

Este é Ndaú daqui mesmo [...] este é Ndaú de Búzi”- Echoes of a listening experience of sound archives with descendants, 91 years later¹

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The beginning of the 20th century is marked, in the field of comparative musicology, by the boom in the recording by European institutions of musical traditions in the non- Western world. Mozambique was one of the countries selected to “be recorded” and the 1931 expedition by anthropologists Günther Spannaus and Karl Stülpner signaled the first sound recordings from that region of the world. The expedition to Mozambique is part of seven extensive voyages funded by the Staatlich-Sächsschen Forschungsinstitut für Völkerkunde between 1926 and 1931, as part of a plan to develop some research institutes created and/or selected to become the most avant-garde institutions in the study of the humanities of the time.

This paper intends, on the one hand, to contextualize the expedition to Mozambique within the scope of the general expeditions carried out by the Berliner Phonogramm- Archiv at the beginning of the 20th century; on the other hand, it intends to share the results of the collective listening experiences, in 2022, of the sound recordings of 1931 with the descendants of the recorded voices. The experiences of collective listening are part of the methodological options of my doctoral research, aiming at the future repatriation of sounds to their place of origin.

History of a repatriation Project

In 2011 I discovered that the first recorded sounds from Mozambique were made by two German anthropologists in 1931 - Günther Spannaus and Kurt Stülpner - and were part of the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv wax cylinder collection. At that time, I tried to start the process of repatriating the complete collection composed of 32 wax cylinders in a total of 90 minutes of sound recorded in northern Mozambique with the Ndaú indigenous group.

I contacted the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv but I was told by its Director at the time that repatriation was one of the most important missions of the Archive but it should be carried out by a team that included a researcher from Mozambique on the list and mediated by the Goethe Institute. I was also told that the result of the repatriation would also be turned into an edit of the recorded sounds to be included in the Berliner-Phonogramm Archiv's collection of historical sources edits. In the meantime, I had access to the recordings that have already been transferred

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to a DAT, but I could only hear them in the archive in Berlin. I spent a week in Berlin and during that time, through the hands of Susanne Ziegler, I collected many documents related to the mission. Documents included letters and copies of publications where the recordings were used by other researchers, mainly the former directors of the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv. I returned home with those copies, but only with my notes about the experience of listening to the recordings in a very comfortable and well-equipped room that I was able to use during my stay at the Archives.

In 2019 Orlando Fernão got a scholarship from the Camões Institute in Portugal and came to the University of Aveiro, from Mozambique, as a master student. I offer him the possibility to work about that collection and putted him in contact with the documentation that I was kept in my own personal archive. Fernão was interested in the project and as it is a Mozambican citizen he also accomplishes de requirements mentioned by the Berliner Phonogramm-archiv director in 2011. So, the process was re-started....

Fernão, began to work with all the documentation, trying to translate all the letters from German to Portuguese and fill in all the details to reconstruct the mission of Spannaus and Stulpner in 1931. He was also preparing a visit to the Phonogramm-Archiv when, suddenly, the pandemic arrived. So, we contacted the archive again and under these conditions, the new director gave us the possibility to access the recordings by transferring them to a shared dropbox where all the documentation was deposited. [exemplo musical dos cilindros]

Fernão dedicated his master's thesis to exploring all the documentation related to the expedition to Mozambique without the possibility of carrying out fieldwork. Thus, all the research was based on documentary sources without fieldwork and without the possibility of returning to Mozambique and promoting the long-awaited repatriation.

In 2021 Fernão was approved as a PhD student at the UA and in 2022 he joined the Liber|Sound team with a research grant. In August 2022, he went to Mozambique for the first exploratory fieldwork, contacting institutions and the native descendants of the voices recorded by Spannaus and Stulpner in 1931, the Ndaus. This first experiment was carried out to accomplish two goals: 1- identifying a possibility of repatriating the recordings to an institution and 2 - to identify what was recorded from the point of view of the Ndaus descendants. Thus, Fernão traveled to Mozambique with the sounds on his computer and visited different target interlocutors to explore the first listening experiences.

The experience of Listening/observing experiences of listening

During August and September I traveled to Mozambique for a exploratory fieldwork in the provinces of Manica and Sofala – territory of the Ndau community. My interest was to listen to the records with the natives, trying to know what the recordings were about and whether they were worth to be repatriated, in the point of view of the natives. I listened to the recordings with four groups that seemed to me to have legitimacy about Ndau culture, they are the sociocultural research institutions (ARPAC), the government administrative offices (Posto Administrativo de Muxúnguè), the traditional leaders (the régulo) and cultural groups (The Mukapa grupo).

My timetable of research, fieldwork and listening experiences was the follow:

1. Research Institutions (from 05/09-15/22 to 15/09/22) SLIDE 1

In the beginning ARPAC was just an archive and was named the Cultural Heritage Archive. It was dedicated to the collection, storage, and dissemination of local cultural manifestations in each region of Mozambique. Currently, it is a sociocultural research institute. It was through the work of ARPAC that, in 2008, Timbila came to be declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It has its head offices in Maputo and representations in each province. That's why I worked with ARPAC's in Manica and Sofala, places where the recordings were collected, in 1931.

2. Regional Administrative Institutions (16/09/2022)

Posto Administrativo is part of the territorial division of Mozambique. Mozambique is subdivided administratively into Provinces, and these are subdivided into Districts, and districts into Administrative Posts. Posto Administrativo has a very strong power in the life of population since it is a kind of assembly of small chiefs who control small regions, and once it was used by the colonial authority to control the population, and now is being used by the party in power for the same purpose.

3. Traditional Leaders (16/09/2022)

African societies have their organizations that sometimes escape the Western logic. Traditional leaders in Mozambique appear as people who exercise authority over members of their community, that is, over their extended family. In many cases, this leader is the oldest relative of all. They currently have roles in the official politics of their constituency – the small chiefs I have just mentioned. They are also the repositories of the spiritual power of the community.

4. Cultural Groups (Mukapa) 17/09/22

I also intended to listen to the recordings with a group that practiced traditional singing and dancing. Fortunately, the administrative authorities organized a listening session with the region's best Mukapa Group. Mukapa is the most representative traditional dance in Chibabava District.

Listening Experience

When carrying out and observing the above experiences I realised that in spite of having the very same material to be listened the sound produced different reactions into the listeners. In the case of the research institutions the recordings were treated as a historical document; in the administrative institutions the listening experience produced an exercise of remembering the colonial trauma; in the case of traditional leaders the listening experience gave rise to a process of wondering, discovering, learning and monitoring, and, finally, with the cultural group, it inspired and brought about other memories.

Listening the Sound Recordings at the ARPAC's

The listening of the records in these institutions were with their provincial delegates, namely the researchers Killiam Dzindua, a sociologist, and Francisco Matias Américo, a historian. The listening took place in their respective offices, in Manica and Sofala, respectively. Surprising was when, in Sofala, Alberto Zimanta, a sociologist, addressed me in a very natural way asking me to transfer the files to the library computer in order to have them available to the staff and the public in general. Of course, I had to find a way to escape from this request.

Listening the Sound Recordings at the Posto Administrativo

The listening assembly with the Head of the Posto Administrativo de Muxúnguè, Mr. Mateus Titosse Massambire was a collective listening experience that included three local teachers and three more men that are part of the staff of the Head. This listening contextualised historically and culturally the recordings; triggered a multivocal memory about colonialism and pulverized an anti-colonial discourse by the encounter with a historical document that had been recorded without their knowledge and consent. And from here on the speech moved away from the sound to focus on many colonial experiences, but for which sound had effectively been the trigger.

Listening the Sound Recordings with a Cultural Group

The listening experience took place in the house of the régulo (the local name for the traditional leader). The régulo is a very important traditional authority. Before Portuguese colonial rule, the

function of régulo was exercised by the oldest member of the extended family or ethnic group. In addition to politics, and solving problems within the family or the group, it performed very important social and religious functions, namely ceremonies of communication with ancestors, invoking rain, of eradicating pests and other natural misfortunes.

The régulo of Muxúnguè is Manuel Horácio Mugadoi, 64 years old. Two other men were with him, two ladies, one of whom was his wife, and a boy about 13 years old. The listening experience here was relaxed, fun and full of expectations. There was always a great desire to hear the next song. Participants approached the laptop. As they listened, they discovered and commented on the past: “this Ndau is from here” [Este Ndau é daqui] – the régulo said at one point – “this Ndau is from Búzi” – he would say, at another time, as the words sounded to him. The audition was also filled with singing moments in which the régulo, instigated by the song, sang the lyrics over the audio, clarifying the lyrics for those present; and immediately he began rehearsing the song. When a phrase was reiterated, he would look and give a signal those present to pay more attention to that passage – once the words were learned, he would invite them to follow him in the singing – always shaking his head. [ilustrar com um áudio do régulo, aqui (duration: 30’)].

Listening the Sound Recordings with a Cultural Group

Eighteen members of the group were present, including eight men, seven women and three boys between the 11 and 13 years old. It is led by Samuel Saveca, father of the three boys and husband of some of the women.

According to them, there are five musical genres in these records: Mandique, Malosvwe, Mukapa, Makwai and Chigande. Mandique is a local magical-religious practice; Malosvwe is the Mandique dance; Mukapa, Makwai and Chigande are mere local traditional dances not associated with the Mandique. One of those present explained the reason for Mandique's predominance in these recordings. According to him, there is a lot of Mandique because in the old days there was no Stereo in the festivities; people went to social activities such as harvests, weddings, and after drinking, they sang and danced these songs. On the other hand, Christianity was weak at that time. So the cultural part of an event was filled by Mandique.

More markedly in this group, listening generated a discourse about other things; brought other memories; the lyrics of the songs were the trigger to talk about other things that no longer exist in Ndau society like the use of certain plants for medical purposes or the way they use to travel throughout long distances. Unlike the régulo's house, the women here were very active and participated in the process. And after the experience, the group decided to show the repertoire they perform today. Video available on <https://youtu.be/t20sp2VwWYg>