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African Female Nascent Entrepreneurship In The Macao S.A.R.

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Home, community, and identity all fit somewhere between the histories of and experiences we inherit and the political choices we make through alliances, solidarities and friendships (Mohanty 2003: 136).

ABSTRACT: African women from different countries and social classes, from those seeking refugee status to diplomats and peasants' daughters, have been arriving in increasing numbers on Chinese shores since the 1980s. The amazing stories of some of these "invisible" but dynamic women have been ignored, yet they reveal great diversity and deserve scholarly attention, as they provide rich material for studies on the African diaspora in China.

This article focuses on African migration to Macao, a former Portuguese colony and primary migration destination in the Pearl Delta River Region, which currently hosts the densest African population in China. It explores both the more recent and the relatively longer-term migration of African women and university students to Macao, and examines the intersection of these communities resulting from the overlap between the ongoing global movements of African diasporas and new African migratory trends to China.

The article draws on the life stories as well as the educational and entrepreneurial experiences of African women in Macao, and investigates the relevance of ethnic networks of trust and reciprocity for their communities' survival. This article places specific emphasis on the experiences of African women, recognizing their achievements in the face of multiple intersections of racism and sexism on the part of both state and society, and reveals how the women employ a resistance strategy by reinforcing ethnic migrant networks.

Introduction

Recent international interest in the Macao Special Administrative Region (M.S.A.R.) of China has been attributed mainly to the double-digit growth in the city's economy and gaming revenue, and low inflation and low unemployment, all of which have created a strong demand for labor in the services, construction, and hospitality sectors. Macao is considered the largest gaming city in the world. However, the interest in Macao is also related to China's growing presence in Africa through trade, diplomatic relations, and Chinese migration. The combination of gaming, as an economic driving force, with Macao's geographical position as one of the major travel hubs in the prosperous "world factory" (Yang 2011; K. Zhang 2006) of the Pearl River Delta Region has not only attracted a large flow of visitors and expatriates to the area, but also made it part of a transnational circuit for international students, mainly from Africa. These students are drawn to the benefits of advanced studies, research opportunities, employment, and business prospects.

Macao has witnessed a growth in access to tertiary education over the past decades, and today has 10 institutions of higher education. The city also has the only Roman Catholic university in the People's Republic of China, the University of Saint Joseph, targeting international students, in particular African students, as well as seminary students and mission-

aries. The University of Macao is expanding across the border into the adjoining Chinese city of Zhuhai, with its new campus built on Hengqin Island and linked to both Macao and Zhuhai via a tunnel. According to my analysis of official data, between 2000 and 2011 the number of students from African countries in Macao universities increased nearly tenfold. Today they number approximately 100 students, the great majority of whom came to Macao because they had extended networks of family and friends who had already settled in mainland China or in nearby Asian countries. Other aspects that add to the attraction of Macao are its 500-year history of exchange with the West (the longest contact with the West of any city in China); its architectural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity; and the intermingling of cultures that contributes to making the territory a unique historical and cultural location.

Following periods of decolonization in their home countries, sub-Saharan Africans and other people of African ancestry have come to constitute distinct diasporic groups in Macao. The majority arrived from Portuguese-speaking countries and played an important role in maintaining a transnational “Afro-Lusophone” popular culture through African diasporic associations, as well as through a number of cultural events, festivals (mainly the Lusophonia Festival), shows, street parades, exhibitions, and trade fairs. They are part of China’s wider strategy towards Portuguese-speaking countries, and of the local government’s long-term objective of encouraging travelers to choose Macao not only as the region’s premier gambling destination, but also for cultural tourism and the “exoticism” of its hybridized cultures.

The purpose of this article is to explore the African women’s diaspora in Macao, a dynamic mosaic including people from various countries, and to assess the likelihood that they will remain in the M.S.A.R. after finishing their studies, working either as professionals in their field or in entrepreneurial ac-

tivities. As part of the same question, this article investigates women who, as students, have started to earn a living by engaging in additional activities. It also analyzes a recent worldwide trend of globalization, “the transnationalism from below” (Smith and Guarnizo 1998), focusing on immigrants as a “counter-geography of globalization,” as well as on the “feminization of migration” (Zaman and Tubajon 2001; Boyd and Grieco 2003; Gabaccia et al. 2006) or “feminization of survival” (Sassen 2000: 506), an emerging phenomenon, half of international migrants being women, generally compelled to work in gender-biased and informal sectors of the economy. Thus this article focuses on an undervalued, gender-specific aspect of African migration to China: the patterns of migration of African women in Macao, and their networks. This is set against Macao’s and China’s interplay of politics and economics with African countries, which seems to neglect the mutual benefits of migration and development. This emphasis leads to the discussion of key concepts, such as higher education, female ethnic entrepreneurship, and ethnic transnational networks. The educated African women I discuss here express and negotiate their racialized and gendered diasporic identities (through their precarious statuses as migrants and students) and their lived experiences across borders in a predominantly Chinese context. They also participate in meaningful exchanges and interactions with their home countries in Africa, as they use the trends and opportunities of globalization to their advantage.

This article focuses on interrelated areas of my current and ongoing research and is structured as follows: I will discuss some relevant literature that provides guiding ideas for this article. Then, I will present a statistical and historical description of African migrants in Macao; I will provide a contrasting evaluation of the earliest African female community in Macao, some of whom were pioneers in the informal cross-border trade in China, and a more recent wave of African female students. Then, I will present two parallel case studies of African women

students based in Macao involved in informal work as self-employed entrepreneurs between Guangdong Province and their hometowns in Africa, in order to understand their motives for starting small-scale businesses, identify their trade practices and the constraints that they faced, and explore whether they would pursue their activities after finishing their studies.

After reviewing first the general literature on African expatriate communities, I will turn to the most recent studies directly pertinent to my thesis, to clarify how African women have negotiated their roles and integration into Chinese society without losing a sense of their origins, and then used adaptive strategies to enter the Chinese realm of academic and economic influence. Last, I will discuss African women who are not in academia.

Migrant Women as Homogenized Others

Studies of African migration to China have overwhelmingly concentrated on male African experiences, as men own and control the great majority of African businesses in China and in Hong Kong. Research on African expatriate men who reside in Chungking Mansions, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong, the areas of Xiao Beilu in Guangzhou (Canton), and Yiwu in Zhejiang, and who may or may not be traders, has been conducted by African, Western, and Chinese scholars in Hong Kong and China. Among them, Bodomo (2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2012), Bertoncetto and Bredeloup (2007), Li et al. (2012), Le Bail (2009), Lyons et al. (2008, 2012), Pelican and Tatah (2009), Zhang Li (2008), and Yang (2011) stand out. Yet few works focus on Africans from Portuguese-speaking countries in Macao: these stress the importance of the Portuguese language in shaping the identity of the “Lusophone Africans” in Macao (Bodomo and Silva 2012), and the importance of the Mozambicans of Chinese ancestry, who settled in Macao (Morais 2004, 2005). Taking as a point of

departure previous research I conducted in Macao among Nigerian students in one institution of higher education (Morais 2009), the present article extends the investigation to Africans from other countries and to female nascent entrepreneurship. I argue that in the mid-1980s, when Macao was still under Portuguese administration, some African women paved the way for cross-border trade activities with neighboring Zhuhai, one of China's Special Economic Zones created in the 1980s, and that these activities expanded after 1999 with the arrival of a new wave of African women. There is a significant gap in the literature on Africans in contemporary China with regard to these women.

Transitory and temporary business activities, which occur without government supervision and lack substantial benefits, came to special academic attention when Hart (1973) originally proposed the term "informal activities." He postulated that in certain countries these can contribute to the economy as much as formal activities. After 1990, scholars argued that the informal sector is made up of diverse economic activities and occupations, ranging from casual work, such as temporary part-time jobs, to work done at home by self-employed individuals who produce legal goods and services, even if they do so through irregular or unregulated means (Chen et al. 2004). Furthermore, the informal workforce has begun to be recognized as displaying entrepreneurial traits and qualities, which could be of potential benefit if integrated into the formal economy (ILO 2002). Another strand of literature highlights the heterogeneity of women's experiences (Mohanty 2003: 24), in particular the resilience of both migrant women and the networks they use to migrate, find a suitable university, settle, and engage in entrepreneurial activities.

This article focuses on African women who engage in a business venture's early stages, which, according to the definition of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, involves having created a business during the past twelve months but not paid salaries

or wages for more than three months (Reynolds et al. 2004). To frame an overview of Nigerian and Angolan women, I adopt an “integrated perspective,” which highlights women’s special modes of conducting business through a web of professional, family, and community relationships (Brush 1992: 27). Bygrave and Quill (2007) identified the “Four Fs”: Family, Friends, the Founding entrepreneurs themselves, and Foolhardy strangers, or private investors. I try to fill another gap by contrasting the two groups (the first-generation migrant women and those arriving in the later waves) because few studies of female entrepreneurship have investigated differences in individual characteristics across sets of women. Though women’s employment-oriented migration is on the increase, not many studies have discussed women’s movements in relation to education, or the combination of education with employment (Kenway and Bullen 2003).

In recent years, in light of concrete evidence on the importance of new business creation for economic growth and development, women’s entrepreneurship has attracted increasing attention (Acs and Audretsch 2005; Langowitz and Minniti 2007). Not only does female entrepreneurship contribute to economic growth and employment creation, but it is increasingly recognized that it also enhances the diversity of entrepreneurship in an economic system (Verheul et al. 2006) and provides paths for female independence and accomplishment (Eddleston and Powell 2008). This article suggests that the “integrated” perspective offers explanations for how women combine business with family and other societal and personal relationships. The majority of studies (Chen et al. 2004; Cingolani 2003) relate women’s involvement in the informal sector to their generally lower level of education. This is not the case with my interviewees. The present contribution offers new evidence of the magnitude of the gender performance gap for informal entrepreneurs in China by taking into account home-based entrepreneurs, who have been called “invisible

entrepreneurs" (Baker et al. 1997). I argue that in contemporary Macao, as in the rest of China, in both general perceptions and official statistics, Africans are sharply considered and evaluated as homogenized "others," in contrast with either Asians or Europeans.

In line with current theorizing, I also highlight the importance of Celious and Oyserman's Heterogeneous Race Model (2001: 156-157); they state that "homogenization mandates the use of stereotypes for in-group and out-group interactions, erasing the experiences of women, men, middle-class, and immigrant people of African origin from academic literature, popular culture, and, most importantly, daily interactions." Although their perspective was developed with reference to one specific group (Afro-American males), I argue that it is a valuable instrument for understanding multiple dimensions of African experiences in China, as well as for commenting on gender-specific migration experiences; for example, how within-group differences between African women relate to such factors as gender, educational attainment, and informal entrepreneurship, and influence daily interactions and experiences. The prevailing homogenous race viewpoint assumes that Africans share one common experience. The African women of Macao challenge the commonplace conceptions of the typical African migrant to China as an untrustworthy male trader, illegal immigrant, or drug trafficker. Other stereotypes that present African women migrants as dependent, oppressed, asylum seekers, or drug mules, are also refuted by the present study.

Although our respondents assert a positive cultural representation of African women, many of them do not achieve as high an educational level as they might have had they been given better opportunities. They report that this is because they suffer the consequences of such homogenized perspectives, and that after graduation they are even less likely than their male counterparts to find jobs that match their qualifications and

genuine aspirations. The findings of Beoku-Betts and Njambi (2005: 113) on the experience of African women in American academic institutions, and the way they are perceived by Americans, illuminate some of the problems that the African women respondents report in the Chinese context. Many participants feel that, compared to fellow Chinese and Europeans, Africans face prejudice even in institutions of higher education, from both students and professors alike. They feel they are viewed as intellectually inferior, and that their entrepreneurial activities or contacts with other entrepreneurs are regarded with suspicion. Informal or even formal cross-border trade remains a sensitive issue in several sectors of the society, including the academic world, although it is common practice in several communities, including among the Chinese themselves. The respondents were reluctant to speak about their business activities, because they were aware that African entrepreneurs are looked down upon, whereas formal activities with the local business community are perceived in a more positive light.

The expansion in the last four decades of new educational opportunities for both sexes makes such research even more relevant. Gains were particularly important among women in terms of “retention and progression from primary to secondary and beyond” (World Atlas of Education 2012: 12). Today African women constitute a significant number of international students, especially in higher education. Although access to higher education is still problematic in many countries, the last decade has brought to Macao a major increase in the number of African women who are beneficiaries of higher education.

Although heterogeneous in terms of experiences and identities, African women in Macao share certain traits: they are relatively well educated, since the majority of them are college graduates; and they are very much attached to personal networks, defined as “sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination

areas through the bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin” (Massey 1988: 384).

The Survey

African women who not only engaged in university studies but also decided to become self-employed traders, or “single female entrepreneurs,” are the primary focus of the present study. Three main aspects of these women’s lives will be considered: their migration experiences, the motivating factors that pushed or pulled them into doing business, and finally their entrepreneurial networks. In order to understand the “fringe” stories of African female students in Macao, as well as their accomplishments and trials, I conducted a field study among three groups of Africans, starting in 2011 and completed in the course of 2012 and 2013, using the techniques of participant observation, free conversation, and extended interviews with a set of guiding questions.

I restricted my analysis to three groups of African women who arrived in Macao between 1987 and 2008 and who obtained their final degree after entering Macao.¹ Finally, in this study I also draw heavily on my own life experience as an academic originally from Mozambique working at a university that has the highest numbers of African students in Macao and as a resident in Macao for over two decades from 1987 to the present, as well as one of the co-founders of the first local Portuguese African Association created in 1992.

I interviewed 20 respondents in Macao and in Portugal on the following issues: personal histories and connections to their home countries and the African diaspora in China; educational, family, and occupational histories; reasons for migrating to Macao for study; the benefits and drawbacks of migration; occupations and the operation of trade activities that they might pursue; involvement in local cross-border associations;

participation in ethnic and national celebrations; and experiences with race relations, class, and gender in China. Of these 20 women, 10 were studying in three local higher education institutions and working in Macao. Five others belonged to the first influx of female African students who had graduated from local institutions and sought opportunities locally instead of returning to their respective countries. Some of the remaining women settled for a while in Portugal, the U.K., Angola, or elsewhere, but then a few returned to Macao, and some also started families. Categorized based on country of origin, five interviewees were born in Nigeria and the other 15 were from various Portuguese-speaking African countries. The age of the respondents ranged from early 20s to 60. Their years of schooling and the length of time they had spent in Macao varied: some of the women from the Portuguese colonies had been living in Macao for over 20 years; most arrived in the 1980s and 1990s, while others arrived in 2008. The majority were in their 20s or early 30s at arrival, except for two individuals who arrived as divorced single mothers in their late 30s and 40s.

All the participants had already earned bachelor's degrees or were in the course of graduating. Three of them had earned master's degrees, while only two were pursuing Ph.D.s. Participants who had been early migrants from Portuguese-speaking countries had higher degrees than their Anglophone peers in this study. Although all these women migrated to Macao with the intention of earning bachelor's, master's, and, if possible, doctoral degrees, after completing their bachelor's degrees they seldom applied to graduate school. For the more recent batch of female African students, visa constraints and scholarship requirements made it difficult to do so, whereas for the first generation of African women, marriage and family constituted comparable barriers.

Of the married women, all but one had African husbands, generally men from their home countries, though not always from their own ethnic groups. Many other women were single

or divorced. At least two marriages had occurred among the most recent newcomers: one between partners from Anglophone countries, the other with partners from a Portuguese-speaking and a French-speaking country.

The women interviewed had maintained strong ties to communities of kin in their home countries and in other countries of the African diaspora, individually or through membership in associations (as in the case of those from Portuguese-speaking countries), sending remittances; building, purchasing, and maintaining homes; making frequent visits; and, in some cases, purchasing goods in China to send to their home countries. The life stories of the interviewees help us to focus on African women who were nascent entrepreneurs.

In what follows, migrant women's aspirations and successes and the challenges preventing them from reaching the goals they had set for themselves will be the major topics of my discussion. I will also explore their attitudes toward entrepreneurship, especially with reference to the extent to which it explains varying levels of entrepreneurship between different groups of women.

Portuguese-Speaking and English-Speaking Students from Africa in Macao

In Macao, the number of international students from various African countries has steadily increased, as has the proportion of female students among them.²

Until 1999, yearly censuses in Macao showed a breakdown of the foreign student population that included specific African countries. The current Education Survey gives their number in an aggregated form, under the generic rubric "African countries." Macao's official population statistics do not even include those who hail from Africa as a separate category. According to the survey undertaken as part of this research, complemented

with information from the Tertiary Education Services Office statistics, the number of international students in Macao's universities from Portuguese-speaking countries continued to grow steadily in the first decade following Macao's transference of sovereignty to China; however, it registered a slowdown in recent years.³ Today, it is estimated that Mozambican students are the largest community among those from Portuguese-speaking countries, and that Nigerians are the largest group among those from other African countries. The strengthening of relations between China and Lusophone countries through the creation of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation Between China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries in Macao, the opening of the first consulate general of Angola in Macao in 2007, and the presence of honorary consuls from other Portuguese-speaking countries, have played an important role in continuing to attract students, traders, and visitors from those countries, and strengthening their networks.⁴

Regarding women students specifically, the largest group comes from Mozambique, followed in descending order by those from Cape Verde, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe.⁵

A smaller number of women students arrived in a new wave from 2008 onwards from the English-speaking countries of Nigeria and South Africa. South African students represent a new layer in the complexity of this transnational African community.⁶ They exemplify the presence of long-established Chinese communities in South and East Africa with links to Macao (Morais 2004, 2005), as well as the more recent Chinese immigrants to settle in South Africa. South Africa has a larger Chinese population than any other African country (Park and Chen 2009: 30), and many choose to pursue their higher education in China.

The number of African students from Anglophone countries studying in Macao, most notably from Nigeria, has gone up significantly, perhaps because China now ranks as one of the

major destinations for international students.⁷ Single women drive this most recent trend, a shift in the African migration pattern. This new wave peaked in 2008, but students continue to come seeking bachelor's or postgraduate degrees. Many Nigerian women are motivated by high expectations for Sino-African trade, and also expectations of finding a job while studying. They are attracted to Macao's high salaries and high standard of living, and by the ease of access to mainland China, and hope to stay on after graduation. The half-dozen female Nigerian students of the first batch who graduated in 2011 tried to remain in Macao in pursuit of jobs or even marriage, and some married men of other nationalities. Some ignored or tried to find ways to circumvent the strict migration and work policies that prevent foreign students from taking up work after graduation. The increase in the number of women students occurred before the "Imported Labor Law" of Macao was introduced in 2010 to curb the inflow of migrants from many countries, including Nigeria. Previously, they could apply for an entry visa upon arrival, whereas currently they need to apply for it in advance through a Chinese embassy or consulate in their home country. Another restriction stipulates that non-resident workers who terminate their contract with their local employer also lose their working visas. Their work permits turn into a 10-day visa, on expiry of which they must leave Macao. Another controversial issue is the "six-month waiting period," whereby a person may be allowed to come back to Macao in the six months after the termination of his or her work visa, but is not allowed to work in Macao during that time. This measure is intended to prevent non-local workers from job-hopping. If a worker voluntarily resigns to accept another job offer or for other reasons, he or she is required to leave Macao for six months, and only after that period will he or she be granted a new work permit (a so-called "blue card") to work for another employer.

Whether Africans settle in Macao or return to their country of origin depends on the type of visa they obtained when they originally came to study in Macao. Many discovered that job and career opportunities in Macao were not as they had anticipated. Some became victims of the harsh labor market conditions, while others opted to go into self-employment.

Even when they were students, the lack of mobility due to discrimination and limited knowledge of the local culture and language had already led the migrant women to seek forms of self-employment as an alternative to unemployment or to interrupting their studies. But this is probably a better description of the development of short-term, informal, and semi-illegal activities than of longer-term businesses, which are also widespread. Immigration policies deny newcomer students options for legal employment during their stay. After graduation, they may feel that they have achieved a similar or higher educational level than their Chinese classmates or those of other nationalities, yet they report that they are not recruited by employers in Macao.

Africans in Macao: Old Settlers versus the New “Birds of Passage”

Gender is not something unchanging that is brought into every encounter, but is often shaped and patterned in different interactional contexts (Morgan 1988: 91).

The first Africans in Macao arrived from former Portuguese-speaking colonies in the mid-1970s, but the current influx includes African immigrants from other nations. When referring to Africans in Macao, it is appropriate to talk about “multiple, frequently overlapping diasporas” (Alpers 2001: 24) resulting from diverse migration waves. I argue that they should be analyzed comparatively, avoiding homogenization,

because official statistics, negative media attention, and popular representations prevailing in China all tend to blur African diasporic communities within a generic African label.

Since the mid-1970s, political and socioeconomic conditions in Africa have served as motivating factors for increased migration to China and ultimately to Macao. Africans have migrated to Macao for different reasons: to escape political instability and economic difficulties, to study, and above all to find a suitable career in a rising, prosperous China.

In the particular case of women, although many continue to face discrimination and prejudice, the great changes African societies are undergoing today influence gender roles and many African migrant women no longer fit the traditional stereotypes of rural, uneducated women who are “pure victims of globalization” (Pratt and Rosner 2006: 16). In fact, these women, who choose to emigrate alone, demonstrate qualities of resourcefulness and innovation, despite the fact that the majority of them live an extremely precarious existence marked by low, unstable incomes and the constant threat of strict migration laws. Interestingly, this does not match the circumstances of their Chinese counterparts who arrive as migrants to countries in Africa.

The African population in Macao, which the 2011 Global Census includes under the generic category “other countries,” is estimated at 959 people.⁸ Settlers from Portuguese-speaking countries form the vast majority, as against temporary residents from Anglophone countries, who (to borrow the title of Piore’s seminal book) can be seen as BIRDS OF PASSAGE (2003). We can therefore distinguish the following sub-groups:

- 1 Those who arrived from Portuguese-speaking countries. They can be further differentiated into two sub-groups:
 - 1a An early group, who started arriving in China in the post-decolonization period after 1975 either to work or to study, in particular during the 1980s

- (referred to in the article as first- and second-generation migrants from Portuguese-speaking countries);
- 1b The most recent newcomer students who arrived on student visas, the great majority of whom are scholarship recipients.⁹
 - 2 A more recent transnational movement of women of various African origins, in particular Nigerians and Angolans, who began to come to Macao in the first decade of the 21st century in pursuit of higher education as well as economic opportunities, coinciding with the biggest influx of African migrants in the nearby province of Guangdong in the 1990s.

Brief Overview of the First Portuguese-Speaking Diaspora

Although no direct figures are available in Macao, the first group of Africans and their families arrived in the wake of the decolonization of Portuguese Africa in 1975. This movement is inscribed within the larger movement from recently decolonized Africa to Portugal. Forced by post-independence political unrest and economic downturn, a number estimated at between half a million and 800,000 people of different ethnic origins (Rocha-Trindade 1995: 199), who were born in or had been long-term residents of Portuguese colonies, arrived in Portugal with Portuguese passports (61% from Angola, 33% from Mozambique, and the remainder from Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, and São Tomé and Príncipe). They were the so-called “invisible migrants” (Smith 2003: 9) or *retornados* (returnees) who had been deprived of identities, family networks, and economic resources in Portugal. Some of them eventually ended up in Macao and settled with their families under the generalized statistical designation of “Portuguese.”¹⁰

The second wave of migration of Africans from the new Portuguese-speaking countries started arriving in the 1990s, the last decade of the Portuguese administration before Macao's transference of sovereignty in 1999 (the so-called "period of transition"), and it continues to the present (Morais 2004). Members of this younger generation have not distanced themselves socially and culturally from the earlier Afro-Portuguese community of settlers in Macao; it may only be their different political conceptions of the Portuguese decolonization process that separate these two groups, because the younger generation did not have to deal with feelings of disconnection from their homelands, or traumatic experiences of decolonization, as did many members of Macao's earlier Afro-Portuguese community.

The great majority of those African newcomers were male and female students from different class backgrounds who had only had the opportunity to receive a college education since the independence of their country, and they enrolled in the first local Macao university created in 1981. In Macao, which was the last of the Portuguese colonies, they had some advantages, such as the official use of the Portuguese language, the offer of university programs in Portuguese, and the benefits of government-sponsored scholarships. At that time, the Portuguese administration in Macao started awarding scholarships to students from Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa to study in the city, as a form of cooperation with the newly independent African states (a strategy continued by Macao's current Chinese administration). Simultaneously, the colonial government also allowed local civil servants to complete undergraduate courses at local universities during their official work time.

Some African students, a great number of them women, therefore attended university programs in Portuguese and attained mostly bachelor's degrees, mainly in law, Portuguese studies, and public administration. During the period of Portuguese administration in Macao, Portuguese-speaking Afri-

cans, with or without undergraduate degrees, were able to find work in Macao's civil administration, as the Portuguese language, together with Chinese, was one of the official languages and a requirement for recruitment (Bodomo and Silva 2012). With the undergraduate or post-graduate degrees that they received, many African immigrants were able to make the transition from student to immigrant status by applying for work permits. For these immigrants, permanent resident status could be acquired seven years after being legally admitted into the territory, a rule that remains in force in Macao under the Chinese administration. Today, a reasonably large number of professional Africans from Portuguese-speaking countries who graduated with bachelor's or master's degrees from local universities after the mid-1980s can be found across Macao's professional sector.

These African men and women have achieved the recognition of their peers, in contrast to many others who are not noticeable at all in their domain of expertise and are therefore not recognized for their contribution and potential (as is the case for many women in Asia), or able to access senior management and decision-making posts.

It is worth mentioning that in addition to Chinese, Portuguese continues to be officially spoken in Macao, and the ability to speak the language is one of the requirements for obtaining a job in the local administration. Consequently, several university courses are still taught in Portuguese, in particular in the law degree programs, which aim at preparing jurists who are familiar with the Macao legal system, inherited from and based on Portuguese law. As the previous Portuguese colonial legal system of Macao, which was based on the Roman-German tradition, remains in force, the great majority of law graduates can thus easily pursue careers as lawyers, public notaries, and jurists in the Macao Public Administration, in the private sector, and in the two local general consulates of Angola and Portugal.¹¹

Those Africans who remained Portuguese nationals despite being born in Africa, or who became Portuguese nationals through marriage during the period of Portuguese administration in Macao, continue to work for the local administration. Many have married men of other nationalities (Africans from other Portuguese-speaking countries, Portuguese, Macanese, and Chinese) in Macao, and had families. Their children and grandchildren are Portuguese nationals, attend the Portuguese School of Macao and local universities in Macao, or pursue their studies in Portugal or in other countries, while preserving traits of their African roots and cultures.

Africans from Portuguese-speaking countries in Macao possess a high degree of ethnic collective identification, although internally they display great diversity in terms of origins and phenotype. The great majority of the first wave of African migrant women from Portuguese-speaking countries, by contrast with men, has been much more actively engaged in the creation and leadership of local associations whose activities are highly subsidized by the local government, and also in recruiting members from Macao, Portugal, and other Portuguese-speaking countries to join these associations. They have played an important role as cultural mediators of their African roots through music, dance, gastronomy, languages (either Portuguese or Creole), and strong ties to their home countries and diaspora community through family networks and local associations.

Others, who were civil servants before Macao's transference of sovereignty, took the option of returning to Portugal when they had the prospect of securing similar jobs there, because of the uncertainty about living conditions under the Chinese administration. However, some have subsequently returned to Macao under the cooperation policy agreement between Macao and Portugal, which allows Portuguese-specialized civil servants, who are in demand in Macao, to work under the

Chinese administration in several sectors, from the judiciary to education.

Female Entrepreneurial Pioneers

Comparing the profiles and trajectories of the first generation of African men and women in Macao, what distinguishes them is the fact that the women have shown a more entrepreneurial spirit. In fact, in addition to working in salaried jobs, at least half a dozen of the respondents from the “first generation” of female migrants from Portuguese-speaking countries, including those who were scholarship recipients or who were employed in the public sector, reported that, on at least a few occasions earlier in their lives in Macao, they had engaged in informal cross-border trade activities through the Chinese city of Zhuhai (which borders Macao to the north), in order to assist themselves or their families financially. Such activities included buying affordable Chinese-made products to sell in their home countries, sending them by sea or air, or carrying them in their luggage during their occasional visits home.

Some long-term African female residents in Macao reported that they had engaged in small-scale, informal, cross-border trade for several reasons, including the proximity of cross-border facilities between Macao and Zhuhai, the affordability of Chinese products, and the shortages of such products in Europe and in their countries of origin in Africa. It is notable that such shortages existed before the influx of Chinese migrants to Africa and the proliferation of their shops selling Chinese products. These African women relied on themselves and on Chinese suppliers, as there were also no African traders in China at that time. They established good relations with the local shipping companies in Macao, while their network of relatives and friends in the port authorities and administra-

tions, either in Portugal or in their countries of origin, could facilitate customs clearance.

During the colonial period in Macao (before 1999), the shipping and handling agencies and packaging firms in Macao grew to serve the Portuguese expatriate community (comprising a large number of civil servants and their extended families) and other small-scale clients and their counterparts in their home countries. These people frequently shipped their possessions and goods together in huge containers to the same destination, a use of networks that facilitated the practice and frequency of informal trade and made it more profitable. According to the respondents, a combination of factors contributed to discontinuing those business activities: age, a more economically stable life, and the encumbrance of family responsibilities and children. A further deterrent was the fact that local Macao authorities, and even those in Portugal and former Portuguese colonies in Africa, began to impose more restrictive customs clearance regulations and increased duties for Chinese goods.

Nevertheless, the statements of some of the respondents of younger generations make it clear that the entrepreneurial spirit has not waned. Due in part to the increasing number of public events focused on African culture and traditions that are held in Macao, some respondents have even discovered that African products have an "exotic" value among locals and mainland Chinese and Hong Kong tourists, as well as their own nostalgic compatriots, which can be exploited commercially. They engage in importing and selling, or helping others to import and sell African handicrafts and food products, quite often through new suppliers with Angolan trade connections in Guangdong Province, where a sort of "Angola town" is coming into existence. Others, who are more attached to the domestic sphere, have become specialized in homemade ethnic food that can be ordered for private functions or sold at booths or restaurants,

or at regular local African-themed fairs, festivals, and national commemoration events held in Macao.

These African women's culinary talents, like those of their counterparts described by Beoku-Betts (1997) in the United States, contribute to their income, as well as preserving and disseminating their culture in the broader community. Interestingly, these informal trade activities by some of the African women in Macao share many of the characteristics of similar business activities carried out by their counterparts in Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, the so-called *rabidantes*.¹² These women trade basic products, unhampered by bureaucracy or state control, between Cape Verde and places like Portugal, France, Holland, and Brazil, which are within the Cape Verdean diaspora (Grassi 2006: 24). Recently they have also been turning their eyes to China. The African women from Portuguese-speaking countries in Macao are similarly inspired by their entrepreneurial spirit to become involved in small-scale, transnational, informal commerce, but oriented to a greater extent towards a client base composed of their networks of family and friends.

Engendering Ethnic Entrepreneurship Networks in China

These circuits could be considered as indicators of the (albeit partial) feminization of survival, because it is increasingly on the backs of women that these forms of making a living, earning a profit and secure government revenue are realized (Sassen 2000: 506).

Women of each African community in Macao maintain close emotional and business ties with China, Asia, and their hometown in Africa. Some have stronger connections with men and women of other ethnic groups, or rely to a larger extent on kin ties or African men and women who conduct business on a regional or even international level.

Africans maintain family, friendship, and religious connections, interlaced with common business interests, with fellow nationals of the same ethnic origin who study or trade in mainland China, and indeed with others who live, work, or study in Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. These ethnic networks, often supported by the Christian churches operating in Asia, also lend assistance to African migrants, helping them to find and enroll in universities, seek jobs, obtain visas and work permits, and circumvent legal restrictions, as well as providing moral, emotional, and spiritual support. Translocal connections are facilitated by phone and internet, short distances, and easy access from Macao to China and the rest of Asia, and to Africa, with the increasing frequency of direct flights and budget travel options.

The level of mobility is high among these women. Many of the interviewed students from elite, wealthy, or middle-class families, or those who are the children of career diplomats, had lived not only in different parts of Africa but also in Asia, for example in North Korea or Singapore, before coming to Macao. In fact, respondents from the different linguistic clusters (Portuguese, Anglophone, and Francophone speakers) belonging to the higher echelons of African societies had all already experienced cosmopolitan lives and travel. Even the Nigerian respondents, who, in contrast, come from poor rural or urban families, mentioned that they had travelled to Macao by way of other Asian cities, most often Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, or Singapore (as do many African traders who are visitors to or residents in China). In their cases, these places served as “stepping stones,” where relatives, friends, missionaries, and NGOs helped them to negotiate the immigration constraints and submit their candidacy to the universities of the Asia-Pacific region. These women used education as their means to legal migration, with the intention of returning to work in Africa after graduating. However, they all found that remaining in Macao for work was more profitable, both for the economic

and life opportunities it offered and for security reasons. In fact, 95% of the women interviewed spontaneously praised the level of security that they enjoyed in Macao, which they characterized as a “women-friendly” place, in particular those from Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, and South Africa, where violence not only is often directly aimed at women, but also erupts in relation to various ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences. A few women also mentioned the advantages of living in a modern city without the shortages of electricity or water that they had experienced in some African cities.

The interconnectedness of Africans from Anglophone countries, in particular those from Nigeria, is illustrated in the fact that, more than all the others, the Nigerian women students maintained the closest ties to informal support networks by sharing apartments or hostels. They also maintained close connections to the broader network of Nigerian expatriate entrepreneurs living in mainland China, who dominate the formal and informal sectors of business, and in so doing increased their chances of encountering opportunities to enter these circles themselves. Many felt compelled to circumvent the immigration policies, and some Nigerian women students with limited socioeconomic resources who did not qualify for scholarships participated in these globalized commercial networks on the basis of ethnic, kinship, friendship, and religious ties. For a person to belong to the Igbo ethnic group of southeastern Nigeria, recognized internationally for its culture of entrepreneurship and widespread networks, is especially advantageous for international migration (Kómoláfé 2002; Norwegian Directorate of Immigration 2004). Among the Nigerians in China, as among those in Europe, ethnic group identity is stronger than Nigerian identity (Cingolani 2003) and induces those who share such a sense of identity to act as if there were an innate bond between them, even if they have never met before.

The level of entrepreneurial activity, however, differed greatly between women of different ethnic groups. Among the

informal traders from Portuguese-speaking countries, the most active were those originally from Angola. Like their Nigerian counterparts, they were oriented towards their own ethnic group. Nigerian and Angolan women arriving on student visas, including those who stayed on after graduation on work permits, were also able to benefit from contacts with co-ethnic residents in Guangdong Province.

Today Angola is China's first African commercial partner, and since 2009, it has been China's main petroleum supplier.¹³ Commercial exchanges between the two countries continue to grow, and they attract more and more Angolans to China.¹⁴

The Angolan women students in Macao and other Angolan residents relied on the Angolan traders in Guangzhou, the so-called *moambeiros*.¹⁵ The number of such traders in China is expected to increase because of the growing presence of Chinese doing business in Angola, despite the fact that during 2012 China started to tighten visa concessions to Angolans.

Women and Informal Trade: Two Case Studies

This section presents two case studies of African women students based in Macao who engaged in additional trade activities between Guangdong Province and their hometown in Africa, in order to understand their motives for starting small-scale businesses, identify their trade practices and the constraints that they faced, and explore whether they would pursue their activities after finishing their studies. One is a Nigerian Igbo woman, the other an Angolan who has recently graduated and left Macao to return to Luanda.

At the time of the interviews, these two women were single, between 25 and 27 years of age, and had engaged in business in Macao for at least three years, though they had been students for longer. The Angolan woman came to Macao as a recipient of a monthly scholarship from the Macao government, whereas

the Nigerian woman paid her own tuition fees. Both were eager to advance their education and to improve their situation and that of their families in Africa. They stated that they engaged in trade for personal survival and to provide for their families, as international students in Macao are not allowed to work for wages while studying. They managed to balance their studies and business activities, as one woman had already obtained a college degree and the other was enrolled in her last year of university in Macao. The Angolan student is typical in that 20% of Angolans involved with Angola's informal economy have a medium- or upper-level education, and young women among them especially have a high level of education (Development Workshop 2009: 53). This form of "one-woman" informal business is fairly small-scale, but it has become a survival strategy for some African women students in Macao, and often also serves to complement their family's income back home. The women operate their businesses from home or a student hostel and have no employees. This requires low capital investment, but relies on personal networks and the new technologies in communication and modern transportation.

Supply and Trade Circuits from China to Nigeria and Angola

Nigeria is a country highly dependent on a "cargo economy" of imported foreign goods (Ogunsano 2008: 198), and the same applies to Angola. A number of African countries, including Nigeria (China's second-largest export market), prohibit the import of a range of goods in order to protect local industries (Taylor 2007). But Chinese products are in great demand and arrive through multiple connections (Lyons et al. 2008) to both Nigeria and Angola. Not surprisingly, a great number of Nigerian and Angolan women engage in trade thanks to significant connections with transnational trade conducted by men. Strong

linkages exist between the formal and informal sectors both in Macao and in China, where cross-border parallel trading is also widely practiced by the local Chinese. Due to Macao's strategic position and easy access to China (the journey on the new train from the Macao-China border to Guangzhou is just 45 minutes), Nigerians and Angolans have forged friendships and business alliances with traders in Guangdong Province hailing from their respective countries of origin, and these facilitate access to Chinese manufactured products.

The African markets in Guangdong are located in several commercial buildings in the Sanyuanli district, where there is a great concentration of Nigerian Igbo traders (men) who are formal wholesalers. In the same district, a much smaller number of Angolan traders of both sexes, originally from the capital city, Luanda, are becoming increasingly visible. Many of them commute between Luanda and China. Most of these, whether wholesalers or commuters, are proficient in Chinese (some have Chinese wives who are also their business partners), have good Chinese suppliers and contacts, and are in a better position to negotiate supplies than are the informal traders. A small number of them also studied Putonghua (Modern Standard Chinese) in universities in Guangzhou, Yiwu, and Wuzhou (Le Bail 2009: 12). They act as intermediaries for the Nigerian and Angolan students-turned-entrepreneurs, and even for the Angolan residents based in Macao. They help them to engage in retail trade across borders and also to supply the local African consumers with African products. They assist them by giving advice, and help them to order and purchase manufactured goods in bulk from Chinese suppliers. They also help with the timely provision of goods, arranging packing containers, organizing deliveries, finding the cheapest cargo service, finding other customers with whom to share and fill up a sea freight container, and finally paving the way for customs clearance of their orders upon arrival in their hometowns in Africa.

The Personal Histories of the Two Women and Their Chinese-African Trade Circuits

Before coming to Macao, the Nigerian woman had already spent one year in Singapore hosted by a Nigerian man married to a Singaporean Chinese woman. There she helped her host with his wholesale men's shirts business, exporting from China to Lagos. Once or twice she traveled with this man to Guangdong to purchase goods, at which time she also started gathering information on the local business logistics and opportunities. Finally she was accepted into a university in Macao, while her business friend moved to Nigeria, where he opened a cosmetics factory. The woman managed to maintain continuous access from Macao to formal trading systems for most of her transactions. She refers to her present Nigerian Igbo contact in Guangdong as a "trade consultant." This man is married to a Chinese woman, and they live in the city of Dongguan. The couple runs a small shop selling hats and walking canes in a commercial building near the old Guangzhou railway station, where he also offers consultancy services and displays samples of Chinese manufactured products. Due to his long experience and contacts in China, and for an undisclosed commission fee, this man is able to find ways to acquire any Chinese manufactured products that are currently in demand, and then arranges the best way to freight and ship them all the way to an African destination. The woman orders men's and women's footwear. The merchandise is sent from China by Chinese licensed freight forwarders to the Seme border town in Benin, where it is stored in one of the warehouses there. The woman's brother then comes from Nigeria to pick it up. This is done to circumvent Nigerian import restrictions and the customs regulations in Lagos. The woman's brother and family have a market stall located about 10 minutes' drive from the Nigeria-Benin border, along the Lagos-Badagry Expressway.¹⁶ They retail the merchandise directly to consumers. During

the research for this article, the brother moved from his stall to a larger shop, and he is planning to turn his business into a wholesale store.

In Angola, as is the case in many other African countries, the level of informal self-employment is very high (ILO 2002). The civil war, which lasted from independence in 1975 until 2002, affected Angola's economic development. After peace was achieved, informal trading and the demand for Chinese goods went up. In the first study on informal trade conducted in Luanda, Adauta (1998) concluded that 42% of families in Luanda depended exclusively on this sector. More recent data indicates that the informal economy is expanding; over 60% of Luanda's population now earns a living through petty trade and informal occupations (World Bank 2012).

In 2006, the Angolan government implemented a reconstruction program, which included the closure of the great majority of traditional African markets in Luanda, including the legendary Roque Santeiro Market (once considered the biggest open-air market in Africa) and the construction of new ones built by Chinese construction companies, or renovated with Chinese oil-backed loans together with the prohibition of street trading in Luanda's city center. Yet, due to the reduced size of these new markets and the lack of job opportunities in the formal sector, informal trade persists in Luanda, especially in the form of "house trading" (trading carried out in the doorways of blocks of flats or residences) where a great diversity of goods and services, from drinks to hair styling, are offered. This sort of activity is carried out by Angolan women, who can balance it with domestic duties, and even practicing a profession. The trade might be conducted from a small shop or canteen (*cantina*) attached to the home.

My Angolan respondent came directly from Luanda to Macao after being awarded a grant, and then decided to supplement her monthly income and at the same time to assume greater responsibility for the upkeep of her household

back home, which included a brother who had studied in China himself on scholarship a decade earlier. He works for a wholesale business in the Comuna of Hoji ya I-Ienda (an area in the municipality of Cazenga on the outskirts of Luanda, where former factories have been turned into warehouses for the resale of imported goods from China and the Middle East). He travels frequently between Luanda, Guangzhou, and Dubai to complete and deliver orders for clothing and electronic goods. Imported clothes, either secondhand (called "*fardex*" because the clothes arrive and are sold in "*fardos*" or plastic bags) or new ones (imported from Brazil, South Africa, China, and Dubai) are in high demand by people of all social classes in Luanda.

Before she came to Macao, her family had started to trade from their family home in secondhand clothes bought from other women at the Roque Santeiro Market and sold to a network of regular and referred customers as well as to extended family members. Many women in Angola find it is more convenient to purchase clothing at trade homes rather than in the markets or streets, partly because they can try on the clothes with a degree of privacy. In Macao, our respondent started buying clothes, handbags, and hairpieces and sending them to Luanda, so that the family did not have to rely on local wholesalers. Furthermore, in China, she had access to a better selection of fashionable items, and she could even take pre-orders from regular customers. She thus managed to contribute to her family's trading enterprise. Sometimes she carried items as accompanied luggage on occasional school holiday trips to Luanda. She also sent small parcels via Angolan travelers frequenting Macao.

Both women respondents said that their families were highly dependent on the income from their transnational small businesses. Had our respondents not sent merchandise to their families, the latter would have had to purchase their trade goods from importers in the main outlets in Chinatown

in Lagos, and from the Chinese wholesale traders in the district of São Paulo in Luanda.

Capital and Financial Returns

These women are reluctant to supply exact figures for their trade activities, especially on capital expenditure and profits, and this proved to be one of the difficulties of this study. It is therefore impossible for me to present accurate information on income. Apparently, the respondents also do not keep regular and accurate records of their transactions or prices; in addition, they reported that the prices at which they bought and sold merchandise and the fees and other expenses they paid varied widely according to suppliers, demand, types of customers, seasons, and events in the region, all of which made average figures difficult to calculate. It seems reasonable to suppose that these women do not want to reveal information about earnings for fear of attracting negative publicity in the small expatriate community of Macao. Nonetheless, it was possible for me to determine that they invest between US\$1,000 and US\$8,000 in each transaction, and that they do this three or four times a year. Their shipment orders take between three and ten weeks to arrive in Africa, the greatest delays corresponding to peak periods in the calendar, such as the Chinese New Year.

Advantages of and Constraints to Informal Trade

The two respondents recognized that they did not have to face the constraints and barriers experienced by their female counterparts involved in similar activities in Africa (e.g., lack or shortage of electricity and water supply, regional and international policies, harassment by customs officials, poor security,

exploitation of their inadequate knowledge, theft, and lack of financial services) (Morris and Saul 2000). Nevertheless, they share with their counterparts in Africa a lack of the finances necessary for business investment (e.g., access to credit). As they did not have any means of securing bank loans, these women started their business by relying on a combination of private savings and contributions from family members or personal acquaintances, much as the relevant literature indicates (Blankson and Omar 2002; Baycan-Levent et al. 2003; Ekwulugo 2006), or loans from more distant relatives or people from their ethnic communities (Basu and Goswami 1999).

The main barriers the respondents faced in running their businesses were related to their countries' national contexts, the Chinese immigration policies, and currency exchanges. In fact, the main constraint they mentioned was the inability to access capital, and in some cases low turnover due to price fluctuations, especially those stemming from exchange rates. The devaluation of the American dollar (the main currency used by African traders) was a particular concern, as they rely on rates offered at unofficial and undisclosed sources of exchange currency, and they have to deal with rising rates of inflation in China and Macao. They also mentioned that licensed freight forwarders operating in both China and their home countries have increased their charges. Above all, they were conscious that the lack of formal employment opportunities for them in both their home countries and China continues to contribute to the existence of the informal trading economy. They mentioned that in Macao, and even in certain sectors of their communities, there are negative prejudices about the informal activities of women traders. They also stated that a few female African graduates who had sought employment or who applied for training programs at various managerial levels in the gaming sector (which organizes regular recruitment fairs) had complained that they felt there were stereotyping barriers regarding women, and ultimately all ethnic minority groups.

There are only two known cases of an African man and woman being employed in the local gaming and hotel industry; in both instances, it appears that the fact that they had residence status was instrumental in their securing their positions. Employers apparently did not consider African applicants who were otherwise qualified for managerial positions because they did not have residence status and did not speak Chinese well enough. Yet, these women maintained that local American and Chinese casinos hired Filipino and Russian women who also did not speak Chinese.

Macao, like other Asian economies, displays a gender gap in leadership, senior management positions, and political empowerment for all women, including in the gaming industry.¹⁷ As the range of industries in Macao, other than the gaming industry, is limited, a wider range of professional opportunities is not available. Despite Macao's economic success and the gaming and hospitality industries' high demand for human resources, only 20% of the local casinos employ foreigners and there is even strong opposition to the recruitment of foreigners in the local casinos led by the associations of casino workers.

As they were unable to find employment in the gaming industry, the income from their business activities in the informal sector helped these African women to survive and to continue to study in Macao. It paid for their undergraduate fees, or, if they were recipients of scholarships, it complemented their income. Some of the wider group of respondents in the research stated that they had acquired a taste for business and if they had the opportunity they would like to open an individual business after their graduation (e.g., an African hair salon) in Macao. However, high rents in real estate (which result from speculation) are serious obstacles to small-scale entrepreneurs.

Whereas the lack of job opportunities strongly encourages most African women to seek alternative economic paths, only a minority are involved in transnational activities. In contrast to the younger generation, the first wave of African women from

Portuguese-speaking countries, and their families and relatives, constitute an economically more stable ethnic community, enjoying all the privileges of permanent residency. The recent students and migrants from Portuguese-speaking countries, however, could not find suitable employment. A fortunate few found work in Macao because they were fluent in Portuguese and had long-established family connections in the city, both of which opened doors for them in sectors related to trade and diplomacy with Portuguese-speaking countries.

Other recent arrivals claimed that they had fewer opportunities for scholarships in Macao. Students from Portuguese-speaking countries, for instance, complained about the requirement stipulating a minimum of three years between the acquisition of a bachelor's or master's degree and eligibility for another scholarship to pursue post-graduate studies. Many were forced to return to their home countries, as they were unable to find a job to support themselves and pay university fees. Regarding the availability of scholarships, most African immigrant women from Anglophone countries claimed that students from Portuguese-speaking countries received "favorable treatment" when applying for Chinese government scholarships in Macao. Currently a Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) program exists in mainland China, offering scholarships to African students, regardless of their country of origin, to study in China, but it does not extend to Macao. The Nigerian students suggested that it should cover Macao as well, as part of China, and offer scholarships to students from other countries in Africa in the name of cooperation between China and Africa.

Nigerian women who graduated from universities and wished to remain in Macao stated that, due to a lack of social and professional contacts in Macao, they were more vulnerable in the local labor market. Despite their educational backgrounds, they had been forced to accept temporary occupations in small trading companies.

The findings suggest that the most recent wave of African immigrant women in Macao do not receive the returns from education that the first generation of Africans from Portuguese-speaking countries realized. They have greater difficulties in finding jobs and earn lower salaries than would be expected given their educational qualifications. I encountered one woman from a Portuguese-speaking country, a graduate student in law school, who is working in a restaurant kitchen, along with another Nigerian woman who is a university graduate. Both had to work as waitresses or kitchen helpers in a small Portuguese restaurant.

These challenges relate to the language barrier, the perceived strangeness of their geographic and cultural background, and a sense of isolation, allied to the confusing ways of the local bureaucracy and the absence of ethnic or business associations and political representation. All of these have contributed to changes in the respondents' perceptions of their migration, of their migrant community, and of their host city (and to changes in its perceptions of them). When they came to China, they expected a better future for themselves and their families. They did not anticipate that the combination of race, gender, class, nationality, and immigrant status would position them as outsiders, to be regarded with suspicion as always at risk of infringing the law.

These findings are in line with other literature confirming that gender, race discrimination (Harvey 2005), and university education (Akanji 2006; Cheston and Kuhn 2002; Kuzilwa 2005) have a positive "entrepreneurship effect." A considerable number of respondents said that they are working in the informal sector or had worked in it when they were students, and that they are aware of others doing such activities, both now and in the past. In a manner similar to that argued by Marlow (2002) in the case of the United Kingdom, the lack of equal opportunities for accessing employment in Macao compelled some African females to start their own businesses while studying.

Some women continued this activity after they graduated and returned to their home country. The “entrepreneurship effect” is particularly noticeable in Macao in the decision on the part of some of these women to seize trade opportunities made available through social networks in China. African women are also able to take advantage of both their ethnic and female capital. They rely largely on the resilience of their networks and ties to both men and women who conduct business on the regional and international stage. The literature has also demonstrated that entrepreneurs’ personal knowledge of other entrepreneurs has a “role model effect” (Kwong et al. 2009) on nascent entrepreneurs. In Macao, the proximity of Guangdong Province with its high concentration of African businesspeople supplies precedents. The respondents in my sample were driven by the examples of other male and female business owners with whom they shared common characteristics, such as nationality and ethnicity, but who were also older and more experienced than the respondents themselves. They took advantage of contact with entrepreneurial friends and associates who had a lot of experience in the trading business in China. They maintained these contacts using the new means of communication, such as the internet and mobile phones, and by frequent visits. Cooperation with male entrepreneurs, which ranged from the exchange of information to sharing business advice and joint trade, seems more relevant than female networks, possibly because men have longer trading experience in China compared to the limited number of women entrepreneurs in China.

In summary, regarding women of various ethnic groups who began to arrive in Macao more recently, in the first decade of the 21st century, no considerable differences can be detected amongst them in terms of level of entrepreneurial activity, attitudes towards entrepreneurship, social capital available when starting a business, or job and career opportunities.

Plans for the Future

Although the two women respondents I described in detail had hoped to formalize their business operations after graduation and venture into other areas, their actual situation has conspired to prevent such developments. The returns from informal trade do not lead to the expected prosperity and complete autonomy. One might say that China's prosperity has created a false belief that it is an ideal income-generating alternative for some African students, a sort of "romanticized" view (Williams and Round 2008). The large sums of start-up capital required for entry into informal trade have become a deterrent, and it is harder for newcomers to operate a business with a profit. My findings indicate that for the African women students in Macao, the informal sector is considered an alternative only because of the impossibility of finding a job or starting a formal business. For most, it is just a way to supplement their income and remains a transitory activity. Informal trade allows them to earn a living and make a financial contribution to their households in Africa if they are in a position to take advantage of such remittances, but the profits are found to be lower than expected and there is little prospect of turning these activities into a formal trading business.

Although this sort of small-scale, informal trade strengthens the economic power of women and their households, it is revealing that, after three years in their enterprise, my two women respondents preferred to quit the activity as soon as they graduated and looked for better employment. The Angolan student decided to go back to Luanda, where she believed living conditions and job opportunities were better with the booming economy driven by oil production. She also planned to help her family and their house trade by exploring new neighboring markets like Namibia. The Nigerian student, who is about to conclude her studies, failed to either find a job in the gaming industry or to open her own business in Macao; she

does not plan to return to Nigeria, however. After graduating, she will join her common-law partner in Australia in order to open a business there.

Conclusion

The African population of Macao is the earliest African immigrant group in China, and one of the most stable. The first generation of women came mainly from Portuguese-speaking countries, and, benefitting from the advantages of the last decade of Portuguese colonization in Macao, a high demand for Chinese products in Africa, and the lack of suppliers of such products there, paved the way for informal cross-border trade well before African traders of both sexes and from different countries established themselves in mainland China. The regular shipping of expatriates' belongings and support from networks both in Portugal and in their African countries of origin facilitated their small-scale informal trade.

The more recent generation of African women in Macao consists mostly of university students from both Portuguese- and English-speaking countries, especially Nigeria. Whether or not they are the recipients of government scholarships, most of them, like their predecessors, conduct small-scale transnational trade, often with the help of the considerable population of African male traders in the neighboring Guangdong Province. They do this to pay school fees or supplement their own incomes, and often also to help fund small businesses and boost their families' incomes back home. Nevertheless these activities involve tiny capital funds, generate little income, and appear to be transitory. They are pursued mostly because of the difficulty of obtaining regular jobs commensurate with the considerable educational qualifications these women have. Their opportunities in this respect are constrained by immigration laws and attitudes resulting from stereotyped perceptions

of race, gender, and ethnic background. Nigerians face greater challenges than those hailing from Portuguese-speaking African countries. They also have no ethnic association, because their studies, their income-generating activities, and the time spent travelling to mainland China leave no time to coordinate such an enterprise, and in any case it would not enjoy government support (as do the associations of Portuguese-speaking Africans).

With China's increasing involvement in Africa and the increase in emigration of Chinese people to Africa, African migration to China will probably continue to increase in the near future. African women in Macao expressed the desire that policy makers, educators, administrators, and foundations would provide greater support for higher education by devoting a percentage of their budgets to the provision of scholarships to African foreign students, and also that they would focus on improving the general situation of African students in Macao, including a recognition of their achievements, long due for African undergraduate women in particular.

NOTES

- 1 (a) Older women from Portuguese-speaking countries (between the ages of 40 and 60), who had started their informal businesses during the 1980s or 1990s. (b) Younger women from Portuguese-speaking countries, mainly Angolans between the ages of 22 and 30, who had been engaged in business for only a few years. (c) Nigerian women who were between the ages of 22 and 30, and had owned or managed a business for only a few years.
- 2 According to the most recent Education Survey of 2010/2011 from Macao's Statistics and Census Service, Africans are the sixth most numerous national group among international students in Macao, with 95 students (60 men and 35 women) after Portuguese or dual citizenship and would not be included. These figures cannot be considered modest when compared to the number of students from other Asian countries (91; 65 men and 26 women), Japan (25; 6 men and 19 women), or Taiwan (67; 44 men and 23

women), which are not included under “Other Asian,” or from other countries in America (38; 20 men and 18 women) and from other European countries (147; 81 men and 66 women). In the years 1999-2010, the numbers of male and female African students were generally balanced; however, there were more women than men in most years between 2002 and 2007. The countries included under “Other Asians” and “Other European Countries” are too small to be taken into account, according to my source. Kou Chi Man, Macao’s Statistics and Census Service, e-mail message to author, November 10, 2012.

- 3 In 1999-2000 there were 46 students (26 men and 20 women), whereas in 2011-2012 there were 39 students (23 male and 16 female). Teng Sio Hong, Macao’s Tertiary Education Services Office, e-mail message to author, November 12, 2012.
- 4 The Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries was established in Macao under the auspices of China’s Ministry of Commerce in 2003. The Forum somewhat resembles the existing Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) created in Beijing in 2000, and aims to foster Sino-African cooperation. The Macao Forum comprises eight countries: Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, China, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, and East Timor, with Macao as an observer member. The Macao Forum hosts the ministerial-level meeting every two to three years and, through its Sino-Lusophone Countries Cooperation and Development Fund, allocated the first batch of the US \$1 billion cooperation fund to support Chinese companies and the country’s members of the forum on projects to be implemented in the Portuguese-speaking countries.
- 5 Kou Chi Man, Macao’s Statistics and Census Service (e-mail message to author, November 12, 2012) and Teng Sio Hong, Tertiary Education Services Office (e-mail message to author, November 2012).
- 6 During the scholastic year 2011-2012, at least two of the female South African university students studying in Macao were of Afro-Chinese ancestry.
- 7 Between 2002 and 2012, a total of 73 students from Anglophone countries pursued higher education, 59 of whom were from Nigeria. Teng Sio Hong, Macao’s Tertiary Education Services Office, e-mail message to author, November 12, 2012.

- 8 Kou Chi Man, Macao's Statistics and Census Service, e-mail message to author, November 10, 2012.
- 9 Between 2002 and 2012, according to data collected at the end of each scholastic year by the Tertiary Education Bureau, a total of 410 African students were enrolled in higher-education institutions in Macao; as for Lusophone African students, these included 86 from Mozambique, 81 from Guinea-Bissau, 49 from Angola, 35 from São Tomé and Príncipe, and 14 from Cape Verde. Teng Sio Hong, Macao's Tertiary Education Services Office, e-mail message to author, November 12, 2012.
- 10 It is estimated that at least 25,000-35,000 of the *retornados* were Africans or had African ancestry, and 65.5% of them were less than 40 years old (Baganha 1998: 229-277).
- 11 The Basic Law of Macao S.A.R. of the People's Republic of China is the constitution of Macao, and has been in effect since December, 20, 1999; it will remain in force for a 50-year period.
- 12 A popular derogatory Cape Verdean Creole term for "street vendors" or "hawkers."
- 13 According to data released by the Macao Forum, commercial exchanges between China and Portuguese-speaking countries totaled US\$108,200 million between January and October 2012, an increase of 12.3% compared with the previous year (Tribuna de Macau, December 14, 2012).
- 14 While officially it is estimated that there are some 250 Angolans in mainland China, 60 of them being students on scholarships in the province of Wuhan, a wider community of Angolan traders is visible in Guangdong, with an undetermined number of Angolan visitors coming for business, tourism, and medical treatment.
- 15 *Moamba* is a typical Angolan dish, and the name is given to traders in Angola who buy Chinese articles for resale in Angola.
- 16 This 10-lane expressway is under construction by the China Civil Engineering Company and will be an important link in the Economic Community of West African States.
- 17 According to Macao's 2011 Gaming Sector Survey, despite the fact that more than half of the labor power in the gaming industry is female, women have less access to high positions and have lower wages, especially in management positions. Women comprise 52.4% of the workforce in the gaming industry, but they earn 17.4% less than their male colleagues. Only four out of ten directors were women (429 women in a total of 821 employees).

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