Circa 1900, at the peak of the “age of empire,” there were more Portuguese-born men and women living in the foreign plantations and cities of British Guiana and Hawai'i than there were in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea - let alone Timor, Macau or Goa.<sup>1</sup> Their lives and experiences have hardly been acknowledged by mainstream historiography. Their sailing was not about conquest, conversion, discovery, sea-trade, plantation owning or slave trading. They were the ones being racialized, traded and contracted.

Occasionally, Portuguese politicians tried to counter that movement. At a higher level, they dreamed of a new empire, a new Brazil in Africa in the aftermath

1 In 1851, the Consul Henry Horatio Haynes mentioned that there were 18,000 Portuguese in Guiana – 14,000 of them working in the sugarcane fields – and that the industry would not survive without them (Arquivo Diplomático, Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Lisboa, Consulado Guiana Ingleza, caixa 700, ff. 74). Many of them lived in extreme situations. In 1854, their condition was described in official documents as “misery” (Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Conselho Ultramarino, Índia, Cx. 14, Doc. 453, “Sobre o estado de miséria em que se acham os colonos portugueses em Demerara”). See also Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Conselho Ultramarino, Reino, Cx. 2, Doc. 32, “Emigração de madeirenses e açoreanos para a Guiana britânica (Demerara),” 1852). The estimated number of Portuguese-born residents in the African and Asian colonies is much lower than that all through the 19th century. Just as a sample, in 1844, the estimated number of white inhabitants in Angola was 1,832 in a total of 386,163 inhabitants (Lima 1846, 4A). For the entire area of Mozambique, in 1900, there were 953 Portuguese out of a total of 107,677 inhabitants (Sousa 1902, 453) (See *Counting Colonial Populations* at [www.cham.fcsh.unl.pt](http://www.cham.fcsh.unl.pt)).

of Brazilian independence. But the actual Portuguese who moved would rather migrate to independent Brazil or other nations and empires than to embark for the ill-reputed, feverish and unprotected African destinations. Officers like the consuls, who were closely acquainted with the flows and communities of migrants, suggested that the Portuguese government should take the initiative of rerouting those migrants into the Portuguese administered territories.

By the 1850s, the Portuguese consul in Georgetown, British Guiana, recommended that the Portuguese working in the local sugar plantations should be sent to Southern Angola or Mozambique.<sup>2</sup> What happened instead was that a group of Guiana-settled Madeirans chartered a ship to go to Australia at the time of the gold rush (Newitt 2015, 106). In 1897, the Portuguese consul in Honolulu corresponded with the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the matter of sending some of the Portuguese residing in Hawai'i into Timor, which was under Portuguese jurisdiction but hardly settled by Europeans.<sup>3</sup> That never happened either.

The Portuguese government had little means to support the patriotic biopolitics foreseen by consuls and politicians. Madeirans and Azoreans kept being recruited for the sugar plantations of the Guianas, Caribbean and Hawai'i and the textile mills of New England, or trying their fortune at sea, or following the promise of gold in California or elsewhere. The closest there was to a policy of re-routing migrants into the colonies was the sponsored settlement of the Huila plateau in Angola with Madeiran islanders, from 1884-5 onwards (Medeiros 1976; Bastos 2008, 2009). As I have previously argued (Bastos 2008), this episode is better understood in the context of inter-imperial competition for workers than in that of an organised colonisation of Angola: Madeirans were being drained into foreign nations, and the sponsored settlement of Huila worked as a two-in-one; not letting them "out" and bringing them "in."

Historians of the Portuguese empire have paid little attention to those massive flows and the communities thus created within other empires and nations, except for a few recent attempts to frame migration within empire

2 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Conselho Ultramarino, Índia, Cx. 14, Doc. 453, "Sobre o estado de miséria em que se acham os colonos portugueses em Demerara" (9/5/1854-15/4/1856).

3 Arquivo Diplomático, Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Lisboa, Consulado de Portugal em Honolulu, Cx. 624, 1896-1913, f. 9/34, carta do Consul Antonio de Souza Canavarro ao Ministro e Secretário de Estado dos Negócios Estrangeiros Mathias de Carvalho e Vasconcellos, 14/11/1897.

(Morier-Genout and Cahen 2012; Newitt 2015). Nor were those flows addressed in the revised narrative of empire known as Lusotropicalism, a doctrine adopted in the 1960s to support a regime increasingly fought against from within and questioned by international organisations.<sup>4</sup>

The imperial geography of reference remained practically untouched by the post-empire literature. Whether critical or nostalgic, approaches to “Lusofonia” take it as an imagined transnational Portuguese-speaking community replicating the locations of empire: Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, Cape Verde and S Tome in Africa; Brazil in South America; plus enclaves of Portuguese heritage, such as Goa in India, Macau in China and Timor in South East Asia. Excluded from that cartography are the large pockets of Portuguese descendants in Canada, the US, Australia, northern Europe, the Caribbean, or other nations unrelated to the Portuguese empire.<sup>5</sup>

In the project *The Colour of Labour – the racialized lives of migrants*, I go beyond the analytical limitations of using primarily nation-based imperial geopolitical units, and address, instead, the flows of people who moved across them - mostly as labour. I follow their displacements and settlements, study their communities and racialized lives in the plantations, industries and shores where they worked. I engage with a few of those situations, including the sugarcane fields of colonial British Guiana and Hawai‘i (both as kingdom and US territory) and the cotton mills of Southern New England. In this article, I present the case of the Portuguese in Hawai‘i.

## HAWAI‘I’S MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETY AND ITS EARLY SOCIOLOGISTS

The Portuguese in Hawai‘i were one among a variety of ethnic groups brought to the islands by the plantation economy – along with the Chinese, Japanese

4 It should be noted that the regime explicitly obfuscated the fact that in the 1960s thousands of workers were leaving Portugal to settle in northern European economies; “emigration” was not to be officially acknowledged – and that has had consequences in the understanding of the past, too.

5 Although hardly visible in mainstream historiography and narratives of nation, Portuguese diasporic communities are acknowledged as a central part of the “Portugal and the Portuguese Communities Day” celebrations on June 10th. In 2018, for the first time, the official celebration with Portuguese authorities was held in New England (and extended to California) following a new trend inaugurated the year before (when they were celebrated among luso-descendants in France), and no longer in Portugal – as a step meant to replace the discursive nature of the acknowledgment by a public action.

(including Okinawans, who identified themselves separately but did not figure as such in the census), Southern Pacific Islanders and, later, Koreans, Filipinos and Puerto Ricans. That multi-ethnic society has long been considered a prime case for the study of racialization dynamics. Its potential as a laboratory for social studies was explored early on by pioneering sociologists Romanzo Adams and Andrew Lind. In the 1920s, they both left the University of Chicago to join the newly founded University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and lead its sociology department. They promoted hands-on empirical research with their students and brought in their mentor Robert Park as a visiting scholar in 1931. They collected a large amount of data on the accommodation of different groups/races, using the concepts of amalgamation and assimilation, and avoiding the biological sciences' use of race; insisting, instead, on the social character of collective identities. The concept of "ancestry" was meant to sanitise the categories of belonging from their racialist tones.

Race and racism were historically enacted in different ways in Hawai'i and on the mainland United States. Hawai'i and Hawaiians existed outside the scope of Asian and European empires until the accidental visit of Captain Cook, on his way to the northern passage in 1778. The islands had been settled for about a thousand years by Polynesian navigators – sailors, sea explorers, discoverers – who came mainly from the Marquesas and Tahiti. For an unknown amount of time, they sailed back and forth between those distant islands and Hawai'i, but their routes had been suspended much before the British arrival. Renamed by Cook as the "Sandwich Islands," the archipelago then entered an era of dramatic change: population decline, arrival and establishment of foreign sailors, traders, missionaries, adventurers and eventually large masses of indentured labourers, as well as new plant and animal species, new commodities and lifestyles. There were also major changes in internal politics: the troops of Kamehameha the Great, from the easternmost Island of Hawai'i (the Big Island), had conquered most of the other islands by 1795, unifying the archipelago – except for the westernmost island of Kaua'i, which submitted in 1810. The ruling Kamehameha dynasty was interrupted in 1874 by the death of King Lunalilo and the dispute – solved with elections – between their Dowager Queen Emma and opponent David Kalākaua. Kalākaua won and became the cosmopolitan ruler that many referred to as the "merry monarch." He had previously worked with the board of emigration and was a supporter of the massive importation of labourers. After his death in 1891, his sister Lili'uokalani held the throne, but

she was forced to give up power to a mostly US coalition of planters in 1893 – an episode painfully inscribed in the memory of Hawaiians and subject to yearly evocations and commemorations (Wisniewski 1979).<sup>6</sup> The “Republic of Hawai‘i” then founded was annexed to the US in 1898 (Daws 1968; Coffman, 2016; among others). From then on, Hawai‘i followed United States’ rules and regulations as a territory and, in 1959, it became the 50<sup>th</sup> State of the Union.

Throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Hawai‘i was not, therefore, a formal colony but a kingdom with its own aristocratic lineages (*ali‘i*). Hawaiian *ali‘i* frequently promoted alliances and intermarried white newcomers, or *haoles*, generating a class of descendants with high political influence, who were ranked above the incoming migrants from Europe and Asia in the social hierarchy.

As a consequence of this historical process, Hawai‘i entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a multi-ethnic society with its own racial arrangements along an idiosyncratic social stratification. The black-and-white vocabulary of the mainland was inadequate for the local complexity, which had evolved in its own way. Adams, Lind and students used the available emic categories, shaped by social use and endorsed by the censuses adopted since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The censuses sanitised the slur or mere vulgarity attached to the popular categories: instead of “Kanakas”, “half-castes”, “haoles”, “Pakes”, “Portagee”, etc., they used “Hawaiians”, “Part-Hawaiians”, “Whites”, “Chinese”, “Portuguese,” etc. While the sociologists used the census categories, society held to the common, sometimes pejorative names.

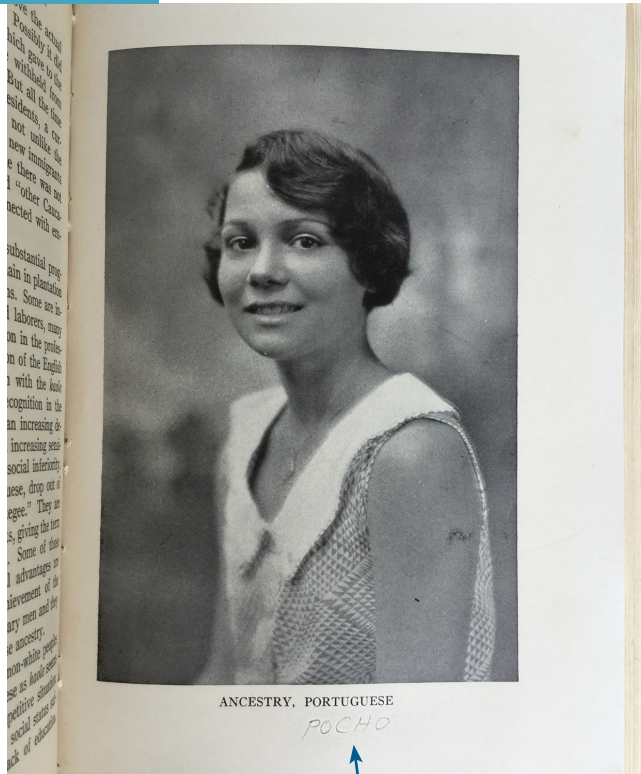
It is thus unsurprising that someone scribbled the word “POCHO” underneath the figure representing a woman of Portuguese ancestry in one of the library copies of Adams’ *Interracial Marriage* at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. There were further pencil annotations next to other photographs, like “PAKE” underneath the picture of a Chinese youth, probably from the same reader – a statement of idleness, a playful didacticism, an experiment in translation not exempt from racial slur. Asked about the meaning and intensity of that term, my contemporary interlocutors in Hawai‘i suggested that “Pocho” was less offensive than the ubiquitous “Portugee.” Although we can only speculate about the intention of the person who held that pencil,

6 In 2017, the legacy of the defeated Princess/Queen was subject to multiple commemorations, including a public festival for her birthday, a series of enactments of the coup performed by professional actors at the Royal Palace and Gardens, and the exhibit “Lili‘uokalani: Her Life, Her Legacy, Her Words”, at the Hawai‘i State Archives.

we can argue that the act was consistent with the book's reification of "types." Adams contested the use of "race" to refer to social groups and argued that there was nothing biological, but solely social, in their distinctiveness, proposing the more accommodating concept of "ancestry" as a mode of overcoming the tension between biological and social criteria for collective identities. Yet he presented the groups in ways that so resounded with the physical anthropologists' approaches to races, particularly when he used photographs of "types" to illustrate the book, that he ended up reinforcing the very thing he wanted to dismiss: stereotyping groups based on their physical appearance.

**Figure 3.1**

*"Ancestry, Portuguese", included in Romanzo Adam's Interracial Marriage in Hawaii. A reader added "Pocho" to this caption, presumably the same person who added "Pake" to the caption under a youth of Chinese ancestry, and others.*





## THE PORTUGUESE, AN UNDERSTUDIED GROUP

The Portuguese entered Hawaiian society in large numbers between 1878 and 1913, predominantly, although not exclusively, to join the sugar plantation workforce. From 1878 to 1888, about 11,000 Portuguese men, women and children left their homes and family networks in Madeira and the Azores and moved to Hawai'i with contracts signed with the Hawaiian government's Board of Immigration. In 1887-8, the sponsored migration of Portuguese labourers was suspended, to be resumed in 1895, already in the period of the Republic. Between 1895 and 1913, another 13,000 Portuguese arrived - mostly islanders, some mainlanders (Caldeira 2010).

That large number of people left an indelible mark on the islands' social landscape, especially the islands of O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i (Big Island), and, to a lesser degree, Kaua'i. Those women and men came with their language, their Catholicism (although Protestant communities came to Hawai'i via mainland US; see Dabagh and Case 1988; Fernandes 2004; Ferreira 2006; and Newitt 2015), their saints, their Holy Ghost, their festivals, their costumes, their stone and clay ovens, their bread, their fried dough, their seasonings, their cooking (Portuguese Pioneer 2007; Maui Portuguese Cultural Club 2011) and their musical instruments (Tranquada and King 2012).

"Portuguese" became a common word in Hawai'i, whether referring to ancestry or food; the trio malasada/Portuguese bean soup/Portuguese sausage supplanted that of bread/wine/olive oil, which might elsewhere be associated with the Portuguese. Malasadas (fried dough with optional filling) are, to this day, Hawai'i's favourite sweet treat. Portuguese sausage is a daily staple; there is even a variety of spam with the flavour "Portuguese sausage", and an option of Portuguese sausage for the Hawaiian MacDonalD's breakfast. But while Portuguese food is still a strong presence, the existence of actual Portuguese groups is somewhat elusive. There are societies and heritage groups, there are festivals, there are churches, but the community has not remained bound together – or at least not in the ways that can be observed in New England today. On the contrary, a large majority will refer to their multiple heritages and intermarriages.

In spite of its local relevance, the Portuguese-Hawaiian connection is poorly known outside of Hawai'i and the ancestral islands of Madeira and the Azores. From a social science perspective, the Portuguese in Hawai'i remain an understudied group, with a limited number of academic works on



them.<sup>7</sup> In the 1930s, Andrew Lind's students at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa produced a variety of research papers on all ethnicities, some of them on the Portuguese. Those papers, however, had a limited or no circulation, but many were kept at the university.<sup>8</sup> Also at that period, one MA student from the University of California engaged on a comparative study of the Portuguese in Hawai'i and California, referring to the concepts of amalgamation and assimilation (Estep 1941); but the circulation of that work was equally limited. After World War 2, Edgar Knowlton, a professor of European languages at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, who had been born in Fall River and had previous acquaintance with the Portuguese of New England, promoted and authored a number of academic studies on the language, history, genealogy and printed press of the Portuguese in Hawai'i (Knowlton 1960a, 1960b; Correa and Knowlton 1982). The modest body of literary works produced by, or about, the Portuguese in Hawai'i (Roll 1964; Coito, in press), generated a specific line of commentary by literary scholars (Rogers 1978; Dias 1981, 1989; Fagundes 2005; Silva 2013; and Coito, in press), plus one unpublished Harvard PhD thesis by Hawaiian-born, Portuguese-descent religious studies scholar, Timothy Paul Freitas. Based on literary and historical sources, Freitas used Paulo Freire's liberation theology to depict the experience of Portuguese islanders in Hawai'i as a movement of emancipation (Freitas 1979). A celebratory volume organised by John Henry Felix and Peter Senecal compiled some landmark texts on the Portuguese in Hawai'i – poetry, short stories, transcripts of personal documents and historical narratives (Felix and Senecal 1978). Maria Ioannis Baganha's thesis on the Portuguese migration to the United States compared the communities of the East Coast, California and Hawai'i (Baganha 1990). More recently, and available only in Portuguese, there are Palminha da Silva's (Silva 1996) and Susana Caldeira's (Caldeira 2010) comprehensive view and exhaustive compilation of documents about

7 I thank historian John Rosa, from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, for sharing this and other observations. Indeed the number of research based academic works is limited, there are some non-academic or partially academic works – sometimes sponsored by community associations – that represent valuable sources on the Portuguese in Hawai'i (Freitas 1930; Gouveia 1975; Felix and Senecal 1978; Coryel 1986; Knowlton 1991, 1993; Santos 1996; Pasquini 1999). There are also a few different community associations promoting the study of Portuguese heritage, like the Portuguese Genealogical and Historical Society in O'ahu and the Portuguese Association of Maui.

8 Student papers addressing the Portuguese in Hawai'i are stored in the Romanzo Adams Social Research Archives at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

Portuguese islanders in Hawai‘i. But so far, only one mainstream sociological article in English has addressed the Portuguese in Hawai‘i, using the group for an argument on ethnogenesis: the authors argue that the clear distinction between “Portuguese” and “*haole*” in Hawai‘i is due to the fact that they are rooted in different parts of the productive system. Although both of them are considered Caucasian, or Eurodescendants, the *haole* were landowners, whereas the Portuguese had come as labourers. It was that factor, rather than any other, which had created an ethnic distinction between the two groups (Geschwender, Carroll-Seguín and Brill 1988).<sup>9</sup>

While rarely targeted as the main subject of study, the Portuguese in Hawai‘i are nonetheless present in any broad-scope study of Hawai‘i’s ethnic diversity (Adams 1937; Lind 1938), plantation society (Takaki 1983; Beechert 1985; Jung 2006), cultural (Tranquada and King 2012) or general history (Daws 1968; Kuykendall and Day 1948). They appear as a category defined by national origin but also by a racialized existence, one that adopted names with variable derogatory potential like Poregee, Portugee, Pocho, etc.

**Figure 3.2**

*“Portuguese women, children and bread at a plantation,” c. late 19th century, probably Kauai, anonymous author and subjects.*



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9 The argument does not address the thousands of Germans and Scandinavians that also came as contract labourers in the 19th century, followed by large numbers of Spaniards, Central Europeans, Galicians and Russians in the 20th. One way or another, none of those groups persisted as a distinct quasi-race as the Portuguese did.

## A MAJOR ENDEAVOUR: HOW MANY, WHEN, HOW, WHY?

The arrival of over 20,000 Portuguese had an important demographic impact on Hawai'i, whose indigenous population was going through rapid decline. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, many in the islands feared complete disappearance – something that had indeed happened to other indigenous populations after first contact with incoming foreigners. From an estimated number of at least 300,000 Hawaiians in 1778 (Takaki 1983, 22), or up to nearly 700,000 according to new research (Swanson 2016), the population had gone down to 130,000 in 1834,<sup>10</sup> mostly due to introduced illnesses (Daws 1968). There were a few foreigners there at that time: Anglo-American missionaries and their families; some French Catholic missions; the traders who settled there for business; the whalers and sailors of diverse backgrounds, who jumped ship and established themselves in the islands. But they were not many. In 1853, the population had plunged to 71,000 (Takaki 1983, 22) and, in 1872, it was down to 57,000.<sup>11</sup> The arrival of many thousands of labour migrants in the following decades reversed the demographic decline. In 1900, the population of Hawai'i had nearly tripled to 154,000 (Forstall 1996, 3). Among the newcomers and their offspring, there were 18,272 Portuguese individuals, almost 12% of the total population. Other groups included the Chinese (17%), Japanese (40%), Hawaiians proper (19%), and Part-Hawaiians, whether European-Hawaiian (5%) or Asian-Hawaiian (2%), and a varied group of non-Portuguese Europeans and North Americans (6% in total) (Forstall 1996, 3).

The Portuguese were thus a core group in Hawai'i at the turn of the century. From a social science perspective, they provide a key case not only for the analysis of inclusion, exclusion, ethnogenesis, and racialization processes, but also for the study of gender, reproduction, family and sexuality. The Portuguese migrated to Hawai'i in families and married mostly within the community, differently than the Chinese and Japanese who, at that time, migrated as single men (Williams 2007), and contrary to the stereotypical adventurous single Portuguese man in the tropics, imagined by Gilberto Freyre as the root of Lusotropicalism (Bastos 2018).<sup>12</sup> In 1900, the Portuguese were the only

10 <https://guides.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/c.php?g=105181&p=684171>.

11 <https://guides.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/c.php?g=105181&p=684171>.

12 That role was perhaps enacted by the sailors and whalers that came previously and married locally. The contrast between the two patterns helps demystify the lusotropicalist essentialisms, so as to pay >

migrant group in Hawai'i with a nearly equal number of men and women. While the male/female ratio among the Chinese migrants was 7/1, and among the Japanese it was 4.5/1, among the Portuguese it was 1.2/1, with a total of 9,785 men and 8,487 women (Forstall 1996).

I will not elaborate much further on numbers, aiming instead to go beyond the disembodied statistical charts and approach the experiences of moving and settling, the projects and aspirations of those who moved, their choices, and the constraints they faced. The experience of those men and women, often accompanied by their children, started with the anticipation and planning of the trip, signing the indenture and boarding the vessel for a six month voyage (shortened when travelling by steamer) all the way across the Atlantic, round Cape Horn and then all the way across the Pacific to Hawai'i. There they found a place that so resembled their home islands – the mountains, the volcanic soils, the vegetation and climate – that some would think they had gone in a circle and were back in Madeira. The society was different, however, and so was the social setting in which they could move. There were Hawaiians, whom the Portuguese referred to as *Canecas*, from the original *Kanaka* (d'Oliveira, d'Ornellas and Canario 1970, 48); there were part-Hawaiians, offspring of unions between Hawaiians and Asians or Europeans; there were *haoles* (whites, mostly Anglo-Saxons); there were Asians (Chinese and Japanese); there were southern islanders. And there was an expanding sugar economy, one that demanded an increasing amount of human labour.

The islands' economy had gone through a radical change: from the low-impact (though labour intensive) traditional agriculture centred on *taro*, the main food staple, into a cash-oriented plantation system. For a while, the sandalwood trade was central for the new Hawaiian economy, followed by a period of whaling and agricultural exports to Mexican and then American California. It did not take long, however, for Hawai'i to surrender to the so called white gold, or sugar – a product that had transformed the entire Caribbean and Brazil into plantation societies based on enslaved African labour (Mintz 1985; Palmié and Scarano 2011; MacLennan 2014). Although neither a European colony nor a society of enslaved labour, Hawai'i, too, became a land of sugar plantations and, with it, slowly transformed itself from an indigenous kingdom into a semi colony – not of an old European nation, but of the new player in the world economy, the United States of America (Coffman 2016; Miller 2017).

► more attention to structure and circumstance, as the Portuguese sailors travelled single, and the Portuguese contract labourers travelled in families.

Two measures had enabled the establishment of the sugar economy in the kingdom of Hawai'i. First, the possibility of privately owning land, facilitated by the land division that started in 1839 and was completed in 1848: the "great *mahele*" (Beechert 1985, 29-33). It was meant to grant rights to native Hawaiians but was soon turned on its head, for the 1850 amendment allowed foreigners to own local land. The process of allowing land partition and land owning would benefit, above all, the class that emerged from the connections between the *haoles* and the *ali'i*, or Hawaiian aristocracy. Second, there was the 1875 reciprocity treaty with the US, which granted a viable market for the commodity. Indentured labour completed the equation that turned Hawai'i into a sugar field.

Such was the physical, social and moral ecology into which the Portuguese arrived: it was there that they interacted with other groups, as contract workers in the sugar plantations, like the Chinese before and after them, and the Japanese, in larger numbers, as well as the Filipinos, Koreans, Puerto Ricans and others that came later. There were also the Native Hawaiians, who had always supplied a smaller but steady workforce on the plantations as both workers and *lunas* (overseers).

The Portuguese who went to the Hawaiian plantations came from a variety of backgrounds. Many were familiar with agriculture, and some came from complete disenfranchisement. But many others did not: some were urbanites who longed to work in a city street shop; others had been small-scale farmers who dreamt of acquiring land; there were also those who were business oriented and used the time of indenture/contract to amass funds and used some land-acquiring opportunities to pursue their projects. At the end of their three-year contract, some renewed it; some moved up in the plantation hierarchies as *lunas*; others bought land and farmed it; others moved into the city, others, particularly after annexation, went to the US mainland; but only a few went back home.

#### WHY HAWAII – AND WHY MADEIRANS AND AZOREANS?

A question that often occurs to those who are involved with, or want to know about, the Portuguese migration to Hawai'i is: why go through such a long and painful journey to such a faraway place? Weren't there closer viable destinations? The short answer is that the contracts offered by the Hawaiian

Board of Immigration were the most attractive for the many who wanted to leave the island in search of a better life, whether escaping destitution or improving what they already had. But why did the Hawaiian government sponsor Portuguese islanders from so far away rather than people from the nearer Pacific islands, South America or Asia? The Portuguese were expensive in many ways: the travel was longer, their pay was high, and they came as families, while Asians came mainly as single men with no “unproductive” family members attached.

Oral tradition has it that the good match of the Portuguese islanders and Hawaiian plantations was due to Madeirans’ familiarity with sugarcane production and Azoreans’ familiarity with pineapples. This is a picturesque motive, yet of not much relevance – or even chronological accuracy - against the hard structural facts of land scarcity, dramatic social inequalities, limited upward mobility and extreme vulnerability at the bottom. In the idiom of conventional migration studies, there were strong “push” factors for Madeiran and Azoreans (Baganha 1990). Leaving was a repeated gesture and, for many, a desired path. Islanders were recruited as crew in the vessels that stopped for water and supplies; some entered as stowaways for unknown destinations; large contingents had been mobilised by the Portuguese government to settle in the southern border of Brazil in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; and above all, many had ventured into the harsh life of Demerara plantations in British Guiana (Menezes 1992). In other words, moving off the island was common. Living transnationally, across empires, was an accepted existence. The contracts offered by the Hawaiian Board of Immigration were more attractive than any of the previous options. Many fought to embark. The police had to check for stowaways – and still there were many. When the British steamer *Kumeric* anchored in Funchal in 1907 to load passengers for Honolulu, the captain set up a tight control in order to prevent the entrance of those who did not have contracts; besides the officers, local policemen were hired for the purpose. In the end, the more ingenious got on board, among them some of the guards who had been assigned to keep intruders away.<sup>13</sup>

The reasons why the Hawaiian Board of Immigration and the local planters sponsored Portuguese islanders over other populations from closer places – with less expensive travel costs – deserves further analysis (Miller 2017).

13 UK National Archives, Kew, Foreign Office, BT 165/470, Official Log Book n. 4, *Kumeric*, registered in Glasgow, Master David Baird.



A set of structural elements and conjuncture shaped the choice of this group as labour supply for the Hawaiian plantations. The Hawaiian government was keen about the need of countering the Hawaiian demographic decline by bringing migrants, and there were endless discussions on what peoples would make the best migrants, and according to what criteria. Surrounding those discussions there was also a growing fear of being engulfed by neighbouring Asian nations that had furnished contract labourers in large numbers, a fear laced by the “yellow peril” ideology (Miller 2017). King David Kalākaua, who ruled between 1874 and 1891 as a cosmopolitan monarch who engaged with western modernity while keeping the traditional Hawaiian ways, was an active promoter of bringing in other groups as a counterweight to the Chinese. The Portuguese served as such to the Japanese labourers. As much as planters cherished this group, there was a subliminal fear that Hawai‘i would become an extension of Japan via an overpopulation of Japanese on the islands.<sup>14</sup>

For a few years, the Portuguese were presented to the planters as worth being paid for on the basis of a number of traits: laborious, family oriented, and, through a variety of euphemisms, of an appropriate race – not really white, like the *haoles*, but still of European descent, a variation of the white-but-not-quite concept that pervades in Anglo-Saxon environments (Almeida 1997; Azevedo 2010; Harney 1990; Lassalle 2016). Portuguese disputable whiteness was manipulated by the authorities and ideologues according to the occasion – to bring them closer to white planters in disputes regarding annexation (Daws 1968) or to keep them at a social distance for purposes of managing labour.<sup>15</sup> The Portuguese, arguably white, at least “Caucasian”, “speakers of a European language” (categories used to bring them closer to white), but not really “white”, were conveniently used as an alternative both to Pacific islanders, who were in small numbers, and to East Asians, who might

14 The discussion around the ideal balance between the two groups – Portuguese and Japanese – involved planters and the government for decades. In the end, after having been discontinued in 1885, the sponsored migration of Portuguese islanders to Hawaiian plantations was resumed in the 1890s. In the 1907-1908 Consular Report, the Portuguese Consul in Honolulu, Antonio de Souza Canavarro, examined the matter at length, together with his comments on the better conditions now found by the migrants in the plantations, when compared to the past, and on the fact that many chose to move to California given the high salaries provided there (Arquivo Diplomático, Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Lisboa, Consulado de Portugal em Honolulu, Cx. 624, 1896/1913, Relatório Consular para 1907-1908).

15 For a parallel process in colonial Guiana, where Portuguese islanders served as indentured labourers from 1835 and moved upwards to commerce after the term of their contracts, see Williams (1989).



be too many. Bringing in Africans was then out of the question – nor was it acceptable, neither for the Hawaiian rulers nor for the New England *haoles*, to restore the concentrationist racial regime of the Caribbean and Southern us plantations. Diversifying the labour force was a better prospect for all parts involved. Bringing in European labourers was considered a plus. In smaller contingents than the Portuguese, workers from Spain, Germany, Norway and others made it to the Hawaiian plantations.

One key person in enabling the Madeira-Hawai'i connection was William Hillebrand, a doctor and natural scientist, and long-term resident in Hawai'i, who had connections with Madeira (Meier 2005). Azores would soon join in with large numbers of people. Later, smaller contingents of mainlanders equally sailed to Hawai'i.

The Portuguese Atlantic islanders and Hawai'i were also linked by the routes of whaling ships that harvested the rich waters of the north Pacific in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The whalers brought sailors from the islands of Cape Verde, Madeira and Azores to Hawai'i, recruited on stopovers in the Atlantic or from among the settlers of New Bedford, the world capital of whaling and an old destination for Portuguese islanders. Those men often jumped ship and sometimes married and settled locally. In the 1870s, there were about 400 Portuguese in Hawai'i, most of them whalers and sailors (Felix and Senecal 1978). One of those early settlers was the businessman Jason Perry (or Jacintho Pereira), who claimed the credit for influencing King David Kalākaua into sponsoring Portuguese islanders. Perry would later become the first Portuguese consul in Hawai'i, but he would soon be replaced by a career diplomat – Antonio de Souza Canavarro – due to the importance and responsibility of the position. Canavarro was appointed in 1882 and stayed in office until 1914.<sup>16</sup>

16 The long term residence was partly due to personal reasons; Canavarro refers to his son's health as a reason to remain in Honolulu beyond what was expected. He resided in the Nu'uuanu valley near Honolulu, on the island of O'ahu, where most Portuguese also lived, and occasionally visited the other islands to check some situations of his countrymen, as many of them worked in the plantations of Kaua'i, Maui and the Big Island. The consulate was a link between the Portuguese government and its subjects in Hawai'i and, while fantasising about rerouting them into the Portuguese possessions in Africa and Asia – to no success –, Canavarro kept quite close to the community. He thoroughly investigated abusive situations of Portuguese labourers in some plantations; pleading for them in what they considered unfair court decisions; making arrangements for the property of deceased men or women with no relatives and representing the country in the pomp and circumstance of royal events – the Kalākaua's birthday parties, coronation anniversaries and other festivities occurring at the palace (Hawai'i State Archives, Foreign Office and Executive Collection, N. 403-19, especially folder 289, 1884; See also Interior Department, Immigration - Portuguese, 1865-1899; and Foreign Officials in Hawaii – Portugal, 1893-1900).

The previous existence of a few hundred Portuguese in Hawai‘i may have had a minor role – if any – in making them a group of choice for the planters and government. It was not irrelevant, however, that there was some vague notion of a “Terra Nova” very far away, a place where some Portuguese islanders had gone to for good and gave notice of (Jardin 1971).

#### THE VOYAGE: A MIDDLE PASSAGE ON A MAYFLOWER

The first sponsored contingent of Portuguese islanders arrived in Honolulu in 1878, on board the German ship *Priscilla*. For its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in 1978, a group of Portuguese-descendants in Hawai‘i organised a big celebration, which included refashioning a downtown square with a Portuguese-style cobblestone pavement and a *Padrão* honouring the Portuguese and their history. There were festivals, dances, music, food and an enactment of the *Priscilla*’s arrival. The fact that such celebrations treated the *Priscilla* like the Portuguese *Mayflower* also brought the criticism that this presentation whitewashed the history of hard labour endured by their ancestors. There was a tension between two ways of regarding those voyages: as close to the pilgrims’ experience in search of a new homeland, on the one hand; or, on the other, as echoing the horrific experience of the Atlantic “middle passage” that brought millions of enslaved Africans to the New World plantations. Being neither of those extremes, the Portuguese passage to Hawai‘i was experienced differently by different people and it is referred to in different ways by the descendants of those who sailed. Much of the tone in such depictions relates to current positions in contemporary Hawaiian society.

Sources reporting the actual experience of migrant sailing are rare and indirect.<sup>17</sup> It is quite easy, however, to discover the numbers, names, and even family ties of those who travelled. The State Archives in Honolulu have a separate collection of card files for the Portuguese migrants. Whoever is interested in knowing about the arrival of their ancestors from Portugal can find the name of the vessel in which they sailed and the year of arrival. It is, however, far more difficult to grasp the experience, perceptions and reflections of those who travelled. The few who could write were not in the habit of

17 Recent works have addressed in quite inspiring ways the experience of ocean-crossing by emigrants (Brown 2013), indentured labourers (Bahadur 2013) and enslaved men and women (Mustakeem 2016).

keeping personal diaries: they mostly favoured sharing their experiences by telling stories to one another.<sup>18</sup> They wrote occasional letters, meagre in content and context. Mandatory logbooks, like those that should have been kept by the captain and physician or surgeon on board the British commercial liners transporting the Portuguese migrants, are yet to be found, in spite of our efforts in the appropriate archives. So far we could only find logs for the voyages of the *Surveric* (1906), *Kumeric* (1907) and *Willesden* (1911).<sup>19</sup>

For that reason, the document “Destination Sandwich Islands,” written by João Baptista d’Oliveira and Vicente d’Ornelas, young Madeirans travelling on the British vessel the *Thomas Bell*, between Funchal and Honolulu in 1887–88, is a most precious source (d’Oliveira, d’Ornellas and Canario 1970).<sup>20</sup> João Baptista d’Oliveira had been a clerk for the British consul in Madeira and could speak enough of both languages to act as translator between the Portuguese-speaking immigrant passengers and the English-speaking officers and crew. It is not clear whether he travelled on a contract or as a paying passenger. He often referred to the immigrants as “them,” putting himself at a distance. That distance, however, could have been due to the fact that as a single young man he travelled with the other bachelors, whether regular paying passengers or contract migrants, while the bulk of migrants travelled as families. He was

18 The local expression “talk story” fits well on this tradition. Recently, efforts to compile scrapbooks with family histories and memories have fixed the oral tradition in a material support. California-based Luis Proença, S. J., compiled and published online the *Portuguese Hawaiian in Hawaii Oral Histories series*. He also produce the documentary *Pukiki – The Portuguese Americans of Hawai’i* (Proença 2003)

19 Exhaustive research at the British National Archives in Kew, the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the State Archives in Honolulu and other major collections, including the companies that owned the vessels, has disappointingly shown that the captains’ and surgeons’ logs of merchant vessels have not been archived in ways that minimally resemble those of the Royal Navy – a fact confirmed by Naval Historian Kevin Brown (personal communication). The rarity of sources related to travelling generated an inflexion in the overall project. Still, the few sources found allow for a glimpse of the sailing experience. For the *Willesden* and *Kumeric* there are interesting complementary sources provided from the Portuguese Consulate in Honolulu (Arquivo Diplomático, Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Lisboa, Consulado de Portugal em Honolulu, Cx. 624, 1896–1913, memos from April 14, 1908, and from January 26, 1912).

20 *Thomas Bell’s* was the last sailing of the first wave of Portuguese migration to Hawai’i, all to the kingdom of Kalakaua. Portuguese migration was then interrupted, to be restored during the planters’ republic, in 1895, after much debate on the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the Japanese and the Portuguese labourers’ performance in the plantations (Arquivo Diplomático, Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Lisboa, Consulado de Portugal em Honolulu, Cx. 624, 1896/1913, Relatório Consular, 1907–1908).

friends with the First Mate Kinnon, who encouraged him and his companion Vicente d'Ornelas to keep a journal, which they did. Unfortunately, their diary is the only one we know of from the dozens of journeys with Portuguese on board. Fortunately, their record is rich enough in detail to give us a close-up view of their long haul sailing experience.

Aboard the *Thomas Bell*, there was life's drama in all its aspects: babies were born, babies died, adults got sick and died, many got seasick, some got lice, most got bitten by bed-bugs, some were treated by the physician and Isabel, the Portuguese nurse, and most often they were prescribed more nourishment as medicine (*farinha de sustancia*). There was music, dancing, card playing, jokes and trickery. There was romance; there was sex, within and outside the marriages, including that of young boys with older women. There was jealousy, there were triangles, there were marriages on board. There were fights, an increasing amount of them after months of people being crammed together on the boat. There were rows between couples in which one had persuaded the reluctant other into embarking on such an adventure. There was domestic violence, rightly punished by the Captain. There were constant disputes for food, as the cooking crew took bribes or sexual favours in exchange for edible and drinkable goodies, leaving some passengers with nothing other than sea biscuits and coffee. There was sadness on board, longing for home, longing for those left behind, for a life of no return. But there was also joy. There were feasts and festivals; celebrations of saints and Christmas with the making of a *lapinha* (elaborate Nativity scene) with whatever could be found in the vessel. There was a dramatic passage around Cape Horne, an aborted landing in Valparaiso, where a cholera epidemic induced quarantine, and a happy landing in Iquique, still in Chile (also the place where a man who had brought both his wife and children and his younger lover – whom he had met in Demerara – jumped ship, leaving behind both the family and the mistress, who right after married one of the ship's cooks). There was the awe and joy of seeing whales, sharks, albatrosses; of fishing and hunting big animals, on anticipating the edible feast they provided. There was, above everything else, the celebration of arrival. Oliveira and Ornellas wrote a few final details on the quarantine and depot in Honolulu, described the encounter with the consul Antonio Canavaro, and mentioned that “the trip had been recorded by J. B. d'Oliveira and Vicente d'Ornellas, and that in our possession was a document signed by the passengers in regard to the knavery that had occurred on this trip” (d'Oliveira, d'Ornellas and Canario 1970, 47).

João Baptista d'Oliveira, who in the meantime became Oliver, kept the journal safely and, after his death, his widow handed it to the Reverend Ernest G. da Silva, of Hilo, who had been on that trip as a young boy. Silva stored it away, and it remained forgotten until found by his daughter Lucille Silva Canario. She translated it into English and, in 1970, had it published by the prestigious *Hawaiian Journal of History*, becoming afterwards a most quoted source. Although Timothy Freitas (1979) notes some minor discrepancies in the translation and suggests further reading of the Portuguese original, its published version in English provides a wealth of detail in the passengers' experience.

#### ARRIVAL: DESTINATION PLANTATION

Historian of Hawaiian plantations Ronald Takaki argued that it was in the interests of plantation owners to keep the work force segregated, even when that involved different housing, different wages, different functions. Indeed, plantation payroll records are most often organised by racialized groups – Chinese, Hawaiians, Japanese and Portuguese.<sup>21</sup>

A rare literary source provides another sort of account of plantation life: *Hawaii's Kohala Breezes*, presented as "a novel about the early Portuguese settlers in Hawai'i." Published in 1964 in New York, this was the first novel by Elvira Osorio Roll (1886-1969), who was born in Hawai'i of Portuguese parents and who lived through some of the situations and atmospheres depicted in the novel. *Hawaii's Kohala Breezes* (henceforth *Breezes*) is not only one of a kind but also a powerful entrance into the lives of the Portuguese in Hawaiian plantation society (Rogers 1978; Silva 2005). Francis Rogers, a Harvard Literature professor who pioneered the study of writers of Portuguese descent in the United States, was such an enthusiast of Elvira Osório Roll that he placed her as second only to John dos Passos among that group, although acknowledging that *Breezes* was no *Manhattan Transfer* – not even close (Rogers 1978). But *Breezes* remained, for Rogers, an eloquent illustration of how novels can sometimes provide more insight than the social sciences. Rogers' student, Timothy Freitas, himself born in Hawai'i of Portuguese ancestry, also emphasises the documentary value of the setting of *Breezes*

21 E.g. Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association (HPSA), Plantation Archives, Lihue Plantation Company Payroll Book, 1893.

(Freitas 1979). Its dense and multilayered account of the life of the Portuguese in Hawai'i further enables us to pursue an analysis of the interactions of class, race and gender in that society.

Elvira Roll, nee Osorio, was born in Hilo, on the Island of Hawai'i, her father from mainland Portugal and her mother from Madeira, presumably from comfortable family backgrounds. They were meant to reach Tahiti but remained in Hawai'i, moving thereafter solely between O'ahu and the Big Island. Their experience was different from that of contract labourers, as they did not work in the fields, had an education, were ranked higher in the social system, and held higher expectations of upward mobility. However, just like the labourers, they were classified as Portuguese, or, in the derogatory form, "Portygee", "Portagee", or simply "Poregee." Elvira would eventually marry a man from Indiana and move to mainland us. There is little record of her in the islands and most of the Portuguese-Americans of Hawai'i – by no means a homogeneous group – whom I met in 2017 had never heard of her or *Breezes*.

The tensions of class, gender and ethnicity/race run through the entire novel: being Portuguese, being "poregee", being American, not being a labourer, being a girl, being a woman, being a *haole's* wife. The plot consists of a romance between the Portuguese Infelice and the *haole* Jack (much like the 1980s *Mystic Pizza*, Julia Roberts' Hollywood debut as a working class Portuguese girl dating an upper class Yankee). The author makes the "Portugueseness" of her character clear to the reader, while emphasising her distance from the labourers, the "Poregee" at the bottom of the scale. Although literate and claiming aristocratic descent, Infelice will always be called "Poregee" by the *haoles* she comes across – including the pair of siblings she meets as a child, described as angels with blond air, with the little boy being her future sweetheart, Jack. Her parents tried in vain to match her with a rich Portuguese suitor of noble origin, but her heart belonged to the *haole* Jack, who also had to fight against his father and was disinherited as a consequence of marrying a Portuguese woman. After marriage, in spite of being the supervisor's wife, she is still subject to further expressions of racism by the *haole* women of the plantation and vicinities. One of them, from the us Midwest, mocks her Portugueseness and reduces it to themes of food and wine. Infelice responds by bringing in references to imperial glory and civility that build up to an ancestry of civilised Romans for the Portuguese *versus* the *haoles'* uncivilised Barbarian descent. She even stresses that the habit of drinking tea was handed to the English by the Portuguese Queen Catherine,

married to Charles VI (wrong monarch, but point made). Like others before and after her, Roll responds to ethnic deprecation with themes of national pride rooted in themes of empire.

Following previous analysts, I find Elvira Osorio Roll's novel of remarkable value, not so much for its literary qualities - which are neither outstanding nor substandard - but for its sociological and anthropological notes on the lives of the Portuguese who settled in Hawai'i in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and onwards. The author knew first-hand what she wrote about. Although the book is not strictly autobiographical, it is based on her personal experience, her accurate witnessing and her engaging reflections upon the social tensions that shape the lives of the many subjects involved in the plantation. While the fictional plot is a standard one of love and fear, honour and shame, order and disruption, past and future, social constraint and individual choices, the actual characters live through the identifications of that precise plantation culture, involving labour, racialization, gender, age, nationalities, hierarchies, stereotypes and class. Regardless of the literary value of Roll's *Breezes*, it stands up as a powerful way of approaching the history of the Portuguese in Hawai'i, itself a variety of a larger story of labour and race.

#### LIFE BEYOND THE PLANTATION

For most of the Portuguese who came to Hawai'i, their new life started at the plantation, but it did not end there - or, at least, not at the bottom of the plantation hierarchy where they began. They moved up into other positions: the prevailing racialized hierarchies brought the Portuguese to positions of operational management like *lunas* (overseers), while keeping them away from full leadership and supervision. Moon-Kie Jung notes that there is a tradition of associating the Portuguese with the role of *luna*, but the evidence is that although there were many Portuguese *lunas*, they were not a majority; and that by no means the majority of Portuguese were *lunas* (Jung 2006). *Paniolo* (cattle-handler, rancher, cowboy) is another role much associated with the Portuguese, especially in Maui. Many Portuguese did work as ranchers, but the term is not Portuguese. It probably evolved from *espanholes*, as there were a number of early ranchers from Mexico in Hawai'i. Landlord is another role often associated with the post-plantation Portuguese. Many of them planned to own their piece of land or urban property after



their time at the plantation. In the second wave of migration, housing and surrounding land was part of the contract deal and many of the workers made that a starting point for accumulating more property. Masonry is yet another craft and skill that is immediately associated with the Portuguese: even today, the oral tradition has it that the main public buildings in Honolulu were built by the Portuguese, who knew how to handle the lava stone from back home. Carpentry, cabinet making, guitar making – the ukulele being its most famous outcome –, printing, and a variety of other arts and crafts were also activities carried out by many of the Portuguese after finishing their plantation contract. Indeed, many had come with those skills and tried to shorten their time at the plantation in order to go back to their arts and crafts. At moments, the consul acknowledged that it would be useful to have the migrant ships unloading their passengers directly in the rural islands rather than in Honolulu, because there some migrants escaped their route to the plantations and went directly to the exercise of their urban-oriented skills and arts.<sup>22</sup>

As a group, the Portuguese in Hawai'i embodied the multiple experiences of leaving, moving, settling, labouring the land, hoeing, cutting, threshing, carrying cane, burning straw, feeding engines, navigating racial classifications, enacting identities, playing, praying, carving their place, doing business, owning property, moving into the mainstream, or away from it, leaving their mark on Hawaiian society, taking credit for creating icons as Hawaiian as the ubiquitous *ukulele* and the beloved *malasadas*, celebrating their heritage, promoting festivals abundant in food, music and dance, and also exploring their genealogy and culture beyond their playful elements.

They founded important cultural associations, religious groups and mutualities: the oldest being St Anthony, or *Sociedade de Santo António Beneficente de Hawaii*, founded in 1877, before the first wave of contract labourers even arrived; the most famous being Lusitana, immortalised in a street name in Honolulu's Punchbowl neighbourhood – although two Lusitanas existed, the *Sociedade Lusitana Beneficente de Hawaii*, and the *União Lusitana Hawaiiiana*, founded in 1882 and 1892 respectively. The important devotion to the Holy Ghost in the Azores and among the Azorean Diaspora (Leal, 2011) also structured societies and churches throughout Hawaii: in O'ahu, the Holy Ghost Fraternity of Punchbowl has existed since 1891 (Punchbowl Holy Ghost 1991); in Maui, the spectacular Kula Church was funded by the

22 Hawai'i State Archives, Foreign Officials – Portuguese.

**Figure 3.3** *Portuguese church in Kula, Maui*



**Figure 3.4** *Portuguese oven, Kepaniwai Park's Heritage Gardens, Iao Valley, Maui.*



**Figure 3.5** *Traces of Portuguese societies in O'ahu*



Portuguese community. Other Portuguese late-19<sup>th</sup> century charities included the Portuguese Ladies Charitable Society, the *Corte Camões*, and the *Sociedade Concórdia* (Caldeira 2010, 222-23). At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of Portuguese cultural societies expanded in number and functions, adding recreational activities to their charitable goals: the *Associação de Socorros Mútuos A Pátria*, founded in 1905, followed by the *Club Literário D Carlos*, the *Club Recreativo Português de Hawaii*, the *Club Dramático Português de Honolulu*, the *Portuguese Charitable Society*, the *Pioneer Civic Association* and the *Hilo Chamarrita Club* (Caldeira 2010, 223-24).

Another sign of the vitality of the community was the variety of the Portuguese press: in Honolulu, O'ahu, where most of the Portuguese resided, there was the *Luso Hawaiiiano*, founded in 1885, which in 1892 merged with *A Aurora Hawaiiiana* (founded in 1889) to form *A União Lusitana Hawaiiiana*, which lasted until 1896. In parallel, there was *A Sentinela*, also running from 1892 to 1896 and, from then on, *O Luso*, which lasted until 1924. There were also the short lived *O Directo* (1896-1898), *As Boas Novas* (1896-1898), *A Liberdade* (1900-1910) and *O Popular* (1911-1913) (Caldeira 2010, 237). In Hilo, Hawaii, there were *A Voz Pública* (1899-1904), *A Setta* (1903-1921) and *O Facho* (1906-1927).

In spite of the importance of the Portuguese language in the plantations and urban settings, efforts to promote its teaching were not met with success. There were attempts to support a Portuguese school: there were plans and subscriptions. By and large, however, the education of choice – even for the Portuguese children – was in English; and through English the Portuguese of Hawai'i were mainstreamed.

Becoming mainstream was neither an easy nor fast process for the Portuguese in Hawai'i. Until 1930 (incl.), they figured in a separate census category, outside the “white” category covering most other Europeans and North Americans, as well as their descendants. Things were to change in the following decades, a time in which Hawai'i was deeply and directly affected by the international war, followed by a time in which the territory became a state – the 50<sup>th</sup> of the United States. That was the definitive element of mainstreaming: the Portuguese became Americans in the first place; Americans of Portuguese descent on a second level of identification; and Portuguese-Americans in the light of more recent trends. Or, as many would tell me, just “Portuguese.”<sup>23</sup>

23 Some people would say how much better it is to be Portuguese than *haole*, with all the colonial connotations and resentment that goes with it.

Or: “Portuguese – not Portugee!” Portuguese names are widespread and Portuguese as a label is commonly identified by anyone in Hawai‘i - although not always related to the history of migration and plantation labour that brought so many Portuguese to the islands.

Many people of Portuguese descent search for their genealogy, seek records, try to know in which boat their ancestors came, from which district and village on which island. Genealogy is often complemented by genetic ancestry tests that in theory show the exact proportion of Portuguese, Hawaiian, Scottish and other ancestries there are. As anthropologist J. Kehaulani Kauanui (2008) argues, the legal/colonial imposition of “blood” arguments for claims of indigeneity shaped and influenced the perceptions and practices of belonging – or of being eligible for qualified programmes. Many of those perceptions and practices, I argue, have been extended to other groups, including the Portuguese. Much like proof of at least 1/8 of Hawaiian blood is required for admission to the Kamehameha schools – aimed at providing excellent education to people of indigenous Hawaiian ancestry – so proof of Portuguese ancestry is required to qualify for a high school scholarship under the Dolores Furtado Martin fund, meant to support the education of students of Portuguese descent in the prestigious Punahou school. More than once, the Portuguese genealogical society has been called to assess ancestry among candidates.

Nowadays, the *Festa* (a yearly festival in Honolulu), the cultural associations on the different islands, the Holy Ghost fraternities, also on different islands, the Genealogical Society in Oahu, the Heritage Society in Maui, are some of the venues where people of Portuguese descent can celebrate their heritage. No longer needed as a primary support, as in the early days of migration, those societies keep a flame of tradition while providing space for enjoyment – through music, dance, food and festivity. Some participants in the *Festa* get to learn the phonetics of old Portuguese songs to sing them more authentically, dance to the music, wear traditional festive clothes from Madeira and the Azores, cook, eat, sell and buy *Vinhdalhos* (garlic-seasoned pork), *Pão* (bread), sweetbread, malasadas, get to know their ancestry, and strengthen their community ties.

**CONCLUSION:****PARTIAL VISIBILITIES AND IMAGINED COMMUNITIES**

To finalise, I suggest a reflection on the inclusion and exclusion processes of some groups and themes in the national narratives they are part of. I have shown the importance and visibility that the Portuguese in Hawai'i achieved locally and referred to the absence of a counterpart in Portuguese national narratives. I have associated such an absence with the programmatic tradition in mainstream Portuguese historiography of emphasising empire as the core of nation, and thus equating national history with conquest and crusade - first in Iberia, then in the four corners of the world, whether as an expansion of the Christian Crusades, or resulting from discoveries, or as the establishment of trade and business, or any combination of those aspects. I have also added that the contemporary imagined community of Portuguese speakers – *Lusofonia* – follows the map of empire, highlighting the former colonies, now officially Portuguese-speaking countries like Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, Cape Verde and S Tome in Africa, Brazil in South America, or enclaves of Portuguese heritage, such as Goa in India, Macau in China and Timor in South East Asia, while leaving aside the geographies of exile and labour migration.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout the article, I addressed up close one of those geographies – that of the Portuguese who laboured and made their lives in distant Hawai'i. Their saga was not inscribed in the geography of the nation, just as that of Madeirans in Demerara was not, even though more expressive in numbers. And yet, as I have discussed, more Portuguese-born lived in the plantations and towns of British Guiana and Hawai'i than in Portuguese colonies in Africa and Asia. The geographies of escape from oppression and destitution attracted more Portuguese men and women than the aspiration to empire in Africa. They built their communities, carved their space and social niche, lived through the stereotypes and categories that society assigned them, and went on with their lives in and out of the plantations. They built their churches and associations with their own funds and energies; they played and danced their music; they baked their bread, cooked their cuisine, ate their food; they printed their newspapers in Portuguese, compiled their knowledge, and celebrated their heritage. The language may be nearly lost in contemporary Hawai'i, but there are many other marks of their heritage, and much of its memory is kept alive

24 Brazil, however, has also been a destination for migrants in different periods.

by volunteers and cultural activists that recreate it in a variety of imaginative ways. Less important than finding traces of an essentialised “Portugueseness”, the knowledge of the Portuguese experience in Hawai‘i allows us to account for multiple ways of enacting a collective identification through reference to an existing nation with a history, geography and culture. In turn, their experience expands that collective history in ways that challenge the traditional national narratives around empire.

## » ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is a result of the project *The Colour of Labour: The Racialized Lives of Migrants*, generously funded by the European Research Council with an Advanced Grant (ERC-2015-AdG 695573). The author wishes to thank the team members who discussed the preliminary version of this paper and the institutions who supported her research in Hawai‘i in 2017: the East-West Center Research Department; the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, particularly at the Hawai‘ian-Pacific Collection at Hamilton Library; the Hawai‘i State Archives; the Hawai‘i Historical Society; the Bishop Museum; the Portuguese Genealogical and Historical Society at O‘ahu; the Plantation Village and the Portuguese Association of Maui, and an extensive number of people who kindly helped by sharing their memories and commentaries – among others, many thanks to Bernard Carvalho, Robert Castro, Wiletta Centeio, Paul Chandler, Josephine Carreira, Larry Cravalho, John Henry Felix, Marta Macedo, Rachel Mamyia, Jodie Mattos, Nic Miller, Dan Nelson, John Rosa, Audrey Rocha Reed, Evelyn Starkey, Beatrice Wong Souza, Russel Sousa Bordel Borges and Wilma Souza Boucheau.

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CRISTIANA BASTOS

Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa

Av. Prof. Aníbal Bettencourt 9 — 1600-036 Lisboa, Portugal

[cristiana.bastos@ics.ulisboa.pt](mailto:cristiana.bastos@ics.ulisboa.pt)

[orcid.org/0000-0001-5387-4770](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5387-4770)

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CITE THIS CHAPTER AS:

BASTOS, C. 2018. "Portuguese in the cane: the racialization of labour in Hawaiian plantations". In *Changing Societies: Legacies and Challenges*. Vol. 1. *Ambiguous Inclusions: Inside Out, Inside In*, eds. S. Aboim, P. Granjo, A. Ramos. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 65-96.  
<https://doi.org/10.31447/ics9789726715030.03>