

**MUSIC AND HUMAN MOBILITY  
REDEFINING COMMUNITY IN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXT 2016**

Guest edited by Maria de São José Côrte-Real & Pedro Moreira  
“Henri Coandă” Air Force Academy Publishing House

**SOUNDS AND MEMORIES AMONG MIGRANTS FROM ANGOLAN  
DECOLONIZATION**

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***Abstract:** From 1975, as a result of the decolonization process, more than half a million people left Angola, where they resided, to head to Portugal. It was forced migration due to the political, economic and social instability, during the period of decolonization of Angola. Migrants, mostly Portuguese or of Portuguese origin, once they arrived at their destination, were called “retornados” (returnees). This paper discusses the role of music in the phenomenon of forced migration in which “naturais e ex-residentes de Angola” (natural-born and former residents of Angola) were the protagonists, as well as the ways this displacement is now experienced by them. This article presents two case studies, results of fieldwork conducted in Portugal. The first concerns gatherings that are held annually in the city of Caldas da Rainha by former residents of Angolan city of Huambo, where music and dance are of great importance. The second is focused on the expressive practices of Pedro Coquenão, who was born in the city of Huambo, radio announcer, musician, DJ and mentor of the performance project “Batida”. In both cases I analyze the role of music and performance in the integration, affirmation and re-invention of identity. I emphasize the importance of memory and its uses, and the sensorial expressive practices of the participants, since they promote the continuity and the reconstruction of their “angolanidade” (Angolanity) in Portugal.*

***Keywords:** music, forced migration, returnees, Angola, memory*

### **1. MIGRATIONS OF DECOLONIZATION<sup>1</sup>**

One of the main consequences of decolonization of lands dominated by European countries was mass migration of white populations that lived in the colonized territories. Due to the independence of the former colonies, to the general insecure conditions, to the difficult relations with the African nationalist movements and for being identified as promoters of colonial regimes, these people were forced to return (or in many cases to go for the first time) to the so-called “metropolis”. This was a real exodus, although not immediately identified as a migratory phenomenon. It was common to define it as repatriation and the exiles were designated as “repatriates” or, in the Portuguese case, as “returnees”. Forced displacement of several thousands of people from the former colonies was considered over time just as being a “return to the motherland” or “homeland” and not as a migration,

assuming a priori that returnees belong to their motherland and that there has been an assimilation process in the place of origin (Smith, 2003). The notions of “motherland” and “return” have been used in an ambiguous way and even used as a political tool. I will attempt to clarify why this happened. As Andrea Smith mentions, migrations of decolonization represent one of the least studied phenomenon in the academic context. One of the reasons why this migratory category was invisible in the academic world was, for instance, due to a long political silence; colonial governments intended to obfuscate all the mistakes and the disasters caused by colonial systems. The migrants’ exodus from the colonies provided clear evidence of the end of an unsuccessful political panorama that caused extensive economic losses and a large number of victims as result of the violence of colonial wars. In this context, the definition of “repatriated” became an instrument to obscure the more critical and difficult aspects related to the migration to Europe of people with European origins (Smith, 2003).

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<sup>1</sup>The migratory category used in this section is proposed in Smith, A. (2003) (ed.) *Europe's Invisible Migrants*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press.

Over a long time this type of displacement has been decoupled from broader studies on migration as there is a strong distinction between “migrant” and “repatriate”. The migration arising from decolonization can then be considered a forced migration phenomenon due to the involuntary nature of this displacement.<sup>2</sup>

**1.1. The Portuguese case.** In contrast with other European colonizer states whose colonies gained independence during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese decolonization came later. The *Estado Novo* (“New State”), the dictatorship led first by Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, and later by Marcelo Caetano, was overthrown on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1974 by a military coup with the so-called “Carnation Revolution”, an event that opened the doors to the end of colonialism in 1975. From then, Portugal would receive more than half a million people from the former colonies. Those migrants were called “returnees” even if many of them had never stepped foot in Portugal. The arrival of the returnees changed the face of Portuguese society, bringing with them different lifestyles. They had to face the difficult process of reconstructing their identity, as individuals and as a collective, becoming a focus of huge public attention.

Once in Portugal, these migrants had to deal with a thorny process of adaptation, not only due to a phase of great disruption and economic and political change in a post revolution country, but also because they were stigmatized in different sectors of society. After a difficult process of integration, this phenomenon became less visible and became part of the Portuguese society. The case of the “returnees” was rarely mentioned. For decades, the academic silence on the subject has been associated with the silence of the public opinion’s silence; except for their short period of return, this issue has become a problematic and almost forbidden “taboo”. Recently there has been a renewed interest about this migratory episode in the academic community, and also among writers and journalists who have published articles, essays and romances on this topic.

The purpose of my research is to understand the role of expressive practices and memory in reconstructing identity in this post-colonial migration context. The model suggested by the ethnomusicologist Adelaida Reyes (1989; 1990; 1999) has been the starting point for the analysis of represented expressive practices; the paradigmatic lens proposed by the author, related to involuntary displacement phenomena, allows to identify pre-migration, departure and re-establishment phases

of decolonization migrants. I focused mainly on the re-establishment phase, this is, their settlement in the geographic territory of arrival: Portugal.

## 2. NATURAL-BORN AND FORMER RESIDENTS OF HUAMBO GATHERINGS<sup>3</sup>

One of the contexts where I realized my fieldwork were two yearly gatherings – one in 2012, and another in 2013 – of natural-born and former residents of the Angolan city of Huambo (called New Lisbon during the colonial period). The name of the gathering is “Huambo100” and it is organized every year at Caldas da Rainha City, in the Leiria district of Portugal, precisely in Mata Rainha D. Leonor Park, a green area administrated by CHO – North West Hospital Unit in Caldas da Rainha. It lasts two days. It is just one of the many gatherings that happen during the year in this city. These gatherings have been happening for forty years, namely since the arrival of the participants in Portugal. The gatherings consist in the aggregation of hundreds of people aged between sixty and eighty years that lived in the same Angolan city. During the event they share common references and stories of their past in Angola. These references consist in the food, the chosen meeting place – the park – which, according to the participants, is reminiscent of African forest, and also music and dance. It is important to underline that expressive practices are a main prerequisite for the success of the event.

One or more musical groups are invited every year to the “Huambo100” gathering in order to perform live music. In 2013 two African musicians were chosen to participate. Their activity has been centered mainly in Lisbon for a long time. The first, Zezé Barbosa, is a Cape Verdean singer and guitarist, and a resident musician in the Associação Cabo-verdiana de Lisboa (Cape Verde Association in Lisbon), whose repertory mainly includes mornas and coladeiras from Cape Verde, Angolan semba and Brazilian samba; the second, Mestre Capitão, is an Angolan percussionist, and performs with an Angolan traditional group of dancers that participate in the Ballet Tradicional Kilandukilo.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>The definition of “natural-born and former residents” (“naturais e ex-residentes”) used in the title of this section is an emic definition. Considering that the informants do not identified themselves in the concept of “returnees”, they prefer to use this definition as it defines their belonging to the Angolan territory as place of birth or as place of residence in the past.

<sup>4</sup> The Kilandukilu Traditional Ballet is a group of Angolan traditional music and dance. It was created in Luanda in 1984. Since 1996, some members of the group live in Portugal where they promote their work.

<sup>2</sup> For further information cf. Smith (2003).

Zezé Barbosa's performances happened over two days and his repertoire was based on the genres mentioned above. During his performances, I noticed that some recurrent musical themes induced people to get more involved in dancing practices. Some of these were the sembas *Mariquinha* and *Comeram a fruta* hits of the Angolan singer Bonga; the funaná *Tunuka* by Orlando Pantera, and the coladeira *Nho Antone Escadeirado*; the mornas 'm *Cria Ser Poeta* by Paulino Vieira, *Lua nha Testemunha* by Dani Silva and *Ondas sagradas do Tejo* by Francisco Xavier "B.Leza". Zezé Barbosa also interpreted some songs by Duo Ouro Negro<sup>5</sup>, an important musical reference for many of the Angolan former residents, as for e.g. *Moamba*, *Banana e Cola* and *Muxima*, an Angolan traditional song, popularized by the Angolan group Ngola Ritmos, and later by Duo Ouro Negro.

I observed that the performances - live music and dancing - represented some of the most important moments of socialization and amusement for the participants, and opportunities to reactivate body memories. The performance of the Angolan group was directed by Mestre Capitão and it occurred in the second day of the event. The musicians and the dancers performed some Angolan traditional music and dances. The group was composed by two musicians and three dancers, two women and a man. The musicians played membranophone instruments (djembé and conga) and aerophones, namely whistles. Differently from the performance of Zezé Barbosa, I noticed that in the case of Mestre Capitão the participants did not respond to the sonorous stimulus. In a certain way, this attitude determined the group's performative choices in order to encourage dancing reactions among people, who just limited themselves to stare at the stage, or to take photographs.

During Mestre Capitão's performance, there was a significant moment. He started to sing *Muxima*, a very important and famous song in Angola and abroad. As Marissa Moorman says, it can be considered as an unofficial anthem of the Angolan nation<sup>6</sup>:

Muxima summons pure nostalgia. Today, when a band plays this song the entire audience sings and sways along and if they do not all of the lyrics they at least know the refrain. [...] Countless versions of the song exist and, as Zé Maria o Ngola Ritmos noted, "it has already gone around the world" because it is the song that musicians traveling overseas and representing the Angolan nation cannot fail to include in their repertoire. (Moorman 2008:121).

Although it sometimes awakens a sense of national belonging and it is considered a distinctive symbol of "angolanity", the audience, however, did not respond to this song in a strong participative way. In order to counter this, Mestre Capitão exhorted the participants in the gathering to sing in a more convincing way, recalling participants' "Angolanity". According to him, "if they were true Angolans", they should sing *Muxima* with more involvement.

Some of the participants told me that, according to them, Mestre Capitão's performance was a sort of "spectacle", highlighting the presence of dancers and the choreographic aspect. However, I could observe that the participants felt less identified with this kind of expressive practice, when compared to that of the Cape Verdean musician Zezé Barbosa.

The occurrences caused by the *Muxima* performance show the existence of two "Angolanities" that meet each other in a symbolic and bodily dialogue. Through the performance, musicians, dancers and audience dispute with each other a notion of "Angolanity", or of "true Angolanity", as suggested by Mestre Capitão. These two Angolanities are expressed, represented and claimed in the act of representation or self-representation. While the "white" audience seeks to affirm and legitimate their Angolan identity, Mestre Capitão contests it due to historical colonial reasons. This situation takes us back to the definition of identity, in ethnic, symbolic and national terms. Who could be considered as being a true Angolan? Which and how many Angolanities exist? How could they be legitimated?

According to the provocative affirmation of the musician, there is a preconceived idea about who is a true Angolan. The little involvement of white Angolans in the performance stressed such opinion, and highlighted the existence of a border between these two Angolanities; at the same time, his provocation was an opportunity to share a common reference from their home country.

For the former residents of Huambo, this gathering represents a strategy to dialogue and to construct self-representations through memories and references of the past, re-signified in the

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Cidra, R., 2010a.

<sup>6</sup> *Muxima* is an Angolan folk song, which became famous through the arrangement and interpretation of the group Ngola Ritmos. The group formed in 1947 and was led by "Liceu" Carlos Aniceto Vieira Dias. *Muxima* is a word in African Kimbundu dialect meaning "heart". This name also designates an Angolan city where there is a catholic sanctuary that is a pilgrimage destination. It had a strong importance for the European colonizers, as well as for the indigenous population. (Moorman 2008:121-122).

present. The possibilities of these self-representations are explored through a “reenactment” of the past, with sensorial, imaginative and symbolic pursuits. This quest for the past is also made through spatial references. On one side, we have a geographical space, which is the ancient colonial space, rethought and reimagined in the present; on the other, the place where the “Huambo100” gathering occurs, which becomes the stage for a ritual commemoration which provides new memories. Therefore, both kinds of spatial locations - real and imaginary – are just some of the ways in which memories can emerge.

Having these ideas in mind, it is possible to consider the gathering as a commemorative ceremony (Connerton, 1989). Even though “Huambo100” isn’t connected with a specific past event, or with the commemoration of an important person, such as in Connerton’s definition, the notion of commemorative ceremony could be used for this case study, considering that the gatherings represent a common past ritually reenacted, that is, the customs or the gatherings in Angola before the independence. Furthermore, the gatherings operate within a specific temporal framework: the migration of decolonization in 1975, a recurrent topic in participants’ conversations. According to Paul Stoller, an anthropologist who emphasizes the importance of the senses in the ethnographic work (1992; 1997), the commemorative ceremony could be considered as a sensorially constructed event. A performance could be seen as an arena where different memories and powers come into contact. They are disputed and represented and they engender a resignification in the present, out of referential context.

The use of memories in the performative present is realized in several ways. Different generations can manage memories very differently, just as the second case study will show. It focuses on the activity of a Huambo natural born DJ and performer, that uses the past to reconstruct the present in his performative experiences.

### 3. BATIDA: MEMORY OF ANGOLA IS NOT SAUDADE<sup>7</sup> OF THE PAST

Pedro Coquenão, mentor of performative project Batida, comes from a Portuguese Angolan family. He was born in 1974 in Huambo, Angola. Coquenão belongs to a later generation compared to the one of the participants in the gatherings.

<sup>7</sup> *Saudade* is a Portuguese word used to express a nostalgic feeling. It evokes the absence or the loss of someone or something that belonged to the past, which is not present anymore and cannot return.

Being so, his expressive practices and his use of memory are very different from the previous one.

With the independence of Angola, in 1975, he migrated with his family to Portugal. His link with that African country was based on memories transmitted by his family. He started working as a DJ and as a radio announcer from an early age. He collaborated with some Portuguese radio stations: Radio Marginal, Radio Radar and Radio Antena3. His work is marked by an urge to promote and spread African contemporary musical cultures, or, according to his own words, music with “an African inspiration or influence”. For this purpose, he created the Colectivo Fazuma (Fazuma Collective) in order to promote the works of several artists, supporting the organization of concerts, and the edition and release of audio records, video clips and documentaries based on African contemporary sounds.

In this paper I will just explore his last (and ongoing) project, Batida, having followed some of its performances between 2013 and 2014. Batida was created in 2007 as a radio program transmitted by Portuguese radio station Antena3. The name was inspired by audio bootlegs sold in the streets of Luanda or in the *kandongueiros*<sup>8</sup>, where it is also possible to listen to them. These CDs are “best of” compilations of current modern music, according to their sellers. These compilations are called “batidas” and they constitute an informal way to promote not only already known musicians, but also new ones by spreading their works.

Besides Coquenão, Batida is also composed of a varying group of people. They are Luaty Beirão, the MCs Kapa and Sacerdote (who also compose music and lyrics), the sound engineer Bruno Lobato (Beat Laden), and Catarina Limão, who collaborates with vocals, sound production and photo editing. One of the most important characteristics of Batida is the attention given to the new trends coming from “the African urban musical scene”, or the ones which are of “African inspiration”. These expressions constitute emic concepts used by Coquenão to define his work. However, it was not easy for him to import this repertoire from Angola.

Coquenão decides to compose his music according to an idea of sound mix (“mistura sonora”). Bazuka is the first musical composition done by Pedro Coquenão. He uses some melodic fragments taken from the homonymous song by Carlos Lamartine, an important Angolan singer of semba, adding to them rhythmic patterns composed by him and based on kuduro.

<sup>8</sup> In Angola, the *kandongueiro* is a collective passengers transport.

The collaboration with the record label Difference Music was a turning point for Coquenão's work because it gave him access to a large number of phonograph records from the sixties and seventies recorded in Luanda by Valentim de Carvalho. By having access to this musical archive, and encouraged by the success of his first soundtrack, Coquenão decided to record his first album, *Dance Mwangolé*<sup>9</sup>. It was published in 2009 by the Portuguese record label Farol and it is composed of sixteen tracks. All the compositions are based on samples taken from original Angolan songs from the sixties and the seventies, mixed with rhythms composed by Coquenão and inspired by Angolan kuduro, South African kwaito, and dancehall. *Dance Mwangolé* was later withdrawn from the market in order to be re-released internationally in 2012 by the English label Soundways Records, retitled *Batida*. In 2014 his third album, *Dois*, is released by the same label. The album still maintains the mix between semba and kuduro, but it also includes other musical styles and genres such as rock, jazz and punk.

After the first album release, Coquenão's music starts being presented as a performative project called *Batida*, defined by himself as a "show". It merges music, dance, video and scenography with the aim to contextualize and transmit a message to the audiences, often an interventive message which characterizes the whole project. According to Coquenão, some concepts have a particular importance in *Batida* performance practice, such as the concepts of "community", "belonging", "memory" and "change". His performative practice aims to gather people, recreating a community link that is of great importance for him; his multiple belongings are reaffirmed through the performance; it allows him to reconstruct and reinvent his own identity through the cultural allusions provided in his work. Thereafter, it is possible to consider his approach as being a dynamic approach to the migratory past.

Coquenão's work is built upon the renegotiation of familiar memories, and the construction of new meanings. His work seeks a dialogue between different musical realities, also bringing attention to political and social issues. *Batida* carries within it an interrogation, a transgression, a transformation and not just a quest for a lost past. It involves the audiences in different representative possibilities (performative, political, interventive).

In one of the shows I attended in the course of my fieldwork, Pedro Coquenão wore a hat which reminded him of the ones which were used by the

colonizers. Later, during an interview, he told me that the reason for using that hat was mainly provocative. His idea was to present a dichotomy between the image of the colonizer that is generally associated to the one of the *retornados*, and the interventive message transmitted by his performance.

*Batida* is directly derived from Coquenão's memories, memories that could be considered embodied (Connerton, 1989), memories inscribed in the body and transferred into the performance. The stage became a place to receive and gather people, revivify a connection with the past, but within a new interpretation. The performative occasion contributes to shape the represented events. The shape of this representation varies depending on the musicians and dancers involved, where the performance takes place, and the specificities of each audience. The performance is multidimensional and engender new meanings (Behague 1984), becoming a place for the negotiation of identity.

Coquenão converges semba, its strength as a tool of protest and social impact, with hip-hop and kuduro, which are seen as contemporary dissident responses to the Angolan sociopolitical situation. It merges sound and performative identities in search for a possible identity reconstruction and interventive proposals.

#### 4. DATA INTERPRETATION

The performances analyzed occur in the ethnographic present. However, they aggregate pasts that are not in opposition to the present, but in a dialogic position: the diasporic dimension is projected by the informants of this research in different existential levels, being revitalized with mnemonic practices.

The "Huambo100" gathering could be seen as a response to a long historical silence about a mass migration from the former colonies and a way to affirm a collective identity circumscribed in the performative space. It is built upon a sensorial apparatus, mainly by music and dance, which solicits memory to confer new meanings to the present. The participants are this way connected to their African past. According to an informer, these performances have the potential to make him "imagerically throw himself" into his past, "through images"<sup>10</sup>. Expressive practices solicit recollections inscribed in the body (Connerton, 1989; Stoller, 1992), with these recollections being reinterpreted in the performance. The gathering

<sup>9</sup> *Mwangolé* means Angolan, Angolan natural-born.

<sup>10</sup> Personal Interview with A.P. 28th July 2012, Caldas da Rainha.

also represents a strategy that some participants use in order to claim their “Angolanity”, a characteristic that they sometimes feel as being contested.

In the same way, Pedro Coquenão projects his past in his shows, and in the music he composes, using or re-elaborating Angolan musical repertoires from the sixties and the seventies. Compared to the first case, the shows of Batida transmit a different ideology: they constitute a form of protest which is more focused on the present, and not so much on the past. He does not just want to criticize social and political history, but also contemporary issues. All his works have an interventive character which resides on the promotion of African expressive practices which are less familiar to the western ear, and through provocative and critical messages about the Angolan sociopolitical situation, transmitted to the public through all the components of his performance: music, lyrics dance, videos, and scenography.

Different reactions to traumatic events determine the different positions that can be found between one performative context and the other. Firstly, in the case of Coquenão, the contacts with his home country were not interrupted, making it easier to collect new memories and attribute new meanings in his relation with the past. Secondly, Coquenão belongs to a younger generation compared to the one of the participants in the gathering. As Rui Cidra writes in relation to Cape-Verdean migration:

Contrary to the immigrant generation of their parents, their musical practices were not motivated by a ‘defensive’ relationship (Gross et al., 1994) with ‘memory’ and references to their original territory, but, on the contrary, they professed the formation of ‘assertive’ identities (Gross et al., 1994), highly political and very complex from the point of view of identifications, adjusted to interpret their experience in Portuguese territory. (Cidra, 2008: 117)<sup>11</sup>

Finally, it is possible to identify different uses of memory in these two case studies. In the first case, remembrance is used, through various sensorial expedients, to reenact collective moments, and a general sense of a past which has

disappeared. In the second case, the shows are also built upon memories associated with a pre-migratory past; however, this past revivification is different. Within it, we can find a more “assertive” identity that searches for a contemporary Angola.

## 5. AKNOWLEGDMENTS

I would like to thank Pedro Coquenão, Amílcar Pereira, António Alípio, Rosalva Fonseca, Prof. Dr. João Soeiro de Carvalho, Carla Gonzalez, Florida Ferrara, Ricardo Andrade, Sandra Young.

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<sup>11</sup> My translation. Original quotation: “Contrariamente à geração imigrante dos seus pais, as suas práticas musicais não foram motivadas por uma relação ‘defensiva’ (Gross et al., 1994) com a ‘memória’ e as referências de um território de origem, mas preconizaram, antes, a formação de identidades ‘assertivas’ (Gross et al., 1994), eminentemente políticas e complexas do ponto de vista das identificações, ajustadas a interpretar a sua experiência em território português.” (Cidra, 2008:117)

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