

arts and humanities

How to do music with images: Photography as a way of remembering, authorizing and materializing the musical heritage.

Maria de Castro,

Susana Sardo

Department of Communication and Art, INET-MD, University of Aveiro

Abstract

This work tries to explore how the use of photography can help map and rebuild the musical heritage of a community thus reversing the apparent static condition of a snapshot image. During the fieldwork that I developed between 2010 and 2012, with the Goan community settled in Catembe (Mozambique), photography has been an important element as a mediator in my relationship with Goans as well as a way of understanding issues often missing in oral discourse. Photography was, frequently, the starting point for descriptions of musical practices, festivals and rituals in which Goans participate or have participated in the past. I argue that photography could be a way of remembering, empower and materialize musical heritage in the context of migrant communities when the condition of deterritorialization fragilize ties with the past and with the place of origin. In this case photography can constitute a device, in the Foucault's (2008) perspective, in providing means of memory restoration which, in this case, is transformed in music.

Goan Community in Catembe (Mozambique)

The formation of Goan community in Mozambique was the result of an intense migratory process whether during the colonial period (as both were Portuguese colonies) as well as during the post-colonial period in each territory. For Goans the migratory design is frequently related to the original working profile in Goa: Individuals intend to create on the migratory destiny the same organization as they had in the place of origin. As a consequence the Catembe region - situated on the outskirts of Maputo Bay, west of the River Tembe and part of the Matutine district (FIG 1), was transformed in a place mostly populated by the Goans who dedicate themselves to the semi-artisanal prawn fishing. There are approximately 45 Goan families in Catembe, who share their daily lives with other Mozambican populations, by establishing commercial relations, or work with them in the maintenance of the Goan fishing boats.



FIG 1: Maputo Bay view from Catembe

Music in the Goan Community of Catembe

As in other migratory contexts, the Goans in Mozambique tended to use musical patrimony as a central issue in defining their identity. They use music by describing activities in the past and by using it as contemporary performances thus confirming their difference and oneness. They use perform and transmit music through performances and rituals, whether of a secular or a profane nature (FIG 2).

Photography as a mediator to authorize musical heritage

Photography as ethnographic documentation has been widely discussed, particularly in the area of anthropology. At the beginning of the 20th century, Malinowski (1922/1976) demonstrated how anthropology could incorporate photography as a method of analysis and as a mean of enhancing the ethnographic narrative. Lévi-Strauss (2004) broadened the scope of photography by giving it a documental role, as a way of preserving unique moments, allowing for the collections and analysis of events, objects and people. The sociologist, Ana Caetano (2009), referred to the use of photography as an instrument with emotional value, capable of creating memories of something that is considered significant with regard to individual or group identity. In the context of Goan community in Catembe, photography is used as a way to restore time, a device of resistance against the omission and disappearance of the Goan identity and musical patrimony, particularly as they can identify the moments in which the music has taken place.

How to do music with images

For Goans in Catembe the musical patrimony which originated in Goa is considered their main icon as a witness of their difference and ancestry. However remembering music in Goa is often difficult or even impossible as Goan's relationship with the place of origin is frequently the result of discursive layers produced by the oldest generations. For the most part of Goans in Catembe Goa is no more than a landscape logged in the memories of their parents or grand-parents. Therefore, the reconstruction of music is frequently done by the analyses of photos, which, in certain way represents an apparent paradox: astaticism is a resource where the dynamism of the performance is kept. Photography confirms the previous existence of music thus offering the possibility for Goans to recreate it and recontextualize it. Personal memories, mediated by static images, become fundamental to this process, in terms of *transferring* (Connerton 1999) musical patrimony. The images of the past are now projected in the present materialized into music. Thus, in accordance with Connerton (1999), in representing their musical patrimony, and their rituals, Goans not only remember them, but allow for a *continuity from the past* (1999) to the present and the future.



FIG 2: Feast in the Catembe St. Peter's Club (c.1950)

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