Of Colonists, Migrants and National Identity. The Historic Difficulties of the Socio-Political Construction of Equatorial Guinea

Yolanda AIXELÀ
IMF-CSIC[1], Spain

ABSTRACT

The history of Equatorial Guinea, both colonial and post-colonial, has not propitiated equality in citizenship. There are inequalities between ethnic groups and migrants, and also within each of the groups. In this article I explain the roots of the contemporary problem of national identity in Equatorial Guinea.

Keywords: Ethnic groups, colonists, migrants, colonization, dictatorships, Equatorial Guinea.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Spanish colonial regime in Equatorial Guinea and the post-colonial dictatorships of Francisco Macías Nguema and Teodoro Obiang Nguema, are socially hierarchic and asymmetric political systems. This fact created inequalities in the promotion of individuals and in the rights and collective visibility of certain Guinean ethnic groups and foreign collectives, of both colonists and immigrants, a situation which has had direct repercussions on the current conditions of co-existence.

During the period of Spanish colonialism (established by the Treaties of San Idelfonso of 1777 and of El Pardo of 1778, but not implemented until 1850) there was racial segregation of whites and blacks in addition to the internal segmentation of the two groups according to social class in the case of Europeans and national origin in the case of black Africans. However the Bioko Fernandinos were always an exception to the distinct racial boundaries as they were the only black population that enjoyed wealth and privilege and developed into a powerful elite of the black bourgeoisie.

Following independence in 1968 and the establishment of dictatorship in 1969, the promotion of the Fang (the largest group) against the other ethnicities of the country has been seen as a serious impediment to socio-cultural

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integration, although in practice the majority Fang group lives in social exclusion. Since the discovery of oil, the population pyramid, made up of Guinean, African, European, North American, Latin American and Asiatic communities has been hierarchical, showing differences both among ethnic Guinean groups and foreign national groups (as happened in the colonial period during the productive expansion of the plantations).

The aim of this article is to explain from a historic perspective the obstacles facing the construction of a national identity in contemporary Equatorial Guinea in order to understand why the emergence of inclusive and integrative mechanisms is so complicated among the present-day population of Equatorial Guinea while describing the constant inequalities which emerged during colonization and the subsequent dictatorships.

I will compare the colonial and post-colonial systems. In the former, I will consider the divide between the black African and the white population (except in the case of the Fernandinos), explained within the socioeconomic framework of a colony in which Bioko needed to import labor both from other regions of the country and from other African countries, in order to guarantee economic growth. With regards to the latter, I will describe the expulsion of the colonists and foreign workforce following the establishment of the first dictatorship, until the oil boom of the 1990s (with Bioko again as main pivot) once more created a need for qualified workers of different nationalities which in turn produced a pole of attraction characterized by a high level of cultural diversity.

If there was no room under the colonial regime for the construction of an Equatorial-Guinean national identity, during the post-colonial period the dictatorships would encourage the supremacy of the Fang in order to create a political identification based on a single cultural identity: the dictators, from the Fang ethnic community, sought consolidation through empowerment of their ethnic group.

The research is based on several scientific contributions. In the first place, I transfer the work of Anderson (1983) to the African context in order to consider whether the construction of a national identity in Equatorial Guinea resorts to an "imagined community", in this case, based on the Fang group. This needs to take into account the social tensions which arise when the national identity is constructed on the basis of a homogeneity defended by non-legitimate dictatorial political interests. The second scientific support is the now classic reflection on the socio-political construction of ethnic and cultural differences suggested by Barth (1976) as it allows us to explain the internal tensions which exist among the Equatorial Guinean groups. On the other hand, identity claims as a source of power as proposed by Brah (1996) helps us to approach the recent visibility and empowerment of the Guinean minorities in exile. Finally, colonialism in Guinea will be reviewed from the perspective of clear segmentation between white and black African populations, as analyzed by Nerín (1999).

At the methodological level, the research has combined such anthropological tools as participant observation and interviews, with the examination of

archives. The fieldwork in Equatorial Guinea commenced with a first visit in 2004 and has continued uninterrupted with a minumum of one annual visit (and on occasion two or even three a year) of between two and four weeks each. This fieldwork has combined interviews with Equatorial Guineans both in Guinea and abroad. The latter fieldwork involved short visits to South Africa, Cameroon, Spain, Holland, Switzerland and England under the format of what Marcus (1995) described as "multi-sited ethnography". Interviews have also been held with Spanish nationals resident in Equatorial Guinea during the colonial period and with people of numerous nationalities resident in Guinea.

2. EQUATORIAL GUINEAN ETHNIC GROUPS

Equatorial Guinea is a Spanish-speaking country made up of several groups: the Fang, Bubi, Ndowe, the Annobonese, the Bisio, and the Fernandinos. The Fang are originally from the mainland region. They are territorially based and organized in clans and by common ancestor lineage. Traditionally they were organized in chieftaincies. Their language is Fang and they are the majority group. The Bubi are originally from the island of Bioko. They are territorially based and organized in clans and by common ancestor lineage. Traditionally they were organized in chieftaincies and kingdoms. They speak Bubi although the use of Pichi has also spread[2]. They are the second biggest ethnic group in the country, the main minority. The Annobonese are from the island of Annobon and although there remains doubt about their ultimate origins, there is agreement that they descend from slaves destined for the Americas. They have no clan subdivisions. Their language is Fâ d'ambo and they are the third ethnic group in the country although with an extremely low percentage of the population (as is the case with the Ndowe and Bisio). The Ndowe are from the mainland coastal region. They are organized in clans and by common ancestor lineage and their territorial definition has become unclear since the expansion of the Fang. They speak Ndowe and are the fourth ethnic group in the country. The Bisio originate from the mainland coastal region of Equatorial Guinea. They are organized in clans and their territory is not clearly defined[3]. Finally, the Fernandinos as they were originally from Sierra Leone and Ghana and were transferred by the English to the island of Bioko. Subsequently, they mixed with descendants of freed African slaves as Liberians (Martín 1993: 95). From the nineteenth century, they constituted a minority community which purchased land, controlled areas of trade and had sociopolitical power. They were the black bourgeoisie. In cultural terms, during colonialism they synthesized Africanism

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[2]   Pichi has its roots in Krio, which first arrived in Bioko with African inhabitants from Freetown, Sierra Leone in 1827 (Yakpo 2010: 9).

[3]   The recommended, concise bibliography for an in-depth knowledge of these groups is: Fernández (2004), Martín (1989), Tessmann (2003) and Dyombe (2008), Zamora (2010) and de Unzueta (1947).

and Europeanism, in part because their life style was very similar to that of the Anglo-Saxons: in such religious practices as those of the evangelists or protestants, in education and schooling, in their exclusive European clothes, in leisure, etc. The Fernandinos lost their socio-economical influence during the twentieth century, especially after independence, and nowadays they are the smallest minority group. Some authors like Martín (1993), Sepa (2011) or Bolekia (2003: 110) refer to Fernandinos generically as Krios. Martin (1993: 95) or Sepa (2011: 317) outline that they joined with African immigrant laborers known as Krumen, and other groups from Cuba, Accra, Calabar, Cameroon, etc[4].

3. POPULATION DATA

Equatorial Guinea has a very low population density of less than 25 people per square km which lacks reliable censuses both for some decades of the colonial period and, above all, for the post-colonial period.

According to the 1900 census, officially there were 44,753 inhabitants (20,742 in Fernando Poo and the other island areas, and 24,011 inhabitants in the still unexplored mainland region). However, the census was incomplete. In order to estimate the actual population of Guinea at the turn of the twentieth century, it is important to take into account that in the Spanish censuses the mainland population was usually four times that of the island and that detailed figures for Fernando Poo had been available since the mid-nineteenth century. By using these variables to achieve a more accurate figure for the population of Equatorial Guinea in 1900, the results show a total of more than 100,000 inhabitants. Decades later, the Spanish censuses were more complete as all the territories of Guinea were under the control of the metropolis. Thus, in 1950, the Census recorded a total of 198,663 inhabitants, distributed as follows: in Fernando Poo, 40,750; on the Mainland, and the Elobeyes and Corisco Islands, 156,785; and in the Island of Annobon, 1,403. Later, the 1960 National Institute of Statistics Census of all the territories of Guinea recorded 245,989 inhabitants[5]. This is the last reliable census available until the present day.

The census data of the post-colonial period lack scientific endorsement. The following statistics are the most accurate available (Aixelà 2013: 12–14). In

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4   The social basis of the Krio was diverse. On the one hand, the status of the Fernandino (trader and proprietary) was not comparable with that of the Kruman (temporary laborer), although Martin (1993: 95) explained that the latter had been subsumed by Fernandinos (as probably also happened with the remaining few Kruman who were integrated in such groups as the Bubi). On the other, the Krio were heterogeneous both ethnically and culturally as result of their origin and of mixed marriages.

5   *Anuario Estadístico of España of 1969*, p. 460. Spain did not update the census in 1970 (the update was undertaken every 10 years) because Equatorial Guinea became independent in 1968.

1970, in the post-colonial period, the national Administration of the country (using the data from the last Spanish census) set the total population at 225,000 inhabitants (Liniger-Goumaz 2011). In 1983, the General Board of Statistics and National Accounts of Equatorial Guinea calculated a population of 300,000 people and, in 1994, of 406,151 inhabitants[6]. In 1980, the US Census Bureau calculated 256,000 inhabitants; in 1990, 371,000 inhabitants; in 1995, 426,000 inhabitants; and in 2005, 567,000 inhabitants. In 2009, the World Bank estimated a population of 676.273 inhabitants[7]. In 2011, data from the CIA and the Internet World Statistics[8] settled the figure at 668,225.

As an example of the disparities in population figures provided by the Guinean regime, the figure the Statistics Board in Malabo published in 2009 was almost double the World Bank figure at 1,014,999 inhabitants (Liniger-Goumaz 2011), and in 2010 almost three times higher at 1,622,000[9].

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[6] Data available at the web-site of the Government of Guinea at: http://www.dgecnstat-ge.org/ (consulted in March 2012). The similarity of these figures with those of the US Census Bureau is an exception among statistics of the Government of Equatorial Guinea which is generally neither reliable nor transparent, especially since the discovery of oil in 1990. For example, in 2009, the figure provided by the Board of Statistics in Malabo was almost double that of the World Bank at 1,014,999 inhabitants (Liniger-Goumaz 2011), and almost three times the number for 2010 at 1,622,000 inhabitants (data available at http://www.guineaecuatorialpress.com/estadistica.php; consulted in March 2012). These last figures must be rejected as the Government counted some individuals up to four times; in the census of the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE), in the residents' survey, in the community of birth census and the work census. The difficulties involved in calculating the population of Equatorial Guinea do not end there.

[7] Data of the World Bank (2009) available at: http://data.worldbank.org/country/equatorial-guinea (consulted in May 2011).

[8] The CIA data can be consulted at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2119.html (consulted in March 2012); the Internet World Statistics can be found at http://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#gq (consulted in March 2012).

[9] Data available at http://www.guineaecuatorialpress.com/estadistica.php (consulted in March 2012). One of the most prolific researchers, Liniger-Goumez (2011), offered an excellent summary of the difficulties of determining the population even using the figures made available by other non-Guinean organizations: "In 2008, the Institute of Statistics of the UNESCO calculated the population of Equatorial Guinea at 659,000 people. The same year the Bank of France… talked of 700,000 inhabitants… In 2009, the WHO calculated Equatorial Guinea had 651,000 inhabitants, the OECD talked of 700,000, while the World Bank calculated 600,000, and Economy Watch claimed 633,441. In 2010, various United Nations Agencies (UNDP, UNFPA) gave a figure of around 693,000, slightly more than the Population Reference Bureau in Washington. However, the U.N. Statistical Abstract of 2010 reported only 651,000 inhabitants, while the WHO in Geneva gave 676,000, a figure which matches that of the World Bank".

4. MIGRATORY FLOW

Both the colonial model (exploitation of plantations) and the post-colonial model (exploitation of oil resources) have required foreign labor in order to maintain or guarantee viability.

During the colonial period, the Spanish decided it was more productive to hire labor from outside the country, than to depend exclusively on a Guinean work-force, which was both in short supply and opposed to forced labor under the formula of "personal duties". In the post-colonial period, the oil industry required a highly qualified workforce which was impossible to find in a country in which the few degrees courses that were offered by the National University of Equatorial Guinea did not begin until 1995 (the Open University opened its doors in 1985 but with disappointing results). Consequently there were only a few Guinean graduates available in subjects such as agronomy, philology, etc., who had trained abroad and decided to return on completion of their courses (Aixelà 2011: 40–48).

As a result, immigration was a constant feature in Guinea from the middle of the nineteenth century until the present day, with noticeable peaks at particular times.

During the colonial period, indeed almost until independence, the efficient exploitation of the cocoa, coffee and timber resources depended on African labor provided by the contracts signed with other countries of the Gulf of Guinea. Since the mid-1990s, under the second dictatorship, the oil and gas industries have employed personnel from Europe, Asia and North America. However statistics for the arrival of immigrants are only available for the colonial period, when the Spanish annual statistical records and the official contracts which existed with other countries specified the number of people who moved to Bioko, usually for period of two years (de Castro and de la Calle 2007). The figures for immigrants and emigrants since Independence remain unknown as no records have been kept either by the Government of Guinea or the main international statistics authorities.

It is also of interest to note the similarity between the features of immigration during the colonial period and under the dictatorship of Obiang. During the colonial period, African immigrants travelled with a contract and the majority left when the contract ended. The pattern was upheld with the North American and European personnel during the dictatorship of Obiang. Only a minority either wished or was able to stay in either period. Immigrants would arrive without their families and remain alone, except in specific cases for example of European colonists, especially Spanish, and some Africans mainly from Liberia and Nigeria. The situation has been replicated since the oil boom among European, American, African and Asian communities. During the colonial period, the favors of the metropolis allowed those Spaniards who settled in Guinea to retain an influence that was later diluted by the anti-colonial discourse

defended by the Macías regime and off and on by the regime of Teodoro Obiang.

From colonial times, the presence of numerous immigrants of different nationalities on the island of Bioko, alongside the native Guinean population, created a culturally diverse society which today continues to present challenges to the management of cultural differences and co-existence. These complications hinder the emergence of egalitarian trends to reverse a 150-year tradition of severe inequalities, especially on the island of Bioko, both during the period of colonialism and then under the dictatorial political regimes.

5. COLONIAL GUINEA: RACIAL SEGREGATION AND THE BLACK AFRICAN PYRAMID. THE AXIS OF IMPEDIMENTS TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY

The Fernando Poo of the turn of the twentieth century and of the cocoa, coffee and timber plantations reflected a socio-economic reality which required a significant influx of immigrant workers. In order to ensure a supply of labor, it became essential to negotiate such agreements as the contract signed with Liberia at the end of the nineteenth century; in 1898 a total of 1,937 Liberians arrived and in 1901 another 993 immigrants traveled directly from Monrovia, most of whom were hired for two years and returned to their country once the period was completed. The practice of signing agreements with neighboring countries for the provision of labor continued until the end of the colonial period, not only with Liberia, but also with countries such as Nigeria.

Indeed the arrival of black African immigrant workers was vital because, until well into the twentieth century, the climatic features of the country made it difficult to persuade Spanish emigrants to settle in Equatorial Guinea particularly in view of the high mortality rates of tropical diseases. This factor also delayed the provision of all types of infrastructure and obviously meant that the vast majority of the population was black. De Castro (1996: 17, 19) reported that in 1901 there were 445 whites in Santa Isabel, a figure which had risen significantly from the total of 13 in the year 1856. The sense of isolation of the Spanish colonists must have been considerable and altered only with the passing of the decades. The following two testimonies of Spanish colonists are separated by fifty years: "When we arrived on the continent, in about 1885, there was nothing, absolutely nothing! Just a bar on the beach run by a woman who had some French hens. We used to eat fish that they sold there, fruit which we picked in woods and the eggs from that woman's hens. After a year some people arrived from Valencia with some boxes and things got better; but till then … we were so hungry! We hadn't been that hungry on the island in thirty years"[10]. "I arrived in 1935. The first few years were tough, very tough! Nothing had been

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[10] Brunet, Cusculluela and Mur (2008: 143).

done. We had to do everything!... We couldn't do anything without the topee, the quinine and the mosquito net."[11]

De Unzueta (1947: 287) also described life in the town of Santa Isabel in the period between 1870 and 1883 as slow and monotonous. Most of the population were Guinean and black African and the only entertainment was provided by the black Fernandino community: "Against a comfortably-off population of anglicized baptist blacks - "the Fernandino aristocracy"- and a lower class, also black, not sold on Spanish and catholic ideas; Portuguese and English, traders and farmers; virtually no Spanish settlers and a handful of functionaries looking forward to their return to the Peninsula, made up the ranks of the naval and land forces of the Saint Isabel base".

Those Spanish colonists who did brave the conditions were driven by the lack of openings in Spain and on arrival in Guinea they found themselves in a country of opportunities. The country also held attractions for family and friends, offering advantages in free transport to the colony (established in the 1858 Organic Statute and renewed in the Royal Decree of 24th December 1894) or indefinite medical care, advantages in the acquisition of land, the option to employ Krumen (African foreign immigrant labor) free of charge for three years etc. (Sepa 2011: 156–157). In addition to these incentives for potential Spanish colonists, they also set up migratory channels which consolidated networks at the points of departure and arrival. A particularly interesting example was the people of Benasque (Spain) in Equatorial Guinea, a case analyzed by Brunet, Cusculluela and Mur (2008). Thus the Spanish state sought to encourage immigrants by guaranteeing land which had belonged to the Guineans, and although over time the advantages and limitation of land accessible for acquisition varied, the availability was clearly established in the first proclamation of the Organic Statute of the Royal Decree of 13th December 1858 which "confirmed in law the concession of land to colonists, without charge or restrictions in area, and the granting of fiscal exemptions to the new owners for a five-year period" (Sepa, 2011: 155). Further illustration is offered by reports collected by Brunet, Cusculluela and Mur (2008: 38) describing how "in relation to land, properties were offered free to national individuals or companies who requested them; they were not required to pay tax for five years and they became landowners under a single condition that they plant crops or build within two years. Travel from Spain was paid by the State and families were given a grant of 3,000 reales in return for settling there".

The boom in colonial economic development was accompanied by the great trading vitality of the Spanish colonists[12]. As de Unzueta points out (1947: 278), during the second third of the nineteenth century "the 1,000 inhabitants of Santa Isabel of that time dedicated the working week to their jobs, mainly in trade, and

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[11]   Brunet, Cusculluela and Mur (2008: 102).

[12]   The commercial dynamism is also clear in the job offers advertized in the claretian magazine "La Guinea Española". The complete collection is available at: http://www.bioko.net/guineaespanola/laguies.htm (Consulted May 2013).

the population was wealthy and prosperous. Apart from a locksmith, three shoemakers, twelve coopers, six carpenters and three tailors, the rest were traders". According to de Castro (1996: 60), the professional distribution of the capital Santa Isabel in 1875 was varied, as besides the Krumen laborers, there were laundry workers, sailors, servants, carpenters, laborers, seamstresses, tailors, cooks, and a smaller number of store clerks, sawyers, fishermen, coopers, farmers, smiths, policemen, scribes, etc. Martín (1994: 128–129) had offered a similar classification for 1845 on the basis of a census carried out by the protestant pastor Stugeon.

Barriers were established in the colony between the white immigrant population who had emigrated from Europe in order to work and to manage the affairs of the colony, the indigenous Guinean population, and the black migrants who had been hired and transported from nearby African countries to work on the plantations. The contempt for the African population and the hierarchy explicit in all spheres of social life were part of the Eurocentric vision exposed in the writings of the explorer Burton while he was Consul in Fernando Poo (1861 to 1864). He described in shocking terms a visit to a Fang village in a text which ended with the words: "this is how my 'first impression' among the Fang cannibals concluded" (Arnalte 2005: 80) and revealed his racism in such paragraphs as: "Nowhere is the black man worse than at home, where he shows a strange mixture of cowardice and ferocity. With barbaric panic and the horror of death, he delights in the torment and destruction of others, and with more than the usual wild timidity, his main boast is of heroism" (Arnalte 2005: 138).

The barriers between whites and blacks were cultural, legal, political and spatial, although they were ignored in sexual matters, in relations between white men and black women, so long as the relationship was not formalized. One witness justified himself to Brunet, Cusculluela and Mur (2008: 135–136) in a statement that remains disturbing and oddly familiar even today: "the Equatorial climate, with the heat and sticky sweat, day and night, makes the blood boil. The attraction between white skin and black skin is huge. The power, the wealth and the status of the white man, made quite an impact on black women. It was easy for white men to find a partner among the black women. The framework of a highly permissive and polygamous culture meant that carnal relations were natural, with no "buts". And of course! Our people were in the middle, caught between two stools. On the one hand, there was the Guinean saying "*mucha coña, poco coño y un poquito de coñac*" ["lots of playing around, little sex and a bit of cognac"]. On the other hand, there was the option to go native… You could have two or three women, all friends who could all trust each other. And more than one chose this path. Because, of course, you have to understand the need to find consolation from the unhappiness of being such a long way from home".

Therefore, although the official Spanish policy was opposed to interracial sexual relations, such relations between whites and blacks eventually proliferated in Guinea, as has been brilliantly illustrated by Nerín (1999).

Agricultural companies working in timber, coffee and cocoa had avoided hiring married Europeans in order to save accommodation costs but, as in the case of soldiers, their personnel were ordered to remain celibate during their time in Guinea. This failed to prevent frequent sexual relations between Spanish men and Guinean women. Probably in order to limit these sexual relations and to encourage white immigrants to settle in the country, some enterprises chose to allow their workers the company of their families, which led to an increase of 30% in the number of Spanish women in the country by 1962.

The Spanish dictatorship, defender of an androcentric view which restricted women's rights, was particularly concerned about interracial sexual relations of white women with black men and vetoed the immigration of unmarried Spanish women unless they had family members who would take responsibility for them. In the case of men, the situation was different as the many single men who travelled to Guinea until the 1950s hoped only to save money and return home. The main aim was to save as many white women as possible from "improper" relations with Guinean men. The following figures are illustrative: of the white population registered on 15th December 1942 in Fernando Poo, 2,693 were men against 375 women (Sepa 2011: 226); a situation which would change with the arrival of families reflected in the population census of Fernando Poo at 31st December 1950 which recorded 2,493 men against 1,102 women (Sepa 2011: 233).

Some Spanish witnesses insisted on the racial segregation in public spaces and the importance of maintaining an attitude of aloofness and indifference towards black youth and men. For instance, an old woman from Tenerife who had remained in Guinea until independence, explained to me the harsh punishment meted out by her parents and the colonial administrator when faced with a misunderstanding over her behavior: "one evening my parents discovered I had been having friendly conversations with a young Guinean man. They told me off and then went to inform the Governor. The next day they put me on the first morning flight out of Santa Isabel. For me it was painful and humiliating. I was 15."

Therefore, the relative easing of Spanish sexual morality in Africa compared to conditions in dictatorial Spain was true for men[13] but not for women because for them the relaxation of customs had not spread to Equatorial Guinea.

A small sector of the black African community worked in the homes and estates of colonists as cooks and servants, becoming part of the family

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[13] On Spanish sexual morality in Equatorial Guinea, the recommended work is by Nerín (1999). Santana (2009: 17) was of the same opinion and believed that "in Africa they found greater freedom than they had enjoyed in the islands under the [Spanish] dictatorship. The emigrants took advantage of this breath of fresh air that black Africa offered to raise their chances of economic and social success and to relax the codes of behavior once they were beyond the iron control of the strict and conservative Spanish morality of the time. Indeed in Equatorial Guinea, codes of conduct, providing they were not "dangerous" were certainly more tolerant".

community although with well-defined distances and duties in relation to their white employers: "we used to have a cook called Cuk, and a servant called Garrimboy who used to look after the fruit and vegetable garden, the hens, who collected the eggs…; there was another who used to make the beds, serve at table, get the water ready to wash the workers' feet when they got back, have the coffee ready on the table when we got up, put away slippers and boots …" (Brunet, Cusculluela and Mur 2008: 38). There were also strict guidelines for the relations between white foremen and black workers, as illustrated by the following testimony: "You could put them to work hard for three hours, but then at times . . . you had to turn a blind eye and leave them alone, because after all they are human beings. For the blacks, we were the bosses, the *masa*, and that was important because it drew a line… Whatever happened, the white man was the *masa* and in those lands, rightly or wrongly, he held power over everything" (Brunet, Cusculluela and Mur 2008: 131).

In spite of the racial segregation established in Guinea by the Spanish, some men did have children with Guinean women and left them behind when they returned home. Decades later the news, which had been kept secret from wives or families in Spain, caused some relatives anxiety and unease. For many it is distressing to know that they have cousins, siblings or nephews and nieces in Equatorial Guinea whom they have never met and whom their parents never discussed. Such was the case of forty-year-old Mariluz[14] from Valencia who told me: "I have been thinking about making a trip to Guinea for the last two years now to see if I can find my cousin who I discovered in some photos my mother had kept, when my uncle died. When I pushed her, my mother ended up explaining how he had lived with a Guinean woman who had had his daughter and who he had 'had to' abandon when he left the country in 1972. It worries and upsets me and I don't know where to start. My cousin, who is my uncle's only child doesn't want to have anything to do with it". On the other hand, there were also some Spanish men who took their children with them when they left the country and provided them with an education. Others did in fact marry their Guinean partner.

Nevertheless, the degree of "Africanization" of the Spanish population was limited considering how long there had been a Spanish presence in Guinea. In the words of Santana (2009: 30) "they continued to wear western clothes, eat food prepared in the way of the Canary Islands, cook with olive oil, live in western-style homes and form relationships with other whites…".

It is important to point out that the segregationist policy of colonial times was imposed above all by the black African population except in the case of the Fernandino community. So much so that de Unzueta (1947: 278–279) expressed surprise at the sociability and customs of the Fernandinos: "The civilized blacks were too keen on the etiquette and stuffy manners of the English. They greeted each other ceremoniously when they visited or they were out walking. They

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14 Mariluz is 40 years old, she was born and lives in Valencia. The conversation took place in Valencia in October 2012.

were imbued with a strong religious spirit and were so puritanical in their attitude to Sunday that they would not carry out any domestic chores, however natural and normal they might seem. Only the Portuguese catholics and Krumen pagans broke this religious monotony. Well-to-do families sent their children to schools in Sierra Leone… on a Sunday, when the weather was good, the promenade would be filled with black ladies, corseted and overdressed in showy, full skirts, like some distant echo of English fashions, and eager to follow them"[15].

The black African population in Bioko formed a highly segmented community from the foundation of the city of Port Clarence in 1827 (named Santa Isabel in 1843 and Malabo in 1973): until the turn of the twentieth century and the effective colonization of the mainland. The population consisted of the original inhabitants of the island, the Bubi, the Krumen laborers of other nationalities, and the Fernandinos[16]. From this period onwards, they were joined by other Equatorial Guineans: Fang, Annobonese, Ndowe and Bisio. According to Sepa (2011: 199) the arrival of these Guineans to work on the plantations was made possible by the enactment between 1905 and 1906 of the first Social Statute of the Indigenous Population which gave government authorization for the recruitment of laborers from Río Muni and its islands. In 1909 the Vice-Governor of Río Muni was made responsible for recruitment in an initiative designed to bring Guineans from other areas. The policy was interrupted in 1911 and then restored after June 1927. An example is offered by the grandfather of Miguel Angel, a 25-year-old Fang that I interviewed in Malabo in 2008. His grandfather arrived in Bioko in the 1940s: "My grandfather settled in Malabo. My parents, both Fang, were born in Malabo, like me". It is interesting that his birth in the island does not define his cultural ethnic origins: "I am from Nso, my mother's region and not from Mongomo where my father is from, because I was born before they married". This reaffirmation of ethnic identity works equally for the Ndowe, Bubi, Annobonese or Bisio: the place of birth never takes preference over ethnic origins.

This segmentation of the black African population which I described in another article[17] was a disadvantage in relation to the Fernandino group and to a

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[15] In a footnote, de Unzueta (1947: 278-279) described how "eight or ten Krumen were used as beasts of burden to pull the carriage of Governor Linsager and Madame Maltieu". The anecdote reflects the treatment of some Krumen.

[16] As I described in Aixelà (2010: 4), Santa Isabel was a town of high cultural diversity: "The heterogeneity of the population of Malabo in 1856... was based on varied African origins, specifically from Sierra Leone, Cabo Costa, Kru, Accra, Asú, Eboe, Popo, Benín, Bonny, Lagos, Calabar Viejo, Bimbia, Cameroon, Cabinda, Congo, Sao Tomé and Príncipe. There were of course also British and Spanish migrants (initially members of the military and methodist, baptist and jesuit missionaries); people from America, specifically emancipated individuals from Havana; and, from Asia, Philippine exiles (in Basilé) and Chinese laborers from Cuba".

[17] This question is covered in Aixelà, "Being Bubi and Fang in Bioko. Ethnic groups, migrations and national identity" (pending publication).

lesser extent those of the foreign laborers, the Krumen, who had travelled to Bioko with a work contract and a salary, and some of whom decided to stay and acquire land. The Governor Francisco Dueñas, in his report on the state of the colony in 1901 referred to the ethnic diversity of the immigrant population and to the fact that some remained: "the civilized indigenous population does not recognize their origins in the Bubi… but rather in the Costa workforce which arrived in the island as workers or laborers. Once their contract was completed, they spent their savings and their time on working farms which were small at first but through hard work and dedication have grown into valuable plantations"[18]. Nevertheless, it was true that until the Krumen laborers completed their contracts, their job security was the same or worse than that of the Guinean workers, and in particular worse than that of the Bubi who were on home ground. Campos and Mico (2006: 31) reported: "This process [of hiring foreign African labor for the plantations] created a clear differentiation between the local population and the immigrant workers. It is true that the former could be submitted to forced labor in public works; and that quite often the latter settled as small landowners in the colony. But there was always a high number of immigrant workers packed in the huts of the large plantations, who suffered most the violence of colonial domination". On the other hand, it is important to recall that the Guinean laborers who arrived from the mainland or other islands were at the bottom of the black African pyramid, below the Bubi.

Therefore the colonial period saw the establishment of strict racial distinctions between the Spanish "whites" and the African "blacks", as part of a cultural logic that different authors have condemned in present-day Europe. Balibar and Wallerstein (1992) described how the superiority of the "white" was self-perpetuating on the questioned European borders of today, while authors such as Blanchard and Bancel (1998) have pointed out the subtle change in status of Africans in the post-colonial period from the category of "indigenous population" to that of "immigrants".

It is difficult to conclude that colonial policies led to anything but segregation, hierarchy and inequality when the color of people's kin determined the limits and borders of social hierarchies and when in the black African pyramid, other groups not Guinean by origin, had more rights than Guineans for much of the colonial era (Sepa 2011: 247).

This was the most significant Spanish colonial inheritance in terms of the treatment of cultural diversity and the presence of colonists on Guinean territory. Neither aspect could be corrected in the post-colonial period and led to greater intolerance, even worse against the "black unwelcome immigrant" than against the "powerful white man".

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[18]   A.G.A. Africa. Guinea. Cª 783-11, in de Castro (1996: 34).

6. POST-COLONIAL GUINEA: THE FANG PRINCIPLE

The rapid departure of colonists, immigrants, and also Guineans was accompanied by the increasingly strong ethnic supremacy of the Fang. The Fang principle pervading national identity in Equatorial Guinea thus began in the post-colonial period.

Certainly, the establishment of the first dictatorship in Equatorial Guinea under the Fang Francisco Macías Nguema in March 1969, shortly after independence in October 1968, led to the expulsion and flight of thousands of people, Guineans and foreigners, in a process of emigration that would only be reversed after the discovery of oil: Guinea lost the opportunity to construct an independent state based on the social justice that the population craved and such illustrious nationalists as Acacio Mañé or Enrique Nvó demanded during the 50s (Ndongo 1977, Bolekia 2003).

In fact, the Constitutional Conference promoted by Spain and held in Madrid on 30 October 1967 represented the loss of a great opportunity to build an independent state by seeking agreements between different Equatorial Guinean ethnic groups. The initiative failed despite the attendance of important personalities as representatives of the National Liberation Movement of Equatorial Guinea (MONALIGE), of the National Union Movement of Equatorial Guinea (MUNGE) of the Fernandina Democratic Union (UNDEMO), of the Bubi Union, of the Ndowe Union, of the Fernandino Group, and of the Annobon Representative among others (Ndongo 1977, Bolekia 2003).

At the beggining of the 70s, the situation of many groups became unsustainable, as was the case of the Nigerians who from the 1940s had been travelling in their thousands to the plantations. Ndongo (1977: 207) quoted a letter to the *Fuerza Nueva* magazine of 25 December 1971 in which the correspondent wrote that "the estates of Fernando Poo are almost completely abandoned, but this is not the result of either the will or the wishes of their Spanish and Guinean owners. It is simply due to the fact that almost all the Nigerian workers are tired of the ill treatment, of the injustices, of the beatings, of the rapes and of the murders carried out with impunity by the now notorious Macías youth movement, and have abandoned the country even leaving behind their belongings and their savings, seized by the (Guinean) government". From March 1969 onwards, the country saw the mass exodus of other African nationals, of Europeans (especially the rapid departure of the Spaniards), and of course of Equatorial Guineans.

During the first dictatorship, the Equatorial Guineans were given precedence over foreigners, although in the end, all the people that remained behind, whether Guineans or not, needed to deal with a long period of extreme violence (Liniger-Goumaz 1983). Even today there are still no figures for the murders carried out under the dictatorial regime, but the population was decimated. The years of the Macías dictatorship were marked by lawlessness, murder and poverty which spread in towns like Malabo and Bata. Ndongo (1977: 221)

described the situation: "no hay medicamentos. Enfermedades que ya eran leyenda como pian, sarna, nmiguas, tripanosomiasis, etc., están creciendo intensamente en el país. Hace prácticamente un año que no hay pan" ["there are no medicines. Diseases that were just legends like pian, scabies, 'nmiguas', tripanosomiasis, etc., are spreading rapidly in the country. There has been no bread for nearly a year"].

The new configuration of the independent state under the Macías government did not allow cultural diversity within the political framework. In the Constitution of 1973, set out at the III National Congress of the Sole National Workers' Party (Partido Único Nacional de Trabajadores, PUNT, previously known as Sole National Party – Partido Único Nacional – when it was set up in 1969) stipulated that "the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is a Democratic, Popular, Sovereign and Indivisible Republic. The PUNT defines the integrative actions of the Nation under a single Flag in support of the President, but the extremes are not respected by… several members of the Government with "separatist" tendencies as a result of the many millions they received secretly before Independence for their own private purposes and in defense of the interests of the colonialists…*"* (Ndongo 1977: 231, 233).

Certainly the Constitution insisted on the need to loosen and diminish cultural differences, as stated for instance in article 4: "The Sole National Workers' Party gathers in its ranks all men, women, old and young people of Equatorial Guinea, committed to the removal of the old scourges of colonialism, the reinforcement of the independence and territorial integrity…" (Ndongo 1977: 236). Ndongo (1977: 235) cites Antonio García-Trevijano, the man who drafted the Constitution of 1973, when he pointed out the need to channel the different "*national characters*", a euphemism for ethnic groups, with close bonds of shared history and traditions.

That the pluralist sensitivity, which has still to be legalized in Equatorial Guinea and remains discredited against the supremacy of the Fang, today still faces problems has been shown by the recent creation and consolidation of the Coalición Ceiba de Pueblos y Ciudadanos (Ceiba Coalition of Peoples and Citizens)[19]. Although Equatorial Guinea vetoes the legalization of ethnic political parties, the state has been unable to prevent minorities from establishing their position in exile. As Brah (1996) proposed in relation to the contesting identities in the diaspora, exiled Equatorial Guinea ethnic political parties have achieved a high level of visibility through their awareness campaigns within a transnational framework and have increased their power through their demands for recognition of their identity. Clear examples are the Bubi Movement for the Self-Determination of Bioko Island (Movimiento de Autodeterminación para la Isla de Bioko, MAIB) and Etomba a Ndowé, a comparable formation with a Ndowe ethnic base.

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[19] This coalition was presented in June 2012 in Spain. For the aims of the opposition coalition, see their web-site: http://www.coalicion-ceiba.com.

Although the advent of Independence reduced the commercial and economic power of Bioko, the central position of the island as the economic driving force remained key. To guarantee the Fang presence in Malabo, the capital of the country, both Macías and later Obiang, encouraged Fang immigration. Their aim was to ensure socio-economic control of the capital. They also sought to enshrine one of the sources of the legitimacy of the dictatorship within this ethnic group in a clear use of ethnicity for political purposes. One Fang who migrated to Malabo in 1971 was 42-year-old Roberto who recalled: "My father took me to Malabo in the times of Macías. In those days they used to carry out forced migrations."[20] The dictators had undoubtedly initiated a gradual *Fanguization* of Bioko, with higher levels of migration from the mainland than under the Spanish colonists. The process became even more significant following the discovery of oil in 1990. The development of the transport systems between regions can be seen today in the vast range of air and sea services between the island and the continent. Movement is particularly high in the holiday periods when many Fang, Ndowe and Bisio return to the mainland to enjoy the summer break.

Territorial *Fanguization* was followed by the adminstrative *Fanguization* of the State. The most significant political and military posts during the two dictatorships were filled by Fang, specifically by members of Macías' clan, the Esangui of Mongomo, the same as that of his nephew Obiang, who has used the same formula. As described by Liniger-Goumaz (2013) and Bolekia (2011), among many others, Obiang's leadership did not bring great changes because those in government remained the same as in the first dictatorship.

Middle ranking offices were also taken by Fang, many of them close to the dictators' family circles; civil governors, government delegates or commanders of military posts. A few token posts were given to other ethnic groups, in a formula designed to avoid any concession of representation to these communities. In the same way, the emaciated Guinean administration was filled out with members of the Fang ethnic group in general, while the highest posts were reserved for the most influential exponents of the clans. Meanwhile, the current police force still unites large sections of the military militia made up above all by Fang men and women.

This extensive *Fanguization* may be linked to the controversial *muadyanguismo*, in an idea described by Muakuku (2006: 49) when he pointed out the possibility of promoting "brotherhood" from an ethnic group perspective, using the concept of *moadyang (brother):* there would be a "macrostructure which unites different clans with a compulsory sense and code of conduct as for example in the sense of unity and solidarity among all".

Therefore, the inequalities between the ethnic groups of Equatorial Guinea in terms of promotion and opportunities at different levels of the professional or political world, in part due to the fact that the Fang is the largest group, remain

[20] Roberto is a 42-year-old Fang. His case is typical of many Fang who moved to Bioko after the 1970s. The interview took place in Malabo in November 2009.

substantial. The situation has been described by different Guinean researchers and writers. In the words of Ávila (2010)[21]: "For many years the Guinean Administration has been dominated by rampant nepotism, in which shortlists for any public post or grant include only individuals from the Fang ethnic group. They use any means to obtain the posts or the grants that will help them acquire a profession. The outcome, at the community level, is that people of other ethnic groups who live in the same area are dependent on the charity of their majority ethnic group neighbors to cover those needs that constant restraints prevent them from acquiring for themselves".

Although the dictatorial regime is in the hands of a small group of people, all close to the President's circle, the official discourse claims Fang culture as the legitimizing element, which is used by some representatives of the other ethnic groups to criticize the regime. As a result, unfounded generalizations are leveled against the Fang ethnic group as a whole. Abaga (2011) wrote: "for these ethnic spokespeople and their followers, the problem of Equatorial Guinea and what explains its failure is ethnic rather than political. Specifically, the failure of Equatorial Guinea has its roots in the leadership of the Fang, or even more specifically, in the pernicious Fang culture"[22]. Indeed, Abaga (2011) based his argument on different texts, such as the work by Ávila (2010) in which the author insisted on the need to listen to the claims of all ethnic groups in order to encourage the national construction of an Equatorial-Guinea capable of integrating all cultural sensitivities: "We must seek out these arguments in order to insist that this ethnic drift of the political affairs of Equatorial Guinea must be

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[21] For more information on the figure of the Equatorial Guinea writer Ávila Laurel, see Sá (2011) and Ávila (2011).

[22] Fernando Abaga's paragraph comes from the text "Bataman, go home" which opened a fierce debate on the meaning of certain terms used in Guinea to refer to Fang, *bataman*, and Bubi, *bilop*. Other renowned Guineans became involved in a debate on the basis of this text. Mba (2011) claimed that "bilop" was not an insult: "Bilob and not «bilop» is a short and abbreviated form of the word "biloblobo" which the Fang attribute to languages which, different from their own, they cannot understand and in no way is intended as an insult, or is even pejorative. Indeed, the word "biloblobo" does not refer to the people as such but rather their way of talking which is different from that of the Fang. The sense is something like a disordered mixture of words incomprehensible to the Fang and therefore, the word "biloblobo" emerged, which would be the same as saying "scrambled". The verb in this sense would be "*aloban*", in other words "stir" or "hold your tongue", depending on the case... What do have pejorative, ethnicist, racist connotations are words like «bataman », «batafoot», which the Bioko islanders use for the Fang and I say Fang because I do not know if members of the other ethnic groups from the mainland are included". The comments of Mba (2011) soon received a response from the bubi MAIB: "The word "bataman" is not part of the Bubi vocabulary. It is neither an insult nor pejorative. In fact it only means that "certain people are from Bata". The same as the "philological" explanation provided by Sr. Samuel Mba Mombe. "Biloblobo" only means "those who speak languages that the Fang are unable to understand", no more, no less. Therefore, we can talk not only of denotation but also of the connotation of a term, for both one and the other, Sr. Mba Mombe, is seeking to be impartial".

corrected as soon as possible, so that the national construction which must follow the governments of ethnic monopoly may satisfy all Guineans. Any delay in this task will have serious consequences for future democratic governments. The time has come therefore to lay the foundations for a solution to the mess which could undermine our future coexistence".

However, apart from the ethnic segmentation in political and labor circles, which is also reflected in the distribution of urban space, we can distinguish another higher level of segmentation which would include those who take part in the dictatorship, those who benefit from it and those who neither participate nor benefit.

Indeed there are many ways to participate in the regime or to benefit from it: by appointment to one of the institutions of the State where, in spite of appearances, legislative, political and judicial power is under the control of the dictatorship, by joining the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial, PDGE), or by being a member of the government or the judicial, police, administrative or military structures. In the less influential of these structures are individuals who do not criticize the regime for fear of reprisals. In fact, as Bolekia described (2011), the regime always ensures the support of those who work for the State: "President Obiang Nguema's regime nominally approves of political pluralism, but the reality is that the only party that functions is the single party (PDGE), which all public employees must join or be faced with dismissal and expulsion from their posts if they fail to do so". There are also indirect benefits available through patronage in recruitment to private companies, positions in the administration or the granting of trade licenses. In any of these cases the level of the benefits obtained is often proportional to the degree of proximity to power within the regime. There are also the indirect benefits either through a relative who obtains some type of gift, or through family ties or political affiliation which guarantee certain advantages. In any case, most of the population are excluded whether Fang or otherwise, although belonging to another ethnic group does impose greater limits.

In the population structures, the most disadvantaged collective groups are the African immigrants as other immigrant groups, such as those from Europe and North America, enjoy good jobs and are comfortably off[23]. Even the North Africans, such as Moroccans and Egyptians, live in custom-built accommodation, as does the workforce from Malaysia or Korea. The African

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[23] The wealth of the island of Bioko also acts as an incentive to the unforeseen return of the descendants of Guineans resident in Spain who are joining other migrant groups from other African countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Gabon and Mali, from Asian countries like China, Philippines, Syria, the Lebanon, North Korea, from European countries like Spain, Great Britain, France, and from American countries like USA, Cuba, Colombia, among others. For more information, see Aixelà (2010).

migrants are the ones who most suffer xenophobia, ill-treatment and administrative (police and military) and citizens' prejudice[24].

We may conclude that the diversity of the colonial period had been managed through racial segregation and important internal hierarchies within the black African community. The first dictatorship expelled the non-Guineans from the country and condemned to exile those Guineans who chose to flee. The dictatorial regime of Macías imposed centralism based on the clan structure and patronage, which would eventually marginalize the non-Fang Guinean ethnic groups. Although colonialist oppression had come to an end, it was replaced by a new, dictatorial oppression, which would frustrate hopes for an improvement in the socio-economic status of the Equatorial Guineans and their desire for civil rights and freedoms (Ndongo 1977, Nerín 1999). Within these socio-political coordinates and over a period of years, the national identity became related to African bantuism, seeking a global African framework which would hide and fragment the expectations of the different non-Fang Guinean ethnic groups (Kabunda 2007).

7. CONCLUSIONS

Equatorial Guinea presents a high level of cultural diversity, in both the colonial and the post-colonial period. During colonial times the whites were given priority over the black African population, except in the case of the black Fernandino elite which held a position at the top of the black population and could even be more powerful than the whites. A hierarchical and unequal political system was established, in which skin color determined the barriers of the social hierarchies. In the black African hierarchical order, other non-Guinean groups received more rights than natural Guineans.

After independence, the political goals of integration and greater egalitarianism came to nothing as the country entered a dictatorial loop which remains in place today and, while the Fang were prioritized over the other ethnic groups, in practice the Fang community as a whole failed to benefit. The prohibition of ethnic political parties led activists to set up parties in exile, as in the case of the MAIB or of Etomba a Ndowé, which enabled them to raise their profile as a group in spite of the attempts by the dictatorship to limit their weight and specific cultural nature.

The dictatorial regime has taken advantage of the silence on the issue of cultural diversity in conditions of equal rights to construct a national discourse, settled on a formula which enabled the reproduction of the system (differences

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[24] A recent expression of violence against these groups was reported in the following press article published in the daily newspaper *Expansión*, "Malabo carries out mass expulsion of immigrants with the excuse of the death of a local dignitary" available at: http://www.expansion.com/agencia/europa_press/2013/02/08/20130208131332.html (consulted in February 2013).

between ethnic groups, differences between clans) to a point of internal consolidation on the basis of what some have described as *muadjanguismo*, with a *Fanguization* of the state (and also of the Bioko territory). The Fang origins of the presidents have been used to provide advantages to some groups to the detriment of others through the construction of a national identity designed to be homogeneous and non-inclusive. Under the first dictatorship, Guinea was racist and xenophobic and rejected anything non-Guinean that might conflict with the resolute anti-colonial discourse developed by the regime, which was highly critical of the Spanish occupation and led to the expulsion of Europeans, Africans, etc.

Considering this historical perspective on the impact of the administration of cultural diversity during the colonial and dictatorial periods, it is possible to affirm the repercussions of the Spanish colonial legacy in the post-colonial period with the prolongation of certain privileges and inequalities between sectors of the population, which contributed to the enormous difficulties which, in addition to the dictatorial system, hinder the construction of inclusive social coexistence in contemporary Equatorial Guinea.

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About the author: *Yolanda Aixelà* has a PhD. in Cultural Anthropology. Between 1999 and 2001, she was Acting Curator at the Ethnological Museum of Barcelona (Spain). From 2001 until 2008, she was Lecturer at Alicante University (Spain). Since 2008 she has been a Tenured Scientist at the Institution Milà i Fontanals of the Spanish Council for Scientific Research where she is working on interdisciplinary research programs on Gender, Kinship, Ethnicity, Multiculturalism, Immigration, Globalization, Spanish Colonialism and the Anthropology of the Body. She has done fieldwork in Egypt, Morocco, Equatorial Guinea and Spain. Over the last twelve years she has participated in several Spanish research programs on Arab Migration, Islam and Multiculturalism and Social Changes in Africa, all from a gender perspective. She has taught PhD and Master courses at different Spanish universities (Barcelona, Valencia, Alicante, Cadiz, Autonoma of Madrid, among others) and she also has been visiting lecturer at the SOAS, Great Britain (September 2002, July 2005) and at the Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale – CNRS – EHESS, France (July 2003). She is currently director of the Spanish Research and Development Project "La gestion de la diversidad cultural y el impacto sociopolítico de las migraciones transnacionales en dos ex-colonias españolas: Guinea Ecuatorial y Marruecos" (2012–2014).