*Journal of the British Academy*

Volume 10, Supplementary issue 6
2022

# Language, culture and society in postcolonial Angola

Edited by

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ISSN 2052-7217

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The British Academy

*Journal of the British Academy*, **10(s6)**, 1–10
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.001
Posted 31 October 2022

# Language, culture and society in postcolonial Angola: introduction

*Aleida Mendes Borges and Toby Green*

*Abstract:* This short article introduces the collected essays in this special issue of the *Journal of the British Academy*. It examines the contexts for the recent expansion of academic research and publication on postcolonial Angola, and the relative lack of scholars based in Angola involved in this production. It contextualises the political, economic and social frameworks which are associated with this situation as a way of understanding the distinctiveness of the collection. Finally, it considers the context of the production of the present edition, during the Covid-19 pandemic, as part of the structural frameworks which both condition and illuminate the collected essays.

*Keywords:* Angola, literature, gender, knowledge production, postcoloniality, civil war, Covid-19 pandemic.

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Modern Angolan studies have boomed in the West over the past decade (Moorman 2008; Pearce 2015; Soares de Oliveira 2015; Schubert 2017). A wide range of scholarship has assessed the history of the civil war and the construction of a postcolonial society under the aegis of the Popular Liberation Movement of Angola (MPLA), the Marxist revolutionary movement which then morphed into a clientelist state party in the 21st century. Many works have also been produced by Western-based scholars considering the significance of a wide range of Angolan literature, including work by José Eduardo Agualusa, Ondjaki, Pepetela and others (Leite 2012; Rothwell 2013; Leite & Owen 2014). In the context of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, which attained independence following protracted guerrilla wars in 1974, there is no question that Angola has attracted the lion's share of scholarly attention.

For a variety of reasons, only a very small amount of the most widely read academic production on Angola in recent years has been produced by scholars based in Angola. The new scholarship from outside the country is well crafted and excellently researched, yet there is also an urgent need to attend to the perspective of Angola-based scholars. This can ensure that the academic and wider public awareness of themes so relevant to the culture and society of contemporary Angola is shaped at least as much by voices inside as outside the country. It can also draw attention to themes that are particularly important to the lived experience of Angolans, something which scholars based in the country are certainly best qualified to identify: this can thereby help to shape the global academic discourse on the country and frame the research questions that need to be addressed.

This special issue therefore brings together five scholars based in universities in Angola to present an Angolan perspective on a diverse range of themes relevant to postcoloniality in Angola. It highlights that adding to the complex legacy of precolonial Angola, nation and identity building as a process has been permeated with challenges for the Angolan subject and the various local communities. The analysis is approached with an interdisciplinary lens, which is critical in its appraisal of language, culture and society in postcolonial Angola, and creative in its focus ranging from literature to social sciences, language and cultural studies.

Angola covers 1,246,700 square kilometres of the western region of Southern Africa, and with a projected population of about 32 million (INE 2021) it is the second largest country south of the Sahara after the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Although Portuguese is the official language, there are approximately 100 different local languages spoken, of which Umbundu, Kimbundu, Kikongo, Tchokwe and Ovambo are the dominant national languages. The nation is of huge importance to global geopolitics as well as to the regional context of Africa, as it plays an influential role within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Community of Countries with Portuguese as an Official Language (CPLP).

Furthermore, Angola is the second largest oil exporter in Africa, after Nigeria, and the third largest economy south of the Sahara (World Bank 2018; OPEC 2022).

Beyond its economic and political relevance, the nation also offers an interesting insight into important issues of global relevance ranging from the gender equality paradigm to questions of identity and culture. For instance, according to the 2014 census the literacy levels of women in Angola remain lower than those of their male counterparts, which in turn results in their over-representation in the informal sector (MINFAMU 2017). Thus, despite Angola having a National Strategy focusing on Gender Equality and Equity and committing to the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, which includes the objective of attaining gender equality, the World Economic Forum *Global Gender Gap Report* (2021) places Angola in 119th position out of 156 countries. This places Angola considerably lower than other countries in the region, such as neighbouring Namibia (6th) and South Africa (18th), thus highlighting interesting themes for comparative research.

Seen by some commentators as a rival to Nigeria, over the past decade Angola has wielded its continental influence in a variety of situations, including the troubled period of coups and military transition in Guinea-Bissau (2012–14). Nonetheless, outside the country, Angola continues to be viewed largely through the prisms of oil enrichment and elite corruption and control (Soares de Oliveira 2015), the impact of the civil war on the country (Pearce 2015) and in some quarters through the transnational influences brought to bear by the Cuban involvement in the country's civil war (Gleijeses 2016). Yet in all of this, the perspective of Angolans who are not members of the socio-economic elite is often overlooked.

By the 1960s Luanda had become home to the second largest settler presence south of the Sahara, after South Africa, driven by the overseas settlement policy of Portugal's Salazar dictatorship and by its strong economic growth (World Bank 2018). Subsequently, the nation has experienced enormous transformations since independence in 1974. These range from the end of the Revolutionary war, through the entrenchment of MPLA rule in the face of South African and CIA-backed National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebel forces in the south of the country, to the troubled transition following the end of the civil war, the rise of the petro state and the impact of the oil economy both on members of Luanda's tiny elite and on the population as a whole. Until the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the nation had also made significant progress in poverty reduction: according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2020), between 2000 and 2019 Angola's Human Development Indicator value increased by 45.2 per cent.

However, even throughout this period of growth, inequality remained high, with the Gini coefficient being 0.53 in 2018 and with a poverty rate of 19 per cent in urban areas and 58 per cent in rural Angola (Tvedten *et al.* 2018). Furthermore, the

Democracy Index 2020 classified Angola as an authoritarian regime and ranked it 117th out of 167 countries, highlighting the limited scope for electoral process and pluralism, low functionality of the government and low incidence of civil liberties (Economist Intelligence Unit 2021). Here again, although Angola is better placed than other Lusophone African countries such as Mozambique (122nd) and Guinea-Bissau (147th), it remains far behind other countries such as Cabo Verde (32nd) and its neighbouring nations, South Africa (45th), Namibia (58th) and Lesotho (64th).

The impacts of the economic and social collapse that has accompanied the response to the Covid-19 pandemic have certainly been devastating in Angola, as in most parts of the world. The sudden fall in demand for oil led to a steep decline in the value of the kwanza currency, from 482 to the US dollar on 1 January 2020 to 570 by May 2020, and then 645 by the end of the year, a decline of nearly 40 per cent.[1] With food imports constituting 20 per cent of national food consumption, this led to price rises which the poor could ill afford; meanwhile, border closures aggravated the situation, with 'shortages of agricultural inputs' occurring already by May 2020 according to a World Bank report, and a decline in the availability of irrigated crops for sowing.[2] By November 2020, the unemployment rate in the country was estimated at around 50 per cent, whereas it had been 31.8 per cent at the end of 2019.[3] The devastating impacts of the pandemic response in Angola make the articles collected here all the more significant. The African Development Bank (2022) estimates that the country's economy contracted by 5.4 per cent in 2020, and debt restructuring has already been widely called for.[4]

The experience of these hardships plunged people back into a situation which many compared to the civil war. Unrest grew. Large protests took place in October and November 2020, becoming increasingly regular in the first months of 2021 and culminating in a major protest on 20 March 2021.[5] State repression and coercion quickly became associated with the rise of Covid-19 *confinamento* (lockdown) policies. Police fired on peaceful protesters in November 2020, killing one person;[6] brutal suppression of protests was widely reported.[7] State repression was related not only to protests but also to other levers of control over citizens. In one infamous case, a doctor died in mysterious circumstances in a police cell after being arrested for not

[1] For the May 2020 figure, see UNDS & World Bank (2020: 12). Following the war in Ukraine, the kwanza regained value and the exchange rate has reverted to 427 kwanzas to the US dollar at the time of writing.
[2] UNDS & World Bank (2020: 13).
[3] UNDS & World Bank (2020: 15).
[4] *Africa Report* (2021).
[5] Crisis24 (2021).
[6] Human Rights Watch (2020).
[7] DW Akademie (2020).

wearing a mask in his car.[8] Meanwhile, for children and young people, schools closed for an entire calendar year, and economic hardship meant there was a widespread increase in prostitution among young women. The devastating socio-economic situation was compounded by severe floods in April 2021 in Luanda,[9] which followed a prolonged drought which had seen widespread hunger.[10]

This extreme situation makes the articles collected in this issue all the more timely and significant. Across the world, a generalised discussion is ongoing on the need to rebuild after the catastrophes of 2020–21. But what should the basis of this rebuilding be in a country such as Angola, which has experienced such a turbulent recent history – but which has the resources and infrastructure to create a prosperous society? The articles collected here offer some clues as to the answers.

Elsa Sequeira Rodrigues' article, 'Continuity and ruptures in the hegemonic model of femininity in Angola: an analysis of the experience of female lecturers at the Katyavala Bwila-Benguela University (Angola)' (2022), begins the issue with a focus on gender relations in postcolonial Angola and the experience of professional women, specifically university teachers in the central Angolan city of Benguela. Building on qualitative research methods and interview data, Sequeira Rodrigues explores the position of women in a modernising society which is built on 'traditional' patriarchal values. The construction of gender stereotypes, and the contribution of these stereotypes to promoting gender violence and inequality, is a key focus of Sequeira Rodrigues' research. Her interviews seek to reveal professional women's feelings of marginalisation and exclusion on the one hand, and the requirement to be all things to all people (colleagues, male partners, wider family) on the other. Without a frank exploration of these themes and their historical underpinnings, Sequeira Rodrigues suggests, it will be impossible for Angolan society to build an inclusive and shared postcolonial future.

The article by Botelho Jimbi and Dinis Vandor Sicala, 'The construct of "national" languages in independent Angola: towards its deconstruction' (2022), and by Nicolau Nkiawete Manuel, 'Language ideology, representation and nationalism: the discursive construction of identity in postcolonial Angola' (2022), bring an important focus to the question of language. Both are concerned with the way in which Portuguese has been promoted as an official and vernacular language in Angola, leading to the marginalisation of indigenous precolonial Angolan languages. Manuel argues that this marginalisation followed a policy conceived and implemented by the Creole elite of Angola, who benefited from the favouring of the Portuguese language. However, the

[8] Bloomberg (2020).
[9] Al Jazeera (2021).
[10] VOA (2021).

resultant discourses about nation and identity perpetuate disparate social representations and hierarchies and enforce marginalisation: without a reframing of language policy and ideas, a unified postcolonial nation will be difficult to construct. Jimbi & Vandor Sicala (2022), in turn, explore how these differences have been enshrined in law and offer a proposal for reform through the legal re-categorisation of Angolan languages which recognises precolonial languages as national languages: this reform could lead to a more widespread adoption of national languages in pedagogical settings, if the so-called national languages are recognised as official.

Sabino Ferreira do Nascimento's article, 'Reflections of orality in the contemporary narrative of Angolan literature: readings in Boaventura Cardoso' (2022) is in close dialogue with those of Jimbi and Vandor Sicala and Manuel. It also begins from the framework of indigenous Angolan discourses and the ways in which they interact with official and elite discourses. However, Ferreira do Nascimento's research addresses literature and the interaction of oral and written forms of literature in postcolonial Angolan writing. His focus is on the oeuvre of Boaventura Cardoso, one of Angola's best-known writers and a major cultural and political figure in the country. Ferreira do Nascimento shows how discourses of orature enable the powerful expression of Angolan realities and, in an analysis of Cardoso's work, shows how the oral interacts with the written discourse in the presentation of postcolonial Angolan society.

The final article in the issue, by Fernandes Wanda, 'The political economy of *partidarização* within the postcolonial state in Angola' (2022), places these socio-cultural questions within their full political context. Wanda analyses the construction of political party identities in postcolonial Angola with special reference to the MPLA. This is an important but under-researched topic, and it enables Wanda to explore transformations in the political scene as they affect and have been affected by civil society. The article shows how the co-optation of people through the MPLA served as a vehicle to entrench established interests. After the end of the civil war, this co-optation became a mechanism for President Dos Santos to assert personal control over the MPLA and the Angolan state. However, this contributed to his removal from office and the appointment of President João Lourenço in 2017, as calls for reform from civil society grew.

Taken as a whole, the articles present an important intervention by Angolan scholars regarding how the country can and should be rebuilt from the ashes of the Covid-19 pandemic and the catastrophic response to it. Without a focus on asserting indigenous discourses and ideas, through language and literature, it will be hard for the country to overcome the enormous disparities of wealth and opportunity that plague it. Without a focus on the most fundamental inequity of all, that of gender, Angola is also unlikely to fulfil its true potential. And without political reform, this potential will most likely remain unrealised.

Finally, the editors would like to acknowledge that the articles in this collection are testament to the British Academy's long-standing commitment to questions of knowledge production and location. Questions of location of knowledge production, and of the need to ensure that Global South voices contribute to global conversations, have never been more current in academic life (see Coetzee 2019; Cardoso 2020). These articles derive from two British Academy-sponsored Global South Writing Workshops, which the editors both assisted in organising, the first at the Universidade Agostinho Neto in Luanda in October 2018, and the second at the campus of Universidade Lurio in Mozambique Island in November 2019. Of the many contributors to the Luanda workshop, four also attended the subsequent year's workshop in Mozambique, where the questions posed in the first session were interrogated and developed further.

From these, and from discussions with other scholars in the country, this special issue has emerged. The editors would also like to acknowledge the dedicated work and commitment of the authors to this edition, all of whom worked ceaselessly amid the extremely difficult conditions which this Introduction has discussed to produce this issue in spite of the difficulties, restrictions and sadness associated with the Covid-19 pandemic and the response to it.

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To cite the article: Mendes Borges, A. & Green, T. (2022), 'Language, culture and society in postcolonial Angola: introduction', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s6): 1–10.
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.001

*Journal of the British Academy* (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk

The British Academy

*Journal of the British Academy*, **10(s6)**, 11–30
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.011
Posted 31 October 2022

# Continuity and ruptures in the hegemonic model of femininity in Angola: an analysis of the experience of female lecturers at the Katyavala Bwila-Benguela University (Angola)

*Elsa Sequeira Rodrigues*

*Abstract:* Life in Angola remains heavily influenced by the continued effects of the struggle for independence, followed by over 27 years of civil war. The civil war had a profoundly negative impact on all aspects of human life in Angola, including the perpetuation of traditional gender norms, which results in significant challenges permeating the lives of women in the Southern African nation, placing them in a particularly disadvantaged position in terms of health, education and access to resources. This article focuses on female lecturers at Katyavala Bwila University in Benguela (UKB) to explore their experiences and mainstream discourses in relation to their gendered position. Drawing from in-depth interviews and discussion groups, the article examines discursive practices of subjection or dis-subjection to identify possibilities of transformation which may emerge from the recognition of their gendered experiences.

*Keywords:* situated knowledge, gendered experiences, discourse analysis, male domination, symbolic violence.

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## Introduction

Women in Angola face many challenges. Almost 27 years of civil war and a legacy of gendered cultural practices place them at a disadvantage in terms of health, education and access to resources. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (2021) ranked Angola 119th out of 156 countries, well below other Lusophone African countries such as Mozambique (32nd) and Cabo Verde (68th).

The 2015–16 Health and Multiple Indicators Survey (IIMS) found that while only 8 per cent of men aged 15–49 had no education at all, the figure for women was more than double at 22 per cent. A further 33 per cent of women aged 15–24 were illiterate, compared with 16 per cent of men in the same age group. Part of this is explained by the fact that in 2021, 30.3 per cent of women aged 20–24 reported being married or in a union before the age of 18, with a further 7.9 per cent before the age of 15 years old (UN Women 2021). Importantly, the adolescent birth rate as of 2014 was 163 per 1,000 women aged 15–19, down from 190.9 per 1,000 in 2009 (UN Women 2021). However, these factors continue to hamper women's educational prospects and consequently also severely limit their full participation in the formal labour market.

The socio-economic challenges faced by women in Angola are exacerbated by the significant levels of violence committed against them. UN Women (2021) found that 24 per cent of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15–49 reported being subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months. In 2017, this figure was higher, at 32 per cent (MINFAMU 2017). Despite gender equality being emphasised by both public policies and legal frameworks through official political discourse, there is very little translation in practice in terms of budgetary commitments for government programmes.

As argued by Anzaldúa (2004: 72–3), cultural norms and practices in Angola convey 'dominant paradigms', which are predefined concepts that are unquestioned and thus are almost impossible to challenge, leading us to perceive a certain version of reality. This is what Van Dijk (1999) calls 'social knowledge', a series of beliefs that are integrated in discourse without the need for them to be stated and taken as true. It is thus critical to take the time to reflect on general views about masculinity and femininity in Angola and to consider how these are incorporated in general discourses and how they impact the attitudes and experiences of men and women in the country. This is important because through the increased awareness that emerges from this process, women can begin to establish the alliances necessary to promote more gender equality in society.

As highlighted by Gómez (2004), grassroots politics on the level of individuals and communities, through shared meanings and non-discursive practices that question images and representations of women, simultaneously enable the emergence of new

ones. Thus, an increased awareness of gendered dynamics in society and a joint exploration of the existence of heretical discourses (Bourdieu 1997) is conducive to generating new meanings and modifying the established social order – a heretical discourse that 'tends to open up the future' (Gómez 2004: 99). At the same time, it remains imperative to also examine the possible strategies of resistance that emerge from the confrontation of traditional cultural norms by individuals who become active subjects by taking power and authority and thus play an active role in challenging inequalities through pedagogical tools. University teaching staff are a good example of such actors.

This article centres on female teaching staff at Katyavala Bwila University (hereafter UKB) to interrogate the extent to which their experiences, in both their social position as women and their professional role as lecturers, are shaped by dominant gender discourses in society. Focusing on female lecturers offers a lens through which to examine their contributions to the shaping of mainstream discourses as they are actively engaged in teaching the next generation of carers, workers and leaders. As posited by Bourdieu (2000), discourses constitute an important symbolic heritage that may trigger a series of symbolic associations that establish a non-natural division of the spaces attributed to men and women. The focus on lecturers in particular enables us to go beyond the analysis of how women's experiences are shaped by their gender identity to also examine how these are reinforced and regulated by important patriarchal institutions such as the family and the state, as well as education and legal frameworks and the media (Morton 2010).

The structure of the article is as follows: it starts by examining gender relations in Angola and their impact on the lived experiences of Angolan women. Then it briefly describes the research design and other methodological considerations in how the study was conceptualised and implemented. Lastly, the article reflects on the results and explores the main themes identified considering current feminist literature.

## Contextualising gender relations in Angola

Angola is a multicultural and diverse country situated in the western region of Southern Africa; its extensive territory (1,246,700 square kilometres) is divided into 18 provinces. The Portuguese arrived in what is now Angolan territory around 1482–4 and established trade relations with the local kingdoms of Kongo and Ndongo. Zau (2002: 44) argues that at that time, 'capturing and selling slaves was the business in which the Portuguese and Africans got involved, obviously to the detriment of the Africans'. Thus, Portuguese colonial exploitation was characterised by slavery, forced labour with physical violence, and relied on the collaboration of local native

authorities. By the mid-20th century, Portugal had already completed a cycle that redefined the economic and social dynamics in the region, characterised by extensive agricultural production on large plantations and the consequent breakdown of African societies in both rural and urban areas (Nascimento 2016).

It was only from the 1950s onwards that successive rebellious groups managed to consolidate in the form of nationalist organisations and began to challenge the hegemony of Portuguese colonisation, enabling the resurfacing of renewed claims for independence. These organisations began by promoting diplomatic campaigns in support of the struggle for independence, later triggering more direct armed conflict (Zau 2002). The three most prominent organisations were the Popular Liberation Movement of Angola (MPLA), the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA).

After many years of armed conflict, the nation achieved independence on 11 November 1975 under the leadership of the MPLA. Despite the existence of three liberation movements, the governance of the country was handed over to the MPLA, which generated discontent and sparked the beginning of a long civil war. Angola would live, therefore, 'a period of 43 years in a permanent state of war', from the struggle for independence (1961–75) to the ceasefire relating to the internal power struggle (1975–2002), becoming in the process the protagonist of one of the longest-running armed conflicts in the history of the African continent (Paiva 2016: 77).

In April 2002, after 27 years, the end of the war instigated a period of profound political and economic change in the country. The new politics were shaped by a period of consolidation of democratic institutions and the progressive opening of a multiparty system. Concomitantly, significant steps were taken to ensure macroeconomic stability and the adoption of a general system of market economy which was favourable to the private sector (Relógio *et al.* 2017). Despite many shortcomings in terms of reducing inequality, the progress after 20 years of peacetime was extensive as the nation transitioned from a communist regime in the 1970s and 1980s to a more open market economy in the 1990s, a process further consolidated after the end of the civil war.

The particularities of this historical context have meant that Angola is a nation characterised by deep social inequalities, built on the power asymmetries of colonial rule and years of armed conflict. In 2020 about one in two people (54 per cent) in Angola lived in multidimensional poverty and experienced, on average, about half of the identified 16 deprivations related to health, education, quality of life and employment (INE 2020a). It is worth noting that it was only in the last 10 years that statistical data began to be collected more systematically in Angola, with the first post-independence national census being conducted in 2014. Nonetheless, data disaggregation based on sex has only recently been prescribed, resulting in significant

limitations on data availability relating to the social and economic condition of women in society.

More institutionally, successive governments have made official pledges and commitments towards achieving gender equality and the promotion of women's rights. Since independence in 1975, the principle of equality between men and women has been enshrined in the constitution, completed by legal frameworks prohibiting any form of discrimination based on gender. The 2010 constitution further consolidated this position. Yet, beyond official discourse and rhetoric, there are very limited policies and programmes that promote equality, and the allocation of resources to this end remains rather scant.

Consequently, despite constituting the majority of the population (52 per cent) and heading 24 per cent of Angolan families (INE 2016), across all social levels, women remain under-represented and socio-economic indicators reveal a situation of profound inequality. The literacy rate for the period 2018–19 was markedly higher for men, at 82.6 per cent of the national male population, contrasted with only 57.2 per cent of the national female population. For women living in rural areas the statistics are even more startling, as only 29.3 per cent of women were found to be literate, contrasted with a more than double figure for men at 65 per cent (INE 2020a). As mentioned above, these figures are in part explained by the high rate of school dropouts among girls due to early pregnancies as well as well-known issues of predatory practices and sexual harassment perpetrated by male lecturers.

In relation to higher education more specifically, there are significant differences in the employment opportunities for men and women. In 2015, in terms of both administrative staff and professor-researchers, men outnumbered women, representing the majority of the workforce at 67.3 per cent (44.9 of whom were lecturers and 22.4 technical-administrative staff), while women represented 32.7 per cent of staff (14.7 per cent of whom were professors and 18 per cent technical-administrative staff) (MES 2015). In regard to students attending higher education, interestingly, gendered cultural norms influence degree choices, as there is a high representation of women in professional areas such as Health and Education Sciences, Humanities and Environmental Studies, while men tend to choose Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects, Management and Administration, Law, Architecture and Construction (MES 2015).

This in turn shapes employment opportunities, as although employment rates are similar at 64.2 per cent for men and 59.3 per cent for women (INE 2020a), women are mainly engaged in activities related to agriculture (47 per cent) and sales/domestic services (34.7 per cent). This results in power asymmetries, relegating women to performing mostly unskilled jobs and being over-represented in the informal market. The vast majority of women (73.9 per cent) in the country are self-employed (INE 2020a),

which in most cases implies greater precariousness as they do not benefit from labour law protections.

Furthermore, despite the majority of the workforce consisting of informal labour, men and women tend to work in different sectors, with women over-represented in low-paid jobs, thus reinforcing occupational segregation and exacerbating the reliance on women for low-paid domestic and care jobs. There is thus still horizontal labour segregation, with a large number of women continuing to carry out work traditionally associated with women, such as decoration, cooking, sewing and hairdressing, among others, with a large representation in the informal sector of the economy (Domingos 2018).

When we examine the representation of women in decision-making bodies, including the executive, women represent less than 25 per cent of the seats within central and local administrative structures of the state (INE 2020b). The greatest differences are at the central level, as only 32 per cent of seats in Parliament are held by women and women represent only about 5 per cent of the total number of minister advisors. At the local level, women represent around 12 per cent of the leadership of the provinces, that is, out of 18 governors, only two are women (INE 2020b). It is important to note that although there are a considerable number of women in Parliament, it is often argued that their participation is strongly conditioned by the agenda of the political group they represent and therefore they are not vested with power (Valcárcel 1997). Their autonomy and freedom are therefore conditioned by the party's position (INE 2020b). Unlike other Southern African Development Community countries, Angola does not have legislative provisions for gendered quotas (SADC 2018).

In order to challenge the discrimination women experience in Angola, which is deeply rooted in cultural practices, the full engagement of all sectors of society is needed. The intersection between legal frameworks and the socio-cultural and institutional context creates important inconsistencies in the protection of women's rights (United Nations 2013). This is so particularly due to the continuing role played by local customary laws, rooted in the local culture, which continue to shape family relations and views on property rights. Therefore, oftentimes decisions are taken based on tradition, to the detriment of women, who have been historically discriminated against. For instance, in many communities, when a husband dies, the family of the deceased inherits all his property and belongings, leaving his surviving wife and children with nothing.

Such practices are difficult to challenge because personal identity derives from socio-cultural constructs, and in Angola, differences based on sex often form the basis of gender identity. Thus, gender roles remain deeply embedded in feelings and consequently condition the way individuals interact on a daily basis. Hence, the asymmetric power relations between men and women are understood as being 'in the order of

things' in the sense that they are seen as normal and natural (Bourdieu 2000). This results in the naturalisation and normalisation of discrimination, which is accepted as a way of fulfilling the 'cultural mandate' that must be upheld subject to the penalty of social punishment.

**The normalisation of gender-based violence**

In her book *O Estado de Wonderbra*, Barbara Biglia (2007) discusses the processes of naturalisation and the autonomic 'normativisation' of gender and gendered relations. These processes result in the emergence of inequalities of power and rights, which in turn generate discrimination and abuse of power and are the basis for the persistence of gender-based violence. Therefore, the biological differences between the sexes emerge as a natural justification for socially established differences. This legitimises a relation of domination inscribed in biological nature, itself a naturalised social construction, thus serving as the basis for a symbolic construction which is not restricted to the performative sphere and which is 'completed and realized in a deep and lasting transformation of bodies (and brains)' (Bourdieu 2000: 37). The work of reproducing male domination is done by institutions that take charge of ensuring what Bourdieu calls the order of the sexes. These include the family, church and schools, all perpetuating the androcentric vision and male domination.

Gender is thus the result of a process of social construction through which the expectations and values that each culture assigns to men and women are symbolically assigned. As a result of this learning, men and women display the roles and identities assigned to them under the label of gender, hence the preponderance of the masculine and the subalternity of the feminine. These are the essential ingredients of this symbolic order of male domination that defines the power relations of men over women and which is the basis of gender-based violence (Biglia 2007).

As such, the masculine position reveals the conditions of domination and symbolic violence. Symbolic violence is defined by Bourdieu (1999: 173) as 'that violence that starts submissions that are not even perceived as such, relying on collective expectations, on socially instilled beliefs'; it is an invisible, insensitive, muffled and unknown form of violence (more than just a set of beliefs) that traverses the body and is internalised, assimilated and naturalised. It is a form of violence that is exercised without physical coercion through the different symbolic forms that shape minds and give meaning to action. The focus on symbolic violence does not mean that physical violence and its impacts on the lives of women are minimised. Instead, the emphasis is on demonstrating how this form of violence, when normalised and naturalised, results in power and rights imbalances, which in turn generate discrimination and abuse of power, which is the basis for the persistence of gender violence (Biglia 2007).

Along the same lines, García Selgas & Casado (2010) place the emphasis on gender relations as a fundamental part of the explanation of the origin of gender-based violence, stressing that it is necessary always to analyse it based on the socio-cultural conditions in which it originates. Thus both gender relations and gender identities should be analysed with an emphasis on power relations, requiring an analysis of these power relations in their concrete contexts of production and, at the same time, seeking to make visible the power relations present in naturalised inequalities.

In Angola, violence against women continues to be experienced in private and there is some resistance on the part of women to address it publicly; yet, as Strønen & Nangacovie (2016) argue, when it is addressed, it is found to be a common experience among women. The socio-economic marginalisation that women face in society plays an important role in the normalisation of the violence that is inflicted on women and girls. The numbers are disconcerting, with 32 per cent (between the ages of 15 and 49) reporting being victims of physical violence from the age of 15, and a further 8 per cent reporting being victims of sexual violence. Among the women who reported getting married between the ages of 15 and 49, 34 per cent reported suffering spousal physical or sexual violence (INE 2017). Furthermore, in 2015 there was an increase of 57.2 per cent in reports of domestic violence compared with 2014. In 2015, the Criminal Investigation Service (SIC) registered 4,060 occurrences of domestic violence against women, which represents 78 per cent of the total incidents recorded by these services. The remaining 22 per cent were cases of violence that affected children (MINFAMU 2017).

Fundamentally, the constructed gender stereotypes form the basis of a normalisation or naturalisation that implies an acceptance and justification of the widespread levels of violence. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that 25 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 consider conjugal violence inflicted by men to be legitimate, while 20 per cent of men share the same opinion (INE 2016). Thus, violence against women tends to be 'explained from the perspective of power and the inequality in the roles of man/woman or husband/wife' (Nangacovie & Strønen 2019: 62).

## Methodology

Epistemologically, this article starts from a situated and partial position, incorporating a reflexive commitment. This means that the position of the researcher was important when it came to considering what to investigate and how to investigate: the fact of being a woman, Angolan and with lived experience of the adversities experienced by women in Angola, where a mixture of local beliefs and traditions, coupled with impositions from the Catholic religion introduced through the process of Portuguese

colonisation, intersects today with practices and discourses in which inequality is naturalised and normalised.

Methodologically, the present study seeks to analyse the specificity of knowledge and situated subjectivities (Haraway 1995) and thus adopts qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and discussion groups to gather insights on the experience of UKB female lecturers and explore their representations and meanings in relation to the construction of their gendered position. It draws from Murillo & Mena's (2006) framework of considering research to be flexible and open while at the same time allowing for adjustment of the research design, without forgetting that the analysis of the results should have a scientific and social impact. Lastly, a postcolonial perspective, as posited by bell hooks (hooks *et al.* 2004), enables or allows our own reading to coordinate, in the sense of a political articulation that transforms the starting positions and puts them in permanent dialogue without defining unitary and exclusive positions of victims and oppressors. Moreover, the analysis starts from an understanding of the specificity of our knowledge and specific situations which, not in vain, contribute to the process of construction of our identity (hooks *et al.* 2004).

It is thus important to resort to a methodology that proposes a new territory of political and theoretical alliances, a feminism that is better able to 'stay in tune with specific historical and political positions and permanent biases without abandoning the search for powerful links', challenging feminist politics to move towards the goal of building 'a place for different social subjects' (Haraway 1995, cited in Sandoval 2004: 89–90). At the same time, it is essential to place the Other and oneself in a context of collective action, as Martínez Guzmán (2014) argued when proposing the metaphor of engagement. This is to investigate in everyday life and 'position ourselves as competent members of those places and territories, which share codes and expectations and are therefore capable of developing a shared understanding (common understanding)'[1] – a position Spink (2007: 12–13) termed epistemological anticolonialism.

Being *involucrado* (involved/committed) in a research context implies not looking from an 'aerial perspective with a totalising and independent eye, but rather through an inner gaze, which occupies a place in the field' (Martínez Guzmán 2014: 19). Thus, the current project adopted a qualitative methodology and, from the ensuing results, drew conclusions on socially shared phenomena. In-depth interviews and discussion groups enabled the researcher to collect the experience of UKB lecturers and explore their representations and meanings in relation to the construction of their gendered positions. The use of open, non-directive and non-standardised interviews allowed both the researcher and the informants to better understand perspectives on their lives, experiences and situations, expressed in their own words (Taylor & Bogdan 1987).

[1] This term was proposed by Garfinkel (1967/1984, cited in Spink 2007: 12–13).

While the in-depth interviews were conceptualised as a conversation between equals in which the questions were adapted to the dialogue that developed during the interaction (Alonso 1998), the discussion groups were organised in the form of planned conversations, which helped the researcher obtain information on defined areas of interest, in a permissive and relaxed environment (Krueger 1991). The goal of the discussion groups was to create the ideal conditions to share experiences as women and as professionals. From a focus on everyday life, group interaction developed, and individuals shared how they felt while at the same time creating a safe space for such sharing. This contextual exploration, far from being absolute, revealed relative truths about 'being a woman in Angola' which were said and heard by all participants (Muraro 2010). These truths must be allowed 'to be spoken by the mouths of those who live them and with their words, except for the necessary mediations' (Muraro 2010: 91).

The aim was to explore the experiences and discourses of UKB female lecturers in relation to their gendered position. More specifically, we intended to identify discursive practices of subjection or de-subjection with regard to hegemonic identity models of masculinity and femininity, and to make visible the experiences linked to gendered position and that reflect asymmetries in the process of construction of femininity and masculinity. Thus, the sample selection process was based on the notion of criteria of relevance and not of representativeness (Conde 1994); that is, it is about identifying and selecting the participants who best represent the relationships that we intend to investigate, people who, due to their position in the social structure, have had experiences and discourses based on our objective (Murillo & Mena 2006; Cornejo & Salas 2011). The intention was 'to try to locate and saturate the symbolic space, the places of enunciation of discourses on the objective to be investigated based on the criterion of relevance' (Martínez Benlloch 2008: 246).

A total of four female lecturers were interviewed and six participated in the discussion group. All had been affiliated with the university for more than five years (some for more than 10 years) and belonged to different faculties (Polytechnic, Economics and Educational Sciences). All were mothers; four were divorced, one was a single mother and three were married. Interview recordings were subsequently transcribed. Through thematic analysis, different themes emerged from the personal stories and wider discussions. The aim was to search for 'a common element that indicates the way of socially constructing reality […] by the collective represented by our group' (Nogueira 2001: 116). The information was organised into two thematic nuclei: narratives of an assumed equality in the public sphere and the enormous difficulties of reconciling the personal (domestic work) and the professional (demands inherent to their profession); and narratives of an experience of subordination to symbolic power and naturalisation of gender violence.

## Discussion

The narratives that emerged from interviews and group discussions reflected a sense of social analysis of the production of senses, meanings and references that are attributed to social actions (Murillo & Mena 2006). As Amezcua & Gálvez (2002) point out, discourses are linked to three main dimensions: use of language, communication of beliefs and interaction in social situations. Thus, as researchers it is important that we analyse not only the different positions, but also their practical effects in the construction of our subjectivity (the symbolic and the discursive and non-discursive present in the social).

### Between tensions and discomforts: emancipation vs submission

Female lecturers were found to reproduce a discourse in which 'woman' and 'man' are constructed as essentially different. Their representations referred to meanings of what it is to be a man and what it is to be a woman. The woman was identified and subjectively constructed as different, so that she 'must' assume certain social roles. For instance, Prof. C highlighted:

> the man was conceived as the authority in the home, so we women, wisdom is in the woman, in the maintenance of the home […] the man was conceived as the head of the family, the head of the house […] the woman must be submissive, stay by the side […]

Prof. B added that:

> the African man is the authority par excellence […]

This form of essentialising discourse of difference leads certain women to assume a relationship of complicity with the symbolic power of male domination. This is the case even when it implies a continuum of discomfort for 'occupying' their gender role in the process of reconciling personal and professional life. For Prof. C:

> That is why the woman is seen as a 'superman', the woman basically gets to a point when she wonders: Oh my God, what do I want? I wanted to get to the top, but I'm already worn out here.

Prof. A added:

> I feel like a woman, still very overwhelmed!!! Why? Because I have to come to work besides continuing with my obligations at home […].

These statements illustrate the frustration felt by many women, as the incorporation of women into the labour market has resulted in the manifestation of a deep

contradiction between the logic of the sexual division of labour and the woman's need to practice an occupation not only as a source of income for the family, but also as a means of personal fulfilment and financial independence. When we examine female lecturers more specifically, despite their expressions of exasperation they make limited attempts to question dominant discourses (androcentric and heteropatriarchal). Thus, women, even professional ones such as lecturers, do not seek to redefine the hegemonic models of masculinity and femininity that dominate their societies. These deeply rooted gender relations have been shaped by a combination of traditional African culture, Portuguese colonisation and civil war, among other elements, and they continue to be reflected in family, social and political relations. Thus it is crucial to examine the continuities in the gendered interactions between traditionally constructed gender norms and the new dynamics imposed by the demands of modern societies and the conflicts that arise from them (Nangacovie & Strønen, 2019). This occurs as the symbolic order is (re-)established, ratified and reproduced (Bourdieu 1997) through these processes.

The concept of 'emancipation' was frequently mentioned by the lecturers to refer to their equal position in relation to men. It was particularly interesting to see how, on the one hand, their narratives emphasised the need for every woman to be 'emancipated', which was seen as a positive dimension that allows women to gain autonomy and independence from men. On the other hand, however, it was simultaneously seen as something negative. For instance, Prof. B posited:

> there are women who are very emancipated, but deep down there is something missing; they break up their homes [steal other people's husbands] because they do not feel totally fulfilled as women from a biological point of view.

Prof. C also offered limited endorsement for the idea of emancipation:

> Emancipation yes! But happiness, it's not emancipation that gives happiness as such, no.

The 'superwoman' narrative is essential for the reconciliation between the personal and the public, between the productive and the reproductive, leading women to feel they must endure much suffering and resignation in order to achieve 'emancipation'. The main discourses seem to construct subjectivity without resistance to prevailing norms, which has the effect of enforcing adherence to gender roles. This produces discourses that naturalise and recognise the asymmetries in the construction of identities, as well as naturalisation processes that make invisible the mechanisms of power and inequality that underlie mainstream discourses. At the same time, however, tensions, discomforts and sufferings arise in gendered relations in the process of articulation between desire for autonomy at the public/professional level on the one hand and

subordination at the private level on the other, based on the assumption of traditional gendered roles.

The experiences of discomfort, tension and suffering experienced by female lecturers, restricted to the individual sphere and not yet demonstrating the subversive potential of a social group, invite reflection on the need for collective work to be undertaken with other women in order to highlight dynamics that would otherwise go unmentioned, undisclosed and thus unaccounted for. This may presuppose possible resistance to established roles, leaving open the possibility of a transformation of the hegemonic model.

**Maintenance of the generic female role**

The narratives of the lecturers were infused with a symbolic order that is ratified and perpetuated by women in a traditional social reality, constituted by beliefs, norms, identities and roles that remain embodied in their identity and subjectivity and that condition their ideas and practices. Prof. A highlighted elements of the mainstream gender discourses that permeate the local culture:

> In our Angolan culture, the first thing a woman has to learn is to do things at home. Education comes after, the positions after … this is the woman seen from the cultural point of view.

This representation of traditional reality based on dichotomies of gender – man/woman, productive/reproductive – is marked by cultural notions of the subordination of women to men. The use of time, the beliefs (man: authority, head of the family, provider), the values attributed to him, the imposed norms, the construction of identities (male and female), as well as the status (good/bad, married/unmarried woman) and their respective roles in Angolan reality, all have different asymmetrical meanings. Prof. C stated:

> I think that women should not lose their role, the role for which they have been created. The woman was created – and she can study, have completed a university career, take courses – but the woman was created to be her husband's assistant.

Despite being at odds with discourses on the emancipation of women, such views are incessantly reproduced in the processes of socialisation: the identities and values attributed to gender produce ways to perceive, value, desire, respect, admire, love (Gómez 2007). These discourses are maintained regardless of education and financial independence because they are deeply rooted in bodies and habits and 'function as schemes of perception of thought and action' (Bourdieu 2000: 21).

Therefore, it is argued that the process of identity and subjectivity construction among the female lecturers at UKB is shaped by two key aspects: on the one hand,

the masculine (and heteropatriarchal) representation of production, and on the other hand, the feminine (and maternal) representation of reproduction. As such, as posited by Prof. A:

> The woman studied, has a profession, but she is obliged to fulfil her function. My husband can share some tasks with me, but when my mother is present, he cannot perform these (domestic) activities for reasons of obedience. Here comes the cultural aspect that is not innovative and does not allow us to evolve, does not allow us to be at the same level as our partner … if you can, I can!

For Prof. C, it is clear that:

> To be a woman in Angola is to be a worker, a fighter, and I even believe that if it wasn't, because it is a very pejorative and 'strong' term (laughs) … I would say slave […] woman is mother, father, they go to the market, wash the dishes, educate the children.

Meanwhile, Prof. B finds it less controversial to admit that, in her view:

> Men want to have a slave, ready for everything, to obey. And this happens even among intellectual men.

The construction of the identities manifested by the female lecturers presents the woman as the 'angel of the home'. They see cultural gender norms as 'normal'. This naturalisation of gendered roles and identities is assumed and incorporated in the identity and subjectivity of women, who see the care of the home and of the children as their natural role. This is the case even when they recognise that this places them in a position akin to a slave whereby despite being professional, educated women, mainstream discourses are interiorised and reproduced with acknowledgement, but without necessarily challenging them.

Prof. F shared her personal experience of being denied a job because of how her gender was perceived:

> I did a test for an oil company, ELF, in Luanda. I was one of the best candidates, I had the best score and yet I was not given the job. Because I was a woman and because I studied naval engineering (laughs). Because I was a woman, I couldn't go and work on a platform. I must say that it has been very difficult, that there is a lot of discrimination, and I say the same for both private companies and public administration, I had that experience … it is very difficult.

There is thus recognition of the role gender identity plays in the persistence of the discrimination women face. Yet the overall normalisation of gender-based discrimination in society means that asymmetric constructions of female identity are rarely challenged. It was revealing that none of the participants questioned the 'obligations' that society imposes on them as women.

**Male domination and asymmetrical gender relations**

Another important theme that emerged was the naturalisation of violence. It became apparent that mainstream discourses that legitimise and construct the subjectivity of women from a symbolic order marked by male domination and by the naturalisation of violence were identifiable through situated knowledge about relations and strategies of (de-)identification (Haraway 1995). This is because in Angola, female subjectivity shapes and incorporates cultural practices that acquire collective meaning in their historical context. These discursive constructions are permeated by practices with persistent marks that male domination imprints on the bodies of women (Bourdieu 2000). For Prof. F, it was challenging being:

> the only female naval mechanical engineer here in Benguela. But I had to do a thousand turns to get a job [they all laugh]. I must say it was very difficult.

Meanwhile, Prof. A argued that:

> As Prof. D said, society still doesn't accept us as women capable of holding a position of responsibility.

Prof. F added:

> We are not seen as capable of performing tasks on an equal footing with men. It is still difficult … it is a great injustice.

The symbolic values of violence can take a psychological toll on women. Prof. E shared her experience at home of being put 'between "the sword and the wall"', and being told:

> you already work and now you are also going to enrol in college, what about me? How long will I have to eat the food made by the maid or your sister? How long will I have to carry on picking up the children from the nursery? Madam, you decide … from today, if you want a husband, stay at home, if you want to continue studying, go back to your parents' home.

Others shared similar experiences, highlighting:

> He didn't want me to work, but when I got paid, he wanted to be the administrator of my money. He kept my money; he was the one who gave destination to that money. I could not touch my money. (E. 2)

Such narratives highlight how gender roles interrelate cultural symbols and normative concepts of what a woman should be, what she should do, what is permitted of her and who gets to manage her finances. This in turn evokes representations and meanings that contribute to the overall maintenance of male domination as they go mostly unchallenged by women.

It is thus argued that male domination in society generates a symbolic form of violence that is present in day-to-day life, which, as it is not always perceived as such, has a dual existence: on the one hand, it is naturalised, assimilated and internalised with the complicity of women (Bourdieu 2000), while on the other hand, it is also sometimes met with indignation and a clear recognition of the fundamental pain and injury it causes to women. This violence, often exercised without physical coercion, shapes minds and gives meanings to action because male domination contributes to the imposition of a symbolic order in which gender asymmetries are incorporated, favouring masculine positions which, far from being questioned, are assumed and guarantee inequalities between men and women. This goes hand in hand with the maintenance of the social order without the need to legitimise mainstream discourses. The frameworks of understanding and dispositions of the lecturers in the study incorporate this male domination. More importantly, this interiorisation can in turn result in violence that becomes physical and psychological, which, not being recognised as a problem, becomes naturalised.

Some lecturers demonstrated the deep-rooted nature of beliefs that legitimise violence against women. For instance, during one of the group discussions, Prof. B noted: 'A man who does not hit, is not a man.' This was followed by generalised laughter. For Prof. A, this is true even in cities:

> Even in the cities this is true. A man is a man, to make the woman feel that he is a man, first he shouts at her and if she doesn't understand, he slaps her. Then she herself says: 'my husband is a man …'.

The degree of interiorisation of this violence is exemplified by statements such as 'some women like to be hit' (female Prof. F.) or that women:

> provoke themselves saying 'hit me, hit me'. And then they have a good sexual relationship. Don't you see that many children are conceived after a good spank! (Prof. D)

Such comments were often followed by laughter during the discussion groups as women recalled personal experiences that reflected generalised practices and understandings about what men can and cannot do to women's bodies, all within the context of what is socially expected, thus without causing shock.

There were, however, also instances of outrage. E.1, for example, reflected on the fact that:

> Specifically in relation to me, I had a relationship of … approximately 15 years, where I was my husband's mother. I was the mother … He was much older than me, he was 13 years older than me […] I looked after him as if he were my own son. And if that was the problem … The problem was big, despite everything I did for him, he mistreated me … And he assaulted me!!! The violence was not only physical, moral violence is worse than physical. I say this with knowledge of the facts … [sighs].

> Because … when you know you are not what they say you are .... You know you do everything, everything!!! [Practically crying] to make the person feel good. And yet he humiliates you, treating you worse than a sack of rubbish [with an angry tone].

Other women also reflected on the extreme nature of some of that violence:

> One day I had to prepare a practical lesson … I was doing a poster, when he comes and slaps me […] and the next day you see me in class with this whole part of my arm bruised [points to right elbow] and upper lip swollen … [sighs] this situation was extreme. (E.2)

Despite the indignation or rage sometimes displayed by the women who shared their personal experiences of both physical and psychological violence, overall there was a naturalisation of gender-based violence. This was demonstrated by both generalised laughter and reproduction of dominant discourses of women needing a beating by their husbands. On the flip side, even when there was frustration and a sense that such behaviour is inherently wrong or 'extreme', this was not followed by any sort of action that could break the cycle of violence experienced by women. This in turn results in the 'minimisation' of often extreme cases of violence perpetrated by husbands based on the naturalisation of inequality, since the male figure (understood as an authority figure) is identified as superior and invested with the (symbolic) power to inflict violence if he considers it necessary. In this scenario the woman is left with no agency to challenge her partner, as by extension that would mean challenging a dominant cultural norm or belief that is yet to be generally contested or opposed in Angolan society, rendering the ensuing structural violence invisible and natural.

## Conclusion

This article has sought to critically engage with reflections on the experience of female lecturers in the context of a provincial city in Angola, Benguela. The analysis of their discourses revealed a context in which the construction of identities in Angola is marked by a gender binary in which the differences between men and women are accentuated.

Through the analysis of their gendered experiences both individually and collectively, this article analysed how their views were shaped by a hegemonic model of femininity characterised by dominant discourses based on constructed differences that legitimise inequality and produce asymmetries between men and women. These discourses in turn are embodied and sustained by dynamics of recognition through a system of domination hierarchically establishing legitimate and adequate roles for men and women.

The article adopted an objectivity constructed intersubjectively, seeking to understand situated knowledge and subjectivities. It prioritised generating knowledge from a reflection on lived experiences and reality, always recognising that individuals are the product of socio-historical interactions that can be transformed when seen as problematic. Therefore, it allowed for the analysis of discourses that we frame and are framed by, making visible confusing discomforts, contradictions and erosions in the current models, all linked to gendered positions and giving rise to collective and self-transformative action.

The analysis of the experiences and narratives of female lecturers in Angola enabled us to identify main themes of analysis focusing on (1) the prescription of asymmetric roles assigned to each gender, determined by a symbolic power that legitimises male domination with the complicity of the women who adhere to and naturalise this difference; and (2) the naturalisation of various forms of violence that are normalised, accepted, interiorised and reproduced by a symbolic order marked by an overall framework of hegemonic masculinity. It was argued that while on the one hand professional women such as the female lecturers that participated in the study accept and reproduce the mainstream discourses that perpetuate the violence that women experience, on the other hand they also manifest, simultaneously, an underlying, for the most part passive, understanding of the injustice that is inflicted upon them by the normalisation of gender-based violence that is so widespread in the society.

To challenge and confront the dominant cultural constructions of female identity considering the male domination model, which results in symbolic violence, requires more than just being aware of it. It demands organised political action, starting from the courage to share one's indignation, thus igniting a sense of collective action that can break with the tacit complicity of the incorporated representations, in the sense of a symbolic revolution capable of calling into question hegemonic models of masculinity. In Angola more specifically, the analysis of the narratives and experiences of professional women such as the lecturers who participated in the study demonstrated the need to break away from gender binaries that reproduce and legitimise asymmetries between the sexes.

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To cite the article: Sequeira Rodrigues, E. (2022), 'Continuity and ruptures in the hegemonic model of femininity in Angola: an analysis of the experience of female lecturers at the Katyavala Bwila-Benguela University (Angola)', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s6): 11–30.
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.011

*Journal of the British Academy* (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk

The British Academy

*Journal of the British Academy*, **10(s6)**, 31–58
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.031
Posted 31 October 2022

# Language ideology, representation and nationalism: the discursive construction of identity in postcolonial Angola

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*Abstract:* This article explores and problematises the role of language in the construction of Angolan national identity. Drawing on cultural studies and insights from linguistic anthropology, it is argued that in the Angolan postcolonial context, the symbolic power of language has been recruited to perpetuate marginalisation, linguistic stratification and social hierarchisation through linguistic ideologies of differentiation. To collect the data the study utilised virtual ethnography, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The results of this study revealed that the circulating discourses about the nation and identity perpetuate disparate social representations, social hierarchy and marginalisation. The findings also demonstrated how social actors resist dominant discourses and ideologies about the relationship between language and identity in the Angolan postcolonial context. The findings suggest that linguistic heterogeneity creates discursive and ideological tensions that have implications for the construction of a unified national identity.

*Keywords:* identity, discourse, language ideology, representation, nationalism, Angola.

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## Introduction

Angola is a country located on the western Atlantic coast of central Africa between Namibia and the Republic of Congo. It also borders the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Zambia to the east. Angola was a colony of Portugal for approximately five hundred years. In the context of Portuguese colonisation, language was central to cultural and identity politics. To underscore the central role of language in the process of colonisation, the Portuguese colonisers not only prohibited the use of African indigenous languages in public places and education but also used language to socially categorise Africans as assimilados and indigenous (Manuel & Johnson 2018). Such social categorisation has paved the way for the hierarchisation of languages in the construction of culture and identity in the context of postcolonial Angola.

Language has always been central to the articulation and discussion of nationhood (Haugen 1966; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 2007), and of identity and representation (Hall 1985, 1997; Howarth 2002), in both the colonial and the postcolonial contexts. It is a truism that cultural realities are always produced in specific socio-historical contexts. Consequently, it becomes vital to outline the processes that generate those contexts to better understand the socio-historical conditions that have shaped and influenced existing cultural and discursive practices. The corollary is that in postcolonial Africa (Berman 2013; Wolff 2017), and in Angola in particular, cultural and identity politics is linked to the politics of the movements of liberation against colonialism and nationalism. Although several authors have written about the liberation movements and nationalism in Angola (Guimarães 2001; Messiant 2006; Severo 2011; da Silva 2015; Martins 2016; Ball & Gastrow 2019), this article argues that the complex relationship between the movements of liberation and the politics of language and identity has not been systematically discussed in the literature.

I contend that in the Angolan postcolonial context, the symbolic power of language has been recruited to perpetuate romanticised nationalism (Gellner 1998) and linguistic ideologies of differentiation (Irvine & Gal 2000). Angola is a multilingual country with a salient discursive heterogeneity, and this implies a complex relation between language discourse, power and identity. To put it differently, language and discourse are not autonomous entities; rather, language and discourse are mutually constitutive and filled with ideological and political overtones (Bakhtin 1981). Consequently, identities are not autonomous entities because they are produced politically and discursively, inscribed into the regimes of linguistic signification and power. Nevertheless, people are not dupes who are blindly subjected to power. People may resist the discursive and non-discursive practices that interpellate them (Foucault 1972).

In Foucault (1980: 100), discourses are 'tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations. There can be different and even contradictory discourses within

the same strategy.' Therefore, in Angola, the fact that Portuguese is the only official language operates symbolically and represents a contested space. Moreover, it is used as an instrument of national unity and a site for the construction of national identity. The relation between linguistic structure and discourse implies that power operates by producing homogeneity and stratifying languages and discourse. Consequently, this creates among other effects the hegemony of the Portuguese and other languages.

Drawing from constructionist epistemologies, cultural studies and insights from linguistic anthropology, I use a discursive perspective, specifically critical discourse analysis (Fairclough & Wodak 1997) and insights from discourse historical analysis (Wodak *et al.* 2009), to problematise and question the discourses of nation-building and the state in the Angolan postcolonial context. In addition, the article examines how the circulating discourses about the nation recruit linguistic ideologies to perpetuate power and social exclusion. For my purposes, the discursive approach refers to one in which meaning, representation and culture are constitutive (Hall 1997). Thus, I argue that identities are discursive and performative insofar as they are constructed through discursive practices that perpetuate social representations and enact disparate identities and a hierarchy of citizenship. The notion of performativity has been taken by many critical scholars to emphasise that identity construction is a dynamic process of doing rather than a static form of being, that is, identities are continuously reproduced and changing through individuals' actions (Butler 1991; Heller 2010). Methodologically, I use the discourse-historical approach (Wodak *et al.* 2009) and Fairclough's three-dimensional framework (Fairclough 1992, 2013) to synchronically and diachronically make sense of the socio-historical contexts and trace the circulating texts, discourses and the processes involved in the creation of social representation and construction of identity in postcolonial Angola.

The remainder of this article is divided into three sections, the first of which is the literature review section, which discusses the key concepts such as postcolonialism; nation and nationalism; language and nationalism; language ideology and nation-building; language representation and identity; and the historical background of Angolan nationalism, specifically the roots of Angolan liberation movements against Portuguese colonialism. Next, the article presents and discusses the research methods, findings and discussion, and conclusions, respectively.

## Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism is a contested term and has been the object of many heated debates in the social sciences and humanities. Nevertheless, according to Sandhu & Higgins (2016: 179–80), the term postcolonialism refers to 'a theoretical lens that is concerned

with the legacy of colonialism, including how the identity dimensions of class, ethnicity, language, and gender have been formed in response to the center and periphery political relations'. As a theoretical lens, postcolonial theory draws from an array of disciplines, including but not limited to sociology, critical theory and critical discourse. For Eagleton (2008: 204), the focus of postcolonial critique is 'the problematizing of culture itself, which is moving beyond the isolated work of art, into the areas of language, lifestyle, social value, group identity, inevitably intersects with the question of global political power'. The discourse of nation and nationalism is bounded by modern ways of thinking and talking about identities (Calhoun 1997). The term postcolonial in this article underscores the cultural legacy of colonialism and its influence particularly in language use and the construction of identity in the period after independence in Angola.

## Nation and nationalism

Although the notion of Nation has been extensively discussed in the literature on nationalism (Castells 2010; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013; Breuilly 2019), Anthony D. Smith provides a useful definition to begin with. According to Smith (1991: 14), a nation is 'a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy, and common legal rights and duties for all members'. As a political ideology, nationalism derives its legitimacy in producing and reproducing the assumption that each state should have its nation, each nation its state (Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008). A nation is seen, then, as Fox & Miller-Idriss (2008: 536) forcefully note, as 'a cultural construct of collective belonging realized and legitimated through institutional and discursive practices; and a site for material and symbolic struggles over the definition of national inclusion and exclusion'.

The origin and development of nation and nationalism as products of modernism have been well documented and are beyond the scope of this article (for more details, see Kedourie 1960; Anderson 1983; Smith 1986, 1991, 1998; Renan 1990; Eagleton 1991; Fairclough 1992; Hutchinson & Smith 1994; Billig 1995; Hall 1996; Safran 1999; Hobsbawm 2007; Oakes & Warren 2007; Wodak *et al.* 2009; Castells 2010; Coakley 2012; Berman 2013; Kroskrity 2015; de Oliveira 2016; Martins 2016; Breuilly 2019; Dumitrica 2019). This article approaches nationalism both as ideology and discourse through the lenses of British cultural studies (Hall 1996) and linguistic anthropology (Woolard 1998; Kroskrity 2015). From this perspective, this article conceptualises the nation and its corresponding ideology as cultural constructs engineered by political elites and deployed discursively to further political, economic and cultural agendas.

**Language and nationalism**

Language as viewed by sociolinguists is a social practice and a mode of action that is socially shaped and constitutive (Fairclough 1989). In this sense, as Resta (2012: 1) aptly notes:

> Language, in all cultures, fulfills a number of functions. It interprets the whole of our experiences, reducing the infinitely varied phenomena of the world around us, as well the worlds inside us, to a manageable number of classes of phenomena, types of processes, events, and actions, classes of objects, people, and institutions.

In other words, language plays a vital role in the construction of reality, creating frames of consistency. Language is the window into the world. Language is fundamentally at work in how people operate as individuals, as members of their communities and within cultures and societies. We use language to navigate expectations and engage in interpersonal interactions.

Fishman (1972: 49) maintains that 'language is seen as the most salient collective symbol for national I entity due to the fact that the unity of language is viewed as more enduring than other symbols'. Language issues have been guided by social movements, attitudes and ideologies. Language is seen as a natural division commensurate with people and their respective cultures.

Therefore, to examine the complexity of nationalism in postcolonial Angola, along with its political and cultural consequences, it is important to provide a brief sketch of the sociolinguistic situation of Angola in this period. The main feature of the Angolan sociolinguistic situation that many commentators fail to underscore is the dominance of the Portuguese language and the marginalisation of African indigenous languages. The hierarchisation of the discursive field has arisen out of the history of colonialism (Manuel & Johnson 2018). Although most language scholars agree that African languages deserve special attention, more often than not, political commentators argue that African languages should be relegated to informal social roles (Manuel 2015).

Furthermore, the practices by which Portuguese became the only linguistic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991) gradually became consistent in the postcolonial context. The result has been that many Angolan parents are limiting the use of African indigenous languages (national languages) and teaching their children to be ashamed of them. For example, Feijó (2010) asserts that African languages, or regional languages as he calls them, have poor vocabularies and therefore are not suitable for use in scientific, technological development and innovation contexts (Manuel & Johnson 2018). It should be noted that contrary to what African languages' detractors believe, the study and use of African languages in scientific contexts has been documented (see Carter & Makoondekwa 1987).

Surprisingly, the colonial politics of language is upheld by the ruling elites in the postcolonial context with the assumption that the existence of a common language shared by the whole population unifies a nation (Bokamba 2008). In the Angolan postcolonial context, this assumption is epitomised in article 19 of the Angolan constitution of 2010, which enshrines Portuguese as the only official language. In addition, the current Basic Law for Education no. 32/20 of 12 August upholds Portuguese as the only *de jure* medium of instruction in education. However, the assumption that a nation needs to speak a common language to develop a strong sense of nationalism raises questions about the commitment to and respect of cultural and linguistic diversity in Angola. A choice of language for nation-building is not just a matter of political integration but also a mechanism for enacting and legitimating the national culture and ideology of the political system in place in that particular nation (Safran 1994).

## Language ideology

Language ideology is an established field of research in the social sciences and humanities (Hodge & Kress 1996; Woolard 1998; Kroskrity 2012). It is noteworthy that the literature on language ideology reviewed in this article consists of selected research, namely the strands that take a cultural approach to language ideology (Silverstein 1979; Woolard 1998); the strands that emphasise language ideology and linguistic differentiation (Irvine & Gal 2000); the strand that views ideology as a discursive practice (Fairclough 2013) through which people's identities are constructed and refashioned (Featherman 2015); the strand that views language as an ideological instrument of control (Fowler *et al.* 1979; Fowler 1991); and literature that acknowledges media as a discursive space for investigating language ideological debates (Johnson & Milani 2010).

Concerning ideology, Silverstein (1979: 193) defined linguistic ideologies as 'any sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as rationalization or justification of perceived language structure or use'. Silverstein's contribution paved the way for language ideology as a field of inquiry in the field of linguistic anthropology. This research has flourished rapidly and pursues the following research questions: (1) What is the structure of language ideology? (2) What are the consequences of such ideologies? (3) How do linguistic ideologies shape linguistic identities? (4) What is the agency of speakers in an ideologically constrained social structure (Woolard 1998; Rodríguez-Ordoñez 2019)?

Irvine & Gal (2000) used Peircean semiotics to investigate language ideologies in South Africa, West Africa and Europe. They note that ideologies are produced through semiotic processes of iconisation, erasure and recursiveness. Iconisation refers to the process through which linguistic processes (linguistic features) are assumed to

represent the essential characteristics of a particular social group. Said differently, language ideology links the specific qualities or linguistic features of language varieties to the qualities of the people or group that speak those varieties. Social actors construct boundaries that regulate social interactions by reinforcing social norms and discursive practices. Erasure, as Gal & Irvine (1995: 974), put it, refers to the 'process in which ideology in simplifying the field of linguistic practices, renders some persons or activities or sociolinguistic phenomenon invisible'. Recursiveness is when a distinction at one level of signifying practice is projected onto another level in a recurring manner. In so doing, the distinction tends to be used recursively across various social categories (De Costa 2016).

Moreover, social media as a space where ordinary people interact and discuss various social issues represents a discursive space and a potential site for the discursive construction of identity. Investigating language ideology in social media represents a new window that can cast light on the contemporary processes of social change and identity construction (Heller 2010). Finally, language ideologies are indexical because they create boundaries and assign individuals positions based on the differentiation of linguistic resources, accents and non-standard language (Irvine & Gal 2000; Blommaert 2009). In the context of the production and reproduction of ideologies, it is worth noting that language and social practices do not merely reflect social norms but also perpetuate and shape them. According to Fuller (2013), despite the naturalisation of ideas, it is possible to find evidence of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic ideologies in discussions and comments in public forums such as blogs, chatrooms, social networking sites and others.

Conceptualising the discursive construction of identity as an ideological and contested space implies, as Blommaert (2009: 204) notes, rejecting the monocentric view of the nation-state as 'the main actor and delineator of language norms, to polycentric multilingual environments that may or may not include national units'. Consequently, multiplicity emphasises the view that the discursive construction of identity may involve divergent ideological perspectives on language use and discourse that are contested and sometimes disjunctive (Kroskrity 2015). Of particular interest to this article is how political and historical processes have shaped language form and function, and how they have created multiple and shifting ideological relationships between language, representation, power and identity (Freeland & Patrick 2004) in the postcolonial context. The literature on linguistic ideology is extensive and it is not possible to review it here (for more details, see, e.g., Blommaert 1999; Lippi-Green 2012; Verschueren 2012; Ajšić & McGroarty 2015; Kamwangamalu 2016; Wright, 2016; Douifi 2018; Rodrígues-Ordoñez 2019). Suffice it to say that this article combines the insights on the ideology of linguistic differentiation formulated by Irvine & Gal (2000) and Gal & Irvine (1995) with critical discourse analysis (Wodak *et al.* 2009)

to make sense of the discursive construction of identities in the Angolan postcolonial context.

## Language, representation and identity

The relationship between language, discourse and identity has been a focus of inquiry within the field of sociolinguistics. In recent years the field has witnessed new developments as a result of a theorising of identity that challenges traditional views of identity (ethnonational identities) which assume them to be stable (De Fina *et al.* 2006). A perennial issue for discourse analysts has always been the challenge to examine the role of language in the construction of identities and how language practices index such identities (De Fina 2006). How is group identity represented, refashioned and circulated through discourse?

The analysis of relationships in identity construction can potentially illuminate the nature of group–self representations. Discourse analysis based on participants' accounts of social interaction can cast light on identity construction. De Fina (2006: 352) concurs that participants' accounts of social interactions can reveal how 'socially shared group representations are managed and deployed by members of particular groups and what kinds of conflicts and acts of resistance are associated with them'. The social constructionist approach to social and discursive phenomena propounds that identities are constructed and negotiated through discourse and rejects the traditional view that identity is stable and characterised by objective qualities of individuals or social groups (De Fina 2006).

In summary, the construction of identity also relies on subjective factors such as attitudes, perceptions and sentiments of nationhood. These attitudes, stereotypes and perceptions have been shaped and influenced by discursively constructed political and cultural ideologies in the context of struggles against colonisation and nationalism. In the context of postcolonial Angola, the stereotypes and attitudes result from the struggles for power and hegemony among the political elites who fought for independence and the construction of the 'Angolan nation' (Martins & Cardina 2019). Research on the discursive construction of identity and representation is vast and it is not possible to discuss it here (for further reading, see Lakoff 1987; Hall 1997, 2000; Baker & Galasiñski 2001; Moore 2001; Fauconnier & Turner 2002).

## The background of Angolan nationalism and the language question

Angola is a country located in south-west Africa. Angola was a Portuguese colony from the 16th to the beginning of the 20th century and it acquired its independence from Portugal in 1975. It is commonly accepted that understanding the Angolan

postcolonial context requires an understanding of the process of decolonisation, which involves the three important nationalist movements, namely the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA); the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), a revolutionary movement with Marxist ideological leanings; and the Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), a movement with Maoist ideological leanings. Although the nationalist wars in Lusophone Africa had a political character (Chabal 2002; Arenas 2011), it is important to stress that in Angola nationalist wars were not only political but also ideological and cultural in nature.

Nevertheless, the struggle for political power was probably the critical factor that led to armed conflict among the nationalist movements. One of the most daunting challenges of Angolan nationalism was the ideological divide among the three liberation movements, which consequently divided the country along ethnic lines. The ethnic associations led to the assumption that the FNLA was a liberation movement that had regional support among Bakongo, MPLA with members from Mbundu group, and UNITA with members from the Ovimbundu group. This situation, as Guimarães (2001) puts it, resulted in a dogged struggle for supremacy between the three main anticolonial movements.

After the fall of the authoritarian regime in Portugal in 1974, the drive to be the leading anticolonial movement intensified into an outright bid for power in a soon-to-be-independent Angola.

It is significant, however, to note that despite its divisive policy, colonialism paved the way for the rise of nationalist consciousness among intellectuals, which consequently led to the process of defining a collective idea of wider Angolan national identity through the erasure of ethnic identities (Guimarães 2001). The history of Angolan nationalism and the armed conflict among the nationalist movements have been well documented (Guimarães 2001; Chabal 2002; Brinkman 2003; Messiant 2006; Severo 2011; de Oliveira 2016; Martins 2016) and are beyond the scope of this article.

Returning to the language question, especially the relationship between language, power and identity politics (McColl-Millar 2005; Craith 2007; Mooney & Evans 2015), it is significant to note that although many studies have discussed the roots of Angolan nationalism, the question of how language has been used in the production and reproduction of nationalist discourse and national identity in the postcolonial period has been neglected. To underscore the place of language in the nationalist project is to emphasise that the Angolan nation is part of a wider ideological consciousness; as Billig (1995: 10) notes, 'national languages also have to be imagined, and this lies at the root of today's common-sense belief that discrete languages naturally exist', and the Portuguese language is the unmistakable symbol of national unity and nationhood. It is critical to note that Angola is a multilingual and multiethnic nation with more than 29 languages and dialects (Ethnologue 2022).

Ethnologue considers six African languages to benefit from corpus planning in Angola: Chokwe, Kikongo, Kimbundu, Oshwambo, Ngangela and Umbundu. In 2014, the Angolan government organised its first population census and found that 71 per cent of the population spoke Portuguese at home, with only 22.96 per cent speaking Umbundu, 8.24 per cent speaking Kikongo, 7.82 per cent speaking Kimbundu, 3.11 per cent speaking Ngangela and 6.54 per cent speaking Chokwe. In urban areas, 85 per cent of the population reported speaking Portuguese at home in the 2014 census, against 49 per cent in rural areas (Angola 2014). In terms of domains of use, Portuguese is the only official language, but more than 29 other languages are spoken in the country, mostly Bantu languages. African languages have little coverage on national television and radio and they are mostly confined to informal roles such as traditional ceremonies, family encounters and markets. Thus, the trend over the past 20 years appears to be a marked linguistic shift towards Portuguese and away from African languages.

It has been argued that elites play an important role in the development of nationalist ideologies and the construction of national identity (Gellner 1983; Myers-Scotton 1993). In their quest to control political and cultural power, Angolan political elites have used language strategically as an instrument for the expression of collective consciousness. Despite resistance on the part of ethnic intellectuals, the elites also use language to demarcate themselves from the population in order to perpetuate the status quo and maintain control over the economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977) necessary to participate in the democratic processes of society.

Angolan nationalism can be characterised both as a nationalist ideological movement and as a symbolic language nationalism which, according to Smith (1991: 73), 'connects ideology with mass sentiments with the wider group of the population using slogans, ideas, symbols, and ceremonies'. In my view, while Angolan nationalism is rhetorically built on the premise of the supra-ethnic political culture, its modus operandi reflects the use of cultural distinctiveness of the elites and intelligentsia, or what Smith (1991) refers to as intelligentsia nationalism, to forge the political and cultural identity of the nation. Consequently, as national identity has been defined based on the cultural and political identity of the elites, the population from different 'ethnic' groups has been marginalised and excluded based on linguistic differentiation.

In other words, although the role of language in the construction of national identity and citizenship remains marginal in discussions of Angolan nationalism, especially in the postcolonial context, this article argues that language has been at the heart of the discourse on national identity in Angola. To maintain their grip on political, cultural and economic power, nationalists qua political elites have oversimplified the complexities of the multiethnic and plurilinguistic population through the nationalist ideology of 'one people and one nation' declared by Agostinho

Neto, the first president of Angola (Neto 1977). Consequently, this implies the confirmation of the hegemony of Portuguese as the sole official language and therefore the language of national unity. This hegemony operates through the ideology of linguistic differentiation. Cultural narratives of national identity, as Martins (2016) argues, have been used to perpetuate linguistic prejudice, stereotyping, marginalisation, discrimination, language hierarchisation and legitimation of political actions, with profound social, educational, cultural and economic consequences in the lives of the population.

To summarise, although much has been written about Angolan nationalism and its consequences in the aftermath of independence, much of what is written has failed to question and problematise the role of language in nation-building and its profound impact on the construction of the Angolan national identity and citizenship in the postcolonial context.

## Methods

### Participants

The study utilised the purposive sampling method to select the participants who were interviewed. The researcher selected a total sample of 18 participants. Ten participants were aged 24 to 45 and eight participants were aged between 30 and 65. To select the participants, individual factors such as education, occupation, as well as social, regional and ethnic membership (as defined by the participants themselves) were used as selection criteria. The participants selected were linguists, teachers, politicians and workers such as merchants. In terms of education, linguists and teachers had at least earned a bachelor's degree. Other participants had concluded secondary school and technical vocational education. In terms of language, most participants spoke at least two languages, that is, Portuguese and other languages (French, English, African languages). The participants were originally from different ethnolinguistic groups (Bakongo, Mbundu, Ovimbundu, etc.). The goal was to select participants from different social groups to get a broad cross section of society. For online data, the study utilised distributed document data collections (Rahm-Skågeby 2011); specifically, several blogs were searched for relevant discussions. These were general discussions on different issues, and the threads of the discussions relevant to the research question were saved and labelled through screenshots (Boellstroff *et al.* 2012).

**Critical discourse analysis**

The development of critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be traced from critical linguistics, an approach to language and society put forward by a group of linguistics dissatisfied with the analysis of language and discourse in mainstream linguistics (Fowler *et al.* 1979).

CDA is an interdisciplinary method that combines micro and macro levels of analysis to explore the ideological workings of language. CDA is an explicitly political approach which, according to Benwell & Stokoe (2006: 9), is 'dedicated to uncovering and exposing societal power asymmetries, hierarchies and the oppression of particular groups'. Discourses play a central role in the genesis and construction of social conditions. According to Chouliaraki (1998), discourse is a system of options from which language users make choices. From this perspective, identity construction is performative. Performativity depends on how people frame and evaluate discourse (Da Silva 2015).

Methodologically, this article combines the discourse-historical approach (DHA) (Wodak *et al.* 2009) and Fairclough three-dimensional framework (Fairclough 1992, 2013) to synchronically and diachronically make sense of the socio-historical contexts and trace the circulating texts, discourses and the processes involved in the creation of social representation and construction of identity in postcolonial Angola. DHA explores the historical and social to locate the embedded meaning of social events and phenomena in a specific moment (Wodak & Meyer 2009). Fairclough's CDA framework attends to three interrelated levels of discourse analysis, namely the object of analysis (text, verbal or visual); the level of production and reception, which attends to the processes by which the object of analysis is produced (e.g., writing, speaking); and the socio-cultural level, which provides the social analysis (including the historical conditions).

Following Wodak *et al.* (2009), this investigation uses triangulation by collecting data using topic-oriented semi-structured interviews to see how participants discuss and discursively articulate the issue of language and national identity. Using an interview protocol, semi-structured interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour, and interviews were conducted in a private closed room at the Faculty of Humanities. The interviews were tape-recorded using a previously tested digital recorder with the consent of the participants. Although the researcher conducted 18 interviews, after 15 interviews many of the themes became recurrent, and little or no new information was obtained from the final three interviews, suggesting that all categories had been exhausted and a point of saturation was reached (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015). Following the guidelines from Saldaña (2013), data from interviews was immediately coded into themes, concepts and categories after the audio recordings had been

transcribed (Rubin & Rubin 2012). In the descriptive process, multiple and overlapping codes emerged. Codes suggesting similar thematic links were collapsed, while codes that were not relevant to answer my research question were put aside.

In Wodak *et al.* (2009), triangulation means that the analysis of discourses uses methodological and theoretical perspectives from various disciplines. Additionally, the article uses data collected from online social networks, particularly threads that configure discussions and ideological debates (Blommaert 1999) on important social issues related but not limited to health, language, politics and identity. Virtual ethnography, introduced by Hine (2000), has become a useful tool for investigating language ideologies. It is a variant of traditional ethnomethodological techniques, utilising a spectrum of observational and other qualitative methods to examine how meaning is constructed in online interactions (Kelly-Holmes 2015).

Cyberspace or social media is a suitable source of data for the study of language, representation and identity because it is one of many sites of ideological reproduction (Hine 2000). According to Hine (2000), a discourse analysis approach to ethnography might be appropriate for examining discourse and identity (Benwell & Stokoe 2006) through online social networks. As Blommaert *et al.* (2009: 204) note, in mediated environments 'it is not just language that is policed but also registers, genres, and styles, lexis and pronunciation when it comes to the production of messages, meanings, and identities'. Data from online social networks was collected from Instagram debates during the Covid-19 quarantine period between March and September 2020.

Thus, the main objective of this article is to identify and describe how self-representation (Moscovici 1984) and national identity are constructed discursively among the participants in social interaction. According to De Fina (2006), linguistic resources are often used to index individuals' positioning concerning social categorisation. Therefore, textual and intertextual analysis (Fairclough 1992; Manuel & Johnson 2018) was used to reveal how socially shared group representations are produced, reproduced and negotiated in social interactions. To trace the interrelations between texts and discourses, or what Fairclough (1995) refers to as intertextuality, the article examines different discursive practices to see how individual argumentation patterns on the same topic are interconnected and recontextualised in other discursive contexts (Wodak *et al.* 2009). Specifically, the study looks at how the issue of language and national identity is framed in different texts, especially in the Angolan language policy (The Constitution, Article 19 line 1 and 2), the interview texts and the discourses from online social networking threads. The main goal is to trace the intertextual and interdiscursive links among the various texts and discourses and see how these have influenced social and discursive practices in Angola.

## Data presentation, analysis and discussion

This article investigates the discursive construction of national identity and how the ideology of linguistic differentiation is used to perpetuate stereotypical social categorisations of particular groups in the postcolonial context in Angola. In other words, the main question of this investigation was to explore people's experiences with language use and national identity in Angola. The findings from the excerpt of the Angolan Constitution regarding language use, online ethnography (social networks) and semi-structured interviews with the participants are presented below.

### Language provision in the Angolan Constitution

Concerning the use of language, the Angolan Constitution of 2010 Article 19, specifically states that:

> [Extract 1] The official language of the Republic of Angola is Portuguese … The state shall value and promote the study, teaching, and use of other Angolan languages, in addition to the main international languages of communication. (Angolan Constitution, 2010)

Although the official status of the Portuguese language may seem unproblematic given its role as a language of wider communication, the second clause of Article 19 of the Constitution is both problematic and revealing. The article has important ramifications as far as the language question is concerned. The Constitution enshrines Portuguese as the only official language in Angola. Although the Constitution upholds the use of African languages, it categorises them as 'other' languages. In treating the African languages as 'the other languages', the Constitution creates a situation whereby Portuguese is accorded high status while African languages are simply treated as 'other languages'.

Furthermore, the rhetorical language of the Constitution can be viewed as a declaration of intentions or of what is desirable, but not what is de facto to be promoted. The language provision in the Constitution also demonstrates how the creation of a linguistic hierarchy involves not only the ranking of languages, but also their categorisation so that some languages are associated with prestige, privilege and economic power. Within the context of language use, the hierarchisation of languages results in the legitimation and imposition of certain ways of knowing and speaking.

Furthermore, the imposition of linguistic hierarchy can also be seen as integrally tied to socio-economic boundaries, which may reinforce the political and socio-economic power of those who have a good command of the dominant language and the marginalisation of those who do not. The Constitution enshrines the hegemonic position of Portuguese while rhetorically upholding the use of African languages,

albeit with a marginalising tone. As will become apparent, ideological conflicts and contradictions at the centre of the language and identity politics in Angola are captured by the positioning of the interviewed participants and the findings from social network ideological debates in this study, to which I now turn.

**Social networks**

As discussed earlier, cyberspace or social media is a suitable source of data for the study of language, representation and identity because it is one of many sites of ideological reproduction (Hine 2000). As noted earlier, according to Hine (2000), a discourse analysis approach to ethnography might be appropriate for examining discourse and identity through online social networks. The findings from social network interaction in this section represent threads collected from Instagram debates on health care (1,236 comments).

This social network feed contained Instagram debates on a video posted by a patient with a typical Portuguese accent who claimed that he was being unfairly quarantined at the Covid-19 facility in Luanda because he did not have Covid-19. The extracts below present people's reactions to the video.

Concerning the video, one of the participants in the discussion commented:

> [Extract 2] This Zairian or Langa does not know how to speak Portuguese. These Bakongo are like that.

Reacting to this participant's comments, another participant in the debate said:

> [Extract 3] This is very complicated because I see many people in this debate focus not on the message that the man is trying to deliver, but instead call him Langa or a foreigner. Brothers, the disease does not know nationality, race, religion, or even political ideology. These behaviors separate the African people.

Another participant in the feed made the following observations:

> [Extract 4] This Langa does not know how to speak Portuguese. Instead of saying Ambulancia. He said Ambulencia.

To the above comments, one of the participants reacted as follows:

> [Extract 5] First, the tribalist comments simply demonstrate that these people have little brains and are ignorant. We should be supporting our Angolan brother. He is Angolan like us. But ignorant people don't see that.

Another participant disagreed with the above and noted:

> [Extract 6] what! A person, who is Angolan does not speak that way. This is Langa; Bakongo are like that.

Later another participant in the debate on the video bemoaned:

> [Extract 7] It is sad. Discrimination against my people. The people of my heart.

In a similar vein, another commentator to the video noted:

> [Extract 8] Even though we are discussing health issues, it is inadmissible to treat a person like that, regardless of ethnicity or nationality.

One of the participants in the discussion agreed, saying:

> [Extract 9] Many are not reacting to the video and the issue it addresses. People are making tribalist comments. My god what kind of country is this. Many people think an Angolan is the one who speaks Portuguese well.

Finally, another participant in the debate commented:

> [Extract 10] People, let us not underestimate this citizen's message. We should pay attention to the message, not to his Portuguese with an awful accent.

The extracts above reveal how the circulating discourses on language use and identity are intricately intertwined with the existing discursive practices in postcolonial Angola. Extracts 2, 4 and 6 demonstrate how language is used to set boundaries for who is considered Angolan based on linguistic differentiation. As can be seen above, the participants in extracts 2, 4 and 6 did not attempt to understand the message in the video, in which the patient in quarantine claimed that he was being unjustly taken to the Covid-19 facility without any evidence that he was infected with Covid-19. Rather, these three participants in the debate concentrated on using the linguistic performance of the patient to categorise and stereotype him as 'Langa' and 'Zairian' or 'Bakongo'. Interestingly, the three extracts cited above stereotypically use the terms Zairense or Langa and conflate them with one of the major ethnolinguistic groups of Angola called Bakongo.

In the postcolonial context, it is not surprising that these participants use stereotypes and categorisations to represent particular ethnolinguistic groups, in this case the Bakongo. It is important to note that stereotyping and categorising individuals who speak Portuguese with a French accent or Angolans who have returned from the former Zaire (today's DRC) as Zairians or Langas has its origins in the struggles for political interests and power among the Angolan nationalist movements. The categorisation and stereotyping of particular ethnolinguistic groups has often been used strategically and ideologically, both before and after independence, to control the masses and maintain the grip on power among the nationalist movements, as discussed concerning the background of Angolan nationalism.

Language ideologies are involved in how we define what counts as a legitimate language or language variety and a legitimate accent in social interactions. Investigating

language use as a discursive phenomenon in the context of nation-building through the examination of language in social media ideological debates is useful because it can cast light on the complex formation of national identity in the postcolonial context. Moreover, as Blommaert (1999: 1) has noted, 'debates are not ideologically neutral, but constitute the very moments in which views and beliefs about languages and their speakers (i.e. language ideologies) are crystallised, enforced, and/or challenged'.

The extracts above reveal how linguistic features such as accents have come to be conventionally understood as pointing to particular social categories and identities (Jaffe 2014). Moreover, extracts 2, 4 and 6 demonstrate how language features and linguistic performance have been used to perpetuate what Irvine & Gal (2000) refer to as iconisation. The participants in the three extracts use the language features produced by the patient to categorise him as a member of a particular social group, that is, Bakongo, Zairian or Langa. Unfortunately, in the postcolonial context of Angola, these stereotypes and categories have made their way into the existing public discourse and may have been used to perpetuate social exclusion and the linguistic hierarchy, which has implications for the consolidation of national identity (de Oliveira 2016).

Furthermore, it is important to note that although indexicality is a context-dependent phenomenon (Jaffe 2014), the use of stereotypes and categories such as Langa, Zairian or Bailundu to index individuals who speak with a particular accent or pronunciation cannot be understood in isolation because historically these have been strategically used within the context of nationalist movements. Furthermore, the use of languages in Angola continues to reflect the colonial legacy. During the colonial period, acquisition of the Portuguese language was a prerequisite for Angolans to become full citizens (Halme 2006).

Consequently, in the postcolonial context this legacy has continued to perpetuate monolingual bias and the ideology of linguistic differentiation. While recognising that in social interactions contexts are multilayered, from the findings above it can be inferred that the context of the interaction in the debate is shaped by collective and historical processes (nationalism) and circulating discourses that the participants do not have control over. The history of colonialism provides the backbone and has paved the way for the anticolonial movements, which are the instruments through which nationalist sentiment and discourses are produced, circulated and reproduced in the postcolonial context (Martins 2016).

In other words, in Angola language continues to provide the best fit not only for self-categorisation but also for the construction of national identity. The construction of identity relies on objective characteristics such as language and territory. The dominant ideology, that is, the ideology of linguistic differentiation, values monolingualism, and national identity is distributed based on linguistic performance that devalues other languages and varieties and marginalises individuals who speak with an accent

other than the standard Portuguese. Particularly striking is the fact that a debate about health care (Covid-19) turned into a discussion on the patient's Portuguese linguistic competence.

Nevertheless, a critical look at extracts 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 demonstrates that people are not always subservient to dominant ideologies. These extracts clearly show how social actors negotiate meaning in response to the lack of unity caused by the institutional, socio-economic and cultural conditions of late modernity. The extracts also show how, in the context of late modernity, people are repositioning themselves against the one state, one language and one culture discourse akin to modernist nationalism (Anderson 1983; Billig 1995). The extracts demonstrate that there has been an ideological shift away from the view of language as bounded entity indexing, particularly in an ethnolinguistic community, towards a new understanding and emphasis on multilingualism (Pérez-Millans 2016). Extracts 9 and 10 demonstrate that participants are aware of the fact that people might have different proficiency levels in terms of languages. For example, in extract 9, one of the participants said that 'many people think an Angolan is the one who speaks Portuguese well'. In this extract, the participant shows some awareness that language proficiency does not necessarily index ethnolinguistic identity or nationality.

This shift can be attributed to the increasingly fragmented nature of competing identities in the postcolonial context. People are more and more aware that the relationship between language and identity is unstable and dynamic. Although it is often assumed that ordinary people repeat nationalist discourse unreflexively (banal nationalism, in Billig's terms), from the extracts above it can be seen that people speak reflexively about nationhood, bringing to the fore their agency.

In short, rather than working from presuppositions about a top-down mechanism originating from a fixed political power that shapes and influences discursive practices and social action, a critical look at the participants' discourse concerning language and identity reveals how actors in social interactions negotiate meanings and positioning to capture the changes of conditions in the context of late modernity (Appadurai 1996). It should, however, be stressed that from the analysis it is also clear that ideological debates are not only about languages but also involve evaluation of others in ways that ratify and endorse unequal social relations (Pickering 2016). Although there has been an ideological shift in how people assess the relationship between language and identity, the findings above suggest that in the Angolan postcolonial context, people use stereotyping and categorisation to strategically create disparate conceptions and representations of ethnic groups in public forums and social networks. The findings also suggest that stereotypes create symbolic boundaries between ethnolinguistic groups based on linguistic differentiation. Stereotypes are used as an instrument of social categorisation and discrimination. Nevertheless, the findings also show

the existing discursive and ideological tensions regarding language use (Portuguese) and its role in the construction of national identity. Yet it is clear that Portuguese is the language with the highest value and it remains the language of wider communication and identity construction in Angola. The hegemonic position of Portuguese downplays the complex sociolinguistic configuration of the country, marginalises the speakers of African languages and ignores contemporary changes spurred by the conditions of late modernity.

**Discussion: intertextuality and interdiscursivity**

In this section, I take a closer look at the intertextual and interdiscursive connections across the findings from the different contexts, that is, the findings from the online social network interactions, the interview responses and the excerpt on language provision from Article 19 of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola (2010). The salient themes in the interview responses include the hegemony of Portuguese and the marginalisation of some social groups through stereotyping and categorisation. While the political rhetoric pays lip service to the promotion of African languages, official discourse consistently upholds the hegemony of the Portuguese language. As discussed earlier, the language use provision in Article 19 of the Constitution unequivocally supports the sole use of Portuguese and treats African languages as 'other' languages. In turn, the way the interview respondents and the participants in the social media discussion network defended Portuguese as the symbol of national identity show connections between the official discourse and the discursive practices. The intertextual and interdiscursive links regarding the role of Portuguese in the construction of national identity is illustrated in extracts 2, 4 and 6, respectively.

Furthermore, the findings from the respondents and social network interactions highlight the role played by the political elite in perpetuating the dominance of the Portuguese language in the Angolan postcolonial context. As documented by Myers-Scotton (1993), in Africa (and Angola is no exception), political elites perpetuate cultural and identity closure by strategically exploiting official language policies to enforce monocultural and monolingual language practices. The dominance of Portuguese reinforces the ideology of linguistic differentiation used to perpetuate marginalisation, stereotyping and categorisation of some social groups in society.

Moreover, the ideology of linguistic differentiation has been strategically used to question the identity of those who do not have a good command of Portuguese or who speak the language with an accent that demarcates them from the elites (elite meaning those who use the dominant or expected variety of Portuguese), linguistic repertoires that are seen in extracts 2, 3 and 6. A closer analysis of the respondents' positioning and the social network discourses reveals strong links in the relation and

association between language and identity. In both contexts, the respondents and the participants articulate strong ethnolinguistic ideologies (extracts 2, 3 and 6). The findings also suggest some interesting patterns in the ways participants constructed the relationship between language and identity. Participants sometimes constructed language and identity as overlapping or indexing one another (extracts, 2, 4 and 6); these constructions tend to suggest implicit ethnolinguistic ideology.

As seen in extracts 4 and 6, in their discursive patterns the participants in social interaction highlighted this indexing and engaged in justifying why a person with an accent or a weak command of Portuguese is not qualified to be Angolan. Therefore, the explicit nature of these discursive patterns suggests that the respondents and the participants in the social network interactions were operating in the context of a deep-rooted ethnolinguistic ideology. These taken-for-granted assumptions of the relationship between language features and ethnic or cultural identity are akin to what Riley (2011) refers to as ethnolinguistic ideologies. It is important to note that in the project of imagining the postcolonial nation, ethnicity was always seen as at odds with or even in opposition to the goals of the homogeneous and indivisible Angolan nation. Nationalist ideology was epitomised in the motto 'um só Povo, Uma só Nação' (one people and one nation) (Messiant 2006). However, the findings illustrate how ethnicity is strategically recruited in the postcolonial project for the construction of national identity.

Moreover, the stigma and marginalisation attached to African languages and the speakers of these languages is a result of the prestige and the market value of Portuguese (extract 3). Within the market place, language carries value because it is the means by which speakers establish who has the right to speak and what knowledge is valued. From the linguistic market perspective, language has a market value that speakers use to reproduce and establish power relations. Therefore, the findings suggest that African languages and their speakers lack the linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1991) necessary to access the cultural, economic, and political resources necessary for their individual development.

From the findings, it is also evident that the official discourse on the use of language as sanctioned by Article 19 of the Constitution links interdiscursively to the responses of the participants and the views of the participants from the debate in the social networks regarding the hegemony of Portuguese as a mechanism strategically used by the elite to maintain their grip on power and enforce the status quo (extract 9). The findings suggest that the issue of identity and citizenship in Angola has political roots, sustained by a colonial legacy that latently established cultural, regional and ethnic divisions (Martins 2016), which were used as instruments of power contestation among the three liberation movements that were fighting for independence, that is, FNLA, MPLA and UNITA.

Nevertheless, as illustrated by Martins (2016), the findings also demonstrate how the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion are extremely complex. In particular, the findings demonstrate that while identity is ideologically produced and reproduced through institutionalised contexts, this does not mean that identity is blindly accepted and followed by individuals. The findings reveal that people are not dupes who are blindly subjected to power (extracts, 8, 9 and 10). People may resist the discursive and non-discursive practices that interpellate them (Foucault 1977). This is an important finding because it illuminates how the construction of identity is a process fraught with ideological tensions and contradictions. Although these findings cannot be generalised to all Angolans, they nevertheless illuminate how and why the issue of language and identity in Angola is problematic and controversial.

## Conclusion

This article analysed the discursive construction of national identity in the Angolan postcolonial context. It examined the circulating discourses on the construction of national identity from different contexts, particularly the official discourse, Article 19 of the Constitution of the Republic of Angola, interview responses and the stances of the participants from the social network interaction. The article also examined official texts, discourses and language ideologies concerning the relationship between language and identity within the context of nation-building in postcolonial Angola. The article looked at how official discourse on language use gets appropriated, recontextualised and eventually resisted by a diverse range of participants in different contexts. The results provide the opportunity to see how dominant ideologies shape participants' assumptions about the relationship between language and identity as well as how participants push back against such ideologies and construct alternative assumptions about this relationship. The findings show how identities are discursively constructed, contested and open to negotiation in different contexts. The findings suggest that Portuguese is unquestionably the dominant language and the language of national identity. Language differences are used to marginalise and discriminate against some social groups. The findings also demonstrate how linguistic heterogeneity creates discursive and cultural tensions that lead to social hierarchisation and marginalisation. These tensions are the result of the centrifugal and centripetal forces which stratify the languages and discourses, albeit within unequal relations of power. The emerging tensions are not autonomous but rather need to be understood within the socio-historical, cultural and political contexts. Changing these practices will require a battle, especially since language ideologies supporting the hegemony of the Portuguese remain entrenched. The findings also put the political motto 'um Povo

e uma Nação' (one people, one nation) under public scrutiny. It remains to be seen whether future policies will be able to effectively address the odds stacked against the claimed unified Angolan national identity.

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To cite the article: Manuel, N. N. (2022), 'Language ideology, representation, and nationalism: the discursive construction of identity in postcolonial Angola', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s6): 31–58.
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.031

*Journal of the British Academy* (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk

The British Academy

*Journal of the British Academy*, **10(s6)**, 59–76
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.059
Posted 31 October 2022

# The construct of 'national' languages in independent Angola: towards its deconstruction

*Botelho Jimbi and Dinis Vandor Sicala*

*Abstract:* This article discusses the construct of the concept of 'national language' in Angolan society in general, and in intellectual circles in particular. For a clear understanding of the concept, two others are also considered. One is the concept of 'official language' and the other is that of 'regional language'. Three questions will be of paramount importance to help delineate the focus of the article. Firstly, how is the term 'national language' used in the literature and in the context of communication in Angola? Secondly, how different is it from the other two terms? Thirdly, how can academia help to clarify this concept in the Angolan context, where it seems to be used inaccurately?

*Keywords:* national languages, precolonial languages, educational system, regional languages.

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## Introduction

The problem discussed in this article is that Portuguese has been constituted as the official language of Angola (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000: 46; Lei n.º 17/16), while 11 precolonial languages are referred to as 'national languages' (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000; Fernandes & Ntondo 2002; Kambuta 2021), although they are generally used de facto at the regional level. Considering this 'incorrect' use of precolonial languages, the article discusses the concepts of 'official language' and 'regional language' in order to clarify and sustain a more accurate concept of 'national language' for the Angolan context.

Three important questions will be considered here. Firstly, how is the term 'national language' used in the literature in general, and in Angola in particular? Secondly, how different is it from the concepts of 'official language' and 'regional language'? Thirdly, how can academia help to ensure these concepts are understood and used accurately? This work takes a qualitative approach, using a literature review (Snyder 2019) and document analysis (Bowen 2009) as instruments for data collection. It has been concluded that, as happens elsewhere, there seems to be a tendency to use the term 'national language' for 'regional languages' or 'local languages' or even 'precolonial languages' in Angola. It is therefore recommended that concepts should be reviewed and clarified on the basis of language sciences so as to mitigate the vagueness of the term now that the government has decided to include some autochthonous languages in the educational system.

In the whole, the article focuses on the treatment of Angolan languages both de facto and *de jure* over time. In its concluding remarks, the article proposes a consideration of the various contributions of (socio-)linguistics when referring to Angolan languages. Moreover, language-related specialists, lawmakers, historians, anthropologists, ethnologists and others should be and feel invited to work together with others on interdisciplinary research to help (re)define the terms and ensure they are clearly understood when put into use throughout Angolan society.

### A brief description of the sociolinguistic context of Angola

The Republic of Angola is located in the southern region of Africa. Bordering the Atlantic Ocean, it has comprised 18 large provinces since the proclamation of independence by the ruling MPLA (People's Movement for the Angolan Liberation) in 1975. The population in 2016 was 25,789,024 (INE 2016: 31).

Figure 1 shows the regional distribution of the main Angolan languages in 1970, while Figure 2 shows the languages and respective percentages as published in 2016. As is clear, Angola is a multilingual country. The government has selected some languages

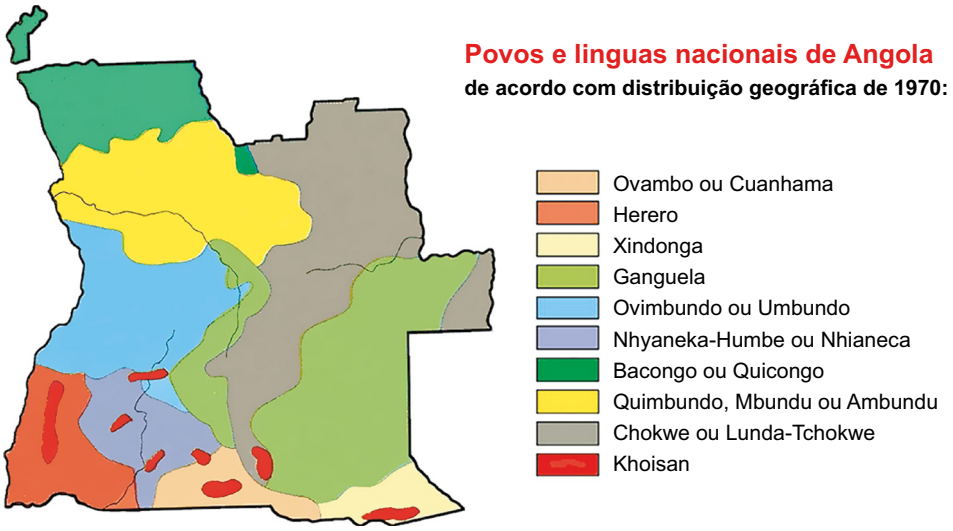


**Figure 1.** Regional distribution of the Angolan languages.
(source: https://palavraearte.co.ao/proposta-de-mapeamento-linguistico-em-angola/)

to be taught in the educational system. Umbundu, a native language, has the greatest regional coverage (23 per cent of the population) as it is mostly spoken in four of the 18 provinces (constituting the Ovimbundu region) of Angola (i.e., Namibe, Benguela, Huambo and Bié) (INE 2016: 51). Kimbundu is spoken by the Ambundu and it holds the second position among the ethnolinguistic groups in Angola (around 8 per cent of inhabitants). They occupy the northern provinces of Luanda, Malange, Kwanza-Norte, Bengo and Kwanza-Sul. Kikongo is spoken by the Bakongo people (about 8 per cent of Angolans). They are located in the northern provinces of Uige and Zaire. Fiote is spoken by the ethnolinguistic group called Mbinda (about 2 per cent), who live in Cabinda province. The eastern flank of Angola is occupied by the Luchaze or Chokwe (about 7 per cent), whose language is Chokwe. They occupy the provinces of Lunda Norte, Lunda Sul and Moxico.

In the southern part of the country there are two ethnolinguistic groups: the Kwanhama (or Ovakwanyama/Ovambo) in Cunene province, whose language is Oshikwanyama/Oshivambo (making up 2 per cent of Angolans); and the Ovanyaneka, who inhabit Huila province and speak Olunyaneka (about 3 per cent). In the south-eastern part of Angola there are the Ovangangela in the province of Cuando-Cubango, who speak Nganguela (about 3 per cent). South-western Angola is inhabited by the Ovahelelo, in Namibe province, whose language is Oshihelelo (less than 1 per cent). Namibe is also home to the Hotentote (the Bushmen), who speak a monosyllabic click language. They are a minority and are widely known as the Khoisan group, the only non-Bantu group (less than 1 per cent) (Redinha 1969; Fernandes & Ntondo 2002;

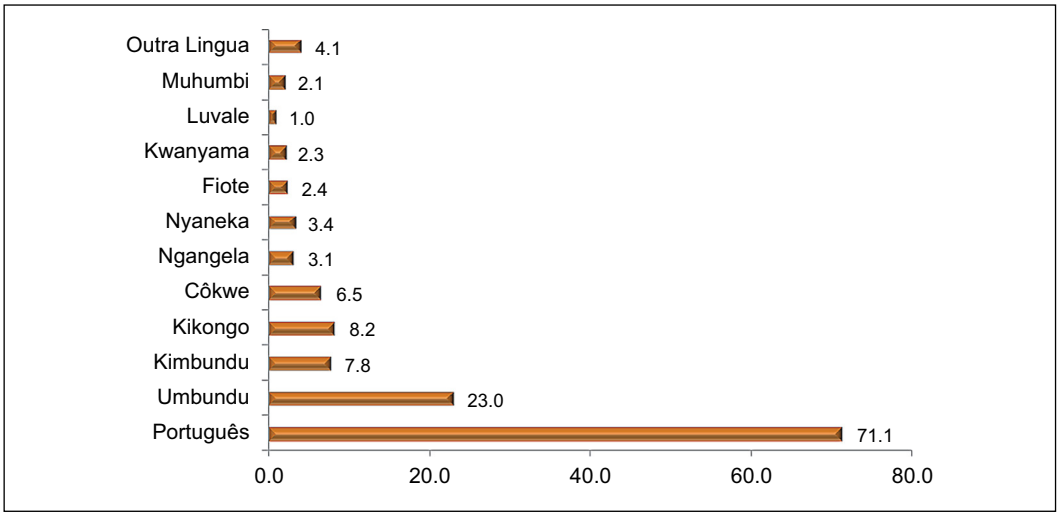


**Figure 2.** Percentages of commonly used languages in Angola (INE 2016: 51).

INE 2016). This is what makes Angola a multilingual country. On the one hand, the Bantu languages originated in north-east Africa, whereas the Khoisan languages originated in Southern Africa. The Khoisan group comprises the Kohi and the San groups, characterised by the prominence of clicks in their speech (Severo 2015: 7). Portuguese, an exogenous language, was implanted across the whole country through the process of colonisation and became the most important language in Angola, now spoken by 71 per cent of the population. While the native languages are called national languages, Portuguese has attained the position of official language, language of instruction and language of the polity.

## National language, official language and regional language

To understand the concept of 'national language', one has to consider it in both the strict sense and the broader sense. In the strict sense, 'national language' refers to that language which serves as a 'source or sign of identity for a nation' (Richards *et al.* 1992: 240; Trask 1997: 147; Matthews 2007: 258). For example, the Ovambo constitute a precolonial nation whose language is Oshikwanyama. In the broader sense, a 'national language' can be any of the regional languages existing within a territory. For example, Umbundu and Kimbundu (Angolan regional languages) are generally considered 'national languages' by Angolans (Fernandes & Ntondo 2002; Fonseca 2012). As is to be expected, nation-state building in multilingual postcolonial countries may imply the suffocation or even the elimination of 'minority' languages when

these are perceived by rulers as a threat to the unification of peoples for common socio-political and economic goals. In fact, Batibo (2014), when discussing existing language policy choices in Africa, includes Angola among the 36.2 per cent of African countries with a 'Colonial National Language Policy' through which the language of the former colonial power – Portuguese – has been selected to be the only official language and the only language with nationwide coverage (Batibo 2014: 17). Although many indigenous languages are called 'national languages' in Angola, in practical terms many feel ashamed to use them in comparison with 'international languages' such as Portuguese; this is similarly echoed with the marginalised 'Khoesan' language in Southern Africa (Batibo 2014: 18). This marginalisation prevents many people from accessing their basic rights to education, health care and the right to use, develop and be creative in their own languages.

Angola is not the only country where the understanding of the concept of 'national language' is problematic. In Mozambique, for example, regional languages are also considered 'national languages', in contrast with the official language, Portuguese (Cossa 2011). This becomes problematic in that the concept of 'national language', as discussed above, implies that the language can be used nationwide, at all levels, for communication, while the concept of regional language does not. A regional language covers only a certain region of a country made up of many other regions, each with a specific language. However, in Uganda, Swahili, which has also been adopted in both Kenya and Tanzania as official languages, is the national language (Daoust 1998: 440).

Most often, the concept of 'national language' is understood as including one or various languages that can stand as symbols or as a source of identity and cultural integration of the nation but that are not necessarily recognised as official languages (Phillipson 1992; Matthews 2007: 258; Richards & Schmidt 2010: 385–6). In turn, Daoust (1998: 443) defines a 'national language' as one that is spoken by the majority of the population and is, in general, a vernacular language of the population, which uses it either officially or not, and which may or may not be used in the educational system. In Uganda, for example, Swahili, apart from being the national language (Daoust 1998: 440), is taught at the secondary school level as a third language for use at the regional level to facilitate contact with neighbouring countries of the eastern region of Africa whose official language or lingua franca is Swahili (Masengo 2019). Other examples of national languages can be given, including French in France, Tetum in East Timor and Filipino in the Philippines (Richards & Schmidt 2010: 385–6).

Often, national languages are established by law. Spolsky (2004: 12) states that around 100 constitutions around the world have specified a national language. That is the case of the Gabonese Constitution of 1997, the Indonesian Constitution of 1945, the Cameroon Constitution of 1996 and the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) of 1997. In the case of Indonesia and the DRC, the

national languages are named. For example, Bahasa Indonesia is the national language of Indonesia and Kikongo, Lingala, Swahili and Tshiluba are the national languages of the DRC (Spolsky 2004: 12–13). In Angola, the only law that uses the expression 'national languages' is Law 13/01 of 31 December 2001, the Base Law of the Education System. However, the laws on languages make no direct reference to any specific names of languages classified as national languages of Angola, although Portuguese has been clearly mentioned as the official language (Constituição da República de Angola 2010).

The above discussion makes it clear that it is not easy to apply the concept of 'national language' to multilingual countries such as Angola given the fact that it does not usually include the name of a specific language, making the purpose for which it is used diffuse. Thus, unless the law names the specific 'national languages' to be taken into account, it becomes difficult to understand why the autochthonous languages of Angola, used on a regional basis, are referred to as 'national languages'. The following subsection explores the concept of 'nation-state' and looks at its relationship with the concept of 'national language'.

### The 'nation-state' and 'national languages' in postcolonial Africa

Over time the concept of 'nation-state' emerged, which Moco (2015: xiv), for example, defines as an autonomous political grouping which occupies a territory with defined borders and whose members (people) share institutions (laws, constitutions and government), although not necessarily the same ethnic origin, religion or language. In fact, Moco's position is influenced by the revision of the concept of 'nation' proposed by Ernest Renan at a conference held at the Sorbonne University on 11 March 1882, in an address entitled 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?' (What is a nation?), where he proposed that the concept of nation should go beyond the limits of a common language, religion, culture or place of birth. Similarly, Judge states that 'in defending the newly independent United States of Belgium', perceiving the union of provinces of the 'Brabantois, Flemish, Hennuiers, Limburgeois, Luxembourgers, Tournaisiens, Gelderlanders, Namurians, Malinois', the particular interests of all should be effective 'in the unity of a common constitution' (Judge 2016: 299–301).

As a matter of fact, the nation-state resulted, to a great extent, from the expanded possibilities that the study of different *a priori* non-powerful vernacular languages by lexicographers, grammarians, philologists created. As Anderson (1983: 71) states, 'the energetic activities of these professional intellectuals were central to the shaping of nineteenth-century European nationalisms'. Seton-Watson (1977: 11) has convincingly advocated that 'just because the history of language is usually in our time kept so rigidly apart from conventional political, economic and social history, it has

seemed […] desirable to bring it together with these, even at the cost of less expertise'. The production of a plethora of literary genres by these specialists in these vernacular languages was responsible for the 'Ukrainian national consciousness' and the 'Finnish nationalist movement' (Anderson 1983: 74), since they produced for the printing industries which in the end distributed to a variety of consumers, from the working class to the upper classes, thereby creating national identities.

All in all, the nation-state has come to be seen as an interesting and potentially useful political model because there is no better reason than a widespread national identity for the inhabitants of a territory to combine forces and to make sacrifices to achieve results (Canovan 1996). Ideally, the links which the inhabitants of a territory have with each other and with the state are influenced and habituated by a sentiment of nationhood and a feeling of commitment to all that it stands for (Frahm 2014: 30). In the conviction of Münkler (2011: 52),[1] where both came together, a political order emerged that was far superior to all other models of political order in terms of social cohesion (solidarity) internally and political self-assertion externally. The importance of using language as a code of communicating all the necessary information for a nation-state to remain united behind a common goal seems to be undeniable.

The previous discussion helps explain the domestic instability faced by postcolonial African 'nation-states' (Herbst 2000: 109) as a result of having their current borders imposed by the colonial powers. Among the instabilities is one linked to the endogenous languages of Africa which, being the sole means of communication for the majority of the population, are threatened with having 'little or no official status', to their detriment in comparison with the officially promoted European languages (Sukumane 2000: 199–200). This situation 'depoliticises' endogenous languages because 'resistance to the official language is seen as opposition to national unity and modernization' (Sukumane 2000: 200). The disadvantaged endogenous local languages are paradoxically called 'national languages' (Legère *et al.* 2000: 4–11) while the European languages, such as Portuguese and English, are called 'official languages'. Thus, in order to preserve 'nation-state' unity, local endogenous languages were called 'national languages' without nationwide coverage and European languages were called official languages and, most of the time, are the only ones used in schools (Kangira 2016: 158 ff).

The previous discussion is important in that use of the term 'national language' to refer to regional languages is not limited to the Angolan context. In Namibia, language-related specialists use the term to refer to Namibian precolonial languages,

[1] The author's original words read as follows: 'Wo beides miteinander zur Deckung kam, entstand eine politische Ordnung, die an sozialer Kohäsion (Solidarität) nach innen und politischer Selbstbehauptung nach außen allen anderen politischen Ordnungsmodellen weit überlegen war.'

implying that the language was 'nationalised' after the proclamation of independence of these countries. It seems that a brief comparison of the concept of 'national language' with the concept of 'official language' may help clarify not only the differences between them but also the concept of the former.

In contrast to the concept of 'national language', the concept of 'official language' seems to be easier to define given that it is used for governmental and state affairs, having been legally designated for the official business of a country, and is used in the law and the main institutions of the country (Richards & Schmidt 2010: 385). For example, German, English and French are among the official languages of the European Union (Matthews 2007: 276). In Angola, as will be shown in more detail below, the constitution states that Portuguese is the official language.

When it comes to the concept of 'regional language', a language is referred to as such when it is spoken in a specific region of a country (Matthews 2007: 339). For example, Catalan is only spoken in certain parts of Spain and France (Richards & Schmidt 2010: 492).

Understanding the terms discussed above is crucial not only for academic discourse but also in terms of the purpose for which they are used and to prevent users from misconstruing their meaning. As seen above, many of these misunderstandings result from the failure of those who are responsible for the accurate use of the terms – journalists, lawmakers, linguists, politicians and the like – to exchange specialist knowledge with one another in an interdisciplinary context before communicating the terms to the language users.

Legislation has been a very important instrument for assuring that terms are used accurately among the linguistic communities, so as to avoid their inappropriate use and the consequent proliferation of misunderstanding.

## What are the de facto and *de jure* statuses of the Angolan languages?

Angolan native languages, other than Portuguese, have de facto been called 'national languages' for quite a long time, either by force of the *habitus* from the colonial period (see da Silva 2009: 38) or due to the lack of analysis and careful application of the scientific signification of the term 'national language' by specialists in the area of language sciences. In fact, da Silva (2009: 38) reports on an interview in 1970, in the late colonial period, in which the interviewer asks about the characteristics of the Angolan school population ('Quais as características da massa escolar angolana?'), to which the interviewee replies that the desire to learn the national language – Portuguese – both orally and in its written versions is characteristic of all the people:

> [o] desejo, por exemplo, de aprender a língua nacional – o Português, entende-se, quer a sua expressão oral quer escrita, manifesta-se em todos. A ordem e a disciplina são cultivadas pela grande maioria dos alunos, o que facilita sobremaneira a acção da Escola … [r]elativamente aos escolares das outras etnias, europeia e africana, estou que, em linhas gerais, não se distinguem dos colegas metropolitanos em condições normais. (da Silva 2009: 38)
>
> (The desire, for example, of learning the national language – Portuguese, be it in its oral form, be it in its written form, has been generalised. Order and discipline have been adopted by the majority of students, which facilitates, to a greater extent, school action … in relation to learners of other ethnic groups, European and African, I believe that, in general terms, they do not differ from their metropolitan colleagues in normal conditions.)

As was stated here, logically, the Portuguese language used to be considered a 'national language' in all Portuguese territories, including those under colonial administration. It was Portuguese – the 'national language' – which the state chose as the vehicle of order and discipline for learners, facilitating the school policies to a point that ethnic differences would pass unnoticed both in Europe and in Africa. As a matter of fact, the famous decree '77' issued on 9 December 1921 under José Mendes Ribeiro Norton de Matos, who was Governor General of the then Portuguese province of Angola (today the Republic of Angola), prohibited the use of the *indígenas's* languages (the languages of the autochthonous inhabitants) in the following statements of its second article (our translation): 'Art. 2. Não é premitido [*sic*] ensinar nas escolas das missões liguas [*sic.*] indígenas' (i.e., indigenous languages are not allowed to be taught in the missions' schools). Norton de Matos's decree has had consequences for the post-independence approach to governance. To illustrate these consequences, a well-positioned governmental member thinks that the investment in 'national languages' should be discouraged in favour of Portuguese, English and French (Fonseca 2012: 12–13). Thus, language policy has been intimately connected to colonial and postcolonial nation-building projects.

Other contexts in which the expressions 'national language' and 'national languages' have been used in the post-independence period – in fact, the expressions have come into vogue by means of mass communication and in the contexts of power relations (mainly in the political and ideological context) – are academic/specialist content publications. To illustrate this, the book *Histórico sobre a Criação dos Alfabetos em Línguas Nacionais* [A report about the creation of alphabets in national languages] (MPLA/Instituto Nacional de Línguas 1980) presents a study of the phonological systems and alphabets of six 'national languages' and a programme of linguistic instruction for six Angolan languages chosen for an experimental stage towards implementation in the educational system. Another work is *Estão as Línguas Nacionais em*

*Perigo?* [Are national languages in danger?], which presents the linguistic situation in Angola and the statistics on the use and dissemination of the alphabets in 'national languages' (i.e., the precolonial languages of Angola) by the Institute of National Languages (Pedro 2014). The book *Harmonização das Línguas Bantu de Angola* [Harmonisation of the Bantu languages of Angola] refers to users of native languages of Angola as 'utilizadores das línguas nacionais' (national language users) (Pedro *et al.* 2013: iii). Additionally, some important events have been held to consider local languages as 'national languages', such as the Colóquio Internacional sobre as Línguas Nacionais (International Colloquium on National Languages), held at the Jean Piaget Higher Polytechnic Institute in Benguela from 7–9 May 2015, where, among others, the universal elements of Angola's 'national languages' were discussed, with a focus on their history and perspectives on their orthography and writing systems. Finally, a more recent publication by a journalist in Benguela province refers to Umbundu as a 'national language' ('língua nacional *Umbundu*') (Freitas 2020: 226). In fact, mass media outlets have been a very important factor of dissemination of the concept of 'national language' in the way it has been conceived by common Angolans because they usually refer to the autochthonous languages as 'national languages'.

All the above can substantiate the wide use of the expression 'national language(s)' to mean regional languages of Angola, and it has become commonsensical among intellectuals, including a significant number of linguists, to consider as 'national languages' all the precolonial languages of Angola. References to regional languages as 'national languages' are made in a diverse range of contexts, including political rallies, classrooms, conferences, church services and others.

With regard to the status of the Angolan languages in the legislation, they are not often described and protected as 'national languages'. In fact, the Constitutional Law of the People's Republic of Angola of 10 December 1975 does not contain any articles that clearly refer to the Angolan languages as 'national languages' or give them legal standing. Rather, Article 5 of the Constitutional Law seems to discourage the use of precolonial languages of Angola, stating that:

> Será promovida e intensificada a solidariedade económica, social e cultural entre todas as regiões da República Popular de Angola, no sentido do desenvolvimento comum de toda a Nação Angolana e *da liquidação das sequelas do regionalismo e do tribalismo*.
>
> (Economic, social and cultural solidarity will be promoted and intensified between all regions of the People's Republic of Angola, towards a common development of the whole Angolan Nation and the liquidation of the sequels of regionalism and tribalism.)

The sentence in italics in the quotation above, 'liquidação das sequelas do regionalismo e do tribalismo' (translated as eliminating the consequences of regionalism and

tribalism), may be interpreted as conveying the idea of the elimination of regional languages so as to avoid the development of regional sentiments towards political self-determination through language use in a period when the newly born nation-state is being built. Furthermore, the motto during that one-party state period, when the MPLA was in power, was 'one people, one nation', which may have influenced the conceptualisation of regional languages as 'national languages'.

## A comparative look at language legislation in Cape Verde and Mozambique

It is striking to compare this with the situation in other former Portuguese colonies in Africa. As in Angola, in the Cape Verdean Constitution the expressions 'national language' and 'national languages' are not used. Rather, all the languages are taken as official, as stated in Article 9 on official languages ('Línguas Oficiais'):

> 1. É língua oficial o Português.
> 2. O Estado promove as condições para a oficialização da língua materna cabo-verdiana, em paridade com a língua portuguesa.
> 3. Todos os cidadãos nacionais têm o dever de conhecer as línguas oficiais e o direito de usá-las.
>
> (1. Portuguese is the official language.
> 2. The State promotes conditions for the officialisation of the Cape Verdean mother tongue in parity with the Portuguese language.
> 3. It is all national citizens' duty to know the official languages and the right to use them.)

Taking into account the points 1, 2 and 3 above from the Cape Verdean Constitution, Capeverdean Creole is to be considered official and its development is to be promoted and protected by the Constitution. In the case of Cape Verde, no language has the legal status of 'national language'. However, research shows that Capeverdean Creole is the mother tongue of most of the population, while children learn Portuguese when they enter school at the age of six (Alexandre & Gonçalves 2018: 5–6).

> Only 51.3% of the Cape Verdean speakers evaluate their own Portuguese proficiency as 'sufficient', which […] is related to the importance these speakers devote to Portuguese and how they reproach themselves. […] Cape Verdean society lives a kind of 'modal diglossia' […] since 90% of the young people […] interviewed prefer to speak in Capeverdean and only 5% in Portuguese, whilst 80% would rather read and write in Portuguese (only 7% would do it in Capeverdean). (Alexandre & Gonçalves 2018: 6)

The statistics quoted above make it clear that although Portuguese is the official language, people prefer to speak in the Capeverdean Creole language (which is supposed to be progressively officialised), giving it a pragmatic position as 'national language'. However, the importance given to Portuguese literacy (by 80 per cent of the study's respondents) may constitute a threat to the practical officialisation of Capeverdean Creole over time in that the 7 per cent who would choose to read and write in Capeverdean Creole may ultimately feel forced to choose Portuguese as a language of science and technology and to abandon Creole altogether in a process of language loss. Thus, it is important that the level of literacy in Capeverdean Creole is increased so as to preserve its use at the national level.

In the case of Mozambique, the Constitution clearly states that there are 'national languages' of Mozambique (precolonial languages) and an official language (Portuguese). In its Article 9 on 'national languages' ('Línguas Nacionais'), the Mozambican Constitution makes it clear that the state values the 'national languages' as cultural and educational patrimony and promotes their development and wide use as vehicular languages of identity ('[o] Estado valoriza as línguas nacionais como património cultural e educacional e promove o seu desenvolvimento e utilização crescente como línguas veiculares da nossa identidade'). However, it is not clear which specific national languages are referred to here, despite the fact that it is clear that the official language is Portuguese, as stated in Article 10 on 'official language' (Língua Oficial).

## The context of legislation on languages in Angola

From 1975 to 1991, Angola was ruled by a single-party Marxist system, supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba. During that period the motto was 'one people, one nation'. With the emergence of the multiparty system in 1991, as a result of the peace accord between the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA, the rebel movement which fought for a democratic state and multiparty system, mainly supported by South Africa, Zaire and the United States of America) and the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA, the ruling party), the government found itself compelled to replace the 1975 Constitutional Law with a new one, which would overrule the democratic Constitutional Law in 1992, approved by Parliament (the National Assembly). The multiparty Parliament passed many new laws to adapt to the new era of democracy. The Base Law of the Education System passed by the National Assembly, designated Law 13/01 of 31 December 2001, states in its Article 9, points 2 and 3, that:

> 2. The state promotes and creates human, technical-scientific, material and financial conditions for the expansion and generalization of the use and teaching of national languages.

3. Without jeopardy to point nr. 1, of the present article, particularly in the adult instructional subsystem, education may take place using national languages.

It should be noted that in its point 1, it states that '1. O ensino nas escolas é ministrado em língua portuguesa' (teaching in schools is carried out in Portuguese). In that context, it is crucial to understand that the verb 'poder' ('may') in point 3 above represents a certain doubt or flexibility about the willingness expressed in point 2, considering the emphasis given to Portuguese as expressed in point 1. In other words, the key sections of the Angolan Constitution which deal with this issue are opaque and, in fact, inconsistent with one another; the fundamental element is reduced to that of the first clause, that all teaching should be done in Portuguese.

Thus, despite the fact that it is expressed in the Base Law of the Education System promulgated in 2001, the *a posteriori* pass of the Angolan Constitution in 2010 (see below) came up with a change to the expression 'national language' which has become 'languages of Angola'. The Base Law of the Education System of 2001 was abolished in 2016 by the Law Nr. 17/16 of 7 October so as to conform to the 2010 Constitution. This new law's Article 16 makes the following points about the language of teaching:

1. Instruction must be carried out in Portuguese.
2. The State promotes and guarantees human, technical-scientific, material and financial conditions for the expansion and generalization of the use of the other Angolan languages for instruction, as well as the sign language for impaired individuals.
3. Without jeopardy to the disposition in paragraph 1 of the present article, and as complement and means of learning, Angolan languages may be used in the other instructional subsystems, under the terms to be regulated in proper diplomas.
4. The State promotes public policies for both the insertion and the massification of the teaching of the main international languages in all the instructional subsystems, with priority to English and French.

The law states, in point 1, that Portuguese should be used for teaching; in point 2, that the state will create conditions to promote other Angolan languages; in point 3, that under complementary legal diplomas, other languages will be allowed to be taught in other subsystems; and in point 4, that other international languages will be taught, mainly English and French. It can be clearly seen that no reference has been made to 'national language'. On the contrary, languages are specifically called 'Angolan languages'. This is because, in reality, the languages belong to the territory called Angola without necessarily being in use nationwide. This may indicate that, upon reflection, use of the term 'national language' in the Base Law 13/01 of the Educational System was found to be inappropriate.

The new Base Law of the Educational System seems to be designed to respond to the Angolan Constitution, whose Article 19 ('Languages') states the following:

1. The official language of the Republic of Angola is Portuguese.
2. The State values and promotes the study, the teaching and use of other Angolan languages, including the main languages of international communication.

The analysis above helps to problematise the definition of the legal position that has been adopted relating to Angolan precolonial languages (autochthonous languages): we can understand this on the basis of the scientific constructs of the concepts of 'national language', 'official language' and 'regional language' compared with the ideological, political conception that prominent members of Angolan society tend to adopt. Given that these concepts are clearly different from each other, it is crucial to distinguish between them both in law and in academia, as they are the main resources people use for the construction of knowledge about this socio-cultural and political phenomenon. Thus, utilising the most recent research in the areas of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics can help legislators clarify what each of these terms really means for the intended audience of the law – the citizens.

For example, if legislators engage in interdisciplinary reading in linguistics-related areas, they may be aware that in the Vanuatu Constitution (the Republic of Vanuatu is situated in the south-west Pacific), in its section 3(1), Bislama is given as a national language among 114 registered ones, and that Bislama, English and French are the official languages (Meyerhoff 2006: 107). Another example can be taken from the Constitution of South Africa, whose section 6(1) states that 'the official languages of the Republic of South Africa are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu' (Meyerhoff 2006: 105), and none of the languages are defined as 'national languages' (Webb & Kembo-Sure 2000: 50). An understanding of the terms under discussion in this article is desirable in the Angolan context of communication, not only for those who study them in the realms of their specialisations, but also for those who are able to learn them accurately for future use.

## Conclusions

There has been a clear contextual change of attitude in relation to the status given to Angolan precolonial (autochthonous) languages in the principal Angolan laws. That is to say, since the proclamation of Angolan independence in 1975, only one law (already revoked) has considered Angolan languages as 'national languages' – Law 13/01 of 31 December 2001. While it is clearly stated that the principal international languages to be taught are English and French, only seven of more than 41 Angolan local languages (Fernando 2020: 179) have been chosen for instruction in the educational system (Jimbi 2018: 478). Moreover, after the passing of the new Angolan

Constitution in 2010, the term 'national languages' disappeared and the expression 'other Angolan languages' appeared, showing, to some extent, that the mention of 'national languages' had been deemed inappropriate but without any further explanation of the reasons behind the change.

Taking all the above into consideration, it seems plausible that the definition of concepts of national languages, official language, local languages, native languages and related terms should be fully understood in the light of linguistic studies, sociolinguistics and language-related areas. One of the benefits of gaining an understanding of these terms will be greater clarity of communication in the future. To that end, the name of the Institute of National Languages should be changed to the National Institute of Languages so as to conform to its actual role of conglomerating and dealing with all the existing languages of Angola.

**A lesson out of all the above**

Considering the discussion above, it seems to be necessary to officialise the autochthonous languages used in schools, not so much as 'national languages' (for none of them has reached a national level) but at least as languages of instruction, de facto and *de jure*, as advocated by many researchers in language policy and planning in Africa (e.g., Batibo 2007; Bamgbose 2011, 2014). Djité's *The Sociolinguistics of Development in Africa* (2008), for example, asks why African children should learn foreign languages when there are so many African languages to learn, and why governmental leaders and doctors do not take the learning of African languages seriously when they know that their direct interlocutors and patients, respectively, rely on these languages for communication.

The reinterpretation of the concept of 'national language' in the Angolan context promises to have significant social, educational and political implications in many ways. Firstly, it will demand deep reflection on how language-related concepts, such as the ones discussed in this article, should be reformulated, understood and transmitted to the target consumers – the Angolan citizens, including academics, the media, lawmakers, students and the like. Secondly, it will spark the need to take the study of all other Angolan languages more seriously in the light of their gradual promotion, recognition and protection as the cultural heritage of Angola. Thirdly, it will boost the population's awareness of the status of the languages they speak, elevate their self-esteem and deter linguistic prejudice on the part of both speakers and non-speakers of Angolan regional languages. Lastly, it will represent a change in mindset in relation to how citizens use the term 'national language' in daily life and make them aware of the differences between 'national language', 'regional language', 'official language' and related terms. Moreover, the understanding of these terms in a multilingual context of Angola clearly indicates the status of each language of Angola, or the

ones they would like to learn in a given time and in a given place. It also helps people become informed about the survival potential of their local languages and encourages them to promote their maintenance and/or revival.

*Acknowledgements*
For this article to see the light of the day, two crucial contributions have been important. The authors are indebted to Professor Toby Green and Aleida Mendes Borges, both from King's College London, whose immeasurable help on language-related issues – the authors are not native users of English – and, most importantly, their amelioration of the content and specific issues of the article, has made a huge difference. Their willingness to patiently read, reflect and redirect to make the article more clear and pertinent, as well as their encouragement in this superb opportunity, is warmly appreciated.

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To cite the article: Jimbi, B. & Vandor Sicala, D. (2022), 'The construct of 'national' languages in independent Angola: towards its deconstruction', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s6): 59–76.
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.059

*Journal of the British Academy* (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk

The British Academy

*Journal of the British Academy*, **10(s6)**, 77–98
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.077
Posted 31 October 2022

# Reflections of orality in the contemporary narrative of Angolan literature: readings in Boaventura Cardoso

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*Abstract:* This study presents reflections on the symbolic capital of oral Angolan tradition, attesting to the proximity between orality and writing in Boaventura Cardoso's narrative fiction. To this end, the works *Fogo da Fala: um conjunto de contos* and *A Morte do Velho Kipacaça* were selected for analysis. A structuralist approach was adopted as a theoretical framework for the investigation. However, the central aim of the article is to highlight the impact and the importance of orality in the contemporary narrative of Angolan literature, with Boaventura Cardoso as a starting and ending point. The article argues that orality is imposed not only as a source and a substrate, but also as an affluent and confluent of literary production engaged with references of Angolanity. The study also seeks to establish guidelines for a more theoretical study of oral literature in Angola and beyond.

*Keywords:* orality, writing, *Fogo da Fala*, *A Morte do Velho Kipacaça*, Boaventura Cardoso.

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## Introduction

There is a construction of the oral universe that is characteristic of Boaventura Cardoso, a contemporary writer of Angolan literature. In the field of Angolan literature, Cardoso needs no introduction. As a short story writer, he is an expert creator of form and content. He usually seeks to restrict himself to a narrative language where orality and writing are close together. The word contemporary is synonymous with a new moment, a new generation, which is a modernity that was concerned with updating the literary assumptions in Angola. That is to say that these assumptions are related to a particular linguistic register of Portuguese that emerged and began to be inserted by a group known as the 'generation of 50'. This was a group of young people educated in Portugal who broke decisively with the cultural pattern of colonial power and committed themselves to restore endogenous knowledge and values Through their work, Angolan literary productions opened new horizons of so-called Angolanity. To illustrate some significant contributions of that particular landscape of Angolan literature, we have chosen the following authors as representatives of the group which rose to boost it:

- Agostinho Neto: *Impossible Resignation*; *Holy Hope*; *Nausea*; *Dawn*.
- António Jacinto: *Poem*; *Granny Bartolomeu*; *In Kiluange of Golungo*; *Surviving in Tarrafal of Santiago*; *Prometeu*; *Fables of Sanji*.
- Luandino Vieira: *Luuanda*; *We Are People from Makulusu*; *The Real Life of Domingos Xavier*.

At the same time, these linguistic subversions are part of a new form with aesthetic value, contributing to the promotion of an Angolan literature that is decolonised from Portuguese literary production.

In this study, the main aim is to analyse, in a very precise case, the proximity between orality and writing in the work *Fogo da Fala* by Boaventura Cardoso (hereafter BC). We restrict ourselves to four short stories from the work in order to carry out a more in-depth analysis of the corpus. During this exercise we will discuss some assumptions of the storytelling paradigm, but the main focus is to verify how the aspects of orality influence BC's stories.

Before beginning along this path, the theoretical basis of the analysis needs to be clarified: structuralist thinking is adopted here as a theoretical framework of the investigation. Instead of describing the author's conscious and unconscious experience, which is an essential principle of European phenomenological ideas, we seek to identify the underlying structures that make the object of study possible (Culler 1999), thus opting for a framework focused on endogenous knowledge.

The study is divided into three core sections. In the first, some theoretical assumptions about the concept in question and the dichotomy of orality and writing in Angolan and African literary production are briefly presented. In this section, the opinions of several scholars who have already looked into this reality will be discussed, but it is not the aim of the article to present these aspects in depth. In the second section, the essential particularities of the writer are highlighted in a very limited way; it is not a biobibliography. An analysis of the relevant short stories is presented in the third section, demonstrating how writing and orality are two sides of the same coin in BC's narrative structure.

In Africa, orality plays an important role in society. In many parts of the continent it is still the most important means for the dissemination and inculcation of social, moral, philosophical and religious values. It is the fundamental means for the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. Therefore, it is in orality where much is still preserved (Ki-Zerbo 1999). Thus, in the literary production of some Angolan writers, some peculiar marks of orality are explored in order to share space with the practice of writing. Examples include Luandino Vieira with his works 'In the Old Age in the Life' and 'True Life of Domingos Xavier', and Jorge Macedo with his works 'Geography of Courage' and 'People of My Neighborhood'. In this sense, when speaking about orality, it is essential to refer to some particularities of the oral universe that are presented in the domain of writing.

What do we understood by orality? At what levels is it different from writing?

It would be a very arduous task indeed if this study were intended fully to address orality, because orality is a river of many different tributaries. However, it is acknowledged that both orality and writing have their own distinct features, a fact that makes it possible to distinguish one thing from the other. According to Guerreiro & Mesquita (2011), Paul Sebillot (1846–1918) coined the term oral literature to designate a mix of literary narratives and cultural manifestations, transmitted orally, that is, by non-graphic processes, without recourse to graphemes.

Still, the expression 'popular literature of oral tradition' is used to designate the vast set of popular texts which are produced and transmitted by the people by voice. This category encompasses tales, legends, myths, recitations, romances, proverbs, rhythmic speeches, prayers and magic formulas. In the same vein, reference is made to popular literature as the set of significant linguistic-discursive practices, oral or written, worked by the poetic function, according to the conditions specific to each genre, which are both produced and accepted and, therefore, transmitted by the people, individually or in groups (Guerreiro & Mesquita 2011).

According to Nunes (2009: 33), 'popular literature' is associated with a social entity that does not use usually writing to represent its verbal art. For the author, the concept of popular literature refers to a literature that expresses, in a spontaneous and natural way, and in its profound genuineness, the national spirit of a people.

Orature, in this context, appears in opposition, in extension and meaning, to the label literature, which refers to writing, to lyrics, to a visual and graphic component (Nunes 2009: 31). Therefore, the term orature arises from the need to separate the literary production of oral tradition from the literary production whose inclination is towards the written verbal language.

## Characterisation of oral literature

It is important to appreciate that there is a wide literature which illuminates the pedagogical, didactic and moral qualities of oral literature and which also allows us to understand its qualitative differences from written literature. These factors need to be considered in analysing BC's text, for they allow us to explore the ways in which the juxtaposition of oral and written forms allows the author to achieve a plurality of ends.

Nunes (2009), when addressing the theme of Angolan and Mozambican orature, characterises them as exemplary and pedagogical because they have an indigenous code of conduct and, finally, they are universal in character.

According to the author, the exemplary and pedagogical character acquired by the narratives of oral tradition allows the transmission of all types of values, whether educational, social, political-religious, economic or cultural. The semantic content of these narratives indirectly contains rules and interdictions that are transmitted to the listening public. This public assimilates these values and contributes to preserving the good functioning of the community. The narrative works as one of the main vehicles for the transmission of knowledge, creating a connection between the generations of a community. It has become, over time, a powerful educational medium at the service of education and training of the younger generations.

As for the code of conduct, Nunes claims that the oral tradition narratives present an elementary indigenous moral code – the just punishment of faults such as envy, presumption, disobedience, selfishness, homicide and kindness, and the reward of cunning and intelligence. They are illustrations of the triumph of wisdom over brute force. In the group of stories, the small, the simpleton, the disinherited and the detested, through their wisdom, end up doing better in life than their persecutors and often become the latter's benefactors. At the same time, ogres, who represent brute force, matter without spirit, are defeated, punished for their wrongdoing and usually quartered (to allow the escape of the victims they had swallowed). The glorification of wisdom or goodness is the subject of almost all the tales.

Finally, the author makes reference to a universal character. Each individual who hears the narrative is able to understand that the conflicts presented in the plot may

well occur among the group of which her or she is part. The questioning and the doubts posed by the listener in the face of the problems presented prove that her or she reflects on what he or she hears. However, at the same time, all elements of the community perceive the conflicts conveyed by the narratives.

Santos (2014) points out the pedagogical, cultural and social functions, in addition to the aesthetic function, as the main aspects of orature; that is, it teaches, serves as a repository of the knowledge of groups and communities and, finally, being essentially an experience of the collective, contributes to the creation of bonds. It is an art that reaches children, young people and adults and whose most relevant texts belong to the collective heritage of humanity.

Meanwhile, Dias (2012: 55) reiterates the pedagogical character of oral literature, concluding that orature has, over time, been a privileged vehicle for sharing within a community an essential set of knowledge, religious beliefs, superstitions and moral and ethical values, assuming an important role in socialisation and in the education of populations. Guerreiro and Mesquita state the following:

> It has an invaluable pedagogical character, functioning as a bridge between generations, perpetuating a body of knowledge almost hereditary, in the biological sense of the term and constituting a universal heritage of Humanity. This cultural manifestation, and verbal art, brings together, in itself, exceptional modelling ideological powers, meeting the erudite school practice, based on the written word, scientific or not, conveyed by the school building. Today, the School transcends the field of merely writing and reincorporates, in parallel with other cultural practices, the oral, virtual and open text, as a psychopedagogical and pedopedagogical tool, in particular.[1] (Guerreiro & Mesquita, 2011: 162)

In a similar sense, when reflecting on the importance of endogenous symbolic capital in education and in the construction of individuals' world views, wa Thiong'o considers that:

> written literature and orature are the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries … and culture carries, particularly, through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. (wa Thiong'o 1986: 15–16)

In sum, there is a wide body of analysis which coheres around core elements of oral discourse. Oral discourse reflects moralities and metaphysics of society and has a pedagogical function to (re)construct social cohesion. It is therefore clearly a vital

[1] Translation by the author.

element of postcolonial African literature, to be reinscribed in and alongside the written form that has come to predominate.

## Classification of oral literature

There have been many attempts to classify and define oral literature, some of the most relevant of which we will discuss here. On the one hand, classification can follow a thematic perspective in which narratives of enchantment, whose characteristics derive from the supernatural – that is, that which is amazing and miraculous – predominate. On the other hand, they may focus on animal narratives/fables, in which the characters in the fable are anthropomorphised. Then again, aetiological narratives explain other important aspects of orality, including banter or deception, in which the morning-time is often a defining quality (Nunes 2009).

According to Nunes (2009), Junod (1975), in the work *Cantos e contos dos ronga* (the Ronga are a group of Bantu people chiefly from southern Mozambique; it also the Bantu language spoken by Ronga people), presents a typology of five categories to facilitate the reader's understanding. Animal Tales are mentioned first as being the most original and precious part of Ronga folklore. They celebrate the deeds of the hare, the sand frog, the chameleon, even the swallow in their wanderings with large animals – large and stupid – such as the elephant, the antelope and even the human. The typology's second category, referred to as Wisdom of the Little, comprises mainly stories of human beings – children, the impoverished – who, by virtue of their intelligence or with supernatural help, triumph over the contempt with which they are treated and achieve miraculous successes. The third category, enjoyed especially by children, is Stories of the Bogeymen (ogres), in which the wisdom of weak creatures allows them to triumph over these horrible and cruel monsters. The fourth group is Moral Tales, stories from which a lesson is drawn, although the narrators do not always realise this and do not think in any way in terms of morals. Finally there are Foreign Tales, composed under the influence of either blacks from other tribes, Indians or Arabs, numerous in the region, or even through the influence of the Portuguese. In this case, it is difficult to know to what extent these stories are indigenous.

In the literary domain, there appears to be a system of apartheid. Literature is divided into two parts. On the one hand, there is oral literature, which is considered to be mediocre, or the least good. On the other hand, there is written literature, considered to be the most organised in an aesthetic and linguistic sense. Its literariness is more complex and deliberate due to the fact that there is a creative subject. In view of this imposed hierarchisation, oral literature is increasingly subjugated. But it is necessary to acknowledge that 'the inauthentic and the disorganization exist in both oral and written literature' (Saraiva 1975: 107). Therefore, 'contempt and

inattention towards so-called popular literature is much more than a contempt and inattention of a literary order: it is contempt and inattention to popular people' (Saraiva 1975: 105).

Oral literature differs from writing in several particularities. Each follows a guiding principle, although both have the same common denominator: literature, that is, the use and appropriation of literary language. There is no doubt that orality and writing have different characteristics. While the first is usually confined to the voice, the second clings to the written form as its support for realisation. Although there is a transition from oral texts to writing, it is necessary to bear in mind that the latter is not a registered voice. At the same time, 'the voice is not a sound isolated from register' (Zumthor 1997: 70). And the transposition of orality to writing has been increasingly inflecting texts of an oral nature (Júdice 1995: 119).

Orality is appreciated in Africa as far more than a means of communication, as it provides a means to preserve the wisdom of one's ancestry. In this sense, 'the word transmitted in orality leads to the ancestral heritage so valued by this culture' (Nascimento & Ramos 2011: 457).

In order to identify the specific features of oral texts and written texts, it is necessary to discuss the axial characteristics of orality, as well as those of writing. There are several explanations of the origin of orality and writing. However, we will not explore the mythical approaches that surround them here. Rather, we seek to describe the essential particularities of both in order to highlight, in a more precise way, their respective features (Tito 2018).

Unlike writing, orality points us directly to the voice, that is, to what is spoken. In this context, the transmission passes through the sound that produces speech.[2] For this reason the voice has a specific mode of existence – it makes use of the magical power of the word (Meireles 1983).

It is impossible to point out all the characteristics related to orality. But it is known that it is usually characterised, on the one hand, by a more familiar style of language, providing a natural manifestation.[3] On the other hand, orality is characterised by the harmonic use of choruses, repetitions, assonances and parallelisms and by their systematic exploration.

Since oral texts are at the service of memory, they rely on the evocative force of successive repetition of the same phrase, made rhythmic at the same time by the constant

[2] Malamoud (2000) is absolutely right in saying that sounds precede words. This means that in orality there is a kind of hierarchy, where everything starts with sound or pronunciation (sound – word – phrase).

[3] This naturalness, which is a particular form of orality, does not mean freedom in the face of linguistic manifestation. There are established rules that must be considered in order for communication to have the desired effect.

number of syllables and the melodic structuring of tones, which facilitates the memorisation of oral tradition (Bosi 2004; Halbwachs 2006). However, these texts are more rigorous than they appear to be, which is why they invite the audience to share in the search for meaning, having, for this reason, a dialogical structure. However, texts in oral literature, in contrast to those in writing, are not limited to an elite; this has a tendency to diminish the social prestige of those texts of oral record such as proverbs, songs, riddles, fables and other texts of this nature.[4]

Bâ (2010: 167) states that 'writing is one thing, and knowledge, another. Writing is the photograph of knowledge, but not knowledge itself. Knowledge is a light that exists in man. The tradition of everything that our ancestors came to know and that is latent in everything they transmitted to us.' This indisputable assertion demonstrates the dependence of writing in relation to orality. The latter is where latent knowledge rests. Therefore, without voice and speech there can be no harmonic signals to support graphemes. For this reason, writing constitutes the photograph of knowledge. In other words, it is the shadow of the body of orality. However, without speech, writing cannot be fully grasped. Thus, orality is the primary element, and writing is the secondary. Nevertheless, 'what happens in writing is the full manifestation of something that is in a virtual state, something nascent and inchoative, in living speech, namely, the separation of meaning in relation to the event' (Ricoeur 1976: 37).

As much as the process of writing these texts amplifies the naturalness of orality, it will never be possible to destroy the essence of oral literature. For this to become evident, however, it is necessary to recognise the true marks of orality, because only in such conditions can it be preserved. Orality must be defended so that it is not confined by the normative standards of writing.

In fact, the process of writing is a long way from responding to the linguistic devices that orality requires. While one needs the voice exclusively, the other is done only in writing. And, in accordance with Zumthor (1997: 13), 'the voice goes beyond the word. The voice does not bring the language: the language moves through it, without leaving traces.' Therefore, the voice (the pure manifestation of orality) goes far beyond what the written word can represent. But it must be borne in mind that orality is not reduced to vocality: gesture is present along with voice, even if it is limited to simple mimicry of the face, namely movements of the eyes and eyebrows (Dournes 2000). This is the point of intersection between oral literature and dramatisation.[5] The narration of oral texts requires, for the most part, the representation of what is

[4] See, for example, Vansina (1982).

[5] This aspect of the approach to oral literature and theatricality is described more fully in Bologna (2000).

narrated. However, at the moment of its realisation, orality requires true naturalness. For this reason, a familiar language is manifested in it, without great stratagem, providing listeners with an immediate understanding.

Nevertheless, understanding the nature of orality before going through the complex structure of writing can enable greater understanding and perhaps lead to the mastery of writing. But how should orality be classified, especially in these times when, increasingly, texts are transported from orality to writing?

The transformation, by collection and anthologising, of oral texts into writings leads to neglect of their pure nature, thus legitimising 'a classification of orality in pure, mixed and secondary', explains Zumthor (1997: 76).

In this domain, pure orality is present in societies that in precolonial times did not practise writing, including extensive territories formerly called the Third World, such as several African countries. With regard to mixed orality, it coexists with the practice of writing. Finally, secondary orality is part of a regime of hegemony of the written text. In this, the practice of orality enters the sphere of writing, to the point of being, at times, reduced to the declamation of the products of writing. This last case is experienced in Europe as well as in some parts of Africa that continue to embrace colonial culture and that deny orality in favour of writing. This, as we know, has a nature of its own, totally different from the oral.

However, orality excels in the speaker's native language. It uses repetition. A narrative can be repeated several times since the main objective is for everyone to use, without any obstacle, the dialogue of the community. This enables these stories to be related by a certain speaker, on a certain day and in a certain place, in front of a specific audience (Alexandre 2000).

Orality, in its various texts, shows an economy of discourse because excessive information makes memorisation difficult. Another key feature of orality is mobility. That is, oral texts are mobile and have the ability to change, to receive new characteristics over the course of time (Cuisenie 2000).

## Angolan oral tradition analysis

In the case of Angolan orature, the classic analyses have been provided by Estermann, Chatelain and Ribas, whose works will be discussed here. The contributions of these scholars, two of whom were engaged in missionary activity, facilitated the rescue and (ac)knowledge(ment) of Angolan literature of oral tradition.

Chatelain (1964) carried out important work in the domain of the Kimbundu language, whose first written version dates back to 1894 with an English translation. In the work *Contos Populares de Angola*, the author mentions that in African folklore, stories of animals and fables predominate. Chatelain fits the narratives into six classes:

1. traditional fictional stories;
2. stories presumed to be true;
3. historical narratives;
4. stories with a certain moral philosophy;
5. proverbs and anecdotes;
6. poetry, music and riddles.

Estermann (1971), in turn, oriented his studies to the oral literature of the people of south-west Angola, who comprise the ethnolinguistic groups Nhaneca-Humbe, Herero and Ambó. He ordered them in five classes, namely:

1. everyday life stories;
2. animal tales;
3. tales in which anthropophagous monsters intervene;
4. tales of wonder;
5. tales that contain mythological elements.

Finally, Ribas, in the same segment, in *Missosso, Vol. 1*, surveys Angolan orature, highlighting tales, riddles and proverbs of Ambundu origin. The author shows that Angolan oral literature is rich in content. As a framework for a secular tradition, it includes tales, riddles, sayings, disdain, imitation of animal voices, songs, children's pastimes, prayers and so forth (Ribas 2009: 83).

For Ribas, the tales reflect aspects of real life:

> They include the most varied characters: men, animals, monsters, mermaids, souls. If, sometimes, the action takes place between elements of the same species – a fact, moreover, more common – at other times, however, it takes place mixed, in a participation of different beings. […] The *riddles*, same as stories, are revealed in the evening, either in the glow of the moonlight, or in the blazing of bonfires, or even in funerary vigils, in thick and tasty curls of smoke, in a general distribution to the listening public. Accommodated on mats or rugs, the participants, namely women and children, some lying on one side, some sitting on the other, the elders in the caress of the Quifunes, voluptuously sharpen their imagination. They launch intricate guesses, tear off the veil of mystery; this is the climate of thought […] *The proverb* – wise reflection of life – takes the top spot in the literature of a people. This truth, proclaimed by scholars, finds no opposition in the oral archive of Angolans. Intelligently condensed, it mirrors the wisdom manufactured by experience. Hence, as among other peoples, speakers can adopt a characteristic philosophy, sometimes circumspect, sometimes amusing, and sometimes sentimental.[6] (Ribas 2002: 87–97)

[6] Translation by the author.

Therefore, 'fables, legends, myths, wonderful tales and novels of chivalry are narratives that circulate orally and, we may say, constitute the prehistory of literature. Children listened to the narratives of the elders in evenings by the warmth of the fireplace for centuries …' (Guerreiro & Mesquita 2011: 154).[7]

Thus, proposals for the classification of orature generally converge in some aspects, which suggests a universal classification of the same, for example, the imaginary aspects, the presence of the wonderful, the predominance of ghostly beings (fairies, ogres, muquixe [a ghostly being with a human body and the head of an animal], mermaids, etc.), the fabulous language, with the protagonism of animals, many of which are universally referenced (tortoise, fox, lion, rabbit, etc.). However, the differences are often related to issues of an endogenous nature, such as the culture or world view of each group of people – not to mention the point of view of the authors who set out to study the different literatures of oral tradition.

Accordingly, we are convinced that the classifications of Angolan orature proposed by Estermann, Chatelain and Ribas encompass all the relevant stages and groups. Therefore, according to the context or situation in which this symbolic capital is shared, it is up to the social institutions to select those collections that reflect greater affinity between the public and the narrators, according to the age of the target audience. For example, in the case of children, these may be fables, tales of wonderful characters, especially those that have a moral purpose; riddles also prove to be suitable to the minds of children and young people.

In addition, there is an attempt being made in the Angolan oral canon to adapt oral techniques in written discourse. This is especially evident in the work of writers such as Luandino Vieira, Wanhenga Xitu and Boaventura Cardoso. It can also be seen in poetry in the work of Viriato da Cruz (see Riaúzova 1986; Macedo 1989).

However, similar to national literatures in most African countries, Angolan literature began and continues to be written in the language of the former colonial oppressor, a language which under the circumstances has already undergone an appropriation process. Hence, the use of the Portuguese language has always been among the main arguments for questioning the African dimension of Angolan literature. Such a fact would open room for a dialogue with wa Thiong'o, as he put forth the reflection that 'the only question that preoccupied us was how best to make the borrowed tongues carry the weight of our African experience by, for instance, making them "prey" on African proverbs and other peculiarities of African Speech and folklore' (1986: 7). The brief analysis of this article shows precisely how Boaventura Cardoso, despite resorting to a language of European origin in his literary production, manages to be faithful to the specificities of the Angolan Bantu philosophy with which he adorns the aesthetics of his texts.

[7] Translation by the author.

## Boaventura Cardoso: life, work and literary style

The Angolan writer and poet BC was born on 26 July 1944 in Luanda. He spent part of his childhood years, before starting school, in the province of Malange, and attended and completed his primary and secondary studies in the city of Luanda, after which he entered higher education in the area of social sciences. A man of culture, he has already held several leadership roles in Angola.

In his youth, BC was a member of the generation of 70, an Angolan literary and cultural movement, alongside many other Angolan writers, namely Manuel Rui, Jofre Rocha, Ruy Duarte de Carvalho and Jorge Macedo. The generation of 70, an intellectual movement made up of young people from various former Portuguese colonies who were studying in Portugal, met at the Casa dos Estudante do Império. It was here that the members of the generation of 70, who were engaged in literary production characterised by cultural and political intervention, first sought to contribute to the independence of their fatherlands.

Like all the literary production of the emblematic figures of this generation, BC's works are marked by traces of a genre of literature referred to as *guerrilla* and infused with revolutionary values and ideals, in which writing is used as a weapon in the search for independence and freedom. What emerges is a metaliterary process in which writers, through engaged literary production, fight for social justice and for the improvement of people's living conditions in their country.

As already noted, in this writer's production the illusory antagonism between orality and writing is replaced by an explicit dichotomy between the two forms of discursive representation. Thus, the records of the speeches that shape his narratives, clearly reproduced from oral tradition, are recreated, through the artistic and aesthetic genius of the author, with simplicity and mastery. This means that BC is able to use the literary recreation of popular speech and oral tradition as symbolic capital, not simply as an exercise of cultural affirmation, and this ends up constituting the style and aesthetic form of the writer's literary production, as we demonstrate in the following pages. The author does so by inserting in his tales different formats of oral speech.

Making use of his mastery of the sociolinguistic situation in Angola, BC, in addition to recreating popular language, uses the so-called improper diglossia, alternating the use of Portuguese (normative and non-normative) and Kimbundu (one of Angola's Bantu languages), as a strategy for the emancipation of an emerging national literature. He is a member of the Union of Angolan Writers (UEA) and author of the following works: *Dizanga dia Muenhu*; *O Fogo da Fala*; *A Morte do Velho Kipacaça* (short stories); *O Sino do Fogo*; *Maio, Mês de Maria* (romance); and *Mãe*, *Materno Mar*.

BC is positioned at the top of the pantheon of modern Angolan literature. His work is best known through the aforementioned novels and unusual tales. In this piece, our analysis of the orality and the writing in his textualisation is limited to his short stories.

The Boaventurian short stories are closer to the *hybrid identity* acknowledged by Chinua Achebe (Lopes 2016). However,

> by allowing experiences of form and style, Cardoso, while exploring paths and breaking with formal writing of European origin, turns to the traditional Angolan narrative style.[8] (Martinho 2005, cited in Lopes 2016: 26)

BC's prose rhythm is marked 'by a colloquialism inherent to the oral rhythm itself, punctuated by factual expressions, interjections, curses, exclamations, lenga-lengas' and other resources (Mata 2014: 154). These particularities will be presented in the analysis of the tales 'Pai Zé canoa miúdo no mar', 'Mona kassule é Ngamba', 'Canto da fome and Kalu' and 'As garinas e o esquema'.

During the analytical process, there was no need to interpret the stories. The focus was limited to identifying oral assumptions in the narratives to be analysed. The analytical intention is to feel the intensity of the words, observe the image resource in the stories and see how the literary language is used.

Rhythm is an indispensable element in the stories of BC. There are melodic phrases that sound like a song. Apparently, the technique of narratives of oral tradition is refined. In these, there is a strong association between narrative and song. However, in the stories by BC that were chosen for this study, there is a mark of resistance. In other words, there is a preservation of orality. The rhythm is not left out and repetition is a mark of discursive intensity in the narrative fabric of the stories. These sequences of sentence structures – 'It was raining. It was raining. Big rain' – demonstrate the author's capacity for creativity through the particular rhythm he brings to his literary work. While this sequence is structured in Portuguese (Tinha chuva. Chovia. Chuva grande), and despite the richness of the rhythm it suggests, it clearly denotes a distance from standard European Portuguese. Moreover, the writer recreates the oral use of the popular linguistic register. This exercise is a sign of resistance in terms of linguistic style in the literary production in the Angolan context and in BC's literary work in particular. It is indicative of the type of reformulations of Angolanity that were achieved by the generation of 50.

> Tinha chuva. Chovia. Chuva grande. […] O canto crescia… O chicote marcava o ritmo do canto nas costas negras […] Canto. Trabalho. Canto. Trabalho. Canto. Trabalho […] Canto. Força! Força! Trabalho! Trabalho forçado! Força!

[8] Translation by the author.

> It was raining. It was raining. Big rain. […] The song grew … The whip marked the rhythm of the song on the back of a black person […] Song. Work. Song. Work. Song. Work […] Song. Strength! Strength! Work! Forced labour! Strength![9]

> Andou, andou, andou. […] Pai, mãe e mona kasule: o reencontro bandeira branca no camião reentraram Kariango.
>
> Walked, walked, walked. […] Father, mother and mona kasule [last born]: the reunion of the white flag on the truck re-entered Kariango.[10]

The issue of literary resistance in BC's stories is strictly associated with the construction of hybrid identity in literary culture in Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa, and the case of Angola makes this clear. The structure of Portuguese, a previously unknown language, started to share space with the nature of orality, a true palimpsest.

> […] Ninguém percebia as contas que o patrão fazia. Os contratados não sabiam ler, nem escrever.
>
> […] Nobody noticed the accounts that the boss did. The contractors did not know how to read or write.[11]

Allegory is also an important feature of the stories. There is always a lesson, a need to think and rethink, a fabric of complete and, to some extent, complex meanings in which dexterity is needed to conceive the overall meaning of the narrative. In tales, the discourse is full of colloquiality, a particular phenomenon of orality.

> A curiosidade da criança é nascente de água, parar é parar vento com a mão. Vida no mar ele quer saber toda. Pai Zé responde sempre, paciência é dele.
>
> The child's curiosity is a spring of water, to stop is to stop the wind with your hand. Life at sea, he wants to know all. Father Zé always responds, patience is his middle name.[12]

Colloquial language does not detract from the discourse of BC's stories. On the one hand this is an aesthetic choice, and on the other hand it is evidence of a language (Portuguese) whose standard form has not been mastered by the majority of the people, a language that is used as one wants and is able to, in the most natural and colloquial way possible. As long as it fulfils the postulates of communication and satisfies the will of the majority, the language is used.

[9] O canto da fome, pp. 25–6, in *O Fogo da fala* by Boaventura Cardoso. Translation by the author.
[10] Mona kasule é ngamba, pp. 77–8, in *O Fogo da fala* by Boaventura Cardoso. Translation by the author.
[11] O canto da fome, pp. 25–6, in *O Fogo da Fala*, by Boaventura Cardoso. Translation by the author.
[12] *Pai Zé canoa miúdo no mar*, p. 91, in *O Fogo da Fala*, by Boaventura Cardoso. Translation by the author.

While analysing the stories of BC, it became clear that they should be seen from the perspective according to which orality is characteristic of the African cultural field and is the dominant discursive form if not the only one (Aguessy 1977). Orality plays an important role in modern Angolan literature. And because of this, the Angolan writer felt, or even feels, the need to emphasise the mark of orality, since this is the dominant discourse in Angola. Nevertheless, it should be noted that here there is no longer a pure orality because it has already transformed itself in the form of writing.

## Proverbs and riddles in the tale *A Morte do Velho Kipacaça*

### Proverbs

Proverbs – wise reflections on life – occupy the top place in the literature of a people. This truth is proclaimed by scholars and finds no opposition in the oral archive of Angolans. 'Intelligently condensed, it mirrors the wisdom fertilised by experience. Hence, as well as in the culture of other people, it encloses a specific philosophy, sometimes circumspect, sometimes amusing, sometimes sentimental' (Ribas 2002: 96).

Proverbs are used within the Bantu tradition in different contexts as they perform different functions, both pedagogical – in the sense that they ensure, complete and reinforce the education of an individual throughout her or his existence with the aim of ensuring her or his socialisation – and in terms of customary law – to solve problems between members of the same group or between different groups. In the tale *A Morte do Velho Kipacaça*, these functions are perceived in the conversations of elders to transmit values, rules and customs, or even to resolve conflicts in which the triumph of truth and wisdom stands out.

#### *A short critical summary of 'The Death of Old Kipacaça' and 'The Fire of the Speech' by Boaventura Cardoso*

'The Death of the Elder Kipacaça' ('A Morte do Velho Kipacaça'), found in the third and final chapter of the literary work under study, is a short story which provides the title of the entire book. Evoking a suspense that presents itself as an aesthetic break, dialogues are made in direct discourse for the first time in the short stories that make up the book.

The tale presents the image of an old man and emphasises his value within the cultural environment of Bantu communities. Through oral traditions (proverbs, riddles and short tales), the author brings to his literary work the wisdom and the role

of an elder within his group. In a very transcendental and marvellous way, the literary work suggests a new meaning for the concept of death. Thus, in 'The Death of the Elder Kipacaça', death is no longer the opposite of life. It is, however, an opposite condition to birth, and there is an extended life and a purpose to be accomplished after death.

Concerning 'The Fire of the Speech', the title and the style of the subtitles underline the literariness of the texts they cover while also highlighting the author's affirmation in the whole act of writing. Thus, in this story, in addition to BC's individual use of language, it is also important to consider the metaphorical and symbolic links that the story establishes with fire. In terms of style, it is important not to lose sight of its connection to the first word of the phrase.

In this case, the writer works with language like the man who, with fire, works with glass or iron. Fire is the moulding, transforming force. Speech makes the language ductile; it makes it affectionate. He experiences it and adapts it where the norm could constitute a stagnating or blocking factor. And he seeks, without destroying it, to open the language to new expressive horizons.

Therefore, the present article deals with literary works that better demonstrate the way in which, through his evident creativity, BC masters the language of popular register and the speech and wisdom of the Bantu community – and opens up speech to shape Angolanity anew.

The following proverbs from the tales summarised above serve to illustrate the point:

- Não pergunta ngó o porquê é que o carneiro não tem dentes em cima. (Cardoso 1987: 38)[13]
  Don't ask why the sheep has no teeth on top.
- A surucucu só morde quando lhe pisam então e se lhe metem o dedo na boca! (Cardoso 1987: 38)[14]
  S*urucucu* only bites when it is stepped on and a finger is put in its mouth!
- O rato onde está a deixar as pegadas das patas, também está deixar as da cauda! (Cardoso 1987: 42)[15]
  Where the mouse is leaving footprints, it is also leaving tail prints!
- Não se deve fazer carícias a um cão danado. (Cardoso 1987: 43)[16]
  You should not pet a naughty dog.

[13] There are certain realities that are dogmatic, that transcend our capacity for perception.
[14] Patience has limits.
[15] The behaviour of parents is also reflected in that of their children.
[16] A gentleman cannot be educated with soft words.

– O cágado pode empoleirar-se na árvore, embora por si não seja capaz de o fazer! (Cardoso 1987: 49)[17]
The turtle can perch on the tree, although it is not able to do it on its own!

– No dia em que morre o elefante, não é o mesmo em que ele apodrece! (Cardoso 1987: 52)[18]
The day the elephant dies is not the same day it rots!

These proverbs are typically used in significant communication contexts. In the oral tradition, they are chosen and employed according to the interaction and its meaning. BC employs them in the same way in his literary work: for instance, the proverb 'Don't ask why the sheep has no teeth on top' (Cardoso 1987: 38) is used for problem resolution and for dealing with dogmatic and transcendental instructions, similar to the context of African oral traditions, whereby a single, short proverb is able to convey the meaning of long tales and stories, strong beliefs, philosophy and a way of life.

In African oral traditions, a proverb functions as a summary of a longer tale or story. At the same time, a story is seen as an expanded version of a proverb: among the Bantu community, when a story is introduced, it is commonly emphasised by a related proverb. For instance, the story 'The Death of the Elder Kipacaça', in terms of philosophy and moral and pedagogical values, is intrinsically related to the proverb 'The day the elephant dies is not the same day it rots', meaning that death and other difficult circumstances are not the end of life, so we should always be calm and persevere.

**Riddles**

In addition to proverbs, we also find, in the short story, riddles that, according to Ribas (2002), are narrated in the evening, under the light of the moon or a bonfire, either in simple entertainment of the spirit or to assuage grief over someone's death (Ribas 2002: 97). Like proverbs, they teach important lessons for society and encourage critical reasoning and reflection, so that, through them, participants can understand the conception of the world in Africa (Aguessy cited in Silva 2009: 87).

– Opelu-pelú, peléé kate ku maxitu. Ohy? – question in stimulation. (Cardoso 1987: 60)
(A sting opened up from the savannah to the muxito. What is it?)

[17] Do not be puffed up about taking a place in the sun and being prominent in society, because someone put you there.
[18] In certain delicate situations, common sense, calm and thoughtfulness are required.

- Ongo Soytéé kate ku munguila – the answer made of voices. (Cardoso 1987: 60)
  (The jaguar is spotted from head to tail.)
- Awa yaya, awa yassala, oh? (Cardoso 1987: 60)
  (Some go and others stay, what is it?)
- Omema yaya, y sekele kyssala – vibrant, the answer appears in everyone's mouth. (Cardoso 1987: 60)
  (On the riverbed, the water goes and the sand stays.)
- Nanhy kamokotika pu kwako? (Cardoso 1987: 61)
  (What is it that cannot be contained in a closed fist?)
- Kala lytúbia. (Cardoso 1987: 61)
  (It is red-hot coal.)
- Wenda njyla, Ólonda Óyulu, Akutuka Mulungu, Ly Xytu Yé Ku Munjimbo. Ohy? (Cardoso 1987: 61)
  (Walk paths, over mountains, go down through valleys and canyons, always with the piece of meat in your mouth. What is it?)
- Laháku. (Cardoso 1987: 61)
  (It is sandals or shoes.)
- Yuúá, tupu yú. Ohy? (Cardoso 1987: 62)
  (It is there, but it is here simultaneously. What is it?)
- Búndu[19] – they all answered in chorus. (Cardoso 1987: 62)
  (It is the fog.)

Riddles, like proverbs, are part of African oral traditions and have been used for generations as an efficient way to share or disseminate the people's way of life. This particular form of orality is also a tested method to sharpen the brain and stimulate wisdom and intelligence among young generations.

## Final considerations

The literary and aesthetic Angolanity in the work of Boaventura Cardoso demonstrates the African dimension of Angolan literature. Moreover, it also affirms endogenous knowledge insofar as it calls for a view and criticism based on a literary theory that takes into account Angolan geography, culture and history. These comprise the respective conditions of production, thus deconstructing Eurocentric genealogies, as reflected by Mata (2014: 29):

> [There is an] absence of 'exemplary' cultural canons and corpora on which theories are based, consisting of African cultural texts (both written and oral) that form

[19] It is the fog.

> the 'colonial libraries', of which Mudimbe speaks. Instead, the subalterns' cultural experiences – of colonised peoples – and their cultural contributions are relegated to a secondary place labelled 'local knowledge' that the Western philosophical tradition does not consider relevant.[20]

Thus, for African literature, and Angolan literature in particular, orality does not represent a mere source of literary currents, but, rather, it reveals itself as an integral part of the form and aesthetics of endogenous literary production.

In this order of ideas, orality precedes and, concomitantly, succeeds writing. For it not only generates but is also diluted in orality, which encompasses many other artistic expressions that go beyond the limits of writing.

Boaventura Cardoso, an emblematic figure in modern Angolan literature, exemplifies this process. His writing proceeds by recreating both popular speech and discourse in the local Bantu language (Kimbundu) and aspects of Angola's oral tradition, thereby asserting itself with a peculiar style of making literature and setting a milestone in the construction of literary Angolanity and the African dimension of Angolan literature.

In the writer's tales, and especially in the work *O Fogo da Fala* discussed in this article, discursive records are reproduced from oral tradition. The simplicity and mastery with which they are recreated reveal the artistic and aesthetic genius of the author.

This reading and brief analysis of BC, far from being proposed as a finished study, opens perspectives for new horizons, especially with regard to the study of the relationship between literary recreation of orality and literary Angolanity. This claim is based on the assumption that, in Cardoso, we are looking at one of the main figures in Angolan national literature. A broader analysis might depart from this point and examine the constitution of a corpus based on the literary production of writers such as Luandino Vieira, Wanhenga Xitu and BC himself. In the genre of poetry, the work of Viriato da Cruz plays a prominent role in Angolan literature.

Based on the above, allow me to bring this analysis to a preliminary close with the following observation: responding to the need for affirmation of Angolan languages, the local culture conveyed by them and the difficulty that Angolan writers face in producing texts in Bantu language, BC (and many others who resort to the practice of inserting fragments of the orature in Bantu language and/or literal translation and explanation) finds a strategy that allows him to reach the largest possible number of readers, inside and outside Angola, and, concomitantly, to pen his own answer to the following question posed by wa Thiong'o:

[20] Translation by the author.

> The question is this: we as African writers have always complained about the neo-colonial economic and political relationship to Euro-America. Right. But by our continuing to write in foreign languages, paying homage to them, are we not, on cultural level, continuing that colonial slavish and cringing spirit? What is the difference between a politician who says Africa can not do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa can not do without foreign languages? (wa Thiong'o 1986: 26)

As mentioned above, BC's perspective, as demonstrated in the linguistic style and aesthetic value of his stories, is different from that of wa Thiong'o: he demonstrates that, from a colonial linguistic heritage (Portuguese in this case), we can create, recreate and promote a literary production that clearly preserves African traditions and their particular philosophy of life, showing that languages themselves also assimilate the cultural context of the geographical space in which they are inserted. In this sense, a language of European origin, being flexible and permeated by African traditions and values, is no longer an extension of imperialism but becomes a decisive tool of confrontation and affirmation.

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To cite the article: Ferreira do Nascimento, S. (2022), 'Reflections of orality in the contemporary narrative of Angolan literature: readings in Boaventura Cardoso', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s6): 77–98.
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.077

*Journal of the British Academy* (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk

The British Academy

*Journal of the British Academy*, **10(s6)**, 99–122
https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.099
Posted 31 October 2022

# The political economy of *partidarização* within the postcolonial state in Angola

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*Abstract:* The *partidarização* has been central to state formation in postcolonial Angola. Previous research has highlighted how the MPLA has used its control of the postcolonial state to subvert its institutions. This article analyses how changes in the balance and distribution of power in Angola have led to different reconfigurations of *partidarização* over time. Whereas *partidarização* emerged as a tool of co-optation, first under President Neto and later under President Dos Santos, it was subsequently also crucial to securing the MPLA's viability under the multiparty system. Finally, when the balance of power shifted towards Dos Santos in the post-war period, *partidarização* became an essential tool for the President to assert his personal control over the party and the state. Ultimately, it is argued that this new dimension of *partidarização* has contributed to the demise of President Dos Santos as calls for reform started to emerge from civil society.

*Keywords:* Angola, *partidarização*, political settlement, society, state.

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## Introduction

On the eve of Angolan independence, on 11 November 1975,[1] two foreign armies invaded Angola. In the north, Zaire's army, under President Mobutu Sese Seko, supported the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), and in the south, apartheid South Africa's army supported the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA); both movements, however, were covertly financed by the United States (Gleijeses 2002; Malaquias 2007). Civil war followed the collapse of the power-sharing agreement negotiated between the three independence movements – the FNLA, UNITA and the Popular Liberation Movement of Angola (MPLA) – and Portugal as the colonial power (Malaquias 2007: 64). In the initial stage of the civil war, the MPLA relied on Katangese troops under Moise Tshombe,[2] and later on Cuban troops.[3] The MPLA was also backed by the Soviet Union (Malaquias 2007: 56), a situation which eventually turned the internal conflict in Angola into a major proxy war between the two post-Second World War superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union (Gleijeses 2002).

By February 1976, the MPLA and its Cuban allies had emerged victorious (Gleijeses 2002), and forced the FNLA leadership into exile. According to an informant,[4] 'Holden Roberto [leader of the FNLA] abandoned the armed struggle, saying that the main objective of the FNLA had already been achieved', which was the independence of Angola. This is an indication that Roberto understood that the FNLA could not take power in Angola by military means. Malaquias (2007) explains that Roberto first went into exile in Kinshasa but then moved to Paris, only to return to Angola in 1991, when the multiparty democratic reform was implemented. However, UNITA's Jonas Savimbi

[1] This date was established in the Alvor Accord of 15 January 1975, in Chapter I Article 4, signed between Portugal (as the former colonial power) and the three main liberation movements in Angola, the FNLA, MPLA and UNITA.

[2] Malaquias (2007: 57) explains that in 1960 the province of Katanga attempted but failed to secede from the former Zaire (present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo – DRC) under then-President Mobutu Sese Seko, and those on the defeated side fled to Angola. Correia (2017: chap. 7) explains that this alliance between the Katangese troops and the MPLA under Agostinho Neto (and neither of the other two liberation parties, that is, FNLA and UNITA) was a natural one as they were both enemies of Mobutu. Correia goes on to say that, on the one hand, Mobutu provided support to the FNLA, making such an alliance between the FNLA and the Katangese impossible. On the other hand, the Katangese troops were employed by the Portuguese colonial army to fight UNITA. So, on the eve of the independence of Angola and the subsequent withdrawal of the Portuguese colonial army, such an alliance between the MPLA under Agostinho Neto and the Katangese troops was convenient and would allow them to maintain pressure on Mobutu (Correia 2017: 563).

[3] Through a military operation code-named 'Carlota' (Gleijeses 2002).

[4] An Angolan academic and former UPA (FNLA) freedom fighter (interview in Luanda, 7 August 2018).

chose to fight a guerrilla war from the countryside, claiming that it was on behalf of 'those who did not feel represented by the MPLA' (Chabal 2007: 7), backed by apartheid South Africa and the United States.[5] As a result, the MPLA ruling coalition faced a violent armed opposition from 1975 until 2002, which had a significant impact on the trajectory of Angolan development.

The MPLA's control of the state was formalised through the first constitutional law, approved by the MPLA central committee on the eve of independence from Portugal and published in the *Diário da Repúbica* (the Government Official Gazette) on Independence Day. According to Article 48 of this document, the MPLA would appoint commissars to every leadership position within the public administration, from the provincial level down to Comissão Popular de Bairro, that is, the local administration. This ensured that only MPLA members would have access to public office, leading to what is known in the literature on Angola as the *partidarização* of state institutions,[6] with serious implications for state formation in postcolonial Angola. This was a common experience among many pro-socialist countries, including Lusophone countries such as Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, prior to the multiparty reforms of the 1990s.

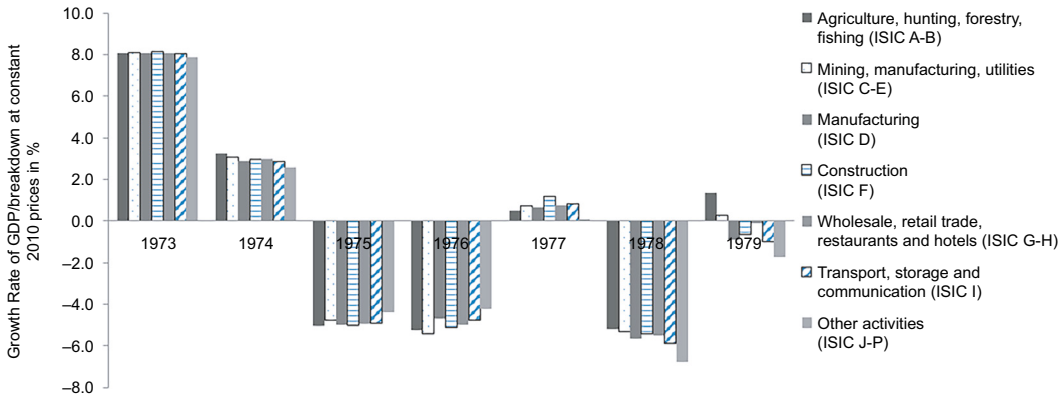
The main objective of this article is to analyse and explain how changes in the balance and distribution of power within the MPLA ruling coalition and between the MPLA and other parties, that is, political settlements,[7] have led to different reconfigurations of *partidarização* over time. To meet this goal, this article employs historical analysis based on in-depth key informant interviews, secondary sources as well as archival research.

Following this introduction, the remaining sections of the article are structured as follows. The first section sets the stage by analysing the postcolonial political settlement and the emergence of the *partidarização*, particularly as a tool of co-optation under President Agostinho Neto. The second section examines the influence of *partidarização* in the transition to a market economy under a multiparty democracy in the 1990s. The third section analyses how the post-war political settlement has allowed *partidarização* to take on new dimensions and is followed by the conclusion.

[5] Until 1992, the United States provided support under the pretext of fighting the spread of communism in Southern Africa.

[6] For instance, Schubert (2013) indicates how *partidarização,* with particular reference to the post-war period, has permeated every aspect of public life.

[7] Political settlement as used in this article is defined as 'a combination of power and institutions that is mutually compatible and also sustainable in terms of economic and political viability' (Khan 2010: 4). Critical to this analysis is the identification of changes in the distribution of power, and 'the implications for institutional performance' (Khan 2010: 7) over time.




Source: Author, from UN National Accounts Main Aggregates database, available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/snaama/dnlList.asp Last accessed 10 Nov 2018

**Figure 1.** Rate of growth by sector (in %), 1973–9.

## The emergence of the MPLA as a vanguard party: setting the stage for *partidarização*

The MPLA and its ally Cuba's military victory over the other two contending parties, that is, the FNLA and UNITA, allowed the party to assert its control of the state. By 1976, nearly 300,000 Portuguese settlers had left Angola for fear that the majority black African population, once in power, would seize the moment to repay the atrocities committed under colonial rule (Bender 1978; Bhagavan 1986).[8] As a consequence, export revenues from coffee (as well as other agricultural produce) and diamonds declined significantly and the productive sector collapsed altogether,[9] as illustrated in Figure 1.

Within the MPLA ruling coalition, the 1975 constitutional law ensured a balanced distribution of power among the following bodies: the presidency, the Conselho da Revolução (Revolution Council) and the Prime Minister. President Neto was the President of the MPLA, and as such he was also the President of the newly established People's Republic of Angola. Article 6 of the constitution indicated that the President was the commander-in-chief and, in this capacity, he could appoint and

[8] One such atrocity was the massacre of Cassanje, in which workers on the cotton plantations owned by Cotonang complained about their working conditions and exploitation as they were not allowed to grow food crops. This unrest led to violence, and the subsequent Portuguese colonial army intervention killed an undisclosed number of African farmers (see Birmingham 2002: 140).

[9] There was a slight recovery in 1977 following the state intervention in the economy through Decree Law 3/76 of 3 March, which established the basis for the nationalisation and expropriations process that followed. This recovery was followed by a significant collapse due to the 27 May political rupture.

dismiss the top military officials of the People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola (FAPLA).[10]

Although the President was the head of the Revolution Council,[11] the Prime Minister (hereafter PM) was the head of the Conselho de Ministros (Ministers' Council). Only this collective body, the Revolution Council, could appoint and dismiss the PM. The PM, under this constitutional law, directly oversaw the work of the ministers in the government. Clearly, this arrangement ensured some balance in the distribution of power within the MPLA ruling coalition; however, over time this political settlement proved unsustainable.

## The 27 May 1977 political rupture and the silence of civil society

The post-independence constitution was very peculiar as it did not provide a clear indication that the People's Republic of Angola was leaning towards socialism. The law guaranteed a significant role for the state,[12] particularly with respect to control of the land and mineral resources. However, the constitution also indicated that the Angolan state protected private property,[13] despite being ruled by a left-wing party that had received substantial support from socialist countries such as the Soviet Union, Cuba and Yugoslavia (Gleijeses 2002) in its fight against the two other liberation movements. This pragmatism allowed for contestation to emerge within the MPLA party-state against the MPLA leadership under Neto. Central to this contestation was the new People's Power Law, which allowed the party base to monitor the actions of the government. However, President Neto believed that this law was not progressive as it was 'against the principle of Democratic Centralism, giving the organs of local power the possibility of watching over organs of central power' (MPLA 1979: 17). This suggests that the party leadership, under Neto, wanted to rule the country with no constraints, particularly in the face of an ongoing civil war against UNITA.

According to Mabeko Tali (2001), this contestation movement was organised *around*, but not *by*, Nito Alves,[14] the political commissar of the first military region during the struggle for independence and later the interior minister, on the basis that the MPLA leadership had turned 'right', betraying the Marxist-Leninist nature of

[10] FAPLA was created in 1974 and was essentially the MPLA military wing, which turned into the national army after independence (MPLA 1979).
[11] According to the 1975 Constitutional law, Chapter III Article 35, this body temporarily replaced the People's Assembly. Article 36 indicates a balanced composition (between military and civilian officials).
[12] See Articles 9 and 11 with respect to the state control of the economy.
[13] See Article 10.
[14] See MPLA (1977) and Mabeko Tali (2001) for a detailed historical account of the events that led to this attempted *coup d'état* and its aftermath.

the party.[15] The fact is that upon the failure of this 'contestation movement' and its attempted *coup d'état* on 27 May 1977, as the victorious MPLA leadership claims, a massive purge followed that alienated the MPLA's base from the party's leadership. This purge also silenced dissent and critique within the MPLA, turning the base and Angolan civil society at large into what Mabeko Tali (2001: 224) calls 'resonance boxes' of the party leadership's decisions, even though Article 3 of the 1975 constitution states that 'the people had the right to participate in the exercise of political power, through the consolidation, expansion and development of people power structures'.

In December 1977, the MPLA organised its First Congress and the party formally expressed its Marxist orientation, calling itself 'the Party of the working class' (MPLA 1979: 11) and uniting 'in a solid alliance the workers, peasants, revolutionary intellectuals and other working people dedicated to the cause of the proletariat' (MPLA 1979: 11). According to Lopo do Nascimento,[16] this change was made too soon and the MPLA's allies, the 'Russians, said "No" to the creation of MPLA-Party of the working class, seeing it as a mistake since there were no conditions', because the postcolonial state in Angola lacked organisational capabilities. For instance, Cramer (2006: 190) explains that 'the MPLA had very little administrative capacity to manage a war economy'. However, as Nascimento explains, 'members of the MPLA leadership had been accused of being bourgeois and non-socialists' and this needed to be addressed. Therefore, to Nascimento this transformation was a 'necessary leap forward' to curtail the possibility of further dissent in the future, such as that which led to the events of 27 May.[17]

The failure of the attempted *coup d'état* was a simple victory of the 'pragmatic' faction within the MPLA leadership over the 'leftist' wing.[18] It also had an immediate impact on the distribution of power within the top leadership of the party under the initial post-independence political settlement examined earlier. An amendment to the constitution's Article 32,[19] 'duties of the president', now granted Neto the following powers: (1) to be the head of the Conselho da Revolução; (2) the ability to appoint, preside over the oath of office ceremony and dismiss the PM and members of the cabinet; and (3) the ability to appoint, preside over the oath of office ceremony and dismiss the provincial governors.

[15] Subsequently, in the First Congress of the MPLA in December 1977, the party officially and formally adopted a Marxist-Leninist orientation for the country.
[16] Angolan Prime Minister from 1975 to 1977, and MPLA General Secretary from 1993 to 1998.
[17] Interview in Luanda, 27 June 2018.
[18] Often referred to in the literature as 'Nitistas' (Mabeko Tali 2001) following their main reference, Nito Alves (Interior Minister under Agostinho Neto).
[19] Law No. 3/77 of 16 August gave President Neto direct control over the Council of Ministers and the government (see Vidal 2003: 7).

Once President Neto was granted these additional powers, he launched his clemency and pardon policy to allow for national reconciliation in 1978 (Vidal 2016). However, this clemency policy became a key co-optation tool. Clemency was limited to former dissidents from the MPLA,[20] cadres from the defeated FNLA and those from the FLEC (the Portuguese acronym for the Enclave of Cabinda Liberation Front) and excluded UNITA (Vidal 2016: 824), which at the time was waging a military operation against the ruling party. A further amendment to the constitution in 1979, through Law No. 1/79 of 16 January, eliminated the post of PM and deputy prime ministers. Nascimento, the then Prime Minister, explained that this 'power concentration [in the presidency was] meant to create an entity that would be acknowledged by everyone as the leader'.[21] Additionally, Lopo do Nascimento argued:

> President Neto had a more prestigious position than the Prime Minister [him], and in a war situation he [Neto] could marshal support. The President came from the liberation struggle, and in a country at war it could not be an unknown young man [Nascimento himself] to open doors.[22]

This suggests that the events of 27 May played an important role in aligning the post-colonial institutions with the prevailing balance of power within the MPLA ruling coalition, which at the time favoured President Neto. Neto's clemency policy resulted in an influx of Angolans who had relocated to neighbouring countries, particularly the former Zaire (present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo – DRC), to escape the armed struggle for independence in the 1960s. Some of these Angolans left the country following the massacre of Cassanje. In a context of declining economic activity, following the collapse of the non-mineral sector due to the already mentioned exodus of white settlers, there were no job opportunities available for the returnees, and civil servants also saw their purchasing power decline. According to Messiant (1999: 78), in these circumstances the MPLA, as a party-state, became an essential provider of access to key services, such as special shops, and goods such as housing and personal vehicles, according to the position occupied by the individual within the state institutions. Party membership was also essential to access foreign exchange currency through job-related travel abroad.

Civil society responded to the increased control of public life in a number of ways. Messiant (1999: 79) argues that the informal economy, for instance, emerged in Angola through measures taken by the state to 'compensate' for its inability to meet the population's basic needs. One such measure was to allow workers, particularly those in the manufacturing sector such as beverages, to be paid in goods for their own

[20] Mabeko Tali (2001) provides a full account of these dissident movements within the MPLA.
[21] Interview in Luanda, 27 June 2018.
[22] Interview in Luanda, 27 June 2018.

consumption. This allowed workers to sell those goods in the informal market, thus generating additional revenue for themselves. In this context, the informal economy could be regarded as a coping strategy adopted by society to survive the already mentioned collapse of the non-mineral economy following independence in 1975.

President Neto did not live long enough to consolidate his political control over the party and the state, or his grip on the key economic institutions of the country, as he died in September 1979. Nonetheless, these amendments to the constitution allowed for a more stable settlement, aligning formal institutions to better reflect the actual distribution of power within the MPLA ruling coalition in the aftermath of the 27 May failed *coup d'état*. The collapse of the settler economy and the subsequent nationalisation and confiscation process meant that the access to resources provided by control of the state was mediated through the party. This shift in the macro political settlement that led to the concentration of power under President Neto laid the foundations for his successor, José Eduardo dos Santos, to establish an Angolan private sector with linkages to the MPLA when economic reforms were introduced in the late 1980s.

## *Partidarização* of the transition to a market economy under a multiparty system

In 1984 the People's Assembly created, upon President Dos Santos's request, the Conselho da Defesa e Segurança (Defence and Security Council),[23] 'a restricted collegial body to run State affairs and direct the war, as structure to support the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of FAPLA' (MPLA 1985: 28). In fact, this body was a *functional substitute* of President Neto's Conselho da Revolução, discussed in the previous section.[24] Indeed, in Article 4 of the Law No. 3/84 of 26 January, the law that created the Defence and Security Council, lines d, e, f and g clearly support this argument.[25] Clearly, this law placed Dos Santos in a privileged position to control the country's foreign exchange earnings and allocate resources with no supervision from the party structures. This state of affairs allowed for the emergence of a centralised

[23] Law No. 3/84 of 26 January DR I Serie – No. 22.

[24] Borrowing from Gerschenkron (1962), this new body, Article 4 of Law No. 3/84, allowed President Dos Santos to enjoy the same degree of control (over the MPLA party and the state) and autonomy that his predecessor, President Neto, enjoyed in the aftermath of the 1977 failed *coup d'état*.

[25] These lines indicate that the new Defence and Security Council was responsible for coordinating the management of the economy and the socio-economic development of the country; managing, coordinating and controlling the tasks of all governmental departments including state secretaries and local state administration; and controlling the execution of all financial transactions with foreign entities.

presidential clientelism system (Vidal 2016). After securing control of the party and the state, through the creation of the Defence and Security Council in 1984, Dos Santos vowed to address the country's ongoing economic crisis during the Second Congress of the MPLA Party of the Working Class in 1985.[26]

The introduction of multiparty democracy in 1990s, following the Bicesse Peace Agreement,[27] was an attempt to allow the dispersion of political power in the context of increasing economic concentration around oil. Growth in the oil sector, a capital-intensive sector, meant that very few jobs were created. In such circumstances, the MPLA ruling coalition had to come to terms with its own base in order to compete in the country's first-ever democratic elections. The approval of a new constitutional law in 1992 opened up the country for multiparty democracy, leading to the creation of new political parties, the return of the FNLA leadership from exile and the transformation of UNITA from a rebel movement to a political party. Under the Bicesse Peace Agreement, Angolans would for the first time democratically vote for their representatives in the new National Assembly and for the country's president.

By resuming the war following the 1992 election, Savimbi (the president of UNITA) severely undercut his claim to be fighting for democracy and alienated many of those who had supported him and his party in the 1980s in the United States, particularly among the Republican party (McCombs 1986), and in apartheid South Africa during the Cold War (Gleijeses 2002, 2013).[28] At the early stage of the renewed civil war, UNITA gained the upper hand by seizing large chunks of territory,

[26] The following were identified as key objectives in the five-year plan: 'Achieving greater work and production efficiency and improving supplies for the population, as the precondition for guaranteeing the process of social and economic stabilisation; Giving priority to economic relations with foreign countries and promoting exports, as decisive factor in balancing the national economy; Reformulating methods of running the economy within the framework of planned socialist management and, in order to strengthen it, improving methods of running the economy and applying value relations more efficiently' (MPLA 1985: 51–2).

[27] The Bicesse Peace Agreement was signed between the Government of the People's Republic of Angola and UNITA in 1991 in Portugal. This agreement allowed for the first general elections in Angola, under UN supervision, in September 1992 to elect the Members of the National Assembly (parliament) and a new president. The MPLA won 54 per cent of 220 seats but Dos Santos had to face a run-off election with Savimbi; however, that never took place as the war resumed upon Savimbi's refusal to accept the results of the election. The document can be retrieved from https://peacemaker.un.org/node/143 (accessed 20 April 2021).

[28] Official support for UNITA's war effort faded following the 1988 agreement between apartheid South Africa and the Cuban–Angolan coalition. This agreement allowed for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435/78, which granted the independence of Namibia in 1990. In 1994, multiparty democracy and general elections in South Africa brought to power the African National Congress (ANC), a former ally of the MPLA in Angola.

including major cities such as Huambo in the central region of Angola in 1993.[29] In the face of UNITA's renewed military threat, the MPLA ruling elite once again chose to unite behind its leader, Dos Santos, who still controlled the oil rents through SONANGOL.[30] However, Dos Santos had to make substantial concessions to quell internal dissent.

To meet these challenges, Dos Santos played the clientelism card by, for instance, authorising the hiring,[31] in 1993, of South Africa-based Executive Outcomes to secure oil facilities in Soyo city and later, in Lunda North province, the diamond mining areas in Cafunfo town (Reno 1997: 177–8).[32] Later, in 1995, Dos Santos rewarded some army generals by authorising the creation of Lumanhe Extração Mineira, Importação e Exportação, and providing the company with 15 per cent of the shares in two valuable alluvial mining projects, that is, the Chitotolo and Cuango (Partnership Africa Canada 2007).[33]

Further concessions were made to select members of the MPLA party (and to people associated to them) when Saneamento Económico Financeiro (SEF)[34] was implemented (Vidal 2016: 841–2). SEF reforms involved the targeted privatisation of state-owned assets,[35] which was desirable following Angola's acceptance as a member of both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1989. Indeed, the privatisation programme provided an opportunity to create an indigenous capitalist class with strong links to the MPLA ruling elite,[36] also known in the literature as

[29] The second most populated city in post-independence Angola, after Luanda, was under UNITA military occupation between 1993 and 1994.

[30] Changes in SONANGOL Statutes in 1991, Decree Law No. 8/91 of 16 March, created a Board of Directors (Article 12) in which the president was appointed by the Council of Ministers headed by Dos Santos, thereby ensuring the president's control.

[31] This strategy was meant to deprive UNITA of revenues from illegal diamond mining, which was estimated at USD 600 million/year from 1994 to 1997 (Hodges 2007: 178).

[32] Reno (1997) explains that following the post-election war, in 1993 the Dos Santos government contracted military 'advisers', such as the South African Executive Outcomes and the American Military Professional Resources, to train Angolan personnel in the new national unity army.

[33] According to Partnership Africa Canada (2007: 7–9) this company is controlled by Angolan army generals António Emílio Faceira, Armando da Cruz Neto (former Chief of the Joint Staff General), Luís Pereira Faceira, Adriano Makevela McKenzie, João Baptista de Matos (former Chief of the Joint Staff General) and Carlos Alberto Hendrick Vaal da Silva (retired Inspector General of the Angolan armed forces), who was mistakenly identified in this publication as a civilian. Between 1997 and 2006 Lumanhe's 'cumulative net income, after taxes, reached an astounding US$120 million' (Partnership Africa Canada 2007: 7).

[34] A programme designed by a task force comprised of Angolan and Hungarian experts intended to promote an 'Economic and Financial Restructuring' of the economy (Maximino 2017).

[35] This was a way to ensure that the MPLA party would remain viable, with access to funds, in a multiparty system.

[36] An Angolan academic (interview in Luanda, 6 August 2018).

'the party entrepreneurs' (Aguilar 2003; Vidal 2016), who were expected to lead the country's structural transformation in the post-war transition.

In 1998, during the Fourth Congress of the MPLA, President Dos Santos managed to oust from the MPLA Central Committee and its executive body, the Political Bureau, influential figures such as Lúcio Lara and two former prime ministers, Lopo do Nascimento and Marcolino Moco.[37] This signalled a change in the political settlement and was intended to consolidate Dos Santos's power, that is, curtail dissent and reassert his political control over the party and the state following the introduction of multiparty democracy. A year later, Dos Santos expanded his Office of the President of the Republic, through the Presidential Decree No 8/99 of 19 February 1999, into Casa Civil (Civil Office), Casa Militar (Military Office) and Secretaria Geral (General Administration), which allowed him to reaffirm the already evident presidential control over the civil and military structures of the state. This new institutional arrangement became essential to promote most of the changes observed in the post-war period.

Meanwhile, UNITA continued to be a major threat, waging war despite the 1994 Lusaka Protocol,[38] which had helped to de-escalate the post-1992 election war, particularly between 1994 and 1998. This was a peculiar period for UNITA. On the one hand, Savimbi sent his elected party members to take their seats in the National Assembly in Luanda and help build the new democratic institutions; on the other hand, Savimbi himself refused to return to Luanda and take part in this new political landscape. Therefore, Savimbi's ambiguity made it impossible for UNITA, in the National Assembly, to check the deeds and misdeeds of the MPLA government under Dos Santos.

The 1992 constitutional law allowed for opposition political parties with seats at the National Assembly to demand accountability from the MPLA government, particularly with respect to the new strategy of accumulation that the state-led market economy provided.[39] Furthermore, the 1990s democratic reforms enabled the emergence of private independent newspapers such as the *Imparcial Fax* and later *Folha 8*

[37] Lara is recognised as an influential figure, alongside Neto, in the emergence of the MPLA during the struggle for independence (Club-K 2016). Nascimento, who was Prime Minister during the transition to independence and later in the first post-independence government under President Neto, was reduced to *militante de base* (simple party member with no key responsibility). He was regarded by factions of the MPLA ruling elite, at the time, as a potential alternative to Dos Santos for leadership of the MPLA (Club-K 2014). Moco was the General Secretary of MPLA between 1991 and 1992, and PM from 1992 to 1996.

[38] This refers to an agreement signed between the Angolan MPLA government and UNITA following the post-1992-election armed conflict to address the outstanding military issues from the 1991 Bicesse Peace Agreement. The document can be retrieved from https://peacemaker.un.org/node/145 (accessed 3 March 2019).

[39] Article 103.

and *Angolense*,[40] which contributed to maintaining the pressure on the MPLA leadership. However, through a strategy of co-optation and threats,[41] the MPLA ruling coalition under Dos Santos prevailed.

By then, Angolan civil society was already resisting the control of the party-state. For instance, when the Lusaka Protocol collapsed in 1998, a number of civil society organisations decided to act to bring the two warring parties, the MPLA-led government and UNITA under Savimbi, together to negotiate a new settlement. These groups included Grupo Angolano de Reflexão e Paz (The Angolan Reflection and Peace Group) and Mulheres Pela Democracia (Women for Democracy) (Pain & Reis 2006: 59).

Prior to the 1990s, all civil society organisations and associations had to seek authorisation from the relevant state institutions in order to operate (Pestana 2003). Due to Article 3 of the 1975 constitutional law, which allowed for the creation of the already mentioned people's power structures, in 1989 it was possible to establish the Associação Cívica Angolana (Angolan Civic Association – ACA). ACA was formally recognised by the Ministry of Justice in January 1990 (Pestana 2003: 17), but this association was disallowed later, allegedly for violating state security (Abrantes 2014: 247).

The 1992 constitutional reform made it explicit, as part of the 'Fundamental Principles', Article 3, that 'the Angolan people shall exercise political power through periodic universal suffrage to choose their representatives, by means of referendums and other forms of democratic participation in national life'. This represented a serious contradiction of the prevailing political settlement. By law, people should have had equal access to the opportunities that the transition to a market economy provided. But in reality, as will be illustrated, access was limited to those with linkages to the ruling party in Angola, which is an indication that *partidarização* was to play a key role in the viability of the MPLA under a multiparty system.

Early in the 1990s, a number of influential individuals emerged in the private sector, including Armindo César Sibingo (CEO of César & Filhos Group) and Mello Xavier (CEO of Mello Xavier Group), who were both elected to the National

[40] *Imparcial Fax* was established in 1994 by Fernando Ricardo Mello Esteves, aka Ricardo Mello; *Folha 8* was established in 1995 by William Tonet; and *Angolense* was established in 1997 by Américo Gonçalves and Graça Campos.

[41] The regime would accuse anyone who criticised its accumulation and appropriation of state assets of being a paid agent of UNITA. Ricardo Mello, a journalist, director and owner of the independent newspaper *Imparcial Fax*, was murdered on 18 January 1995, and those responsible for his death were never found or tried. UNITA deputies in the National Assembly were forced to denounce Savimbi's post-election war in order to remain safe in the cities. Former UNITA members such as Jorge Valentim, George Chicoty, Nzau Puna and Paulo Tchipilica later joined MPLA and were granted key roles (such as ministers and ambassadors) within the MPLA led government.

Assembly under the MPLA in the 1992 general elections; Bartolomeu Dias (CEO of Bartolomeu Dias Group) and Laurentino Abel Martins (CEO of L.A.M. Group) are also well-known examples. A remarkable feature of these business people, apart from their political linkages, is that they focused their investments mostly on trade (retail), hospitality, construction and road freight transport. Clearly, the state did not push the emerging indigenous capitalists towards the productive sector such as manufacturing or agriculture. Agriculture was a risky sector in this period due to the armed conflict, and the overvaluation of the local currency could render the domestic manufacturing sector less competitive (Ferreira 1999).

A second strategy employed by the MPLA ruling elite in this period to expand the private sector despite the limited organisational capabilities of an emerging capitalist class was to create business conglomerates attached to, or in some cases with strong links to, the party and/or its high-profile members. Two party-linked companies were prominent in this period, that is, UCERBA (União de Cervejas e Bebidas de Angola), the party's business wing for the beverage manufacturing sector, and GEFI (Sociedade de Gestão e Participações Financeiras).[42] GEFI was created to manage business assets and investments linked to the MPLA and as such it is the main business wing of the party (Morais 2010). Through GEFI's business network, the MPLA was able to enter the following sectors: beverage, marketing and publicity (to support its political campaigns), hospitality and mass communications (see Figure 2). Entry to the hospitality and beverage sectors resulted from the abovementioned privatisation programme, whereas the expansion to mass communication resulted from new investments. Expansion to the banking sector took place in the post-war period.

Another relevant company with strong links to the MPLA is Grupo GEMA,[43] created in 1994. Grupo GEMA's CEO, José Leitão da Costa e Silva, held successive positions in the Dos Santos cabinet from 1988 until 2003. José Leitão has been the secretary of the Ministers' Council as well as the minister head of President Dos Santos's Civil Office. This placed the company in a unique position to acquire stakes in different sectors during the 1990s privatisation programme. According to an informant[44] and Morais (2009), Grupo GEMA started with stakes in the beverage manufacturing and real estate sectors in this period and enjoyed a formidable expansion to sectors

[42] According to Morais (2010: 7), it was created on '21 September 1992 a week before the first multiparty election in Angola'.

[43] Further evidence is provided by Morais (2009) in which he identifies some of key MPLA-related figures presumably attached to this company and presents an account of the process of expansion of Grupo GEMA. José Leitão da Costa e Silva is also known as José Leitão.

[44] Grupo Gema board member, interview in Luanda, 26 July 2018.

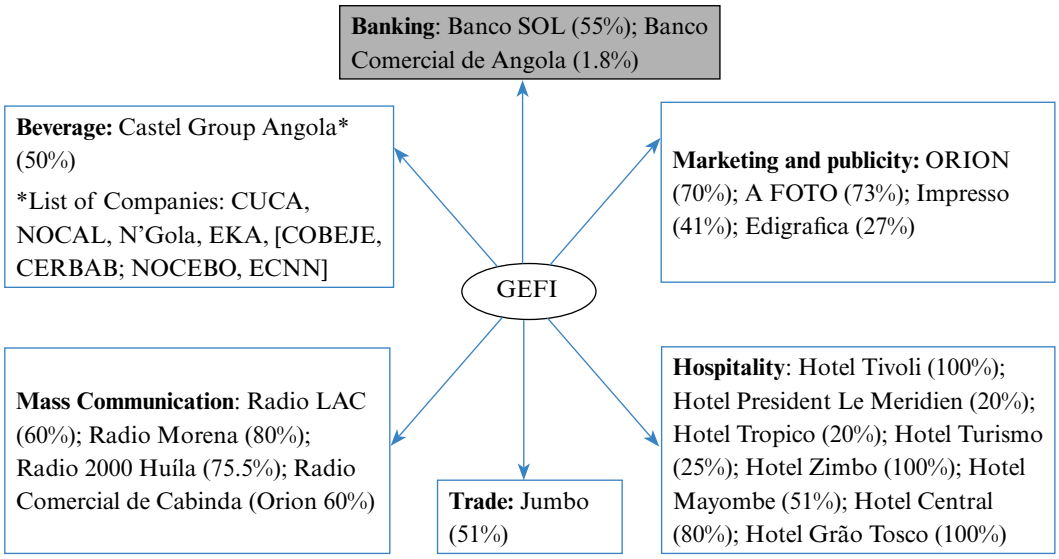



**Figure 2.** MPLA Party Business Network.
Source: Author, from Morais (2009, 2010).

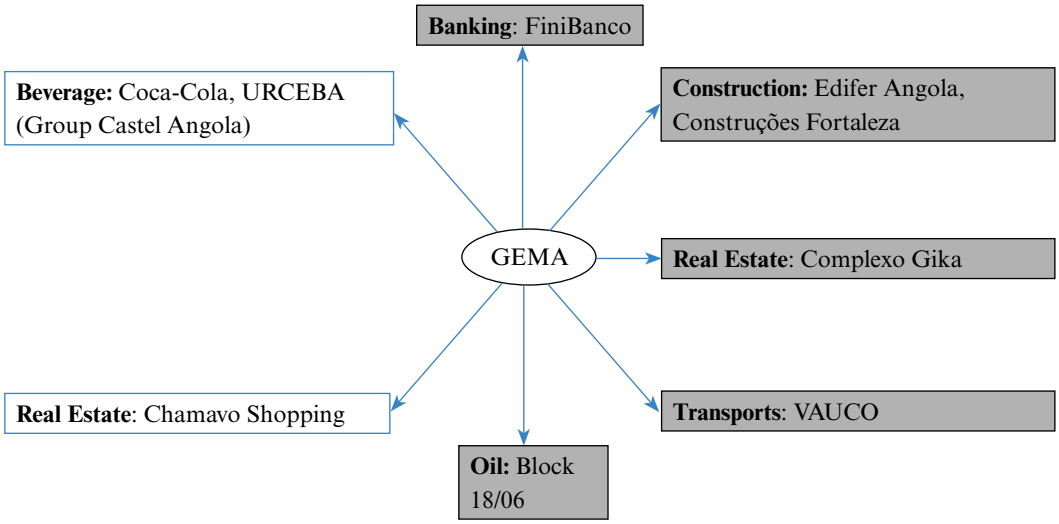



**Figure 3.** Grupo GEMA business network.
Source: Author, from *Expansão* (2011: 30–2).

such as banking, construction, oil and transport in the post-war period, as illustrated in Figure 3.

The third group was that linked to the armed forces generals, as mentioned earlier in this section, who were very involved in the mining sector. It is noteworthy that, according to the Angolan Diamond Law, Law No. 16/94 of 7 October, Article 2, the

mining concession rights needed to be approved by the Council of Ministers presided by President Dos Santos. This meant that access was also at the president's discretion. Indeed, another informant,[45] the CEO of a well-established company in the oil and gas, mining exploration and services sector, explained: 'When the company [his company] moved to the diamond mining sector members of the MPLA political bureau and generals were the only ones who owned mining concessions.' Those generals approached our informant (PV25) because they knew she was a mining engineer. She then scouted the market to find a foreign business partner to start the project. Later, PV25 also managed to secure her own concession. MPLA-linked generals' activities were not limited to the mining sector. The generals took advantage of the 1992 Bicesse Peace Agreement, which allowed for a reduction in army and police personnel, to diversify towards the private security services. As a result, some of the surplus labour that once belonged to the defence and security forces found employment in the private security sector with companies such as ANGO-SEGU, ALFA 5, TELESERVICE and COPEBE, all of which were linked to key MPLA generals.[46]

It is possible to see that the new context created by the transition to a market economy and a multiparty system was also essential for the MPLA to ensure, through *partidarização*, that key factions of the ruling coalition as well as the party, through its business conglomerate, would seize control of key sectors of the economy, which in turn would ensure the party's financial survival in a more competitive environment. The emergence of the party's business conglomerates and key factions as leading business entities was a way to ensure support for the party's leadership under President Dos Santos. Following the death of Savimbi, the balance of power within the ruling coalition shifted in favour of Dos Santos, and with it *partidarização* reached new dimensions.

[45] Interview in Luanda, 20 August 2018.

[46] This was first reported in the news article 'Investir em Angola é agora a divisa dos nossos ricos' [Investing in Angola is the new motto of our [Angolan] rich people] in *Semanario Angolense*. Later, this article was republished by different news outlets such as the website https://forum.motorguia.net/off-topic/85913-os-50-angolanos-mais-ricos-de-angola.html (accessed 9 September 2020). According to the news report, ANGO-SEGU is linked to Gen. Fernando Miala (former head of SIE – External Secret Services, and, under President João Lourenço, head of the Intelligence Services and State Security), Jose Maria (former head of the Army Secret Services) and Santana Andre Pitra (Petroff), former Interior Minister and Commander of the Angolan Police. ALFA-5, a leading company in security services to mining projects, was created in February 1993 and is linked to Gen. Joao de Matos. TELESERVICE (linked to generals João de Matos, França Ndalu, Armando da Cruz Neto, Luís Faceira, António Faceira and Hendrick Vaal Neto) operates mainly in the oil sector, providing security to oil companies. COPEBE is linked to Pedro Hendrick Vaal Neto (former Minister for Mass Communication), Gen. Roberto Leal Monteiro 'Ngongo' (former Minister of Interior) and Nelson Cosme (former Ambassador).

## The post-war political settlement and new dimensions of *partidarização*

The end of the Angolan civil war in 2002,[47] following Savimbi's death in combat on 22 February, marked the military victory of the MPLA ruling coalition over its main threat, UNITA. This particular event in the history of Angola coincided with the rise in oil prices to historic levels on the international market. Consequently, when the international donor community failed to convene a meeting in order to mobilise resources for the post-war reconstruction plan (Government of Angola Ministry of Plan 2005),[48] Dos Santos turned to China and secured, through an oil for infrastructure reconstruction programme (Corkin 2013), the initial funds for the post-war (re)construction.[49] This was a critical juncture and perhaps a turning point, given that a commitment by the donor community such as Mozambique received, for example, may have changed the course of history.

Some observers interpreted the loans from China as a way of propping up the elite in neo-patrimonial fashion (Alves 2010; Morais 2011, 2012; Soares de Oliveira 2015). However, the way the *Angola model* worked meant that no money flowed from China to Angola (Corkin 2013). Rather, the oil rents were turned into public investment and reconstruction via Chinese engineering, procurement and construction contractors completing projects costed as part of the oil for infrastructure deal, with projects chosen by the Angolan elite (Corkin 2013). Through this mechanism the MPLA ruling elite turned oil into the 'engine' of growth, turning Angola into a giant construction site (Soares de Oliveira 2015).

Without external mediation or the participation of Angolan civil society, the peace process in Angola was conducted through direct bilateral negotiations, leading to the signing of the Luena Memorandum on 4 April 2002. The MPLA ruling coalition wanted to demonstrate the involvement of 'civil society' in the peace and reconciliation process through Decree Law No. 10/94, which allowed the creation of organisations of public utility. However, this decree also allowed the emergence of

[47] Angola achieved peace in 2002 upon the death in combat of Savimbi, the leader of UNITA. However, the conflict in the northern oil-rich enclave of Cabinda is not fully resolved. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, from 1989 to 2019 there were 529 deaths (https://ucdp.uu.se/conflict/387, accessed 5 August 2020).

[48] The argument was that Angola, being an oil- and diamond-rich country, required more transparency in the management of the revenues accrued from these natural resources rather than overseas development assistance (Malaquias 2012). However, Anstee (2010: para. 6) explains that the absence of the international community deprived the MPLA government of 'technical assistance in developing institutions and extending state administration and social services to the whole country'.

[49] It is estimated that by 2017 Angola had received a total of USD 42.8 billion, making it the largest single recipient in Africa (Atkins *et al.* 2017).

organisations such as President Dos Santos's foundation Fundação Eduardo Dos Santos (FESA, established through Resolution No. 14/96 of 20 December), as well as AJAPRAZ and Movimento Nacional Espontâneo, two organisations linked to the ruling party. The case of AJAPRAZ, an association of young Angolan refugees in Zambia, and Movimento Nacional Espontâneo is curious as they emerged within the MPLA but were used as a tool to boost President Dos Santos's image (Hodges 2004), particularly when he was reasserting his control over the party and the state in the late 1990s, as mentioned above. This can be interpreted as an indication of a fissure within the ruling coalition. Indeed, Messiant's (2001) remarkable account of Dos Santos's FESA supports this view. According to Messiant, the creation of FESA was part of Dos Santos's strategy to reassert his control over the ruling party (and the state at large), which he had lost in the transition to a multiparty system. As such, FESA must be seen as way to 'marginalize the party' (Messiant 2001: 287).

In this context, the creation of a national economic system with the 'Angolan private sector as a strategic ally' (MPLA 1998: 39–40) was regarded by the ruling elites under the leadership of President Dos Santos as necessary to ensure the country's independence. Although this strategy was first implemented in the 1990s (as illustrated in the previous section), the post-war reconstruction process provided an opportunity to reinforce and accelerate the process, although, through *partidarização*, access was still limited to those in the upper echelons of the MPLA or those with strong links to key figures in the party.

In order to legitimise the MPLA's control of the state, elections for the National Assembly were organised in 2008, six years after the end of the war, at a time when Angola's economy was growing at a significant rate,[50] and as the post-war reconstruction project was already in full swing. The MPLA won 191 seats out of the 220 seats in the National Assembly, followed by UNITA with 16 seats. These results reflected the popular resentment of UNITA and prompted the end of the National Unity Government set up in the aftermath of the first multiparty election in 1992. The 2008 electoral victory opened the way for the MPLA ruling coalition to strengthen its control over the state and the economy. A presidential election was planned for 2009 but never took place. Instead, in 2010, using the MPLA majority in the National Assembly, Dos Santos changed the constitution to better reflect the country's post-war distribution of power as an outcome of UNITA's military defeat.[51]

[50] UN Stat indicates an average annual GDP growth of 15 per cent between 2002 and 2008.

[51] This move also upset those within the upper echelon of the MPLA ruling elite, as they could no longer monitor the activities of those in the government, thus shrinking their policy space. A clear distinction emerged between those chosen to work with Dos Santos at the cabinet, and those left out and sent to the National Assembly, with fewer opportunities to accumulate assets. To ensure the party remained under control, that is, that those at the National Assembly would not turn their back on

This constitutional reform provided the president with too much discretionary power, enabling Dos Santos to sustain his patronage network. Under the new constitution, the balance of power among the National Assembly, the judiciary and the presidency that the 1992 constitution provided was removed. Now, Dos Santos was responsible for appointing and dismissing officials in the top positions in the state structure, from ministers, state secretaries and provincial governors in the executive, to judges (in the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Courts) in the judiciary, and the top officials in the army and police, making the system presidential in extreme (Pestana 2011). This reform also changed the dynamics within the MPLA ruling coalition, as now, under the 2010 constitution, as an informant explained,[52] 'the party was essential for the president's election but once elected, the president would rule unconstrained from the party structures'. From now on, it was more about the presidency and its closest collaborators than the MPLA as a party. This is important as it helps explain the MPLA's inability to discipline the subsequent wealth accumulation process of its key members. In this light, as Lopo do Nascimento explained,[53] 'who ruled the party, weakened the party'.

Outside the realm of political parties, journalists such as Rafael Marques de Morais (editor of *Maka Angola*)[54] and William Tonet (from *Folha 8*)[55] continued to report cases of corruption and the misdeeds of the MPLA ruling elite despite repeated attempts to silence them.[56] Another strategy employed by the Dos Santos-linked MPLA elite to supress this emerging 'intermediate class' was to use their newly acquired economic hegemony to purchase and then close, on economic grounds, those private newspapers that were too critical towards the presidency. One such example is *Semanário Angolense*,[57] a newspaper that published a controversial article that shocked Angolan society at the time. The article, titled 'Riqueza muda de côr. Os nossos milionários' [Wealth changes colour. Our [Angolan] millionaires], presents a vague account of how wealth has changed 'colour' in post-independence Angola, providing a list of 59 postcolonial Angolan millionaires with strong links with the MPLA ruling elite.

their leader, Dos Santos tied their hands in the way that the new constitution eliminated the need for presidential elections. Now, there was only one election, that for the National Assembly. The president would be the one at the top of the party list.

[52] An Angolan political scientist and law expert, interview in Luanda, 6 August 2018.

[53] Interview in Luanda, 27 June 2018.

[54] *Maka Angola* presents itself as a platform dedicated to 'supporting democracy, fighting against corruption' in Angola; see https://www.makaangola.org/en/ (accessed 29 September 2022).

[55] Established in 1995; see https://jornalf8.net/ (accessed 29 September 2022).

[56] A noteworthy account of this pressure is presented by Morais (2019).

[57] Initially published under the title *Angolense*, created in 1997, it was rebranded as *Semanário Angolense* in 2003, two months after the publication, on 11 January 2003, of the above-mentioned controversial article.

The editor was bold enough to include a picture of Dos Santos and to put the article on the front page. Later, in October 2005, the same newspaper published an article titled 'INVESTIR em Angola é agora a divisa dos nossos ricos' [Investing in Angola is now the motto of our [Angolan] rich people]. This article reported that the Angolan ruling elite's interests and ideas had shifted and that they were now investing in the country as the new indigenous capitalist class, listing the companies linked to them and their preferred sectors. The article also presented a list of those with accumulated wealth of over USD 100 million, led by Dos Santos, and those below USD 50 million. This publication was closed in 2015 on economic grounds after being acquired in 2010 by Media Invest, a company linked to the MPLA (Ndomba 2016).

The mobilisation of civil society, which had started in the 1990s, increased when Dos Santos's hegemony seemed uncontested. Understanding how this was managed is also relevant to our understanding of the dominant political settlement in Angola during this period. The 2011 Arab Spring protests in North Africa inspired a new kind of social protest in Angola.[58] Young activists made use of social media tools, thanks to the public and private investments in the telecommunication sector, to call on segments of civil society, mainly those from urban and suburban settings, to protest against what they perceived as the misdeeds of the state.[59] However, this time they had a specific target within the administration, that is, Dos Santos himself. Protesting against Dos Santos was made possible by the 2010 constitution and reiterated by a 2013 Constitutional Court ruling, which named the president as the sole holder of executive power in Angola. This strategy caused so much concern to the state that it reverted to an authoritarian strategy, to the point that in 2015, 17 young activists were arrested and accused of plotting to overturn the government (Club-K 2015; Sul d'Angola 2015).

The resulting national and international outcry took the MPLA ruling elite by surprise, and calls to respect basic human rights in Angola came from different segments of civil society and from international institutions (United Nations 2015). To avoid losing face, the MPLA-dominated National Assembly approved an Amnesty Law, Law No. 11/16 of 12 August. This law allowed for those young activists who had been sentenced to jail time of two to eight years in March 2016 to be released. At the same time, this amnesty also exonerated from prosecution those within the regime who had committed common crimes (for instance corruption) that had been likely to receive a maximum sentence of 12 years in prison prior to 11 November 2015.

[58] For a chronological account of the protests in Angola, see Luamba (2017). AC7 (interview in Luanda, 6 August 2018) identifies the yellow fever and malaria crises as factors that propelled protests.
[59] Vidal (2015: 86–8) presents a stimulating account of this new phase of civil protests with particular reference to the emergence of the movement nicknamed 'revolutionary movement', and 'Revus' by the Angolan press (Luamba 2017).

In the end, the 2016 amnesty law played to the advantage of Dos Santos and his close associates.

Towards the end of the period, particularly after 2013, when the country's GDP growth reached 6.8 per cent, the highest since 2009, economic growth slowed down due to a significant drop in oil prices, from USD 109/bbl in 2013 to USD 44/bbl in 2016. The state was unable to deliver on its electoral promises of 'Growing More to Distribute Better' as there was no growth to redistribute, leading to questions of legitimacy and contestation even within the party. To make matters worse, the banking system in Angola lost most of its correspondent banking in US dollars (Sampaio 2016).[60] This was due to the presence of politically exposed persons (PEPs) in the sector, a significant lack of compliance with new international regulations aimed at preventing financing for terrorism and money laundering, and tougher regulations in foreign countries, particularly in the United States (Levin & Coburn 2010).[61]

Clearly, in the post-war context, *partidarização* has achieved new dimensions. The members of the new leading business class are all from the MPLA ruling elite. In contrast to the late 1980s and 1990s, when it was possible to see the party's ascendency (through its business conglomerates) and the emergence of three different factions within the MPLA, in the post-war period, members of Dos Santos's inner circle, such as his daughter, Isabel Dos Santos, and his head of the military office, General Kopelipa, have taken advantage of the shift in the balance of power in his favour. However, it became evident, upon the collapse of oil prices on global markets, that those handpicked by Dos Santos to be the 'strong and efficient national entrepreneurs and private investors to drive the creation of more wealth and employment' (Dos Santos 2013) were not yet ready for the task. Ultimately, by employing *partidarização* to limit access to the opportunities that the transition to a market economy provided, the MPLA ruling coalition under President Dos Santos, as mentioned earlier, was unable to deliver on its electoral promises. Through internal and external pressure, and faced with a possible loss in the 2017 elections, Dos Santos surprised his peers at the MPLA Central Committee by announcing that he would retire from political life in 2018 (Dos Santos 2016), thus putting an end to one of the longest-serving terms in office in Africa, second only to Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo in Equatorial Guinea.

[60] In 2015 the Bank of America suspended the sale of US dollar bills to Angolan banks due to lack of compliance and tighter control and fines by the American regulator, and in 2016 the German Deutsche Bank stopped doing dollar clearing for Angolan banks. It is noteworthy that this situation was not unique to Angola, as a 2015 World Bank report indicates a trend particularly for major currencies such as the US dollar and the euro (World Bank 2015).

[61] This report was particularly damaging for Dos Santos's government and indicated the need to address the issue of PEPs within the banking system.

## Conclusion

Even though the phenomenon of *partidarização* is common in countries that have experienced both one-party systems under a central planning economy such as Angola and the other Lusophone African countries, the case of Angola, as this article has highlighted, indicates that *partidarização* has been a key element in the postcolonial state formation and helps explain the MPLA's grip on power in Angola since independence. However, *partidarização* has taken different forms and shapes depending on the prevailing macro political context. There is no doubt that a strong emphasis on *partidarização* helps explain President Dos Santos's long tenure in office, but it also led to his resignation.

President João Lourenço emphasised in a press interview in December 2018, after securing his control over the party, that the MPLA had won the 2017 elections and that only MPLA members were to be included in the government. In the current context of crisis in Angola, in which there are few resources to redistribute and the emerging private sector is still dependent on the state, the ruling party is set to continue to mediate access to valuable resources. The MPLA has won every election in Angola to date, and we do not foresee a change at least in the near future. Therefore, *partidarização* is likely to continue to be an important tool to limit access to resources that are controlled by the state.

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To cite the article: Wanda, F. (2022), 'The political economy of *partidarização* within the postcolonial state in Angola', *Journal of the British Academy*, 10(s6): 99–122. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s6.099

*Journal of the British Academy* (ISSN 2052–7217) is published by
The British Academy, 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH
www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk