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SAOTOMEAN ORALITY AND MUSIC: BRIEF NOTES

Rufino E. SANTO*, Celso SOARES*, Fernando TEODÓSIO*

*R&D, CulturFACE Association, Lisbon, Portugal

***Abstract:** In our experience, initiatives to historically contextualize the culture, orality and Saotomean music are being implemented with too little consideration to the profundity and methodization of topics with little systemic results. Consequently, understanding between culture and the social environment, rituals, regional habits, language, orality and Saotomese music, are not frequently be realized in full magnitude. Thus, the focus of this paper is the integration of the Saotomese heritage aspects and cultural experience considering the influences of society, globalization, economies of scale and the market. We present the results of several literary works and sociocultural events on these topics in the context of São Tomé e Príncipe, which are still scarce. This leads us to consider the requirements for the study, research and applied development as a factor of social inclusion, drawing on information and communication technologies, necessary human resources, events, and other initiatives and cultural demonstrations.*

***Keywords:** São Tomé e Príncipe, music, orality, culture*

1. INTRODUCTION

One approach to orality and music of São Tomé e Príncipe only makes sense to start by reporting the establishment of Saotomese society, its origins and historical path because "at first glance, São Tomé e Príncipe is so small that hardly comes on the world map" (Silva, 2006).

The archipelago of São Tomé e Príncipe is discovered by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, allegedly on December 21, 1471 (São Tomé) and 17 January 1472 (Príncipe) although there are doubts about the accuracy of these dates as according to Albuquerque (Albuquerque, 1989):

... we must remember that disregard the dates of the discovery of the three islands (São Tomé, Príncipe and Annobon) the anonymous pilot quotes, and not known the names of their discoverers. There is however a historiographical current that supports having the islands of São Tomé, Príncipe (originally called St. Anthony [Santo Antão]) and Annobon [Ano Bom] been found on December 21, 1471, January 17, 1472 and January 1 of that year...

The colonization of the archipelago becomes effective from 1486 to award the captaincy of São Tomé to João de Paiva with the task of populating the islands through the king John letter

King John, etc. How many this our letter behold to know that João de Paiva, our squire, who lives in the village of Obidos, has now agreed to serve us go live to our island called São Tomé... (Maino, 1999:135-152).

The settlement of the archipelago occurs by the confluence of "Europeans from various areas, the compatriots who were the margin of Portuguese society" (Bayer, 2012), and Africans brought from the continent as slaves. After the first events that may be connected to the unsuitability of European to the weather, disease and high mortality among them, the archipelago begins to thrive in the business of sugar and slave traffic, making it one of the privileged warehouses for slaves' transportation to the Americas. According to the anonymous pilot (Albuquerque, 1989),

there live many Portuguese merchants, Spaniards, French and Genoese, and any other nation that want to come here to dwell accept them all gladly; almost all have wives and children.

At the same time of the European community there is a large African community, from diverse backgrounds, providing services as slaves.

Every inhabitant purchase black slaves with their black women from Guinea, Benin and Manicongo

and employ them, to couples to cultivate the land to plantations and extract the sugars. (Albuquerque, 1989)

This combination of various origins was born one of the greatest riches of São Tomé e Príncipe: their language and their music, which reflect today its genesis. The Saotomese people results of miscegenation, so the crossing of cultures is evident. We must understand the culture and the environment. It is a challenge of social relations. For this nothing better than sharing knowledge. Rituals, regional habits, language, oral communication, music and leisure are an attraction for tourism and development. This article aims to systematize and implement these ideas presenting the benefits and need for research and development in these issues, obtained through literature and events organized for this purpose.

The following chapters deal with the Saotomese orality and music. The orality is one of the fundamental elements of Saotomese music. Through it, is transmitted messages that will enclosing, as the context and the temporal and spatial circumstances.

2. CULTURE AND ORALITY

2.1 The Saotomese creolization of society and traditional culture. The creole languages are born from a cross between Portuguese and African languages. They identified three national languages: *fórro* (spoken mainly in São Tomé island and greater number of speakers), *lingwié* (spoken in Príncipe island) and *angular* (spoken by *Angular* community). These are the three languages that have ensured the transmission of the cultural richness of São Tomé e Príncipe generation to generation, as in colonial times, most of the population was barely literate. The creolization of Saotomese society manifests itself not only in the language, as mentioned but also in other areas of everyday life, as in stories, dances, cuisine and music. All of this secular heritage is rooted in the oral transmission because very little is written (some steps are being taken to bridge this gap), which has allowed to go through the wisdom and knowledge generation to generation, from the oldest to the youngest. The *sóias* and the “*vessus*”, *kare ey* elements in Saotomese traditional culture, excluding some recent steps towards placing it in books, passed through generations orally, grandparent to grandchild. The *sóias* are tales and legends, told mainly in funerals (“*nozadus*”) by people versed with which they intend to distract and minimize the suffering of the relatives of the deceased. Usually these mostly female, are

required to remain in the deceased's house for a week until the celebration of the seventh day Mass. This practice is entering into abandonment with the advent of modern times and, into some level, with the desvirtualization the traditional sense of family. One of the features das *sóias* is being told story and sung to convey a message of social and moral teaching. Now *vessus* (verses in free translation) can be equated with popular sayings and transmit teachings and everyday experiences. Parables are to be interpreted according to the context, for example: “*Xi pema molê ndala, kê kuá ku ka klaga andji?*” [What sustains the fruit if the palm leaves wither?]. The palm plays an important role in the life of São Tomé e Príncipe, but we can interpret this saying as the manifestation of the importance of the oldest in the education of younger, if lacking the mainstay of the older, the education of the youngest, will have the difficulties in their education and in adapting to life.

2.2 The "non-experts". “*Punda santome fla tudu kua sa plapa*”, on this account states a Saotomese saying, everything in life is an experiment. The first *non-experts* of orality and music, did so in the afternoons in the middle of the yard in the shade of a mulberry tree or a hollow, surrounded by grandchildren and great grandchildren sitting on the floor. Or did it indoors while outside on the zinc, the weak rain drops, on days when the nature decided to impose its law. In this concept, non-expert in orality there are three key parts: an old man or an old woman, white hair and a staff on the knees, occasionally, feel a pain that stung knee reminding that have passed many rains and much ground has been covered; the second element is a group of grandchildren, some natural and other unnatural, children of neighbors, and sometimes a boy comes up and no one knows where comes from, who are all grandchildren because the older, grandfather/ grandmother saw them born and even led to lap the parents who made the birth. Not infrequently, to the grandmother that account, his voice calm, the later stories, was the midwife who took the belly of the mothers who she had been midwife too; the third element of this triangle of orality - that's how the three *makukus* that sustain the container life, It is the turtle (in the case of São Tomé e Príncipe), sly animal that makes the *Sun Alê* (Lord King) object of their cheating endless and still survive. That's life, it is the best animal ever seen in our world because you can with your shenanigans start smiles and the kids' satisfaction of joy.

The three *makukus* pass from generation to generation because the grandchildren of the past become grandfathers and grandmothers, occupy the center of the circle formed by the new

grandchildren where the big stone in the yard, and retell the story in their own way. Each new generation adds one more detail as an addition does not hurt, there is no way to prove it was not as if is telling. What really matters is the legacy forward. The three parties hold the eternity of their existence and build the invisible sound line across generations. These are elements that support the voice of the past that is transmitted to the future, forming identity that we all are.

The stories of other places have other characters that can be “*ukués*”, “*zambás*” that monster faceless and formless, half people half animal, insatiable appetite that scares before sleep to get all concerns and lead to the neglect of the house, elephants or mythical figure shapeless, but very similar with men, which is the worst bug of all animals that the gods created on top of the earth. Please note that this story never had a beginning, that is, using the rigor of the know, the beginning is lost in the indeterminacy of “hear my grandfather tell that his grandfather had to have heard of his great-grandfather who long ago”.

The turtle, which in early history, just walked on foot or by hitchhiking after talking with his buddy hawk, one in which even the animals speak, because there was a time when all the animals speak as real people, although there are people that often wring the nose and say it cannot be because “the animals have no structure that allow them to speak” and because “there is no historical evidence of this fact”, but the truth is that there was a time that the animals talked, the rivers, the mountains and the trees also spoke and only / ceased to / do when men began to use the word as a deceptive tool, cheating each other’s.

There are also those who think that the animals stopped talking because they were convicted after the snake have convinced Mrs. Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, together with Mr. Adam. And because of that we have the “*vessu*” that says “Ploviá de uã vunvu ku modê San Pedu, Lixandê tudaxi ká paga” (the English version “can be the innocent carry the can for the guilty”). The *vessus* like these that we learn, in the circle around the large backyard stone, the mouth of the grandmother, who in turn learned from her grandmother, and the latter must have learned of the grandmother of her grandmother and came to today by word of mouth, grandmother to grandson for a single mechanism for preservation of saying without ever getting on embossed paper.

On this account, as said, at that time the tortoise walked on foot, she was forced to hitchhike to hawk because only then could get to heaven where God gave a big party. Even without being invited, the turtle wanted to participate in the

banquet and as the hawk refused to take her a ride, she said the same that was an order, a gift to deliver in the sky and the hawk could you please take the same, but that would leave the same bag leaning against the palm of your yard and the hawk could spend to collect and take to the sky. Slipped into it in the bag, tied the same inside and was taken to the party in the sky hawk ride.

In less old version, to go to the same party in the sky, the turtle used “*lomplanu*”, an aircraft of two giant fans on the wings, which was piloted by the hawk. The trick, this was the same. Should imagine that who just jumps out of the seat, all full of arguments, because to get to heaven could not be used for an aircraft of this type would not have power to get there. In addition to this technical fact, all passengers die because the outer space of our planet there are no conditions for survival.

But who cares about these things, if the turtle of these bygone times, the one that goes to the party in heaven by the voice of the grandfathers and grandmothers, dies but returns to live to delight afternoon on its laurels, around the big stone the yard where the grandfather has a permanent place and the little guys anxious wait to hear the stories? Go with these conversations to discourage people and make people believe that there are no dreams, but they do not even know where is the sky. But we know, those who hear and live the story, we drink the story of grandma’s lips, we know that the sky is the story that her grandmother told after dinner, where the turtle preaches another prank in the *Sum Alê* and uses all the funny tricks that only she knows, to do things like others do.

When I grow up I want to be like the turtle. If the anxious kids wheels taking grandmothers stories in the yard continue, the big rock where the grandfather or grandmother used to sit is not broken to make *smartphones* and kids do not gain a habit of “*talking*” with your fingers to machines and still look in grandma’s eyes, the turtle talking and going to parties in the sky continue to hold the attention of children around the large backyard stone, the turtle will go to the feast of heaven in a spacecraft named XXI Sputnik, dressed in pressure suit and not with skirt of *andala* sheet (sheet of palm trees), as had done centuries ago, but continues to use necklace of sea shells as he had on his first trip. As can be seen, orality definition of a non-specialist is short and is devoid of concepts and definitions, it aims to be the story that time does not erase transmission of inheritance by the words, by custom and way of doing and being. A cumulative reproduction of the teachings and knowledge that the gift of speech allowed preserve up to today.

2.3. The influences of Saotomese culture. In the cultural field, particularly in traditional dance, stand out elements of European origin, eg the Tchiloli and São Lourenço. The Tchiloli (on the island of São Tome) recreates the tragedy led by the Emperor Charlemagne, while São Lourenço (on the island of Príncipe) is the confrontation between the Christian Crusaders and the Moors. Both events are passed in a non-African context, much less the archipelago. They go by, mainly, from generation to generation orally, keeping an astonishing fidelity to the text and the original form. For its part, the *Danço Congo* and *Puíta* are African-oriented events that has perpetuated through the transmission of generational heritage, the practices of the African community of the islands.

Music is the transverse element to these events, also passed from generation to generation by orally. To mention that the famous “*pitu doxi*” (sweet whistle in free translation), basic sound element Tchiloli, has variations according to the characters that players should know and play at certain times of the show. Cultural influences from other regions of the globe crease the Saotomese daily lives and in the music we can see it in "guitar playing" and performing some percussion instruments among others, the signs of musical influences from various regions of the planet. In fact, what is Saotomese music? Is it the music played or produced by Saotomese, is it only Saotomese traditional music?! Globalization brings us increasingly new trends and new musical products, therefore the communication aspects should follow these trends and throws us new challenges. So we are talking about new habits, new cultures and adaptations in host societies of these trends.

3. SAOTOMESE MUSIC

3.1 Linguistic influences. The music of São Tomé e Príncipe plays the role of transmitting element of the Creoles, especially *fôrro*, the most spoken, because it was through it that many “*vessus*” were transmitted between generations and it also served to circumvent the colonial policy to suppress any manifestation of language than Portuguese that privileged speakers of Portuguese and those who were closest behavior of the ruling class. It is for this reason that many of the best known music sets the archipelago make mention of popular sayings in creole languages and few are sung in Portuguese. To illustrate reproduces a letter from the Leonino ensemble, extinct in the mid-60s of last century:

“*Lioninu fla ê sá pema/ tudu kuà dê ka valê/ Punda ê bili ndokmbó da Desu kondê zudê/ ê ka da klosô,*

da kanvi bila da zetê/ pa non pê kandja ledê pê uwê di Santome” [Leonino says it's a palm tree / that everything has its value / because she harbored Jesus in your pantry / so that it escaped the Jews / she gives lump, "kanvi" and olive oil to make candles and put next to São Tomé.]

It is common to two friends talking on the land songs, especially “*vungus de nostempu*” (the old songs). It is easily deducible that it is the communion between the music and the transmission of identity, this sort of way of "collective self" by time, which is the wealth of what we are and the obligation to make the transmission of this legacy as the well we received from others. He told me:

“... I learned the songs and *fôrro* (native language from São Tome Island as in Príncipe there is the *lingwié* and there is still the *angolar* spoken by *angolar* community) just by listening to the songs on the radio. In my house there was no talk in *fôrro* nor we were allowed to speak *fôrro* but learned, along with another colleague, listening to the radio and singing on the way to the school the music of Pedro de Leonenses.”

Note that in the colonial regime many families did not allow the children to speak the native languages in a protective attempt to ensure the integration of children in society where the dominant and domineering language was, and remains, the Portuguese. Success depended much to be as close as possible stereotype defined and represented by elements of the ruling class and dominating and the language was one of the key attributes to be accepted. But what happened was that the native languages entered through the crack of the windows and made "our Portuguese" in Portuguese different which is perfectly understandable hear “*hoje eu molhei uma chuva, minha gente*” [today I watered a rain, folks]. We are like this, “*nesse português de nós*” [this Portuguese us], is we who “*molhamos a chuva*” [Water the rain] and when someone wants to say that is going ahead the way what it says is “*eu cai frente*” [I fell forward].

3.2 The orality and its elements. The orality takes into account the following elements: 1 - Knowing, stories brought by the mouths of the grandfathers and grandmothers, leaves and words that heal, fruits, leaves and secrets that delight stomachs, the “*vessus*” and the “*sóias*” that convey the sense of good and evil, styles like the captain of Montalvão sing their exploits on the battlefield and the hectic way of Reinaldo de Montalvão among many other things that crossed the times in the words of the grandfathers and grandmothers.

The only way to wag the tail skirt a round of *socopé*, the cadence of *ussua* (typical dance); 2 - People, the main protagonists are the people, the reservoir of knowledge and know that the power of verb ensures the continuation and improvement of the social gene that identifies us wherever we are and no matter how far we are the big backyard stone and wheel of grandchildren sitting to hear the stories of turtle wives. The cry of “*aguedê ê*” takes enough strength to cross the seas and ride on the clouds to distant lands whatever a Saotomese is. Here is an incomplete definition, of course, of orality to a friend who moved here to fulfill the purpose of seeing who is not an expert of what you do not know, trying to convince those who do not know and those who know they can talk about what you do not know even when doing so is a great impudence front of skulls that “*kumé papel, bebe txinta*” (ate paper drank ink) the benches of schools and libraries.

3.3 Saotomese musicians. Saotomese music born with the population of the islands because this thing of “*buta klosson ba longi*” (shoot the heart away, if abstracting, have fun) accompanies people all over the place where they go and relieve the souls in the most painful moments, as they were for many of the early inhabitants of the islands, constituted mostly by people who were hunted and shackled on their land and taken huddled in basements of boats to be “parts sales” stoppages that not dreamed existed. Thus immense musical instruments, more rudimentary than others, were created over time. Because music is, as says the lecturer and writer Albertino Bragança,

...music always accompanies man in the meandering paths of its existence through the centuries... (Bragança, 2015)

As evidenced writings, and in this particular Lúcio Neto Amado (Amado, 2010), “the history of musical ensembles Saotomese lost in time” as lost in time several episodes of Saotomese existence. Regarding Saotomese music, according to the cited author:

musical groups of São Tomé e Príncipe archipelago emerged roughly in the nineteenth century, regimented initially as philharmonics bands, musical groups, choirs and ensembles. (Amado, 2010:17).

It is so since the eighties of the nineteenth century refers to performances of Saotomese musical groups in some European cities, as stated by António Ambrósio cited by Lúcio Amado Neto (Amado, 2010), “that the Antwerp Expo in 1885, accomplished as high success”.

From XIX to XXI century there has been a lot of water under the bridge, for good and ill, losing some values such as the fact that

... points out that between 1920 and 1969, the elements of Saotomese musical ensembles knew all read and played through agendas.”, Lúcio Amado Neto, in degree that at “end of 1960, the Leonine ensemble, directed by Quintero Aguiar, was of the few still playing using staves, a feat never achieved by the generations that succeeded him (Amado, 2010).

Many groups were born and many others died leaving in memory of in many tunes, but especially “*vessus*” that depict Saotomese way of being, thinking and facing life. The role of music as a transmitter of Saotomese identity, the grandfather tells the story of the tortoise, continues. According Albertino Bragança:

From the most pristine times, music plays a social role of the primary magnitude, assuming, in particular, as a major translator of complex states of the soul..., Albertino Bragança (Bragança, 2015:29-30).

And in São Tomé e Príncipe, it played that role in a very special way, preserving the native languages that otherwise would have much less social penetration, as we can deduct from the words of “my friend” learned that the liner through the songs. The music was not only one of the factors that greatly contributed to the transmission of the unwritten languages and endangered, as contributed to transmit the teachings, sayings, proverbs resulting from an accumulation of wisdom and respect to the nature of islands, forged during the five centuries of existence of the human community on the islands because it, relying on the means of radio transmission, thus exceeded the limitation of the scope of the human voice and extended to the archipelago making heard more frequently and even the most recondite *luchan* (little town).

Even when the islander moved to far and distant lands was accompanied of his cassette tape with its *ditty* of the land to keep the connecting chain with what is their identity and go teach their the “*vessus*” that have learned in the great backyard stone. From this point of view, the music took on its role as in grandmother around which the grandchildren go take teaching and creating the linkage, otherwise and as a result of new social needs, were forced to leave “*kintés*” and the warmth of the earth. It can be said that the musical groups of São Tomé e Príncipe arise “during the nineteenth century, regimented initially as philharmonic bands” (Amado, 2011), the hands of the missionaries who apart from other disciplines,

introduced the study of music, as can be inferred from the cite that Lúcio Amado makes from (Ambrósio, 1984): “says that introducing here an association of this nature, which is in charge of sending for Lisbon a teacher of Music, to organize a philharmonic”. According to the author, the first musical group of São Tomé e Príncipe have emerged in 1883, with the same band made tours by Europe, especially in the cities of Paris and Vienna.

However, the mass of musical groups occurs in the mid-twentieth century with the appearance of several groups. These musical groups are critical in the transmission and support of national languages, sayings and “*vessus*”, that this highlighted by Albertino Bragança (Bragança, 2015), while making reference to the metaphorical character of those sayings and “*vessus*”: “In linking the poetry that was behind it, its structure was not made to be of a sharp scornfully and social critique of complex interpretation because based on an intricate proverbs network that hindered his understanding, reflected essentially society São Tomé at the time.” These are ensembles with their lyrics entered into the hearts of popular and addressing issues of the day-to-day life of those people who keep alive the interest of national languages as a transmitter vehicle of knowledge and expertise since they were banned from public schools and, as paradoxical as it may seem, the houses of natives that wanted to integrate in colonial society.

In the 50s and 60s of the twentieth century, we are witnessing the musical ensembles O Almense, Conjunto Vitória, Os CTT, Filomena, O Trindadense, O Maracujá and others, still using barrels (to resonate the sound) and funnels in cheer *fundões* (precincts dances) with their songs and transmitting beliefs and flavors of the islands, as you can still hear the voice Sum Alvarinho:

“*Tindaji ê/ ô Tindaji/ Flegueja de Desu Padê ku Sama Nazalê/ Tindaji ê/ ô Tindaji/ Bô sa men di flegueja di San Tomê*” [Trindade/ Trindade/ Parish Father God/ and our Lady of Nazaré / She is the mother of the parishes of São Tomé]

More recently, in the mid-70s of the twentieth century, there are ensembles, with means to electric instruments, Os Untués, Os Leonenses, Os Kibanzas, Africa Negra and Sangazuza, that continuing the tradition carry on supporting all repertoires basically in national languages and reproducing the knowledge they acquire listening to the older and the tradition. This is how we saw to the ensemble Sangazuza, using the deeper the proverbial culture in *Gita*:

“*Plovia de suba ku sobê/ ku fâ awa toma poson/ manda ku gita desê ni awa nglanji/ bi da quebla ni*

pôto Glesa da Sé” [Because of heavy rain / which caused a flood / a gita down the river Agua Grande / to come to laugh the doors of the Igreja da Sé].

In the migratory circle frame, and as the result of the Saotomese diaspora, begin to ascend musical groups and names of artists who will show awareness of the image of São Tomé e Príncipe in the musical context. This is the case of Calema, Anastácia de Carvalho, Marta Dias, Tonecas among many others emerging in the international market. In 90 years younger than arise: Experience V e os Young Star’s. As for easy listening music, in 2016 is born in band "Ecuador", the latest group of elements that once belonged reference groups in the scene of São Tomé and for various reasons dispersed due to migration. The traditional music, we cite some references “*bulawês*” characterized by mixing percussion instruments with the mouth organ, guitars and electric guitars: Chão-Chão, 5 de novembro, Pastelin de Úbua-Cabra among many groups of *bulawês*...

4. CONCLUSIONS & ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This article was based on an meeting (Tertulia "The Orality and Saotomean Music - Their Influences") that took place in a room with about sixty people, with the purpose of promoting orality, knowledge sharing and raise awareness of Saotomese music organized by CulturFACE - Cultural Association for Development involving orality Saotomese aspects through skits or messages from the popular context, and reveal some aspects of Saotomese music, considering the influences as the result of globalization, it was revealed some manifestation of cultural aspects, economies of scale and market. Create a Center for Research and Development in CulturFACE Association for research, study, promotion and dissemination of cultural heritage, organizing events, initiatives and cultural demonstrations; edit and publish studies or works and cultural dissemination materials, making use of information and communication technologies; application of music as a factor of social inclusion and contribution to development.

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