

**CABO-VERDEAN MUSICAL EXPRESSIONS,
THEIR ROLE AND IMPORTANCE IN THE STRUGGLE
FOR INDEPENDENCE AND AFTER**

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Cape-Verdean musical expressions, their role and importance in the struggle for independence and after¹

Cape Verdean musical expressions are related in various ways to the end of colonialism. Morna and koladera were deliberately employed by activists to transmit their messages. Others, such as batuku and funaná were not evidently linked to the struggle. The present work demonstrates the complexity of the relationships between these musical expressions and Cape Verde's political trajectory. Based on an interdisciplinary methodology, with an emphasis on sources such as the press and discography, I question the tendency, found both in contemporary language and sometimes in academic texts, to associate the morna exclusively with the semantic field of love. At the same time, I seek to relativise the militant attitude associated with the batuku and the funaná.

Keywords: Cape Verde, Cape-Verdean music, activist music, protest music, Guinean and Cape-Verdean independence struggles, post-independence

As expressões musicais em Cabo Verde, seu papel e estatuto na luta de libertação e no pós-independência

As expressões musicais cabo-verdianas relacionaram-se, de diferentes maneiras, com o fim do colonialismo. A algumas delas, como a morna e a koladera, os compositores militantes recorreram deliberadamente para transmitir as suas mensagens. Outras, como o batuku e o funaná, não estiveram de forma evidente associadas à luta. Este artigo procura apresentar a complexidade das relações destas expressões musicais com a trajetória política de Cabo Verde. Com base em metodologia interdisciplinar, com destaque para fontes como imprensa e discografia, além de entrevistas, questiono a tendência, encontrada na linguagem corrente e por vezes em textos académicos, de associar a morna exclusivamente ao campo semântico do amor/sentimentalismo e procuro relativizar a atitude militante/rebelde com frequência atribuída ao batuku e ao funaná.

Palavras-chave: Cabo Verde, música cabo-verdiana, música de intervenção, música de protesto, luta de libertação na Guiné e Cabo Verde, pós-independência

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Music has been used politically in different societies, both by those in hegemonic positions and by those on the opposite side. Ikeda, referring to Balandier's idea of "conflict sociology" in *As Dinâmicas Sociais: Sentido e Poder*, points out that music can be both an "ideological element for maintaining and legitimising hegemony" and a "form of contestation of this hegemony and/or a motivation for transformative actions, such as resistance, or simply the unveiling of reality" (Ikeda, 1995, p. 155). This article addresses the second case, intervention music – or "intervention song", "protest song", "resistance song", among other designations collected by the *Encyclopedia of Portuguese Music* –, which "can truly live and act deeply on sensitivity, stimulating action", according to Fernando Lopes Graça, himself one of the pioneers in this segment in Portugal (Lopes Graça, as cited in Corte-Real, 2010, pp. 220-221).

Music with protest content, Ikeda notes, always deals with inequalities, in which the attitude can be:

denouncing/ questioning; reformist; raising awareness; de-alienating; revolutionary; encouraging belligerent actions; solidarity-based; lamenting; apologetic of revolutionary figures or processes; proposing change; or even cathartic (in the carnivalesque modes of denial and deconstruction of everyday life); ironic/ provocative. (Ikeda, 1995, p. 168)

This author points out that there are also "lyrical-romantic songs [that] can identify revolutionary moments in a group, taking on political significance" (Ikeda, 1995, p. 163), even if, at first glance, or upon first reading, they do not present obvious political content. According to this author, "what effectively marks the ontological status of political music is its construction in the social sphere, often independent of the sound object itself" (Ikeda, 1995, pp. 221-222), which is evident in the instrumental albums that will be presented below. Thus, "added elements such as the form of interpretation, gestures, the space or time in which it is performed, or the political identity of the performer themselves can give it political meaning" (Ikeda, 1995, pp. 221-222).

This article seeks to reveal aspects of protest music produced by Cape Verdians engaged in the anti-colonial struggle, whether compositions prior to the proclamation of independence in 1975 or those created in the early years following independence. It seeks to demonstrate how different local musical expressions related to these two processes – the anti-colonial struggle and the construction of the Republic of Cape Verde. It also references compositions created well before the liberation struggle that are characterised by politicised themes amid the *Estado Novo*.

When it comes to tracing the path of Cape Verdean musical expressions throughout the period leading up to and following the milestone of Cape Verde's independence, some questions arise: did the peasants, a subordinate group whose marginalisation is geographical, economic, and social, create protest music? Was their music used as a weapon of combat by the leaders of the political struggle that began with the founding of the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAIGC) in 1956? In the case of *morna*, which was instrumentalised in the interests of the coloniser, as exemplified below, was it associated with Portuguese colonial power? Or did it participate in the anti-colonial struggle? The starting point of this article is to question the role of the musical genres most widely known in Cape Verde – *morna*, *koladera*, *batuku* and *funaná* – in the context of the liberation struggle.

Considering the links between the privileged classes and colonial power, the assimilation of the coloniser's mentality by the petty bourgeoisie leads them to consider themselves superior to the masses, according to Cabral (1980, pp. 60-61). Following this line of thinking, could we, in opposition, infer that the disadvantaged, those who suffer symbolic violence, as defined by Bourdieu (1989), would be more inclined to protest and fight for change than those who are not as disadvantaged in terms of social, political and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2011)?

In everyday language, as well as in academic works, references are often made to *funaná* and *batuku* – music originating in the rural areas of the island of Santiago – as linked to attitudes of resistance or a militant character. Edward Akintola Hubbard refers to a statement made by singer Mayra Andrade in 2006, when she had just released her first album: "She gave me a brief history of *funaná* before independence, as a music that constantly criticised colonial authority and therefore attracted the wrath of the Portuguese" (Hubbard, 2011, p. 109). On an online music distribution platform, artist Scúru Fitchádo states: "*Funaná* is music of liberation. Fierce music. Anti-colonial music" (Welsh, 2025).² Mai Palmberg states that both *batuku* and *tabanka*,³ "with their obliquely militant lyrics, often contained insults and resentment towards the authorities. *Funaná* was seen as a symbol of resistance to colonial authority in Santiago" (Palmberg, 2002, p. 125, my translation). There is a tendency in the above statements to associate *funaná* with a semantic field of clear anti-colonial, militant attitudes, which sometimes occurs without any effective contestation of politicised attitudes. As will be

² See: <https://daily.bandcamp.com/lists/funana-cape-verde-album-guide>

³ *Tabanka* is a type of mutualist association that, among other activities, celebrates – with processions accompanied by drums, horns, conch shells, and songs – the dates of Catholic saints. It is not a genre of musical performance, although often, as is the case here, it is presented as such (Palmberg, 2002, p. 122).

shown below, *funaná* texts, as a whole, are not particularly militant, even though some may be interpreted as politically biased.

Batuku, based on percussion and singing, with collective performances mainly by groups of women, in its traditional version, only around the year 2000 began to be considered on an equal footing with other Cape Verdean musical genres, when it was recreated by urban musicians in original compositions (Nogueira, 2015, pp. 101-109). *Funaná*, traditionally played on the diatonic accordion, began to be recorded in the 1980s by urban musicians using electric and electronic instruments, and from then on gained widespread public acceptance, becoming a musical genre on a par with *morna* and *koladera* (Gonçalves, 1994, p. 26).

Morna, with its slow tempo and mostly sentimental lyrics, is a Cape Verdean cultural icon that gained international recognition in the 1990s through the voice of the singer Cesária Évora on her world tours. Since 2019, it has been included in UNESCO's list of "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity". In Palmberg's view, *mornas*, "with their lyrics of love and longing, did not stir the masses. *Mornas* rarely contained a political message" (Palmberg, 2002, p. 125). This, however, did not prevent *mornas* from taking part in the struggle for liberation, as I will demonstrate below.

Koladera, with a faster tempo, shares the same fruition spaces as *morna* and is appreciated for pair dancing. It began to spread at the same time as the struggle for liberation. In turn, music originating in 19th-century Europe, particularly the *mazurka*, is a less prominent niche in Cape Verdean musical practices (Nogueira, 2020), but it was also, in some ways, related to the end of colonialism and the beginning of a new era for Cape Verde.

To demonstrate the trajectory of each of these expressions in this process, I used an interdisciplinary methodology, combining contributions from sociology, ethnomusicology, history, and heritage studies, in their intangible aspect. The main source of research was the discographic collection I built over years of research into musical practices from/ in Cape Verde, from which I had access to phonograms and lyrics of compositions (see Nogueira 2016a, pp. 645-656). From a bibliographical point of view, the highlights are the newspaper *Voz di Povo* and the magazine *Mujer* (1980s) for independent Cape Verde; for the colonial period, publications such as *O Mundo Português - Revista de Cultura e Propaganda*, *Arte e Literatura Coloniais*; *As ilhas Portuguesas de Cabo Verde*; and *Exposição Colonial Portuguesa*. More recent works on Cape Verdean music (Cidra, 2011; Gonçalves, 2006; Hurley-Glowa, 1997; Rodrigues, 2017) also contributed to this reflection. Interviews with people directly involved in the liberation struggle, as part of var-

ious works I have produced, were also important in obtaining information (see Nogueira, 2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2020).

Two segments relate to this theme. On the one hand, there is so-called intervention music, or protest music, which is intentionally created to denounce and protest against a situation that needs to be changed, urging the listener to intervene, take political action, and engage in a struggle. On the other hand, regardless of the specific struggle, there are songs that contribute to the development of critical awareness of the reality experienced. As Ikeda points out, "from the perspective of anti-hegemonic actions, we can visualise the relationship between music and politics in two basic ways": those associated with organised political movements and those that are a "realistic perceptual result of the social", using concealed languages (Ikeda, 1995, p. 156).

Imperialist domination, according to Amílcar Cabral, requires for its own security "cultural oppression and the attempt to eliminate, directly or indirectly, the essential elements of the culture of the dominated people". However, the author and independence leader continues, the liberation movement only arises and develops because the dominated people "keep their culture alive, despite the permanent and organised repression of their cultural life; because, with their political and military resistance nullified, they continue to resist culturally" (Cabral, 1980, p. 75). Following Cabral, it is important to ask whether the most repressed Cape Verdean musical expressions (*batuku* and *funaná*) were particularly related to the anti-colonial struggle and whether they were used to raise awareness among Cape Verdeans.

Batuku: from coded language to mass persuasion

The current *batuku* is probably the oldest musical expression in Cape Verde, as it is the heir to forms of *batuque*⁴ practised by the groups of enslaved Africans who began settling the islands. There are abundant references to forms of contempt and repression of its practice by the Catholic Church and the administrative and police authorities (Nogueira, 2015, pp. 73-77). It was after independence that its status began to change. Weeks before independence was declared, *batuku* was featured in a cultural soirée organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the transitional government,⁵ which earned it a review by journalist

⁴ A word used in Portuguese throughout the colonial period to refer to all forms of music and dance practised by black people. To specify the musical genre associated with the island of Santiago, Cape Verde, I adopt the spelling used in Cape Verdean language, *batuku*.

⁵ The transitional government, established by the Lisbon Agreement signed on 19 December 1974 between the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) and the Portuguese authorities, remained in place until independence was declared on 5 July 1975.

Manuel Delgado (under the pseudonym Wanga), then a young man engaged in the struggle of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) against the colonial regime: "*Batuko* only gained the right to take to the theatre stage with the rise to prominence of the people who created it. In this sense, it is a novelty", writes Wanga, who continues:

And one feels like asking who was applauded: the frenzied rhythm and the words muttered between clenched teeth, or the people who danced? The moment of liberation is a moment of pride, and the pride of a people must be translated into art: song, dance, words, or even a simple black star painted anywhere. (Wanga, 1975, p. 6)

These words reveal a turning point in the status of this expression of popular culture in Santiago within Cape Verdean society, through various opinion makers aligned with the cultural policy pursued by the PAIGC, valuing traditions that had previously been suppressed (Nogueira, 2015, pp. 80-82 and 86). From then on, *batuku* groups frequently performed at events in the city of Praia, where they had previously been practically banned. They participated in government activities, such as vaccination and breastfeeding promotion campaigns, which the government used as a means of communication (Nogueira, 2015, pp. 84-85). Articles about this tradition and its character are published in the magazine *Mujer*, by the Cape Verdean Women's Organisation (OMCV), which is linked to the ruling party. Books with transcriptions of *batuku* and *finason*⁶ songs, with biographies of famous *batukaderas*, are published by the Cape Verdean Institute of Books and Records, among other examples of a process of heritage preservation, in which *batuku* is now recognised as a tradition to be valued (Nogueira, 2015, pp. 87-88 and 118-124). Until then, only a few collections of *finason* songs had been published sporadically in the magazine *Claridade* and in *Folclore Caboverdiano*, by Pedro Cardoso (1983), whose first edition dates from 1933, but the emphasis given to their creators as producers of culture makes these post-independence editions stand out.

Given the history of repression and contempt, it would be reasonable to assume that *batuku* groups may have played some role in the struggle for liberation. However, this was not the case, at least in the broadcasts of *Rádio Libertação*, which transmitted from Guinea-Conakry, seeking to mobilise Cape Verdeans and Guineans for the struggle and also to raise awareness among the Portuguese

⁶ *Finason*: songs that are partly improvised and partly already known, which, at a certain point during the *batuku* performance, are sung by a soloist, with uplifting messages, advice and proverbs, differing from the more lively and playful part (named *sambuna*). It is practically non-existent in current groups (Nogueira, 2015, pp. 37-38).

military. According to Amélia Araújo, responsible for programming at the clandestine radio station, apart from music from Guinea, which they recorded locally, what they had available to broadcast from Cape Verde were records that contained almost exclusively *mornas* and *koladeras* (personal communication, February 2010)⁷, since there were no recordings of *batuku* songs, which only began to be collected after independence. Pedro Martins, who worked underground in the interior of the island of Santiago, reported that militants tried to influence *batukaderas* by passing them excerpts from Kaoberdiano Dambará's⁸ book *Nôti* (1964) (P. Martins, personal communication, May 2020), "to show that something was happening (...) like sowing seeds among the people"⁹. This book contains the poem *Batuku* – with verses such as "*batuku e nos aima*" (...) "*Nu nase nu atxa-l / Nu ta more nu ta dexe-l*"¹⁰ – in which the poet conveys the significance of this music/ dance for the people of Santiago. According to Vieira Lopes (F. Vieira Lopes, personal communication, July 2014)¹¹, the poem circulated in handwritten sheets in Praia between 1961 and 1962, before appearing in the book published in France by the PAIGC, which also included it in the LP *Poesia Caboverdiana – Protesto e Luta*.¹²

Given the repressive apparatus to which they were subjected – with denunciations, arrests and fines, in a context in which the Catholic Church and the colonial administration acted in unison (Nogueira, 2015, pp. 73-77) – and the distance that the creators of *batuku* were from technological resources that would allow their recording and dissemination, these songs were very rarely recorded, even in the form of text. Nevertheless, it can be inferred that critical verses certainly existed, a very clear example being those reproduced in *Claridade* magazine, well before the start of the anti-colonial struggle, which speak of a day, in the future, when the established situation will change:

Branco ta morá na sobrado
Mulato ta morá na loja,
Négo ta morá na funco,

⁷ Interview conducted as part of a master's degree in Heritage and Development, on the subject of *batuku* (see Nogueira, 2015, p.79).

⁸ Pseudonym of Felisberto Vieira Lopes, a lawyer who, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, defended activists who had fallen into the hands of the PIDE. For essayist José Luís Hopffer Almada, he is the poet who "invented Creole Negritude" (Almada, in Veiga, 1998, p. 143).

⁹ Interview conducted as part of the master's degree in Heritage and Development (see Nogueira, 2015, pp. 79–80).

¹⁰ *Batuku* is our soul (...) / We are born and find it here / We die and leave it here (my translation).

¹¹ Interview conducted for the book *Batuku de Cabo Verde. Percorso histórico-musical* (see Nogueira, 2015, pp. 79–80).

¹² Poem "Batuku": https://youtu.be/RyAS2jTHzOQ?si=dAax0__h6EQmInp

Sancho ta mora na rotcha.
Ta bem um dia,
Nhô Trasco Lambasco,
Rosto frangido,
Rabo comprido,
Tá corrê co nego di funco,
Nego ta corrê co mulato di loja,
Mulato co branco di sobrado,
Branco ta bá rotcha, el ta tomba... (Claridade, 6, julho 1948, p. 36)¹³

Regarding musical collections in Angola during the colonial period, Valentim states: "the complexity of the meanings inscribed in the songs is due to the use of metaphor and poetic and symbolic language". This author also notes that certain meanings of words "can be strategically preserved and directed only at an audience that has the necessary sociolinguistic tools to decipher them" (Valentim, 2018, p. 230). These ideas apply to *batuku* and *finason* songs, which are rich in expressions that are difficult to understand for those outside the rural world of Santiago and which their creators used to resort to, producing a concealed language.

***Funaná*: from resistance in the countryside to national conquest, overcoming complexes**

Like *batuku*, *funaná* appears in events organised within the cultural policy of the newly created Republic of Cape Verde, after having been neglected during the colonial period by the urban population of the island and, on the other islands, considering the transport difficulties in this insular territory, it was even unknown until approximately the 1970s. According to musician Sema Lopi, before independence, the only time public performances of *funaná* were allowed in his community was during an annual agricultural festival sponsored by the church (Hurley-Glowa, 1997, p. 303). An interview with singer Bana in *Farol* magazine illustrates well the limits of *funaná's* reach. A native of São Vicente, whose journey took him first to Dakar and then to Rotterdam, with a stop in Paris before settling in Lisbon, Bana states he only heard *funaná* after independence:

¹³ Branco mora no sobrado (casa abastada) / Mulato mora na loja (habitualmente na parte inferior – rés-do-chão do sobrado) / Negro mora no *funco* (habitação pobre, espécie de cabana; em Cabo Verde, feita de pedra e coberta de palha) / Macaco mora na rocha (barranco/precipício). / Um dia, o Sr. Trasco Lambasco / Rosto franzido / Rabo comprido / Expulsa o negro do *funco* / Negro expulsa o mulato da loja / Mulato expulsa o branco do sobrado / E o branco vai para a rocha, e cai... (my translation).

I was unaware of the existence of *funaná*, and one of the things that made me sceptical about it was that I watched some of Katchás' rehearsals in France, when he was trying to shape this musical style and then take it to Cape Verde. So I had my doubts about whether *funaná* was Cape Verdean folklore.¹⁴ (Pinheiro, 1990, p. 13)

In turn, Adélcia Pires, leader of the Abel Djassi Pioneers Organisation of Cape Verde (OPAD-CV) in the 1980s, reveals in an interview: "At that time, people did not know the culture of the other islands [...] I discovered, for example, the *mazurka*, how it was danced; *batuku*, *funaná* [...] I didn't even know they existed. In our day, it was only *morna* and *koladera*" (A. Pires, personal communication, January 2018),¹⁵ which confirms the absence of *funaná* in the repertoires known to the Cape Verdean public in general before independence.

Given the subordination of rural inhabitants, one wonders whether *funaná* did not secretly carry messages of rebellion. In her fieldwork in Santiago, although led to believe by the writings of other researchers that *funaná* "was protest music, expressing the frustrations of the *badios*¹⁶ over the cultural oppression they had suffered throughout the years", Susan Hurley-Glowa (1997, p. 360; my translation) did not find the militant texts she had imagined she would find. She notes that acoustic *funaná* compositions (the most traditional version) are "notably absent" of "songs that explicitly address Cape Verdean politics, the years of struggle for independence, racial discrimination, or pan-African unity" (Hurley-Glowa, 1997, p. 359). The author considers that, although there may have been songs that criticised colonialism more openly, "the role of *funaná* in the struggle for independence has been exaggerated by American scholars", including herself, she admits (Hurley-Glowa, 1997, p. 361). What she actually found in the field, she says, were lyrics with "nostalgic memories of life in Santiago, with people and events in local communities, with relationships between the sexes and with the difficulties of Cape Verdean life due to circumstances beyond individual control, such as drought and famine" (Hurley-Glowa, 1997, p. 360). From this description, the composition "Fomi 47" (Codé di Dona) is a paradigmatic example.

¹⁴ The use of the word "folklore" in everyday language in Cape Verde often has the meaning of "traditional music" or "popular music" (see Nogueira, 2020, pp. 13-14 on this issue) but without necessarily being associated with rural contexts, as characterised by Castelo-Branco in the entry "traditional music" in the Encyclopaedia of Portuguese Music in the 20th Century (2010).

¹⁵ Interview conducted as part of a PhD thesis on Portuguese Heritage, focusing on music and dance of European origin in Cape Verde (see Nogueira, 2020, p. 256).

¹⁶ *Badio/badiu*, in the Cape Verdean language, refers to the people of the island of Santiago. Derived from the term "vadio" (see Silva, 1995, pp. 70-71), this word is a case of stigma being redefined, and is now used as a claim to identity.

Memories of the colonial period and the expression of social issues in two compositions

In the lyrics of "Fomi 47", Codé di Dona recounts an autobiographical episode of his near departure for the plantations of São Tomé and Príncipe. There is no explicit criticism, but the simple narration of the situation of hunger, the registration for embarkation, and the sight of the ship's arrival are imbued with enormous symbolic meaning.

*Éra na 59
Txuba skoregadu
Dizanimadu d' nha bida
N djobe Santa pa N ben Santomé
É na praia Santa Maria
Na skritóriu Fernandi Soza
N da nómi, es poi na papel
Es da-m nunbru 37
(...)
N da rinkada N bai pilorinhu
N txiga na Bibi di Rikéta
N pô-l nha prubuléma
El djuda-m mata fômi
(...)
Kuatú dia ku kuatu noti
Na kuat' óra di madrugada
N odja barku Ana Mafalda
N odja lus toma baía
Fladu Ana Mafalda ki dja ben
Pa leba algen pa Santomé di Prispi
Poi kabésa na txon
(...)
N xinta N kuda bida ("Fomi 47", de Codé di Dona)¹⁷*

¹⁷ Foi em 59 / Com a escassez de chuva / Sem nenhuma alternativa / Tentei registrar-me para S. Tomé / Fui à cidade da Praia / No escritório de Fernando Souza / Dei o meu nome, escreveram / Deram-me o número 37 / Saí em direção ao mercado / Cheguei ao pé da Bibi de Riketa / Partilhei com ela a minha situação / E ela me ajudou a matar a fome (...) / Quatro dias e quatro noites / Às quatro horas da madrugada / Vi o barco Ana Mafalda / E as luzes que encheram a baía / Disseram que Ana Mafalda acabou de chegar / Para levar gente para S. Tomé e Príncipe / Baixei a cabeça / Mergulhado nos desafios da vida (tradução: Calu di Guida, a quem agradeço a colaboração). Note: The title "Fomi 47" refers to the drought of 1947, when thousands of people died of starvation. However, Codé di Dona did not give this title to the composition (the lyrics, incidentally, mention the year 1959). The title was given later, when the song was recorded by the group *Finaçon* (LP *Rabecindadi*, 1987, see <https://youtu.be/bQP05EFz9g0?si=s5-4otxSv5heirLHFclH>).

Another composition that, although not an explicit protest, touches on issues that would have been compromising during the colonial period is “Djonzinho Cabral” (controversial authorship) recorded by *Os Tubarões* on the LP of the same title, released in 1979, with the chorus stating that the peasant will sell his cattle and pay what he owes to the heir, meaning that he will no longer lose his land to him.

Nsímia nha midju nsímia nha fíjon

Npo bongolon npo sapatinha

Txuba ca bem nada ca da

Nada ca tem nem pa limárias cumi

Pa nhu morgado ca tomano txom

Nfla mamai nta bendi boi nta paga

Pa nhu morgado ca tomano txom

*Nfla mamai nta bendi boi nta paga*¹⁸

The entailed estate land tenure system, characterised by a hierarchical relationship between wealthy landowners and landless farmers, was formally abolished in Portugal and its territories in 1863. It is interesting to note how a song that refers to the heir highlights the heir’s presence in collective memory more than 100 years later. Like “Fomi 47”, this composition was recorded only after independence, by Codé di Dona himself, in the 1990s.¹⁹ In other words, even though critical statements were produced in the context of rural *funaná*, it is difficult to infer their involvement in the liberation struggle.

De-alienation, re-Africanisation and the contribution of the elite

As for the content of the compositions, “this history of social conflict came to be discursively worked on from the 1960s onwards by an emerging nationalist class, and in its continuity, by the cultural policies of the single-party political regimes”²⁰ and also “by young musicians from Santiago, living on the islands and in the diaspora” (Cidra, 2011, p. 26). This perspective points to protest songs cre-

¹⁸ Semeei milho, semeei feijão / Semeei bongolon e sapatinha [tipos de feijão] / A chuva não veio, nada brotou / Não deu nada, nem para os animais comerem / Para o Sr. morgado não tomar a nossa terra / Disse “Mãe, Vou vender um boi e pago a dívida” (agradeço a Calu di Guida pelo apoio na tradução). See. https://youtu.be/ydEPYy9oo5I?si=IhbuHW_ag-nwzw1R

¹⁹ Cape Verde - Kode di Dona: https://youtu.be/JBq35mo1WKg?si=dN_ds81lmZWY59J2 (“Fomi 47”: from 09:04). The album’s repertoire as a whole corroborates Hurley-Glowa’s assertion that the lyrics of traditional *funaná* are not militant in nature.

²⁰ The PAIGC regime, from independence until 1980, and the PAICV regime from 1981 to 1991.

ated by an elite (university students, emigrants, leaders of the liberation movement), as evidenced by the testimony of militant Pedro Martins and by the poems of Kaoberdiano Dambará, which convey awareness.

Amílcar Cabral, himself a member of this local elite, does not minimise the contribution that people from privileged social groups can make to the struggle (Cabral, 1980, p. 63). Mário Pinto de Andrade recalls that Cabral:

He did not practise any automatism between popular extraction and the degree or quality of political militancy. He understood that a man of peasant origin is not necessarily a revolutionary, that an individual of petty-bourgeois origin can be more revolutionary than another from the popular classes. (Andrade, *No Pintcha*, 1976, p. 9)

For Cabral, this contribution from individuals originating from the elite must stem from their willingness to undergo cultural reconversion in order to combat the alienation promoted by colonial power, which the political leader and theorist called “re-Africanisation” (Cabral, 1980, p. 61)²¹, an attitude that he considered indispensable for the true integration of these militants from privileged backgrounds into the liberation movement.

As will become clear below, with regard to the compositions recorded on albums released by PAIGC and Morabeza Records, with repertoires based on *morna* and *koladera*, those who produced music that was clearly political were activists from the elite (either through university education or through their established socio-economic position as emigrants), several of whom held leadership roles in the struggle and later in the government during the early years of the Republic of Cape Verde. It can thus be observed that the segments that played a role in the identity construction of the new country — such as *batuku* and *funaná* — were not those from which protest music emerged in the previous period.

In the newly created Republic of Cape Verde, the appreciation of traditions and popular arts created fertile ground for the emergence of the Bulimundo group in 1978, bringing together young musicians interested in working with the *funaná* rhythm using the electric instruments of an urban group, in tune with the pop music of the time and rock. It was from 1980 onwards, with the rise of this group on the Cape Verdean music scene, that *funaná* became fully established as a national musical genre. “*Novo Funaná* is undoubtedly the greatest achievement

²¹ The idea of re-Africanisation emerged in debates at the *Casa dos Estudantes do Império* in Lisbon in the 1940s, among a group of young people that included several future leaders of the anti-colonial struggle in the Portuguese colonies. It later became one of the slogans of the struggle and was used by Cabral in several of his speeches.

of Cape Verdean music in its evolution“, wrote Carlos Gonçalves (1994, p. 26), a journalist, musician and keen observer of this process.

This conquest of a new audience was not immediate or easy, according to Katchás, the founder and leader of Bulimundo in its early stages. First, it was necessary to raise awareness among musicians, “because there was a whole complex (...) given that we had always been taught that [*funaná*] was an inferior genre, played by people who were also inferior, without any culture, without access to music, etc.” (Bulimundo, *Voz di Povo*, 15 March 1980, p. 8). Initially, it was necessary, reveals Katchás,

get the members of the group to like the music, then take it to the people most receptive to this genre, which is our rural population, and thirdly, reach the people of the plateau [the historic centre of the Cape Verdean capital, which was where the urban population was concentrated at the time], which was the most difficult. (*Voz di Povo*, 15 March 1980, p. 8)

From then on, *funaná* reached urban audiences, spreading to other islands and Cape Verdean emigrant communities, and began to be enjoyed by people from higher social strata than those of its original milieu. As a result of this counter-hegemonic attitude of countering prejudiced ideas, *funaná* came to be regarded as a Cape Verdean musical genre on the same level as *morna* and *koladera*, which had previously been the only accepted genres.

From the instrumentalisation of *morna* to protest and struggle *mornas*

In the mid-20th century, several authors published texts on *morna*, reinforcing the idea that Cape Verdean culture leaned more towards Europe than Africa. Some examples: “the music of the Cape Verdean people has gained greatly from the influences of whites, islanders and metropolitanites, and has lost almost all traces of notably African music” (Correia, 1939, p. 302) or “*Batuque* is fading away in the face of the new dance style [*morna*], where there is no trace of black ancestry” (Duarte, 1934, p. 13), or even: “The typical dance of Cape Verde is not a form of *batuque*, but *morna* — a pair dancing, as civilised as the old dances of our [European] salons” (Oliveira, 1956, p. 34). At colonial exhibitions, such as the one held in Porto in 1934 or the one held in Lisbon in 1940, *morna* was always presented as the typical and representative musical expression of Cape Verde, omitting the others (Nogueira, 2007, pp. 163-173; 2015, p. 71). Later, in the 1960s, tours to promote *morna*, such as that of *Conjunto de Cabo Verde* in 1962, touring Portugal

and recording albums with the support of the *Agência Geral do Ultramar*, or that of the group *Ritmos Cabo-Verdianos* in Dakar in 1963 (Nogueira, 2016a, pp. 132 and 461) were part of a strategy to win the sympathy of Cape Verdeans, when the colonial war was already underway.

Given its obvious instrumentalisation, one might suppose that something similar to what happened with fado occurred with *morna*, which the Salazar regime used "to create a collective consciousness of Portuguese identity" (Sardo, 2014, p. 65). It is, however, quite clear that *morna* was not associated with colonialism and played a part in the process that led to independence. This is demonstrated by a considerable number of composers who were combatants in the liberation struggle or clearly supported the ideals of independence when it was newly achieved. Manuel d'Novas and Kaká Barbosa are among the latter. Manuel d'Novas composed the song "5 de Julho" (LP *Tchon di Morgado*, 1978, by the group *Os Tubarões*),²² which takes its title from the date of the proclamation of the Republic of Cape Verde. Barbosa, in turn, in the lyrics of "Nha terra aonte e aoje" (LP *Tabanca*, 1980, also by *Os Tubarões*)²³ compares the lives of Cape Verdeans before and after independence.²⁴

On the other hand, there are *mornas* created and recorded during the struggle. Abílio Duarte, Luís Fonseca and Waldemar Lopes da Silva,²⁵ fighters in the anti-colonial struggle, produced *mornas* as vehicles for political messages, some of them clearly exhortatory. It should be noted that the LP *Música Cabo-Verdiana – Protesto e Luta*, released by the PAIGC in 1973, consists of 12 tracks, seven of which are *mornas*.²⁶ Juliana Braz Dias, in her thesis on *morna* as an icon of Cape Verdean identity, states that in the process of independence, *morna*, which was previously an "expression of Lusitanian identity", became an "index of African identity". Although it remained a "symbol of Cape Verdean originality", it was at the same time "an instrument for recreating the bond with the African continent" (Dias, 2004, p. 90).

For Luís Fonseca, author of "Morna Nobo", which he wrote partly during his imprisonment in the Tarrafal concentration camp, there are two distinct periods: one probably lasting until the late 1960s, when *morna* served as a subtle means

²² "5 de Julho", recording by *Os Tubarões*. <https://youtu.be/1BuC4B-HZQM?si=xPNvFXMNI71RC5gT>

²³ "Nha terra aonte e aoje", recording by *Os Tubarões*. <https://youtu.be/D2Dgcs0qELY?si=4KHeP3V8no-wIZFg>

²⁴ For the lyrics of the compositions referred to in this section, see <https://www.caboverdeamusica.online/letras-musicaintervencao/>

²⁵ For biographical profiles of all composers mentioned in this text, see Nogueira, 2016a.

²⁶ LP *Música Cabo Verdiana – Protesto e Luta*: "Morna nobo", "Emigrante", "Céu de São Tomé", "Nova aurora", "Seis one na Tarrafal", "Guerrilheiro", "Mãe" (*mornas*); "Posse bronk", "Tropa", "É pa mar", "Nho Queiton" (*koladeras*); P.A.I. (*samba*). The audio for the tracks on this album can be found at: <https://www.caboverdeamusica.online/musica-de-intervencao-em-cabo-verde/>

of transmitting messages, even though the lyrics may not have been written with this deliberate intention; another with a clear propagandistic intention, as in the case of “Morna Nobo”, whose objective “was really to support the mobilisation of the people” (L. Fonseca, personal communication, April 2016).²⁷ The compositions in the first group, according to Fonseca, coinciding with Ikeda (1995, p. 163), albeit unintentionally, or at least not explicitly, “already reflected some resistance on the part of the composer and society to colonialism”. Among the compositions that fit this pattern are “Fidjo de Ninguém” and “Stóra di Nha Vida” by Djunga de Biluca (founder of the *Casa Silva* and Morabeza Records labels in the Netherlands and a crucial figure in the Dutch core of the liberation struggle); “Stóra di Nha Vida”; “Carta de contratado” (José Araújo, leader of the PAIGC during the struggle and later minister in Cape Verde); and “Fidjo Maguado” by Jotamonte. Examples of *mornas* with more militant language are “Emigrante” (Abílio Duarte), which reminds Cape Verdeans that they would not need to emigrate in mass if it were not for “so much crying and misery” – a reference to the cyclical crises of drought and famine; and “Mãe” (Waldemar Lopes da Silva), which clearly speaks of joining the guerrilla movement, stating that every drop of blood shed by the combatants is in pursuit of future happiness.²⁸

Going back to the 1940s, well before the start of the liberation struggle, several compositions can be identified that stand out for the political content of their lyrics, at a time when the *Estado Novo* was at its peak. “São Vicente de Longe” (60 years later, one of Cesária Évora’s hits on her 2001 album of the same name) is a *morna* by Lela de Maninha, a composer identified by poet and essayist Gabriel Mariano as the founder of “neo-realist *morna*” or, in other words, protest music in Cape Verde (Nogueira, 2016a, pp. 308-309). Also noteworthy for their political and rebellious content are “Hitler ca ta ganha guerra” (Hitler will not win the war) (B. Léza) and “Abissínia” (Anton Tchitché), the latter referring to Mussolini’s 1935 invasion of Eritrea. Examples of *mornas* with lyrics that point to social dramas are also “Fedagosa” and “Rotcha scribida” (both of unknown authorship), about poverty and hunger; “Pinote na vapor” (Manuel d’Novas) and “Fidjo de Ninguém” (Djunga de Biluca and Luís Moraes), about the need to emigrate, among others, from a survey conducted by Rodrigues (2017, pp. 216-250).

The examples presented corroborate that *morna* is not only pain, as stated in the title of an LP by guitarist Humbertona. *Morna Ca So Dor* (1969), an instru-

²⁷ Interview conducted for the preparation of a paper I presented at the VI Congress of the Portuguese Anthropological Association in 2016 (see Nogueira, 2016b).

²⁸ Audio recordings of these compositions can be found at <https://www.caboverdeamusica.online/musica-de-intervencaoem-cabo-verde/>. The lyrics can be found at www.caboverdeamusica.online/letras-musica-intervencao.

mental album with solos of *mornas* and *koladeras*, features a powerful text on the back cover that contradicts the idea present in various texts, particularly those that seek to highlight the proximity to Portuguese culture (Correia, 1939; Duarte, 1934), that *morna* sings only of love and longing.

Morna is the instrument that the people of Cape Verde use to express their suffering and their hope for the future. *Morna* is the people of Cape Verde on the road to São Tomé, in the hold of steamships like a load of coal (...) These are the messages we have inherited from our parents, and the messages we must leave to our children. *Morna* is our protest for the construction of the Cape Verde of tomorrow – a Cape Verde with a wharf; a Cape Verde with steam in the bay, with refinery and factory machines; an airport full of aeroplanes and a land of tourists... A Cape Verde without class differences, without whites or blacks, where every peasant has his piece of land, and every child goes to school. A Cape Verde that no longer sees its children leave for distant lands... And we will continue to make *morna*... No!!... *Morna* is not just pain!!! (Humbertona, back cover of LP *Morna Ca So Dor*, 1969)²⁹

Another example along these lines is the LP *Caboverdianos na Holanda* (1965), instrumental and composed mainly of *mornas* and traditional themes. The cover illustration, showing a hand holding maracas, alludes to a clenched fist as a sign of combat. The text on the back cover, although it speaks of the usual sentimentality of the *morna*, leaves no doubt as to why the record was released:

Cape Verdean music has a painful feeling. Why? Because it is in our songs that we express what our mouths do not say, what our hands do not write. Silent anger, silent disgust, silent despair, words of faith that were never spoken, and confessions that die in our throats... (Biluca, 1965)

These two LPs show how instrumental music – which does not convey any content in the form of lyrics – can also be an element of political struggle.

***Koladera*: weapon of a people who have come of age**

Throughout the 1960s, while the liberation struggle was underway, *koladera* established itself as one of the most recorded and appreciated musical genres by Cape Verdeans, both in the country and in the diaspora. Among the most notable at the time were albums by the group *Voz de Cabo Verde* (first line-up) and *Bana*, both of which always included *koladeras* in their repertoire. It was in the

²⁹ This text appears in Cape Verdean on the LP cover, but I have chosen to present my own translation, with the help of Fátima Bettencourt, whom I would like to thank.

early 1970s that politically engaged compositions began to appear in this genre. On the LP *Música Cabo Verdiana – Protesto e Luta* (PAIGC, 1974), *koladeras* appear as vehicles for explicit political messages: the four *koladeras* on this album reject the Portuguese flag and exalt the black star, symbol of the PAIGC (“É pa mar”); exhorting the colonised people to defend what is theirs, reaffirming their hope in the white parties (“Posse bronk”); and sending away “Nho Queiton” (the Portuguese ruler Marcelo Caetano); “Tropa” is, in turn, incisive and leaves no doubt as to the purpose of the LP, recorded as part of the mobilisation effort for the struggle, when the narrator refuses military conscription and urges others to desert the Portuguese army.

In the post-independence period, *koladeras* continued to be created. On *Os Tubarões’* first LP, *Pépé Lopi*, the opening track is the *koladera* “Labanta Braço” (Alcides Spencer Brito), whose original title was “5 de Julho” (Gonçalves, 2006, p. 11).³⁰ “The song faithfully reproduces the moments of euphoria experienced on 5 July 1975, when it was played in public for the first time”, according to Carlos Gonçalves (2006, p. 198), recalling that moment he witnessed: “(...) the first verse of the poem dictated to the people the title” by which this composition would become known, remembered every year when it comes to celebrating independence. *Tchon di Morgado* (1978), the second of *Os Tubarões*, has a repertoire composed mainly of *koladeras*, one of which is “Patrice Lumumba” (melody by Humberto Évora based on a poem by Ovídio Martins), whose explicit verses about the struggle to end colonialism in Africa mention leaders such as Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Che Guevara and Amílcar Cabral.

In the 1970s, *koladera* emerged as the culmination of a process in which the people, “maturing and freeing themselves from certain shackles”, came of age. In the words of Cape Verdean writer Teobaldo Virgínio,

Emerging as a decompressor of centuries of repression – supported by the resigned cadence of the *morna* in gentle lancinantes (*sic*) in which personal desires were instinctively confused with general tragedy – the *coladeira* (*koladera*) stands out as a cry of defiance and strength of will, giving us a cheerful, playful, uninhibited Cape Verdean... not a man crying over his sorrows, but the joyful and happy atmosphere of his vocation. (*Terra Nova*, March 1979, p. 2)

Four years had passed since independence when this text was published, and its tone reflects the moment of nationalist euphoria that was being experienced: “The *coladeira*, now freed from the police restrictions that all Cape Verdean cul-

³⁰ “Labanta braço”, <https://youtu.be/RfJPqm9ytiY?si=Rt2PX84fQvyGv2u4>

tural flourishing suffered, is documented with a wide range of interventions. Not only singing, ‘danças pertód/falás n’uvid’,³¹ it is also an instrument of social commitment”, writes Teobaldo Virgínio, concluding that *koladera* “is today the Cape Verdean soul in the celebration of nationality” (*Terra Nova*, March 1979, p. 8), which makes clear the prominent role of *koladera* in the context of the liberation struggle and also in the construction of the country. It should also be noted that the humour and social criticism that characterised it in the 1960s, often focusing on female behaviour and revealing sexist and conservative attitudes in gender relations, has diluted over the years (Nogueira & Amado, 2024). The lyrics ceased to focus on this theme, diversifying, and in addition, some women emerged as composers, something quite rare in the past, which shows the effect of the socio-political process itself on the music scene.

Diversity is embraced, without rejecting European influence

A set of European music/dance styles (waltz, polka, mazurka, *contradança* choreography) was introduced to Cape Verde in the 19th century, spreading around the world along colonial routes. They were appropriated and Cape Verdeanised, but by the 1940s, they had been largely forgotten. In the period following independence, they were rediscovered and valued (Nogueira, 2020, pp. 240-247). The simple fact that these songs and dances refer to the colonial period and, more remotely, to the elites of about a century earlier might lead one to suppose that they would be rejected in the post-independence era, as was the case in the French Antilles. In the context of conflicts with the French government from the late 1960s to the 1980s, intellectuals and nationalist activists viewed *quadrilha* and *beguine* as instruments of French subjugation of Guadeloupe (Cyrille, 2009, pp. 204-206).

In Cape Verde, on the other hand, music and dance of European origin, which had been obscured since the 1940s, were rescued from oblivion, precisely at a time when appreciation of African cultural expressions was the order of the day. When asked whether her origins ever worked against those expressions in the context of OPAD-CV and JAAC-CV activities, which encouraged them with competitions and public performances and introduced them into schools, Adélcia Pires replied: “No, on the contrary, for me it was discovering a treasure, see-

³¹ “Dançar apertado, falar-lhes ao ouvido”, an allusion to the *koladera* dance, a favourable moment for gallantry and seduction of one’s partner, and a quote from the lyrics of the *koladera* “Serpentina” (Manuel d’Novas), https://youtu.be/BC7K_1VD0Yw?si=8n2pMYPQXXIZkZYw

ing that each one has its own specificity, something different”.³² The same can be concluded from the magazine *Mujer's* approach to these songs and dances, which, in its second issue, already shows the OMCV's action in preserving these traditions (*Mujer*, April 1982, p. 5). It can thus be seen that these musical expressions benefited from the new cultural policy implemented by the Cape Verdean government so that they would not be completely forgotten and would be accepted as “Cape Verdean tradition”. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the first recording of a *mazurka* after decades of obscurity was in the midst of the liberation struggle, on Frank Mimita's LP *Hora Já Tchegá* (1974).³³ On this album, among several clearly rebellious themes, such as the title track and “Capina Padja” (about work in São Tomé and Príncipe), there are traditional themes, including the *mazurka* “Bingala d’Pó”. The cover features a photo of a crowd carrying a poster with the image of Amílcar Cabral.

Final considerations

At first glance, it may seem paradoxical that *morna*, largely associated with the privileged classes and without any stigma attached to it – quite the contrary, valued and instrumentalised by the colonial regime – was an important vehicle for political messages in the liberation struggle that led to the independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, while *batuku* and *funaná*, expressions of a subalternised and underprivileged section of the population, did not have an equivalent role. Assuming a militant role in these songs from the island of Santiago, as well as in *tabanka*, which is not even a musical genre, is a tendency that is sometimes found, both in everyday language and in academic texts, associating them with a semantic field that encompasses ideas of anti-colonialism, resistance and rebellion. Sometimes, without verifiable data on politicised attitudes and lyrics that can be considered interventionist.

It is understandable that songs originating in the peasant world did not play the leading role that is sometimes attributed to them. The social, political and cultural capital of peasants was low, given their historical background as descendants of slaves; their socio-economic situation was always unfavourable, as a result of subsistence farming in the arid climate of Cape Verde; they were far from urban centres; and they lacked access to recording and communication technology. Benefiting from the cultural policy of the early days of nation-building

³² Interview with Adélcia Pires, which I conducted as part of my PhD in Heritage of Portuguese Influence, on music and dances of European origin in Cape Verde (see Nogueira, 2020, p. 257).

³³ “Bingala d’Pó”, <https://youtu.be/y4zjz2foEXo?si=ygBKREXeaTtPcSV5>

was a stepping stone toward recognising the musical expressions of the *badius* as relevant elements of Cape Verdean culture. In the case of *funaná*, it catapulted it to a status that would have been unthinkable before independence. The same can be said of *batuku*, which has been one of the most prominent musical genres in Cape Verde since the turn of the millennium.

In turn, *morna*, well accepted and instrumentalised by the Portuguese colonial power, ended up revealing itself as an element of subversion of the order that enshrined it, a weapon that composers linked to the cause of independence used in their efforts to raise awareness and exhort people to fight. Even so, we sometimes encounter views that, in some way approaching the statements that sought to bring it closer to Portuguese culture during the colonial period, reproduce that image of romantic and sentimental music, removing from it in that narrative the capacity for participation in awareness-raising actions. *Morna* and *koladera*, urban music recorded on discs since the 1950s and established as what the colonial mentality proposed as “Cape Verdean music”, were effectively put at the service of the struggle.

With this look at how Cape Verdeans engaged in the anti-colonial struggle used popular music to convey their messages, and by analysing the status of various musical expressions in the early years of post-independence, I sought to show the complexity of their trajectory over time – from the 1940s, the era of the first examples of *mornas* with political themes presented here, to the 1980s, when *batuku* and *funaná*, among other traditional expressions, gained ground in the Cape Verdean cultural scene. I believe that highlighting this complexity contributes to our knowledge of the cultural practices of this historical period, the cultural policies of the newly created Cape Verdean state, and the changes in mentality resulting from the process of leaving colonialism behind and beginning nation-building.

From the data analysed, it is clear that different Cape Verdean musical expressions have been related to socio-political issues over time, each in its own way, always revealing — albeit not always in an obvious or propagandistic manner — critical views of the situations experienced, even during the period when the *Estado Novo* maintained structures of censorship and a whole apparatus of repression over popular traditions. On the other hand, I sought to highlight how liberation struggle strategies found in the cultural sphere, and in particular in record production, an important channel for conveying their messages, whether criticising the colonial situation, exhorting the struggle, or later in national reconstruction, corresponding to Amílcar Cabral’s thinking on the role of culture as a weapon for liberation.

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