BEING IN OR OUT OF PLACE
Shifting Visibilities of a Collective Ethnic Other in the City of Porto*

by

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Resumo: Abordagem ao passado e ao presente da presença chinesa na cidade do Porto e aos sentidos da mesma através das narrativas auto e hetero dessa presença.

Palavras-chave: Identidade social; imigração; narrativa.

Abstract: Approach to the past and present of the Chinese presence in Porto throught the narratives (auto and hetero) on that presence.

Keywords: Social identity; immigration; narrative.

INTRODUCTION

Glocalization as a term coined within economics means the creation or distribution of products or services intended for a global or transregional market but customized to suit local laws or culture. In addition to the sense of the tailoring of commodities by corporate global entities in order to suit local markets, there is another, one that refers to the fetishizing of locality for the purposes of product branding. As popularized

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* Paper that gathers the contributions presented at the panel *Situating 'Glocalization': Articulating Ethnographic, Historical, and Literary Approaches to Spatial Process in Western Iberia,* part of the Annual Meeting of the Amercian Anthropological Association, San Jose, Cal, USA and the conference *Anthropological Research in Contemporary Portugal* organised by the Portuguese Studies Program – University of California, Berkeley, USA, both in November 2006.The travelling to these venues was financed by Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia.

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by Robert Robertson, *glocalization* means the simultaneity – the co-presence – of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies in a given social context (Robertson, 1992).

According to Sassen (1999) the new spatialities and temporalities produced by economic globalization do not stand outside the national, being instead partially inserted in the latter through complicated imbrications. For Sassen at the present the global is always a partial condition of individual lives. Thus in between the two spatio-temporal orders (the national and the global) she finds mostly interaction and not so much mutual exclusivity. Consequently Sassen (1998) has elected migrant workers as strategic subjects (among a few others such subjects) capable of illuminating the relationships between the national and the global; and because I share of Sassen's choice, migrant workers and their glocalized lives feature as the subjects of this paper.

However, I should make it clear that the identification with Sassen's view of migrants' workers strategic role departs from the particular stand where I'm located. My gaze departs from an interest in the issues of social identity, its construction, reproduction and thus its discursive, material and phenomenological objectification. Individuals on immigrant paths living in places that are not their original one seem to be a particularly strategic subject, being able to shed some light on the issues that animate my present curiosity. Place always enlightens identity in as much as place is woven out of belongingness, and of its opposite, exclusion. It should also be made clear that this paper is one of the first attempts to commit thought to paper in a new study. Thus the contribution it eventually makes is not yet that of mature research. What this paper does is to outline a series of indagations triggered by an observed reality rather than an actual explanation of the latter.

The trigger idea for the present research was the one of the shifting visibility of two specific immigrant communities in a specific place and city. The two communities are the Chinese and the Ukrainian communities and the place is the city of Porto and its metropolitan area. Although the two communities are being studied in equal grounds,[1] this paper is focused mainly on the Chinese community reality using the Ukrainian community as comparative device in order to highlight how some of the realities encountered are specific to the Chinese community.

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[1] Research carried out within two projects: *Migrant Communities and Urban Systems: Chinese and Ukrainian Communities and their Integration in Greater Porto – an exploratory study* (financed by Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia) and *TRESEGY – Toward a Social Construction of European Youth-ness: Experience of Inclusion and Exclusion in the Public Sphere among Second Generation Migrated Teenagers* (financed by the European Commission).

1. PORTUGAL AND MIGRATORY FLUXES: EMIGRATION *VS* IMMIGRATION – A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Emigration: at the end of the 1960s more than 100 thousand workers emigrated from Portugal *per* year. In 1997 the number of Portuguese emigrants throughout the world surpassed 4 million (Falcão, 2002).[2] In 2003 the number of emigrants was of 27 008. In that same year, European destinations gain a wider importance concentrating 93,5% of those who emigrated.[3]

Immigration: between 1950-1960, the majority of foreigners living in Portugal were constituted by families who had business ventures in the country, namely in the Port wine and in the mining industries. It was not until the 1960s that the first relevant influx of immigration to Portugal took place, a time when Cape Verdeans came to continental Portugal to overcome labour shortages felt on the mainland.[4] After the 1974 democratic revolution and with the dismantling of the Portuguese colonial empire, Portugal received a sudden and substantial flow of migrants coming from the former colonies. This movement represented an explosion in the number of migrants, reaching up to about half a million people who arrived within a few months. Although their insertion was complicated, the process was considered a success taking into account the reduced period of time in which that number of people had arrived. According to Malheiros (2002) this event was rich in consequences for the future as it later originated main migratory chains or networks from Africa. Over the last decade Portugal has shifted from being a country of emigration to being a country of immigration (Falcão, 2002: 3). This represents a major change for Portugal. Until 1980, immigration in Portugal never reached figures of more than 50 000 residents. However, in practically 10 years (1986 to 1997), the number of foreign citizens almost doubled going from 87 000 to 157 000 individuals. The admission of Portugal to the EU in 1986 made it a more attractive destination to immigrants, thus in addition to immigrants from Africa, other groups started to get into Portuguese national space, namely Brazilians, Europeans, Chinese and Indians.[5]

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[2] The Americas hosted 54,3% of Portuguese emigration, while Europe hosted 31,1%.

[3] Source INE 2004.

[4] At that time and upon arrival, Cape Verdeans were not considered immigrants in the sense of non-nationals, as they were from a province of the Portuguese empire.

[5] According to Malheiros (2002), this last wave of migrants differed from previous ones in terms of its complex makeup of both nationalities and of occupations. The author refers to the presence of a range of professions from low skill workers (from the PALOPs – countries with Portuguese as official language – and other African countries) up to highly qualified professionals (from other EU countries, the USA and Brazil). The complexity referred to by this author can be seen even within a single nationality. Brazilian immigration started with highly qualified workers in the beginning of their migratory wave to nowadays being composed mostly by medium and low skills workers.

The existence in Portugal of an extensive work on the immigrants of African origin[6] is a result not only of their important presence in the country,[7] but also a reflection of the trend in Social Sciences in post-colonial issues in the last couple of decades. The presence within a short period of time of a high number of Eastern European citizens – in 2006 the Ukrainian community was the second biggest immigrant community in Portugal just after Brazilians and ahead of Cape Verdean – has also triggered an interest in these communities translated into a reasonable number of studies on this immigrant presence in Portugal.[8] There is however very little research on other communities, namely the Chinese, a community that between 2000 and 2004 has registered a 58,4% growth in the number of citizens legally residing in Portugal (Góis, Marques and Oliveira, 2005: 5). If in 2004 the official numbers were of 5 197 Chinese citizens legally residing in Portuguese national space (Góis, Marques and Oliveira, 2005), in 2005 they were 9 206 (SEF_DPF – Núcleo de Planeamento). One of the leaders of the Chinese community, Y-Ping Chow speaks of c 15 000 Chinese citizens residing in Portugal.

However, the so-called *Chinese community* in Portugal is but a general hetero-category.[9] In fact, according to Tan (1989: 29), not only do the different levels of acculturation – especially linguistic – and assimilation give rise to different types of Chinese identities as, in addition (by considering the relationship between literacy, ethnicity and social identity) we have to at least distinguish the Chinese who can read and write Chinese from those who cannot. Also, while the people of Chinese descent worldwide are identified as Chinese, their subjective experiences of identification and perception of their identity are not the same, and they do not necessarily emphasise the same cultural features as symbols of identity.

2. THE CHINESE IN PORTUGAL – A BRIEF HISTORY

The presence of Chinese citizens in Portugal has been studied very little even in terms of its history. The first news of a presence of Chinese citizens in Portugal relate to the 19th century, a time when via Macao they reached the Azores to work as advisers to the islands' tea plantations (namely Porto Formoso – S Miguel island) (Camões, 2005). Throughout the 1800s there seems to be scattered news on the presence of

[6] See Garcia (2000).

[7] In 2005 the Cape Verdean, Angolan, Guinean, S Tomé and Principe, Mozambican and Brazilian communities represented 48% of the total number of the non-EU immigrants residing in Portugal.

[8] Works such as Baganha, Marques e Góis (2005; 2004).

[9] And this is true for other Chinese immigration contexts besides Portugal.

specific Chinese individuals in Portuguese soil (both on the mainland and overseas),[10] but it is only in the early years of the 20th century that the immigration flux becomes more consistent, thus giving rise to the first Chinese communities in Portugal, in the sense of a set of individuals with a long-stay project in the fostering country.

All accounts[11] seem to indicate that the first elements of the present day Chinese community in Portugal arrived to this part of Europe's geography in the late 1920s early 1930s. The narratives are not very clear concerning the pre-European immigration context. According to one of the descendants, some of these men were previously in Japan where they worked under slave-like conditions. So in the aftermath of the [Great Kanto] earthquake of 1923, they took advantage of the confusion and escaped back to China. According to another, some of these men went to Japan to work in the reconstruction of Tokyo that had been devastated in the referred to earthquake. However the conditions they were working in was near-slavery and when the Sino-Japanese war started they took advantage of the confusion and returned back to China.[12] These first settlers in Portuguese soil were all male, six or five men, and according to the information collected through field work with the first settler's descendants, the latter all end up having different destinies in their relationship with the host country. This narrative as told by the initial settlers' descendants is a foundational narrative and through it they both express and produce the different senses of being Chinese in Portugal, or the different degrees of Chineseness of an ethnic Chinese when he/she is born and bred abroad, away from China, the Motherland.

Apart from the first settlers who arrived in the mid/late 1920s, the 1980s are the time when there is a noticeable influx of Chinese individuals into mainland Portugal. According to Góis, Marques and Oliveira (2005), these were individuals who arrived as an effect of the dismantling of the Portuguese colonial empire in 1975. They were Chinese from Guandong province who lived in East Timor, Angola and Mozambique.[13]

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[10] On the particular presence of Chinese individuals in Portuguese African colonies see Costa (1998).

[11] These accounts, although published by several authors, are always those from the descendants of the initial Chinese settlers that feature in these narratives. The narratives came mostly from two of those descendants, both of them living in Porto. The work presented here, although it takes in account what has been published so far, namely Pereira (2004) and Camões (2005), it is a result of fieldwork conversations held with those two descendents.

[12] The historic accuracy of both narratives is difficult to appertain; it should be particularly noted that the first Sino-Japanese war took place in 1894/95 and the second in 1937/45 – so if the demand for labour in the aftermath of the 1923 quake makes a lot of sense, the Sino-Japanese war as the element that brough back those men to China does not matches the chronology that sets the arrival onto European shores in the late 20s early 30s. However, historical accuracy is not what one should expect from oral narratives. Thus what can be taken from these versions is the economic connection to Japan as well as the portrayal of this latter nation as *locus* of exploitation and war.

[13] At the time of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor there were 10 000 Chinese immigrants, of which 2 000 moved to mainland Portugal. Of these, only a few tens actually stayed on in Portugal with most returning to Australia.

The 90s see a new influx of Chinese citizens into Portugal. A study on Chinese entrepreneurs (Oliveira, 2003) reveals that the majority of the Chinese in Portugal (44,2%) arrived in the 90s and directly from China (59,6%).[14] Recent studies (Oliveira, 2000; Oliveira, 2003; Góis, Marques and Oliveira, 2005) link this upsurge of Chinese immigration into Portugal to not only the changes within PRC itself, but also to the EU membership and the fact that Portugal is seen as an easy entrance into Schengen space.[15]

The Chinese community is fairly evenly distributed throughout the country, although there are noticeable concentrations within the Metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto, but it should be noted that these latter areas (together with the Faro district) are already the ones that concentrate most of the immigration presence in Portugal. We do not find, however, the so-called *Chinatowns* in the proper sense of the word. There are areas with stronger concentration of Chinese inhabitants and business, and only time will tell if they will assume the form of a Chinatown, as it is known to exist in other countries and cities.[16] Most of the Chinese in Portugal are from the province of Zhejiang (Oliveira, 2000: 6), but there are also individuals from Guandong, Guizhou and Heilongjiang (Góis, Marques and Oliveira, 2005: 3).[17]

The demographics of the Chinese community show a strong presence of young adults, a feature common to recent immigrant communities, but also an important presence of children and of some elderly individuals (Santos and Sousa, 2006: 11). This pattern mirrors the importance of family re-grouping within the Chinese immigration strategy: the family, apart from traditionally being a structuring entity of Chinese society, it constitutes also a fundamental resource in the pursuit of successful immigration projects.[18] As far as gender composition is concerned, we find an evolution from a more markedly male immigration to a more balanced proportion of male and female individuals. Thus in 1999 the proportion was of 63% male individuals to 37% female individuals, while in 2004 we have 56% male to 44% female individuals (Santos and Sousa, 2006: 10).

The situation of the Chinese community in the Porto District mirrors mostly that of the national context. If in the year 2000 there were 382 Chinese citizens legally

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[14] Of those entrepreneurs, 34,9% had immigration routes that encompassed other European countries, mainly Spain (Góis, Marques and Oliveira 2005).

[15] A reminder here of the role of Macao as a space of entrance to European space up to 1999, time when the enclave's governance was devoluted to the PRC. The buying or the forgery of Portuguese passports by Chinese immigration networks seemed to have been a marked reality in the territory (Oliveira 2000:10).

[16] Varziela (Vila do Conde – Porto Greater Metropolitan Area) and Porto Alto (Benavente– Lisbon Metropolitan Area) might prefigure such type of socio-spatial organisation.

[17] Information confirmed through field work in the Porto Greater Metropolitan Area; however, according to Y-Ping Chow, in the last 3 years or so, the Chinese community is getting more and more diversified in terms of geographical origin as reflected in Chinese provinces filliation.

[18] On this issue, see for instance Wong (1998).

registered in the Porto District (SEF, 2000), representing 11% of the national total (Lisbon held 58% of the national total), in 2005 that number was 1 762,[19] almost 19% of the national total (Lisbon held 45% of the national total).

The Chinese community commercial ventures focus on the ethnic restaurant business and on '*99 cents*' gift-shops. A sector that is becoming increasingly important is the import and wholesale business. The goods traded are immensely varied and this wholesale business serves not only the Chinese shopkeepers clientele, but also the similar Portuguese clientele.

3. THE CHINESE IN PORTO: SHIFTING SYSTEMS OF VISIBILITY AND INVISIBILITY

In his retracing of the history of Chinese immigration in the S Francisco Bay (USA), Wong lays out a series of legislative acts of the late 1800s that barred Chinese immigrants from having access to certain rights. For instance, Chinese people did not have the right of purchasing property outside the Chinatown; did not have the right to have Chinese children educated in public schools; did not have the right to hold a job in federal, state or local government, etc (Wong, 1998: 11/12). According to Wong these and other discriminatory acts account for most of the community's ghettisation and for the ethnic economic niching initially associated with the Chinese community, namely laundry and food/restaurant business. The initial centring in these two economic activities was perhaps related to the fact that these tasks (washing clothes and cooking) were traditionally undertaken by women, women who, according to Wong, were practically non-existing in the immigrant community once up to 1945 the entry of Chinese women in American soil had been prevented by several immigration laws (Wong, 1998: 13).[20]

It is yet unclear if a similar context of discrimination through legislation was existing or not when the first Chinese settlers arrived in Portugal in the late 1920s early 30s. The retelling of those times by present day individuals is vacant of references to such forms of discrimination. This is not to say that there was no racial or ethnic discrimination, as I am pretty sure that there was (and as some of the narratives tell about in particular in relation to the phenotypical difference)[21] but only that at this state

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[19] Data supplied by SEF, DPF- Núcleo de Planeamento, year 2005.

[20] The legislation that enabled the legal entrance of Chinese women in the USA was the War Bride Act and the G.I. Fiancee Act. However, since only the G.I.s benefitted from these Acts the gender ratio in the Chinese community was largely unbalanced towards the male gender. It was only after the 1965 Immigration Law that such situation was possible to be changed in the USA (Wong 1998).

[21] The most frequently referred to situation was the addressing of the Chinese individual by Portuguese citizens as '*chinoca*' (chink).

of the research it is yet unclear if the Portuguese State might have translated onto the written law the ethnic discrimination the same way the United States had done almost a century before.[22] What we find in Porto (and in Portugal as a whole) which is similar to the reality described for the USA is the economic niching. I shall start by presenting what the narratives collected through field work have supplied in terms the early years of the Chinese presence in Porto, to then move to the present day reality.

3.1. Narratives and Chineseness

As already stated, the narratives on the first settlers are not without discrepancies between them. According to two descendants (a son and a grandson) of two of the initial settlers – a Mr Tsou and a Mr Li –, the first Chinese to arrive to Porto were six or five men. According to Li's grandson this initial group of men had all come together by boat from China, and were from the same province (Zhenjiang) and village (Qintian). In that boat there were 100 Chinese men that were making their way to Europe. Some (three) of that small group of Qintian settled in Porto; one of them went to Lisbon and another returned to China because he fell ill. However, according to the other informant, Tsou's son, his father was from a village in Zhenjian named Haidu, and only in the boat to Europe did he came to meet the men that first came to Porto.[23]

Once in Porto, Tsou's first activity was working as a salesmen going from village market-fair to village market-fair selling trinkets. But soon he was able to set up his own business: he bought cuts of silk from wholesalers; he then had them cut into ties that he would later sell from market-fair to market-fair throughout most of the north of Portugal. Soon he was able to buy the first floor of a building in the old part of the city. In that house he lived and had his business (warehouse, workshop and shop all in one), and soon he was supplying ties to other salesmen, both Chinese and

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[22] This absence of such legal-based discrimination in the first settler's descendants' narratives requires further historic research in order to clearly outline the legal context met by the first settlers upon their arrival in Portugal. It should be noted that Portugal was no stranger to legal discrimination based on racial difference, as the *Estatuto do Indígena* (1926-1961) and the *Acto Colonial* (1930) so clearly show. On these two Laws see Matos (2006). For examples of discrimination met by Chinese immigrants in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century see EFCO (1999:16).

[23] The narratives are not without contradictions, but it seems that the first Portuguese destination of this group of immigrants was Lisbon. Later they moved to Porto, and, in the case of Tsou, the route included a detour via Funchal (Madeira archipelago). According to his son, Tsou did not stay there because the economic opportunities were already taken by other Chinese. There is also reference to a stop over or a short stay in both Singapore and in Marseille, France. It seems that whatever the actual route might have been, it was not a direct one. Porto (and perhaps Portugal) came to be the place where they stayed because the right conditions happened to came into place there and then, and not because it was the clear and definitely intend place of immigration at the time of departure from China.

Portuguese. At one point in the street where Tsou had located his home and business there were six other such tie 'factories', all run by Chinese. The most likely is that this economic niching resulted from the solidarity networks that Chinese immigration entails, networks resulting from the cultivation of the *qiaoxiang* (hometown) ties as transnational linkages (Douw, 2000) by which the Chinese who are already in the foster country help out the newcomers (normally kin or a countryman from the same village), usually by providing them with accommodation, food and work; thus, the newcomers will be contributing to the prosperity of the local sponsor while at the same time start to build the basis of their own business up to the time when they do manage to set up a business of their own and become their own bosses.

The business of making and selling of ties does not seem to carry any ethnic-specific characteristic the same way the opening of a Chinese restaurant might involve, either some decades ago or now.[24] However, the description of the tie-business does bear remarkable resemblance to some of the present day import/wholesale commercial ventures, i e, the ability to perceive and to create the adequate conditions to sell goods at an unbeatable price.

Tsou was a pioneer in more than one way. His was probably the first mixed marriage within the Chinese community in Porto and, according to his son, probably in Portugal. Li's grandson, when tracing the destinies of these initial settlers, narrates what I see as a parting within the Chineseness of the community.

> *'Two of them* [the initial settlers] *married Chinese women that they had come to Portugal; three of them married Portuguese women – I mean, they probably already had a wife back in China, they were probably already married, but they left them there, they stayed here and they* [males] *married here.'*

Further along in his narrative he spoke of the second man (the first was Tsou) who married a Portuguese woman: although that family is Porto-based, he no longer has contact with it and does not know what has become of them. Of one of the other men, one who had married a Chinese woman, he refers that at one point he moved to Lisbon. And, contrary to his present day ignorance of the former man's mixed marriage family's destiny, Li's grandson was able to tell me what had become of the latter man who had married to a Chinese woman and who had moved to Lisbon, something that reveals a maintaining of contact throughout the years – what proves that proximity is not strictly a geographical property.

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[24] It should be noted that in his study of the Chinese entrepreneurship in the San Francisco Bay area, Wong refers to the garments factories as one of the elements part of the economic activities within the ethnic Chinese economy niche (Wong 1998:50/51).

This sense of Chineseness through the composition of your bloodline is something that this research will pursue because it seems to be an element that might be strategic in the understanding of the issues at hand, namely the production and reproduction of a Chinese identity. It is a line of research for which I do not have much more than the fact that the narrative just quoted comes from a man whose bloodline is full Chinese as are his offspring (he is a 3rd generation Chinese; his direct family is in the 5th generation and only the element starting this last generation – a 2 year old boy – is of mixed bloodline), to which one might add the fact that in my first formal introduction to the members (all male) of the local Chinese association (*Liga dos Chineses em Portugal*) through one of their dinners and by the time the amount of wine consumed had already dissolved most of the more formal barriers, I was insistently asked if one of them (Tsou's son, but at the time unknown to me as such, the same way as his family history was) was Chinese or not, if he looked Chinese. It should be noted that Tsou's son is an important element to this community presence in Porto, since he has a company (*Han*) that mediates all the paperwork for the newcomers (an extension of his father's role, as described by him, in welcoming to his Porto home and business the fellow countrymen), having even negotiated with a mobile phone network a special deal that includes technical support and customer assistance in Chinese.

3.2. Chineseness and its material objectifications

The fieldwork episode narrated in the previous section brings us to the first visibility sign: the phenotypical difference. To clearly have Asian features immediately makes you visible within Portuguese society, and definitely in Porto, that is still a very 'white/ Caucasian' city. This is a visibility that cannot be avoided or diluted. In another field work situation, the celebrations of China Day to which the *Liga de Chineses em Portugal* had invited a series of friends and associates – mostly friends, and of these almost all non-Chinese and almost all Portuguese, individuals from a variety of backgrounds ranging from business people to academics – for a dinner and a show in one of Porto's metropolitan area gambling casinos, one male Portuguese guest, a professor of Law, asked a young woman of Asian features [actually one of Mr Li's grandson's daughter (a quality probably unknown to the Professor in question), a young woman in her mid twenties with a degree in Biotechnology from a Porto University and who was there in the role of PR helping out her father (a prominent member of the *Liga*) with the social side of the event], if she was Portuguese. And as soon as she started to answer his question, and in face of her proficiency in Portuguese, he immediately gave himself the answer saying: '*You must be. You speak Portuguese perfectly*'. This young woman is a 4th generation ethnic Chinese who has done all her schooling in Portugal, as did her father before her. She was there with a group of friends her age who were not ethnic Chinese. To these the question '*Are*

you Portuguese?' was surely never formulated. This form of visibility is something that immediately and unmistakably places the subject in a particular position, a differentiated *topos* from where he or she has to negotiate his or her social world. Again, in my Chinese language class there was one Portuguese girl of Chinese ascendancy: her features were Asian, her first name was Portuguese and her family name was Chinese. The teacher, an Asian herself, was frequently more demanding with her than with any of us, the rest of the students, all Portuguese and none with visible traces of Asian ascendancy. She quit half way through.

When walking through Porto streets, the Chinese presence is also visible through the decoration of their commercial ventures, the restaurants and the *'99 cents'* shops. It should be noted that this type of shop was not a novelty brought by the Chinese immigrants to Portugal. Long before the noticeable influx of Chinese immigrants in the 90s, there were shops run by Portuguese, and more seldom by Indian or Pakistani proprietors that tapped into that niche of the market.

The first Chinese restaurant in Porto was opened in 1966 by Mr Li's son-in-law and a friend of his. According to Mr Li's grandson, his grandfather helped financially the two entrepreneurs in setting up the restaurant. The *Restaurante Chinês* made a mark in the city, not only because it was the first one, but also because it aimed at a upper-class clientele, and thus chose a central location in a newly built block of modernists lines making use of its wide ground floor displaying a thoughtful decoration and bringing the Chef and the kitchen staff directly from China. Nowadays the restaurant is run by one of Mr Li's granddaughters.

Although Porto is not very multicultural, there is some supply in terms of ethnic restaurants, not all necessarily run or owned by individuals of the same ethnic origin of the food being offered. Let's take, for instance, the example of the Indian food restaurants. The same way as the Chinese restaurants are run and/or owned by ethnic Chinese, these are also run and/or owned by individuals that were either born in the Indian subcontinent or are Portuguese of Indian descent.[25] But although both Chinese and Indian restaurants, by the way of their interior decoration, share the re-creation of an ethnic ambiance, unlike the Chinese restaurants, the Indian restaurants do not so visibly display on the outside their Indianness the same way the Chinese restaurants display their Chineseness. The latter are mostly always bluntly visible through the display of material icons or symbols of Chineseness: from extremely ornate door-posts with Chinese roof tiles to just the presence of red paper lanterns we can find an array of visual display of the ethnic condition of the food served in those restaurants.

[25] Some of these individuals are ethnic Indians who were born in one of Portugal's former African colonies, namely Mozambique; their mobile and transnational lifestyles produce not only a strong connection to the 'original' part of India (Gujarat), but also to Kenya and to the UK.

Conspicuous are also the *hanzi*, the Chinese characters that spell the name of the restaurant, accompanied by their translation into the Latin alphabet (Figure 1).

In the *'99 cents'* shops the ethnic markers are less striking and less elaborate than the ones used in the Chinese restaurants: the*'99 cents'* Chinese shops are usually identifiable through the red paper lanterns hanging on the outside and by the *hanzi* that spell their name. The inside is usually spartan in terms of decoration, (just walls and centre spaces lined with rows of stacks or shelves) even bare were it not for the baroque effect that results from the shelves being filled up with panoply of goods in all shapes and colours, from digital alarm clocks to underwear (Figure 2).

And if the food served in the restaurants is Chinese (of a sort), and thus we can speak of ethnicity as the most clear identity-bestowing element, the same cannot not be said in equal terms of the goods being sold in the '*Chinese shops*'. What is being sold are not ethnic products in the traditional sense of the word, but perhaps there can be room for the argument that classifies such shops as within an ethnic economic niching, not just on the basis of the ownership of the shops but on the basis that the products being sold are most of them *'made in China'*.[26] Why then the ethnic marking of the shop if the goods being sold are not particular to Chinese culture? The ethnic marking is there because it signs to potential customers that in that space one will find the best deals on the variety of products on sale. The Chinese identity is thus a double barrelled economic resource in as much as it supplies the privileged commercial links to mainland China-produced goods, as its display immediately informs potential costumers that whatever one is looking for, not only is one likely to find it in there, but it will most likely have an unbeatable price when compared to other shops.[27]

This visibility shifts into an invisibility when we move from the domain of the community's commercial ventures to the other areas of their presence in Porto (and Portugal). It is often said that Chinese people never immigrate to a foreign country since their immigration model is so closely woven by *qiaoxiang*. As a result most Chinese when moving into an immigration place do it within their own ethnic affinities: they mostly work for and/or with and live with co-ethnics. In comparison, Ukrainian immigrants work for and with Portuguese and have not so far constituted residential enclaves.[28] When talking to a Porto inhabitant today, almost always he or she will

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[26] This highlights a very specific trait to the Chinese immigration: the dependency of and reliance on their ethnic ties in constructing their business ventures.

[27] The Chinese *99cents* shops are said to have practically driven out of the market similar pre-existing non-Chinese run shops.

[28] Fieldwork undertaken so far in Metropolitan Porto has revealed only a small residential concentration of Ukrainian families in Gondomar. These are 10 families that live in the same block of flats, that in turn is 5 minutes away from their immigrant association, *Drujba*, an important nodule of the Ukrainian immigrant population in Greater Metropolitan Porto. For an exploratory study of this Association, see Appelt (2007).

either personally know an Eastern European immigrant or knows someone who does. At supermarkets or shopping malls, especially at weekends, places where a lot of Greater Porto inhabitants go to at that time of the week, it is likely that one might hear an Eastern European language among the shoppers but almost never Chinese. Obviously, some of the greater visibility of the Eastern European communities is in part a result from the fact that they encompass a larger number of people than the Chinese community does,[29] but I believe that, more than demographics, the differences referred to throughout this paper play a determinant role in these differential degrees of visibility and invisibility.

4. SYSTEMS OF CULTURAL REPRESENTATION AND THE EMBODIMENT OF AN ETHNIC IDENTITY

Representation is a practice that is closely linked with both identity and knowledge, being an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged through the use of materialities that stand for or represent things. To talk about of a politics of representation means refusing to regard cultural practices as merely reflective of, and subservient to other political struggles taking place in the non-textual (Watney, 1986). The Chinese community's paradox of accentuated visibility in certain arenas, namely in the commercial ventures arena, and of invisibility in other realms of social life creates certain reactions within Portuguese society, reactions that denote a different position towards the alien subject from a standpoint of a national (Portuguese) citizen. Language is usually one of the strongest markers of identity and belongingness to a group.[30] The issue of the differential proficiency in the Portuguese language between the Ukrainian and the Chinese community (higher in the former than in the latter) might result in a conceptualization by the Portuguese national citizen of the immigrant individual as respectively '*more like us*' (Ukrainian) or '*less*', or actually '*not like us*' (Chinese), a difference to which one must add the degree of phenotypical similitude and dissimilitude in relation to the average Portuguese citizen. To this easier sharing through a greater ability of speaking the host society's language one must also add the particular form that Ukrainian immigration has assumed. The coming of young adults, firstly male and later female, together with the leaving of the offspring with relatives – usually grandparents, at least through the earlier stages of the immigration process – mirrors the model of Portuguese immigration in the late 60s and early 70s, and a lot of Portuguese see the Portuguese Diaspora in some way reflected in the Ukrainian

[29] In 2003 there were 65 199 Ukranian nationals residing legally in Portugal (Santos and Sousa 2006).
[30] And I recall here the fieldwork episode described on section 3.2.

Diaspora. This more accentuated negation of sameness to the Chinese immigrant in comparison to the Ukrainian immigrant also stems from the Chinese community's traditionally tight circuits of sociability. Mixed marriages are rare in the latter community (Li's descendants are already in the 5th generation and there are only two mixed marriages in the family: one in the 3rd and another in the 4th generation, one of Li's granddaughters and one of his great-granddaughters, respectively) while within the Ukrainian community there are already mixed couples with Portuguese and with other nationalities.

The recent preoccupations by western producers (both American and European) with Chinese produced goods (namely textiles) has placed an undesired spotlight on this community also in Portugal. In 2005, an extreme right party (*Partido Nacional Renovador*) promoted several nationwide campaigns of boycott to the Chinese shops and organised two public rallies within the Varziela commercial compound in Metropolitan Porto (one of the possible embryonic Chinatowns referred to earlier in this paper).[31] In March 2006 there was an official inspection of the sanitary conditions of only Chinese restaurants. This was codenamed *Operação Oriente* (Far East Operation) and it involved over 130 restaurants. The fact that there was such an operation directed only at Chinese restaurants (and actually leaving out other Asian restaurants, such as the Japanese restaurants) was in itself problematic from an ethnic relations point of view, but even more extraordinary was the degree of exposure in the media that the operation had. *IGAE – Inspecção Geral das Actividades Económicas*,[32] the state organism in charge of the inspection, had informed one of the major TV networks that such an operation was going to take place and had agreed to take reporters with them throughout the operation. That day, the late morning news started to broadcast images of the inspection raids, and continued to do so throughout the other day's news broadcasts.[33] As a consequence of this news coverage there was a drop in the number of costumers in Chinese restaurants throughout the country. In some cases the drop reached the 50%. Two months later the consequences were still felt in such a way that, in June, the Chinese Ambassador in Lisbon and the Head of the Chinese Entrepreneurs Association invited the Mayor of Lisbon and the media to a dinner in a Chinese

[31] The Chinese from Varziela chose non-confrontational tactics for the first rally: they did not open their shops that afternoon; for the second rally, a couple of weeks later there was talks within the community that they should not submit their interests to the right wing party interests and thus should not close their doors again. As it was the second rally was not allowed to take place since the request for its authorization had arrived to the *Governo Civil* (local representative of the central government) after the legal deadline.

[32] Economic Activities General Inspection.

[33] This handling by the media of the Governmental Economic Activities Inspection (IGAE) stands out as even more singular when compared to the almost silent way the media reported on the inspection carried out in May 2006 to the restaurants in Fátima, the christian pilgrimage centre located in Central Portugal.

restaurant in a public attempt to minimize the effects of the widely-publicized inspection. However, many restaurants did not survive the drop in costumer numbers and had to close their doors.

The number and content of the rumours on this matter that pervaded through Portuguese people's daily conversations was extraordinary: from restaurants having the cooked rice that was to be served on heaps on the kitchen floor, to the existence of remains of dead dogs whose meat was being served to oblivious costumers, the imagination ran wild fuelled by the TV coverage and centuries of the orientalist (Said, 1979) conceptualisation of the 'yellow peril'.[34] One day I witnessed a conversation in a café between two of the employees on how one of them would not be seen dead in a Chinese restaurant, to what the other one replied that she never went to their shops alone because they were trafficking on human organs and she knew from a safe source that in the shop X on street Y there was found a room in the basement where dead bodies of unsuspecting costumers were, and those bodies had parts missing... This last rumour was amply circulated via e-mails and its consequences on the business of the 'Chinese shops' was felt in such a way that in December 2006 the *Comissão Permanente para a Igualdade e Contra a Discriminação Racial – CICDR* [35] filed a complaint against unidentified subjects who were promoting and circulating the rumour.

The referred to paradox of extreme visibility and extreme invisibility of an ethnic other is reflected on the systems of representation of that social group by the national citizen. The notion of foreign as we know it today is a relatively recent reality dating from the post World War I period, time when the State started to become heavily involved in regulating and controlling refugee flows, something that it did not do before to that degree (Sassen, 1999). Most studies on Chinese presence overseas have taken a traditional approach that focused on the cultural strategies that enabled the Chinese success abroad: family firm behaviour, *Xinyong* (creditworthiness) and *Guanxi* (particularist relations) (Nonini and Ong, 1977: 8). However, some authors argue that Diaspora Chinese have found themselves in novel social arrangements, thus constituting a third culture,[36] and that the newness of these arrangements has largely gone unnoticed because they are obscured by the fact that they take the guise of traditional patterns of family and networking (Nonini and Ong, 1997: 11). Diaspora Chinese "face many directions at once towards China, other Asian countries, and the west – with multiple perspectives on modernities, perspectives often gained at great cost through their passage

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[34] To be noted that Nonini and Ong relate such discourses around racist tropes of threat and disorder to episodic economic and political crisis of modern capitalism and nationalisms (Nonini and Ong 1997:19).

[35] Permanent Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination.

[36] Third culture is a term coined by M Featherstone (1990). They are the products of the globalization associated with late capitalism; they arise from out of the transnational economic processes that transcend the porous political boundaries of nation-states even as they penetrate them (Nonini and Ong 1997: 11).

via itineraries marked by sojourning, absence, nostalgia and at times, exile and loss" (Nonini and Ong, 1997: 12).

The Chinese community in Porto (and in Portugal at large) is constituted by two major groups: those who have been in the country for several generations (the descendents of the six or five males, the initial settlers) that I name as *the traditional families*, and those who have arrived in the late 80s, early 90s that I name as *the highly mobile migrants*. The latter include both single individuals and families and are more numerous than the former, but the status of each group will vary according to the social arena being considered.[37] The importance of language proficiency as an element of identity production and belongingness was already referred to in previous sections of this paper and illustrated via fieldwork carried out. Also, as stated in the beginning, the issues of literacy level on Chinese/mandarin are of central importance in the construction of the diverse Chinese diaspora identities. It is then interesting to note that the long quest led by one of the community's leaders – one of Li's grandsons who acts as the spokesperson for the community in the Portuguese media and institutional contexts – to have a Chinese school for the young children of the Chinese living in Metropolitan Porto has had very different outcome from the same initiative as promoted by the Ukrainian community. The fact that the children might grow without knowing how to speak or read Chinese (Mandarin) is of great concern to some of the members of the community. This quest becomes even more interesting if one compares it to the Ukrainian community situation in which, in spite being a community whose presence is much more recent than the Chinese, was already able to set up such 'school' in a more perennial way: every Saturday morning, at the headquarters of *Drujba*, in a room made available by the local *Junta de Freguesia* c 15 children have classes of Ukrainian language, literature, geography and history with a former High School director and teacher, an ethnic Russian who works as a cleaner during the week. In November 2006, the Chinese school saw its third attempt in five years. In a new place, with a new teacher and only with five children attending the classes.[38]

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[37] In her analysis of the British community in Porto, Lave (2000) also refers to a dived between the Port wine gentry (families that can retrace their presence in Porto for several generations) and the more highly mobile new British immigrants, usually with 3 to 5 year contracts with the transnational companies they are working for while in Portugal. Both the sense of Britishness within the community itself and the type of relationship they entail with the host Portuguese society and citizens is diversely performed along this differentiating axis. I estimate that a similar differentiation will also be present within the Chinese community under study.

[38] It should be noted that the school has always been located in Porto. The facility is always rented by the *Liga*, and never a place made available by the cooperation of a local institution (because, I was told by a *Liga* member, in this way the school was able to obtain a certain independence; the problem was that often the *Liga* run out of money to pay for both the lease and the teacher). When asked why was the school not located in Vila do Conde, and thus closer to the large Chinese community living in the commercial compound of Varziela, Y-Ping Chow explained to me that to have it outside Porto meant that it would acquire a quality of a 'provincial' school. This, apparently, meant a loss of status of the school, and thus was not an acceptable solution.

If in these differential positionings and thus, in shifting patterns of visibility and invisibility and the mediation of the relationship between hosts and guest communities one must not neglect the role of the mass media, I finish this paper with another theme that was treated by the press with some degree of notoriety. This theme clearly brings together one of the major understandings underlining the approach here followed in the research into social identities: the tight connection between selves and bodies and the differentially locations that the Foucaldian regimes of truth of power knowledge ascribe to them. The extreme invisibility that the Chinese community assumes to the Portuguese citizen can be epitomised by the headline in the front cover of the magazine of one of the best reputed Portuguese weekly paper '*O Expresso*':[39]

> Porque não há mortos Chineses em Portugal?
> (Why are there no Chinese dead in Portugal?)

In it is said that there are no registered deaths of Chinese citizens in Portugal in the last five years.

And although the spokesperson for the *Liga dos Chineses* (Li's grandson) says that most of them are sent to their homeland in order to be buried (explaining the importance of the 'mother-soil' through the Chinese metaphor of the tree and its leaves, being that the latter usually never fall far from the former), the article leaves some questions as to how this actually takes place and on the possibility of there being some illegal trafficking of identity and immigration papers. If there is some sort of illegal trading of immigration papers (a reality not uncommon to immigration flows, no matter from what nationality), there are also other factors that might explain such lack of deaths (if in fact there is one) within the Chinese community in Portugal.[40] Apart from the cultural preference to being left to rest close to their place of birth, what is very clear from the statistic data available, is that the majority of Chinese individuals arriving to Portugal are young adults – thus their demise is not a statistically likelihood in the near present.[41] This unlikelihood is further reinforced by the comparison

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[39] *Única – Expresso*, 13th July 2006.

[40] I hold no reliable data on Chinese deaths in Portugal, and quite frequently the media articles that have brought up such theme refer none. However, Cabral (2006) does refer to the fact that the National Institute of Statistics (*Instituto Nacional de Estatística*) registers no Chinese citizens deaths for the years of 2000, 01, 02, 03 and 04. However the collection of the family histories carried out with the members of the 'traditional families' in Porto initiated in 2003 has revealed that their deceased relatives are buried in Porto cemeteries. But these families not only do not hold such a high visibility as the more recent arrivals do, as they are probably Portuguese citizens and thus 'invisible' in the official statistics.

[41] Even those Chinese individuals who have arrived in the 80s are not yet old enough for their deaths to be statistically expectable.

to the Ukrainian community's reality by the fact that the Chinese professional occupations do not entail the degree of risk to the individual's physical integrity as the jobs taken by the majority of male Ukrainians do entail (these fall mainly in construction and heavy industry employement). The death of Ukrainian citizens is thus a more frequent (*visibility*) reality in the Portuguese papers than the death of Chinese citizens is (*invisibility*).

Following Lefebvre's (19991 [1974]) tenet, space is a social product. According to this author, mathematicians developed theories and typologies of space(s) but failed to make a clear link between their concepts, their reality and the physical and social reality. Philosophers took up this task, trying to make the transition between mathematical spaces from the mental, 'to nature in the first place, and to practice in the second, and thence to the theory of social life' (Lefebvre, 1991: 3), but failed to do so. Instead, what they achieved was to separate space from its physicality, from its world situatedness. The Cartesian division between *res extensa* and *res cogitans* created a duality that for centuries made it almost impossible to theorise about space except as an abstract, 'mental thing' (Lefebvre, 1991 :3). By defining space as social, constituted neither by a collection of things nor an aggregate of sensory data, nor by a void packed like a parcel with various contents which is irreducible to a 'form' imposed upon phenomena, upon things, upon physical materiality, Lefebvre clearly tells us then that space is 'a [social] product' (Lefebvre, 1991: 26). Space 'is not a thing among things, nor a product among other products. Rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their relationships in their coexistence and simultaneity' (Lefebvre, 1991: 73). Lefebvre's idea that space is fundamentally a social reality opened the way for the preferential use of the word 'place' over 'space' when referring to human space. Thus, according to Tuan, 'place' is 'structured space'; it encapsulates order, meaning and emotion (2001: 56, 156, 179): to places we give names, to places we feel emotionally attached or repulsed by, 'place is a type of object... [places] define space... [and] are centres of value' (Tuan, 2001: 17-18).

As stated at the beginning, this paper is a work that presents an interrogation of the reality being observed more than it presents an explanation of the latter, and thus there are ethnographic realities that still represent an unanswered curiosity. A person is always a locale, a place of differences: one is always simultaneously, Portuguese, Chinese, a woman, a mother, a daughter, a professional, middleclass, etc, etc. Identities and bodies are variously marked, possessed and experienced as processual formations constituted within webs of power relations. And this is the aim of the research under way: to unveil and understand how such directions intersect within a particular terrain (Porto) at a particular time (the present). The approach here followed takes social identities to be closely linked to representational systems that construct places from which individuals can position themselves and from which they speak (Cohen, 1989,

Hall and Gay, 1996).[42] Thus it aims to delineate how different social groups – two 'ethnic others' and one national group – differentially construct their relationship to the metropolitan area and to the nations they feel attached to as meaningful, i. e. as differential landscapes where different subjects, social values and lifestyles are made reside and embody differential senses of self in or out of place.[43] Acording to the phenomenological approach that informs this anthropological research, the body is the place from where we know the world. That the question as to what really happens to the bodies of dead Chinese should run through some circles of Portuguese society, as it does, is a tenet of this community's alienness from the national citizen point of view because it breads suspicion into the Chinese presence in Portugal through the most material objectification of an identity: the body, that visible face of one's presence in the world.

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[42] Representational systems are here taken as constituted both by signifying practices and symbolic systems (Woodward 1997:14).

[43] *Landscape* in the sense of *humanised space* is a useful tool for analysing the construction of social identities in relation to the materiality of space because it is a concept that is intimately related to the concept of *perspective*, a situated gaze (Thomas 1993), and therefore allows for consideration of meaning, subjective construction, multiple views and variations in spatial and temporal scales (Bender 1993).

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Fig. 1 – Objectifying (making visible) an ethnic identity:
Indian and Chinese restaurants in Greater Porto.

Fig. 2 – *Chinese shops* in Porto.