

SONIC REPRESENTATIONS OF MOZAMBIicans IN RADIO MOZAMBIQUE MAGAZINE BETWEEN 1933 AND 1962¹

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Introduction

This paper analysis the “Revista Rádio Moçambique”, a Radio Mozambique’s Magazine that circulated between 1935 and 1973, and other bibliographic materials related to the music and musicians from Mozambique. It aims to contribute to the understanding of the extent to which sound (or music) created identities and changeable social relationships in the Colony of Mozambique between 1933 and 1962. The first date indicates the beginning of radio broadcasting in the territory. The last one appoints to a period of great changes on the Radio Clube of Mozambique programming - marked by the introduction of “A Voz de Moçambique”, a radio program dedicated to and by the native black people and the foundation of the national liberation movement, FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique).

This magazine was one of the Radio Club of Mozambique’s sources of income through the advertisement from local traders and later from South Africa and Rhodesia. It worked as a site for the dissemination of the achievements and challenges of the station, the colony and the Portuguese colonial empire itself. Therefore, it served to disseminate colonial ideologies and policies simultaneously with the radio (Revista Rádio Moçambique, 1935, no 1).

I consider Radio Mozambique’s Magazine as a colonial and historic source and I describe it using Ann Stoler’s concepts of archive and colonial archive. I see it “as epistemological experiments

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rather than as (a simple) source” and as an example of “cross-sections of contested knowledge” (STOLER, 2002, p. 87). Actually, as a Colonial source, it was under a censorship board (Revista Radio Moçambique 1935, no 1) that “ordered (...) the criteria of evidence, proof, testimony, and witnessing to construct moral narrations” (STOLER, 2002, p. 97). Thus, it can be considered as a kind of mirror that determined what was social, moral and politically acceptable during that historical period. As we will see later, despite the continuous use of the image of black people performing in its covers, the magazine was, in most cases, silent about Mozambicans native musical practices.

The analyses of the Radio Mozambique magazine focus on the identification of reports and discourses about identities socially created from listening to sounds produced “by the other”. For my argumentation I use the concept of “*Sonic Color line*” and the articulation of “sounds with textual representations of listening and the auditory imaginary” both from Jennifer Stoeber’s book “*The Sonic Color Line. Race and the cultural politics of listening*” (STOEVER, 2016, p.7). I will bring out some examples of how listening contributed to the creation of “hierarchical”, “primitivized” and “racialized” (Idem) identities and images of black people in colonial Mozambique. As the paper will demonstrate, black people’s cultural practices took on different values depending on the sociopolitical context.

Sound and the Construction of Sociocultural and Racial Identities in Mozambique

I divide the text in two periods: the first one, from 1933 to 1939, marked by the absence of black people in Radio broadcasting and in the magazine. The second one, from 1940 to 1962, was mainly characterized by stereotyped and ideological intents of black people’s presence in the broadcasting.

Absence of black people in the broadcast, 1933 -1939

The Radio Club of Mozambican founded in 1932, as “Grémio dos Radiofilos da Colónia de Moçambique”, initiated its broadcasting on 18 March 1933. From that day until 1939 black people were absent from radio programming and even from the magazine and there was no concern about broadcasting among them, and their cultural practices. At the time, the Portuguese settlers themselves defined this station as “an instrument of colonization and civilization” (Revista Rádio Moçambique, 1939, no 44, p.6) and an “instrument of Social construction” (PAIXÃO, 1939, p.32).

Black people were the ones to be civilized. The Portuguese law² of the indigenous people from 1929 defines indigenous as being all “individuals of the black race or their descendants” who lived according to their ethnic and cultural customs. Thus, “the indigenous people **were** Portuguese subjects, under protection of the Portuguese State, but without being part of the Nation, whether it was considered as a cultural community (since they lack the requirements for assimilation of culture), or as a political association of citizens (because they have not yet acquired citizenship)” (FERREIRA & VEIGA, 1957, p.13). In this context, “sound functioned as a set of social relations and a compelling medium for racial discourse (...), and it (...) operated at the leading edge of the visual to produce racialized identity formations (STOEVER, 2016, p.7).

The magazine reveals how the radio determined the hierarchy between musical genres. Afro-American genres, were limited at the expense of traditional European genres. For example, Jazz bands were considered bad influence and accused of removing the members of the Orchestra of Lourenço Marques from a musical form, which the colonizers considered “serious”, of “good taste” and “true art”. As a result, the Radio Club of Mozambique organized a Private Quintet and its three main figures were forbidden from participating in jazz groups and ‘Fado’ that was not sourced from folklore (Revista Rádio Moçambique, 1937, no 26 and 27). One of the consequences of this vision was the silencing of other musical genres, especially those of black Mozambicans.

Stereotyped and ideological intents to Radio broadcasting among black people, 1940-1962

The concern about radio broadcasting among the black people appears for the first time in José Lexa's article “*Radio broadcasting among the indigenous*” published in the Magazine in 1939. It emphasizes that nothing had been done up to then in the Colony towards broadcasting among the black natives³ despite de fact that “the broadcasts of Radio Club reached (...) 'all' people of the Colony”. He asked why they could not take advantage of its stations for propaganda purposes and black natives culture (LEXA, 1939, p.38). This article and the station's own history demonstrate that the radio was designed for a specific sociocultural and racial group. However, the article marks

² Estatuto Politico, Civil e Criminal dos Indígenas, Decreto no 16.473, de 6 de Fevereiro de 1929, art. 2

³ I use black natives in spite of indigenous peoples

a turning point in the view on “the right” of black people to “listen”, which was until then exclusively intended for “Western” people.

This concern of broadcasting among black people came up within the scope of the official visit of the Portuguese President, António Oscar de Fragoso Carmona and the Minister of Colonies, Francisco Vieira Machado to the Colony of Mozambique in 1939. The colonizers’ desire was to “take the voice of the supreme chief to the most remote places of this colony...” Nonetheless, radio broadcasts focused on black natives began in 1958 through the Program “A Hora Nativa” (The Natives Time), launched for psychosocial action by the Colonial State. Its focus was on the social construction and civilization of the so-called “bush populations”. According to Marc Power (2000, p. 621), “despite the fact that music recorded in indigenous languages comprised the majority of ‘A Hora Nativa’ programming, a broader engagement with questions of Mozambican cultural identities was not pursued by the RCM”.

In 1962, the program “A Hora Nativa” gave place to the station “A Voz de Moçambique”, under the direction of the International and State Defense Police (PIDE), a Portuguese security agency of the Estado Novo regime of António de Oliveira Salazar (BARBOSA, 2000). The programs were in native’s languages, for and by the black people and their cultural practices. Nonetheless, these actions of inclusion took place at a time when some African countries were gaining their independence and others, such as Mozambique, had their nationalist liberation movements in action. Thus, the colonizer aimed to prevent the black natives from supporting FRELIMO. In this case, listening was used as a technical skill for instrumental purposes (Sterne, 2003).

The Performance of Black people from Southern Mozambique

The first reference to the repertoire of black Mozambicans appears in an article entitled “Black Music” which addresses the results of Maestro Belo Marques trip to Zavala (in Inhambane Province) that took place in January 1940. His aim was the study of black people’s music and to collect elements to produce an African folklore” (Revista Rádio Moçambique 1940, nº 55, p.5).

From his ethnographic work, Belo Marques concluded that “the black man from Zavala did not learn music, he grasped it; he didn't have the trouble of studying the thousand and one combinations of sounds, with figures, dots, conventional intervals... The music of the black man

from Zavala came to him from his trees, from his soil, from his rivers, from his sources, and, without much work than interpreting them, he was born singing”. That was to say, Africans reproduced primitive or natural sounds.

That research, on the one hand, gave place to the music “lhanlhalati” for violin and orchestra, broadcasted on June 2, 1942. Its orchestral background was described as being “attentive and firm in the dark and deep African night-time” (CAMPOS, 1943, p.1). On the other hand, it gave rise to the Program “Sinfonia da Selva” (Symphony from the Jungle). A program designed to be “a reflection of Africa” (Revista Rádio Moçambique, 1940, no 58, p.3) and its people. The colonizers described the black people from Zavala as being connected to the nature and to a dark environment. They believed, as well, that these people’s cultural practices were not taught, nor did they have a methodology for passing on this knowledge. Thus, the oral tradition was unacknowledged. The “Symphony of the jungle”⁴ was broadcasted in April 29, 1940. As a result, the listeners reacted with the following words:

indeed, it is a voice from the jungle, brought to the Radio Club studios and retransmitted (...) to Portugal where many people will have evoked with emotion the times they lived here. Certainly, for those who do not know Africa, that strange rhythm of black music have been a novelty that allowed them to get to know our Africa better...⁵ (Revista Radio Moçambique 1940, no 59, p.2).

An article published in the Magazine in 1941 reinforces this view by referring to rural areas and everyone and everything that was there as “figures of the bush” and their songs as “black Symphony” (Revista Rádio Moçambique, no 70, 1941). At this stage, the cultural practices of none-European (such as Africans) constituted a subject for the Europeans researchers. In that context, Belo Marques research was not meant to host the black Mozambicans repertoire into the sociocultural life of the colony, but to represent them. For example, in an opinion article from the Magazine, Rosado has proposed a fieldwork that consisted of the study of black people’s ethnography, the meaning of their dances and songs and its influence on Portuguese artistic sensibility (Revista Rádio Moçambique, 1943, no 75).

⁴ Sinfonia da Selva

⁵ My translation and it is applied to all quotations from the Radio Mozambique Magazine.

David Rodgers (2019), in his article “*Black Drums, White Ears...*” emphasize this point of view arguing that cultural practices from Southern Mozambique “underwent a process of classification that situated natives within a social and cultural order that had to be paradoxically conserved and combatted simultaneously”(p.4). He adds that dances and songs have been homogenized and designated generically in the sources as ‘batuques’ (drums).

Belo Marques’ work was criticized in an opinion article entitled “Mozambican Music” by António Emílio de Campos, from 1943. Emilio de Campos said that he admired Belo Marques’ compositions on black motifs in Mozambique, as well as regretted that he had not “been able to resist the bad advice of those who directed his possibilities and talent towards inferior genres” (Revista Rádio Moçambique, 1943, nº 92, p.10). However, Caetano Campo, the Director of the Magazine, also called this criticism into question in the article “Programs” published in the same year (1943). From his point of view,

there are those who demand for radio station continuous programs of high music, of stylized erudition, of classic themes that represent the best in art... A radio station that delivered its production to the continuous presentation of a high artistic subject, would risk not having an audience... From the point of view of cultural mission, it would be unadvisable because it would sin on forsaking that situation of puberty in which one cannot give the same spiritual nourishment as a trained and educated adult to assimilate (CAMPO, 1943, p.1).

This text reveals the subjectivity of intelligibility that sound carry. However, the African listener was treated as a child and, for that reason, incapable of appreciating what was considered “art of high culture”. Mozambique was define as being at a “stage of its evolution that corresponds (...) to the passage to puberty” (Colonial Mentality. Revista Rádio Moçambique, 1943, no. 92). Therefore, we are faced with the “sonic color line” (STOEVER, 2016, p. 7). Since certain, racial bodies “are expected to produce, desire, and live amongst particular sounds” and because there are “hierarchical division sounded between ‘whiteness’ and ‘blackness’”. The black native’s right to listen to the radio and their cultural practices were limited because of the belief through which the differences of class and race were crucial to determine who could enjoy a certain kind of sound.

Another example of the “sonic color line” that reveals “primitivization of listening” related to black people, was presented as a funny tale. The author created an imaginary about the perceptions

of sound and the effects it provoked in the life of his black employee. In the following paragraph, I cite the referred text published in the same magazine.

Sabão (Soap) was a black man from Chai-chai... One day, his employer bought a good brand radio set to listen to the news (...). Sabão had never seen or heard a radio set. That piece of furniture seemed strange to him, with some buttons, no drawers and no cupboard... but he kept his reflections to himself: that was a white thing, black couldn't understand." He "noticed that the boss closed the dining room door every night and then he heard other people talking to the boss and playing music, but he had not yet discovered that this was the result of that strange piece of furniture (Revista Rádio Moçambique, 1942, no 79).

In November 13, 1943, the RCM broadcasted for the first time, "a program of Ronga songs from the black folklore of Mozambique". A group of boys and girls directed by Samuel Badola (Dabula) Ambula performed about 6 black people's themes and one from Portuguese folklore. Ahrens Teixeira, the RCM's chief announcer, said: "all the numbers left an unprecedented feeling of primitivism, together with a disciplined harmony, which vividly impressed all who listened to this unusual program."

For this reason, Erlmann (2004) proposed the clarification of how "rational" and "primitive" ways of listening are situated and dependent on the mirrored and fluctuating power relations between the metropolis and the colonial frontier. Therefore, listening to the radio and to the performance of black people, created imaginary and symbolic identities associated to them.

Final considerations

This communication sought to contribute to the understanding of the extent to which sound (music) created identities and changeable social relationships in the Colony of Mozambique between 1933 and 1962. It analyzed the role of sound and listening in the social and racial stratification of Mozambican society during the colonial times.

The main source I used for the paper was the Radio Mozambique Magazine published between 1935 and 1973 by the RCM. The research revealed two perspectives of listening that built the image of black Mozambicans. On the one hand, listening to and reinterpreting the repertoire of blacks created a "racialized and primitivized" image of Africans. Black people's music was

described as coming from nature and they were seen as passive in the process of assimilating their cultural knowledge. There are some illustrations like: Jungle Symphony, inferior genres, figures of the bush, voice from the jungle, ‘batuques’ and they were considered spiritually kids.

On the other hand, the example of Sabão and his employer built an inferior identity of the individual whose “listening is primitive”; he could not distinguish between radio voice and live voice. Therefore, sound and listening played a significant role in the social and racial stratification of Mozambican society during the referred period. The results refer us to the concept of “sonic color line”. The social relationship has undergone several changes according to time and global sociopolitical and scientific context.

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