

THE PORTUGUESE IN HAWAI'I

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In accordance with Island custom, immigrants from territories of Portugal (chiefly the Azores and Madeira islands) and their descendants have been identified as Portuguese, even though many of the latter are issue of intermarriage with other ethnic groups and do not think of themselves as Portuguese. In 1967 there were approximately 21,720 individuals, or 3.3 percent of the total population, identified as of unmixed Portuguese ancestry, and of these, 13,120 or 60 percent, were residing on O'ahu. A somewhat earlier tabulation listed 15,913 of unmixed ancestry and 13,536 mixed with one other strain.¹

The Portuguese are found on all major islands, distributed among all major occupational classes. In contrast with a group like the Chinese, there has been some tendency for the Portuguese to remain in rural, plantation areas in greater numbers, particularly on Neighbor Islands, though many live and work in urban centers. The fact that the U.S. Census since 1930 has not distinguished Portuguese from other Caucasians, and that there has been relatively large migration of other Caucasians from the Mainland, means the proportion of Portuguese in the population has steadily diminished from the peak of 14.1 percent in 1890. Another factor is the tendency of members of the group to move to the Mainland, especially to California. Extensive intermarriage has meant that a large number have simply disappeared into the category of Caucasian (and when intermarried with non-Caucasians, they are sometimes referred to as Cosmopolitan).

Among Europeans, the Portuguese were the earliest to reach the western shores of the Pacific—by way of Africa, India, South East Asia, and up to the Spice Islands, even to Japan in the sixteenth century. Magellan and his men, of course, circumnavigated the globe, making the first crossing of the Pacific from east to west. However, we do not know when the first Portuguese reached Hawai'i. There do not appear to have been any with Captain Cook on his visits in 1778 and 1779.

A Portuguese crewman on the *Daedalus*, Vancouver's store ship, was mortally wounded in a fray at Waimea,

O'ahu, on 7 May 1792. Early in 1794, Vancouver noted that there were eleven foreigners with Kamehameha at Kealakekua, among them a Portuguese.² He is the first Portuguese resident of which we have record, though there may have been others.

Certainly the best known and most important of early Portuguese in the Islands was João Eliot de Castro, a native of Portugal who had earlier migrated to Buenos Aires but had become physician to Kamehameha by 1812. He left Hawai'i, spent some time at sea and on the North American continent (from Alaska to Acapulco), and returned to Hawai'i in 1816 with Kotzebue. Thereafter he served Kamehameha as a minister.

The foreign population increased beginning in 1790, and Portuguese were among those who arrived in the earliest decades, increasing to 486 by 1878. About 4.6 percent of the foreign population, thus, was identified as Portuguese. Most had been seamen in the fur and sandalwood trade and on whaling ships. The *Hawaiian Gazette* commented in 1876, ". . . they are among the most industrious of our people, being generally small farmers or dairymen, or serving on plantations and ranches."

Perhaps a typical representative of this early, pre-1878 group was Antone Rosa, Sr., born about 1826, who arrived on a whaling ship in 1852, settled on Moloka'i, and married a Hawaiian woman. He had five sons and, at the time of his death 7 October 1896, was a farmer in Kalihi, O'ahu.

The need for plantation labor which followed upon the 1875 reciprocity treaty with the U.S. caused the Islands to look toward Portugal, among other sources. Earlier experience with single Chinese men had moved the government to work toward immigration of families. In November 1876 the Bureau of Immigration voted to defray the cost of importing 200 Portuguese from Madeira and the Azores. Though the project was not carried out, it was the first definite step toward large-scale immigration of Portuguese.

The beginning of that immigration was implemented largely by Dr. William Hillebrand who had lived long in Hawai'i, returned to Germany, and who was, in 1876, temporarily in Madeira. From there he wrote in December that conditions were favorable to an emigration to Hawai'i and that he would be willing to help the project. He was appointed Commissioner of Immigration

and authorized to proceed. After many difficulties, a pioneer company was assembled. It arrived on the bark *Pricilla* from Funchal in September 1878. There were sixty men, twenty-two women, and thirty-eight children aboard.

In the next ten years seventeen ships brought 10,998 Portuguese to the Hawaiian Islands. During the tenure of the Republic, a single ship in 1895 brought 657 more. Since then, all immigrants from Portugal, Madeira, and the Azores have come as individuals, though the pattern of family emigration has continued. Approximately 5,500 persons, one-fourth of the total Portuguese immigration, arrived between 1906 and 1913.

From the plantation ownership point of view, the Portuguese were expensive because of the need to first transport, then house, entire families. However, they proved capable, many achieving the status of *luna*, i.e., foreman.

One of the important effects of the wave of immigration was to change markedly the proportion of male to female Portuguese in the Islands. In 1872, of 395 Portuguese there were only twenty-eight females, but by 1884 there were 4,138 females out of 9,997. During the eleven years (1878-1888) when the largest number, 11,000 Portuguese, were recruited for the plantations of Hawai'i, less than a third (31 percent) were adult men, while the majority consisted of children (47 percent) and women (22 percent).

There is a vivid firsthand account of one of the immigrant voyages available in English translation by a member of the Portuguese "colony"³ The log of the trip was kept by João Baptista d'Oliveira (J. B. Oliver) and Vicente Ornellas, who left Madeira aboard the English sailing vessel *Thomas Bell* in November 1887 and arrived at O'ahu on 12-13 April 1888. On so long a voyage, about five months, the passengers had vivid and sometimes harrowing experiences. One episode in the log tells of a storm at sea during which a passenger threw into the ocean an image of the *Menino Jesus* (Christ Child), a few minutes after which the weather cleared. The narrators parenthetically observe: "We do not say this was because the *Menino Jesus* was tossed into the sea; we do know, however, that the calm followed that act."

Before annexation of Hawai'i in 1898, the Portuguese became a politically significant group, and

during the period of change from kingdom to republic and republic to U.S. territory, there was a consciousness in the Islands of a "Portuguese vote."

A significant Hawaiian-Portuguese leader of the period was Judge Anton Rosa (1855-1898), the eldest son of the Antone Rosa, Sr. cited above. Judge Rosa was educated at the Royal School, became deputy clerk to the Supreme Court in 1882, and, after studying law for two years, was admitted to the Hawai'i bar in October 1884. He served King Kalakaua as attorney general from 15 November 1886 to June 1887, and in 1896 he was judge of the third and fourth circuit courts. Apparently a royalist at heart, he was, nevertheless, able to make decisions which took account of all the interests in the Islands. He was fluent in English and Hawaiian and knew French. Oddly, there is no mention of his knowledge of Portuguese.

Of the ten consuls and consul-generals, known to have served the Portuguese community in Hawaii during the past century, at least three were themselves immigrants from Portugal, and others were born and educated in these islands.⁴

Between 1885 and 1927 there were at least twelve Portuguese language newspapers in Honolulu and Hilo, the oldest being *Luso Hawaiiano* and the most recent *O Facho* (The Torch). Sometimes these papers printed literary material written in Portuguese by local people. Two poems, narrating events of immigrant life on the island of Hawai'i, were written by José Tavares de Teves of Honoka'a plantation, appearing in 1885 and 1886. The author, who came to Hawai'i on the *Suffolk* in 1881, had a wide reputation as a poet, song writer, and musician.

Some Portuguese in the Islands have written authentic works of ethnic literature in English. Two novels, in particular, should be mentioned. Elvira Osorio Roll's *Hawai'i's Kohala Breezes* (New York, Exposition Press, 1975) deals with the experience of a Hawaiian girl of Portuguese descent, including instances of prejudice by Mainlanders. In *Haole, Come Back* (Chicago, Adams Press, 1975), James A. Carvalho deals with a fictional restoration of all Hawaiian lands to the Hawaiian people by the U.S. Supreme Court. Carvalho published under the pseudonym "James Oaktree." In Portuguese, *carvalho* is "oak tree." For many years Carvalho has been prominent in presenting Portuguese music on local radio, arranging to show Portuguese films, and stimulating other aspects of Portugal's culture.

By and large, the Portuguese relinquished their language fairly soon, adopting Hawaiian and English (by 1886, the Portuguese made up almost one-tenth of total school enrollment, a consequence of the large number of children among immigrants). And yet a fair number of words entered both Hawaiian and English in Island use (e.g., *pao doce*, 'sweet bread' and the Hawaiian *pakaliao*, 'codfish,' from *bacalhau*). Hawaiian words relating to the Roman Catholic Church may owe their phonetic shape and currency in part, at least, to their use by the Portuguese, e.g., the Hawaiian *Maria Saneta*, 'Holy Mary,' which better corresponds to the Portuguese *Maria Santa* than to the Latin *Maria Sancta*, and the Hawaiian *Kristiano*, almost exactly like the Portuguese *cristiano*. Among other Hawaiian terms suggestive of such influence are *Pukikī*, 'Portuguese,' and *wiola*, 'viol,' corresponding to the Portuguese *viola*, a type of small guitar. If *wiola* were from spoken English, one would expect a Hawaiian spelling with *-ai* rather than with *-i-*. Elizabeth Carr states: "The influence of Portuguese upon the English language in Hawaii is considerable even though the actual number of loanwords heard today is small."⁵

A convenient source on manifestations of Portuguese culture is a series of sketches of immigrant life by Elma Tranquada Cabral which appeared in *Paradise of the Pacific* between 1946 and 1954:

The holiday customs—wine-drinking at Christmas; the *Lapinha* or Nativity scenes; the mass followed by *caldo de galinha*, 'chicken broth.' The widespread use of nicknames—*O Torto da Manoa*, 'The Cockeyed [Farmer] of Manoa'; *A Rosa das Vacas*, 'Rose of the Cows'; *A Fava Seca*, 'Dried Horse-Bean.' The practice of folk medicine—as performed by the *curandeira*, 'practitioner,' versed in herbs and other remedies for such ailments as the *bucho virada*, 'reversed stomach,' or by the *feiticeira*, the 'sorceress,' adept in testing for the *quebranto*, 'spell of depression, illness, or the like caused by someone's evil eye.' Concerning music—an account of the forerunners of the 'ukulele, including the *braguinha*, the *machete de Madeira*, the *viola* (Portuguese guitar), and the *rajão*, 'five-stringed taro patch fiddle,' also called the *cavaquinho*.

Much about food—*carne de vinha d'alhos*, 'marinated pork'; *cebolas*, Portuguese pickles or 'pickled onions'; *trêmoços* (salted) 'lupine beans'; *bôlo de mel*, 'honey cake'; *rosquinhás*, 'ring shaped cakes'; *arroz con feijão*, 'rice with ham, beans, pumpkin, and tomatoes'; *malassadas*, 'doughnuts'; *acorda*, 'stew with garlic, bread crumbs, oil, and eggs'; *morcela*, 'blood sausage'; and *linguiça*, the almost universally popular Portuguese sausage.

Christianity is important in the Portuguese tradition, of course; the majority of Portuguese, in the homeland and Hawai'i, are Catholics, and many of the values and customs are related to religion. One of the most eminent members of the immigrant group was Stephen P. Alencastre (1876-1940), who became Bishop of Arabissus and Vicar Apostolic for Hawai'i in 1924. He had arrived in the Islands in 1882.

A characteristic Old World festival maintained in the Islands is the Feast of the Holy Ghost, at Pentecost, commemorating a ceremony begun by Queen Isabel of Portugal, wife of Dom Diniz, instituted at Alemquer, near Lisbon, early in the fourteenth century. It is more popular in the Azores than on the continent, and in Hawai'i includes the blessing of the meat, a mass, a procession with music (often provided by the Royal Hawaiian Band), donations, and the crowning of a queen. The festival or carnival lasts several days and is the responsibility of the Brotherhoods of the Holy Ghost, of which two remain on Neighbor Islands and three in Honolulu, the latter associated with the Holy Trinity, Kalihi, Punchbowl, and Kewalo.

An interesting development was establishment of Portuguese Protestant churches. As early as 1867 there were efforts by the Hawaiian Evangelical Association to convert Portuguese Catholics, and by 1889 there was an evening school and a Sunday school, with B. F. Dillingham as superintendent. On 19 September 1890, three Portuguese Protestant ministers reached Honolulu under the auspices of the evangelical group. They were the Reverend E. N. Pires, the Reverend Antonio Victorino Soares (pastor of the Portuguese Evangelical Church in Honolulu until 1928), and the Reverend Robert K. Baptist(e), or Baptista, who served in Hilo until 1902. Portuguese Protestant churches, with their hymns in the language, acted to some degree as a conservative influence, while the Catholic church fostered acculturation, for parishes of that faith were not ethnically based—though certain churches, because of residence patterns, had a fairly large number of Portuguese communicants, and still do. An example is Our Lady of the Mount (*Nossa Senhora do Monte*) in upper Kalihi. On a hill overlooking this church is a statue of Our Lady of the Mount duplicating one on the island of Madeira. And inside the church is another statue which wears human hair donated by a young woman of the parish.

There were very few Portuguese priests in the early period (nor are there many now) but many made shift to learn enough Portuguese to use it in the

confessional and in sermons, a task made easier by similarities with Latin. In more recent years the language has been used in the church only on special occasions. Church sanction of a change of the mass from Latin to the vernaculars throughout the world had an eventful result in Hawai'i. On 2 June 1974 at the Church of St. Theresa in Honolulu, the Right Reverend Monsignor Benedict M. Vierra celebrated the first mass in Portuguese in the Islands, with a choir trained by Mrs. Cecy de Souza Browne singing in the same language. Two years later, this Portuguese Pentecost mass was repeated at the same church as a project of the Portuguese Council of Hawaii.

Like most other immigrant groups with little or no access to established sources of capital, the Portuguese fostered accumulation of savings among their number. But the Portuguese Benevolent Society was formed in order to be able to help individuals hit by adversity—invalids, widows, and orphans, for example. The earliest of these appears to have been St. Antonio's Benevolent Society, organized 1 January 1877. In 1882 the Lusitana Society was organized, and in 1903 two more—A Patria (The Fatherland) and São Martinho. An interesting accounting by Marques⁶ reveals the economic benefits of two of these groups. Between 1882 and 1910 Lusitana resources came to \$495,752 and between 1877 and 1910, the figure for St. Antonio was \$367,253. The amounts are very respectable considering that they were accumulated from dues paid by fewer than 4,000 members of both groups combined, mostly people of low income. In time, the need for these societies disappeared, and in the *Honolulu Advertiser* of 1 May 1955 it was reported that St. Antonio was ending seventy-eight years of activity.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to list all the fields in which the Portuguese have been noteworthy, but such a list would have to include politics, music, sports, the dance, law, bread and pastry-making, sausage preparation, education, health, and the church life of Hawai'i, all areas in which these people have taken notable part.

NOTES

1. Population data derived from Hawaii, Department of Planning and Economic Development, Statistical Report 111, "The Portuguese Population of Hawaii," Honolulu, 1976.

2. George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific and Round the World* (London, 1801), V, p. 112.
3. J. B. d'Oliveira and V. d'Ornellas, "Destination, Sandwich Islands," *Trans. L. Canario, Hawaiian Journal of History*, 4 (1970): 3-52.
4. Further detail on the history of the Portuguese consulate is available in the files of the two writers of this article.
5. Elizabeth Carr, *Da Kine Talk: From Pidgin to Standard English in Hawaii* (University Press of Hawaii, 1972), p. 97.
6. A. Marques, "The Portuguese in Hawaii," *Hawaiian Annual* (1911), pp. 43-53.