

Agriculture is the main subsistence activity of most Mozambican rural communities. In this text, we deal with the agricultural practices of the community of Canda, in the province of Inhambane, southern region of Mozambique. We seek, through the testimonies of the peasants of this community, to trace a sound profile of their activity, considering a set of elements such as the instruments used, and the dynamics involved in their day-to-day in the countryside.

Canda's community profile

The district of Canda is located in the south of the province of Inhambane, closer to the Indian Ocean. The area under study is a small town that, according to our interviewees, Mrs. Constância Júlio Bauque, is called Mbokote. She informed us that the name Mbokote has a long history, which is intertwined with the age of her ancestors, who gave the community its name. However, she was unable to tell us the origin of her community's name. We hypothesize two reasons that can explain this lack of knowledge. *(i)* because it is a very old story, which has been lost by the wear and tear of time, *(ii)* because she is, eventually, very contemporary to the history of the community. In any case, it is common for the names of villages and communities in certain parts of Mozambique to be given the names of the dominant families, which explains why, in the local language, the community is called Mbokoteni, which means “in the house of the Mbokote family”.

Agricultural production: Technological profile

About Mbokote's agricultural life, our interviewee said the following:

“I'm a machope by right, and a local, I never thought of leaving here, I have machete for the work, I don't want to go live somewhere else (...). Our practice is agriculture, and taking care of our fields (...) “we wake up at 5:00 a.m. We go out to our fields and by 10:00 we're back at our houses. (Constância, 2022).

The working day seems short, if we consider that, from 5:00 am to 10:00 am of the same morning, only 5 hours of work have passed, however, there are other circumstances to consider: at 10:00 am the sun it is already very high and hot, which still drains the peasants' energies, hence the need to take a break to rest. In addition to the strong sun in this period of the morning, it is important to remember that people practice subsistence agriculture, that is, just to guarantee their daily sustenance, also using very basic material, in this case, the short-handled hoe and other simple techniques. Our interviewee mentions, without indicating in detail, that:

“I have about 6 instruments that I use in the field (...), here we plant rice, lettuce, cabbage, all kinds of seeds that we can obtain to sow, plant and germinate. During lettuce season, we use some medicinal products against insects that attack crops. We grow crops to have food to eat, but if, for example, someone comes along who wants to buy onions and lettuce, we sell them. (Constancy, 2022)

In any case, manioc is a crop that predominates in almost the entire province of Inhambane. In the Mbokoteni area there are large quantities, peanuts are also grown, which are more demanding in terms of land preparation, with the support of fertilizers to be able to germinate. In order to achieve good agricultural results, peasants resort to traditional land treatment techniques, which consist of applying mafurreira, a local leaves mixed with soil to produce thick sand, which helps to nourish the land, but also to ensure the consistency of the land and the plants cultivated. Other types of instruments, such as shovels, axes, are also used in the fields of cultivation in Mbokoteni. When necessary, we buy motor pumps and medicines to use in the land as nutrients to improve productivity. (Constancy, 2022)

Mbokote Community Social Profile

From the ethnographic study carried out in the community, we found that the work of cultivation is given to women, associated with domestic work.

“(…) The child also comes with us to work in the morning, then they go home to sweep the yard and wash dishes. On the days when we don't go to the field, we wake up to sweep the yard, wash dishes and boil hot water for tea, and then we continue with other meals for the children who go to school (...). There is a hospital, but you have to walk a lot, and sometimes you want to take a plate to get there, the only solution is to rent a car and try to negotiate with the driver. The head of our community's name is Mr. Wani. (Constância, 2022)

Regarding what was said by our interviewee in the previous quote, in which an allusion is made to the lack of transport conditions and abandonment of the authorities in the face of their responsibilities as a social provider, it is opportune to contextualize the words of the researcher Hugh Tracey when in the 1940s he visited the of the Inhambane province and described their music as follows:

(...) it has touches of pompousness, reproaches to those who do not fulfill their duties, protests against cruelty and despotism, cries in the face of social injustice. It is possible to calculate the repressive effect exerted by thirty or forty young men dancing and singing in front of the people, the malice of a guilty person, or the blow to the pride of a small authority, who uses his position as a throne, and who sees youth mock its pretension, in time with the music (...)” (Tracey 1940: 96).

Mrs. Constancia, confided in us that the process of children's socialization into adulthood begins very early, and for that reason, they are taught to use the axe, very early on, so that they can lead their destiny in their lives. “They must obtain knowledge about the challenges of life so that they can know how to defend themselves in the future, because here in Mozambique, to live, each one is for himself”. Our interviewee stopped attending school in the second grade, she has 10 children, “(...) a little bit of my old age is the result of that (Constância, 2022).

Ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd rightly states that the new field of ecomusicology combines ecocriticism with (ethno)musicology. This combination offers us the possibility of associating the study of music, culture, sound and nature. (Todd, 2013), which leads us to another reflection, precisely, around the combination of areas of knowledge, and which, ethnomusicologist Susana Sardo (2013) calls the ecology of knowledge, seen as a space where knowledge, and invited to become a transforming experience, producing an intersection of knowledge, in the perspective of interknowledge.

Our approach in this text follows this line, that is, it seeks, through this idea of ecology of knowledge, to understand realities and conjunctures where music certainly has an important role due to its dialogic role. (Sardo, 2013). It is on this basis that it is interesting to understand the extent to which music effectively interferes with emotions, symbolism and daily practices of the populations of Canda, specifically, of the populations that live in Mbokote.

Thus, it is important to understand reality as something that is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 2004), and music, being part of this reality, is inscribed in the discourses of modernity (Habermas, 2000). Music carries important social symbolic elements for people's lives, that is, they cross all spheres of social life, it is present in our daily lives, even without wanting it. It is not by chance that the people of Mbokoteni say that: We sing because we want good things to help us in this time of hunger, (Constância, 2022). Therefore, it is functional, as the ghanaiian scholar Kwabena Nketia (1974) would say in his book on African music, in which he explains music in the context of African communities, referring to the following:

“Music” in the context of African societies is essentially a social event that takes place in community meetings, whether to celebrate some kind of ritual, such as marriage, the coronation of a superior community entity, recreation, work, building houses, roads, or other activities that in urbanized and industrialized environments would be carried out by specialized institutions or organizations, such as municipal services, road construction or repair companies, etc. As a rule, they are people who share ethnic and linguistic affinities, live in the same place and take part in these activities, thus reinforcing social cohesion (Nketia, 1974: 21).

Or as Hugh Tracey would say about the music of the beer people:

“(...) It always revolves around the events or characteristics of the locality, so that most allusions can only be understood by those who are in contact with the inhabitants of the region. They are often critical of the indigenous or European authorities they govern, and, it can generally be said, that the essence of the poems condenses the attitude of the people to the conditions of society (...)” (Tracey 1940:96).

One of the most important aspects present in the sung words of african populations is that they convey a protest against social injustices, and in the text of the interview with Ms. Constancy, there is a reference to the issue of lack of transport, implying that the government is not fulfilling its responsibilities to provide socially to its people. Therefore, it is in music that the misconduct of rulers and community members is discussed. In modern societies these tasks of social regulation are carried out by specialized entities. “Music” in African societies is also a performative dramatization of social dynamics, that is, it is society in motion with all its conflicts and narratives, its smells and flavors, the harmonies established within the community, its kinship relations, philosophies of life and social criticism (Lichuge, 2016).

As the Mbokote people say, “these songs amuse us, when after work we come home, relax with a traditional drink made from oranges, drink to remember our ancestors. (Constância, 2022). Music as a social reality, it still plays the moralizing role of the younger generations, and in the community meetings where the common cultural values are transmitted to the youth, associated with the cultural formation of the individual in the community where he belongs. It is a medicinal vehicle, through healing sessions with long sessions of ritual performance, using the various mechanisms, but in the context of the expansion of cities, it

has led to a new dynamic in the performance of rural traditions and culture in urban environments.

Final remarks

From the principle of the ecology of knowledge, with a focus on knowledge in music, and on ethnomusicology, as a discipline that promotes democratic knowledge, we seek to establish dialogues between the agricultural practices of the Mbokute community, with the logics of the discourse of modernity (Habermas, 2000), ecology of knowledge (Sardo, 2013), or even the suggestions of (Berger and Luckmann, 2004). We recovered understandings about the social work of the population of Mbokute, in their agricultural practices where music is inscribed at all times, whether to claim the well-being of their rulers, or to build a community, collective cultural values, or even to realize the eminently social essence of the individual. The reference to ngalanga, a musical genre of people of Mbokute reveals how the sound ecosystem in this community is articulated between modernity, the question of the ecology of knowledge and, of course, the way in which music characterizes and constitutes itself as an entity with a very specific structure for that context. The study of the soundscape from the local experiences of the community, in this case, the agricultural practice, allowed us to understand other ways of knowing the individual in society and their practices and, how we build a collective memory of Mbokute.

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