"Semba Dilema": On Transatlantic Musical Flows between Angola and Brazil

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Summary

In the song "Semba Dilema", Dom Caetano traces the intimate musical connection between Angola and Brazil back to the dramatic experience of the slave trade. To do so, the Angolan singer recalls an old and lively debate about the origins of samba, according to which the Brazilian genre would have originated from the Angolan musical style known as semba. Taking a cue from this song and a dialogue with its composer, the article explores some of the real and imagined, historical and contemporary affinities between semba and samba. It thus resorts to historical resources and theories, and ethnographic materials that the author collected in Luanda in June and July 2018, in an attempt to eventually suggest new questions and research avenues on the study of music in the Atlantic Lusophone world.

Introduction

In 1997, the Angolan singer and composer Dom Caetano records one of his most popular songs, entitled "Semba Dilema".[2] This is a sentimental and danceable piece written in the Angolan popular music style of *semba.* Over a syncopated rhythm of a dense percussion set, Dom Caetano's warm and hoarse voice evokes an alleged genealogical relationship existing between Brazilian samba and Angolan semba.

Eu vim trazer o meu semba	I came to bring my semba.
sem querer fazer dilema	without wanting to make a dilemma
mas o universo tem que saber	but the universe has to know
o ritmo samba nasceu do meu semba	the samba rhythm was born from my semba
Ai meu museu de escravatura	Ah, my museum of slavery
ponto de partida de angolanos	point of departure for Angolans

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rota de escravos na altura	slave route at the time
para o continente americano	to the American continent
rebita e massemba	rebita and massemba
kazukuta e cabetula	kazukuta and kabetula
samba filha do semba	samba as semba's daughter
não é ficção de cinema	it's not cinema fiction

The lyrics of "Semba Dilema" are dense with meanings and images as they trace the intimate musical connection between Angola and Brazil back to the dramatic experience of the slave trade. The passage from West Central Africa to Brazil constituted perhaps the most traveled route of the Atlantic slave trade from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.[3] While the ports of Luanda and Benguela shipped approximately one-fourth of the Africans to the other side of the ocean, Brazil received almost half of the enslaved Africans taken to the Americas [4]

By claiming that "samba is semba's daughter", Dom Caetano not only establishes a genealogical relationship between the two famous national styles celebrating the transatlantic bonds between the Portuguese-speaking countries, but he also launches a desperate appeal to spread the knowledge about the legacy of Angolan culture in South America and abroad. As the song says, "The universe has to know" about the course of history as well as about the rich expressive culture of the Central African region, once part of the influential Kingdom of Congo and Angola. In his song, Dom Caetano appeals to Angolan urban dances and rhythms (such as *rebita*, *massemba*, *kazukuta* and *kabetula*), as they require to be discovered, properly investigated and preserved over time.[5]

I have started the present essay with this song for two reasons. On the one hand, "Semba Dilema" introduces us to a long-lasting and animated debate about the origins of samba and the role of the Bantu expressive universe in the formation of Brazilian popular music (cf. Kubik 1979; Mukuna 2000; Fryer 2000). On the other hand, the song seems to reproduce in musical terms a widespread opinion among artists, teachers, and cultural producers in Luanda, about the need to contrast misrepresentations, and promote knowledge about Angolan cultural heritage on both a national and a diasporic level.[6]

In this spirit, in the next pages, I seek to investigate the musical relationship between Angola and Brazil, starting from the alleged genealogy between semba and samba as invoked musically by Dom Caetano and often debated in Afro-Brazilian scholarship. In the exploration of this 'dilemma', I will first analyze Dom Caetano's perspective and discursive strategies as emerged during an ethnographic interview I did in July 2018 in Luanda. I will then put his reflections in conversation with historical sources and contributions from Brazilian literature, thus musically speculating ultimately on potential affiliations drawing from my fieldwork in the Angolan capital.[7]

Instead of just reversing the research trajectory, looking at samba from the other side of the ocean, I intend to pin point some of the aspects that in my view and in that of my interlocutors, urge clarifications and may benefit from a more careful understanding of Angolan popular music history. Of course, this work does not pretend to provide definite answers in relation to expressive phenomena which cover almost four centuries and disparate localities, intersect with complex identity-building processes, and elicit diasporic sensibilities. However, it represents a preliminary attempt to reflect on a complex set of 'transatlantic dilemmas' that as such push me along to travel in the next pages frequently in time and space. If this may be seen as inopportune from a historiographic point of view, on the other hand, it allows me to explore and hopefully illustrate new potential research trajectories from the Angolan point of view, and offer further insights into the growing theoretical debate on the Lusophone Atlantic (cf. Castelo-Branco 1997; Naro et al. 2007; Alge 2013).

This is an invitation to destabilize our ordinary gaze towards Lusophone diasporas and actual and imaginary South-South dialogues by taking a closer look at the voices of the African continent and in particular those of Angolan artists, thus hoping to provide a new critical intervention into the historical and contemporary relations between African and Brazilian music.[8]

A Message from Angola to Brazil

I met Dom Caetano on a quiet July afternoon in 2018, at a restaurant in the heart of Luanda, behind the Radio Nacional de Angola headquarters. The singer had just finished a rehearsal session with his band, the historic semba group called Banda Movimento, and had given me an appointment to conduct an interview during his lunch break. In fact, the head of the Instituto Nacional do Patrimonio Cultural (INPC) had suggested to meet Dom Caetano since he was one of the main actors involved in the process of nominating semba as a national intangible cultural heritage and could speak expertly of this Angolan urban music genre that I was investigating.

At the time, I was interested in exploring the recent trajectory of the famous Angolan semba music and dance genre that had played a crucial role in spreading Angolan national consciousness in the late colonial era (Moorman 2008). Thus, I had no plans to approach the relationship linking Angolan artists to Brazilian music. In particular, I intended to understand the complex connection of the Angolan style with the Kimbundu language, the native Bantu language historically associated to the Luanda region. The Kimbundu had been a key expressive tool in the early development of semba by historical groups such as the famous Ngola Ritmos to claim their local identity under the colonial regime.

Image 1. The Banda Movimento in concert. Centro Cultural Recreativo de Kilamba, Luanda, 08.07.2018. Photo by the author

Since the formation of this musical genre, the Kimbundu had therefore always been used in compositions, even though it was no longer spoken by most Angolan artists living in the capital. Dom Caetano was one of the few interpreters to still master this Bantu language and yet he had started composing in Portuguese. I wanted thus to discuss with him the aesthetic and political reasons behind this choice. It was then that "Semba Dilema" was called into question as it was his first song written in the European language. He said:

> I did the first semba in Portuguese "Semba Dilema" because I wish that this message could reach our Brazilian brothers because it seems to me that the younger generations in Brazil have little perception of their origins. They admit slavery, but they do not admit that part of the origins of the Brazilian population comes from the African slaves […]. I have been in Brazil in 1988, I had some contacts with the youth and participated at many conversations taking place at Martinho da Vila's 1980s festival Kizomba. In those circumstances, many did not admit their origins with the Kingdom of Kongo, which includes Angola, the Congos, and even reaches Gabon. (Personal communication, 02.07.2018)

Therefore, the need to send a message in particular to the "Brazilian brothers" had prompted Dom Caetano to write in Portuguese. The association between samba and semba functioned as a powerful metaphor for Dom Caetano to claim the importance of the African heritage

in shaping Brazilian culture at a time in which he had felt that this was not really taken into account. Paradoxically, this occurred in 1988, the year of the centenary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil for whose commemoration the famous samba singer Martinho Da Vila had composed the award-winning samba enredo "Kizomba, festa da raça".[9] According to Dom Caetano, it was important to emphasize the terminological association between semba and samba because it provided strong evidence of the latter's roots in the universe of the musical practices of African slaves. In my eyes, this would have meant approaching a broader scenario in which semba momentarily ceased to be a national flag genre and transformed itself into a more complex diasporic musical expression. Dom Caetano's viewpoint recalled, in particular, a historical debate among Brazilian scholars on the origins of samba, testifying to how this discussion has not only circulated in the Latin American academic and nonacademic context, but has also had an impact on Angolan intellectual and artistic life.

Semba or Samba *Dilema*?

Since its first appearance in nineteenth century police records, the term 'samba' has carried different meanings. In general, however, it has always been associated with the universe of African-derived dances (on the use of the term 'samba' across the Americas, cf. Sandroni 2001, 84; Andrade 1989, 454).

A common explanation of the term 'samba' relies on its Bantu etymology and has it derived from the Kimbundu term 'semba' meaning 'umbigada' ('belly-bump'). This hypothesis is largely discussed by the ethnologist Edison Carneiro (1974, 36) who coined the expression *samba-de-umbigada* as a generic definition for covering a wide variety of Afro-Brazilian dances which share the choreographic gesture of the belly-bump. In 1961, Carneiro identified more than twenty dances across the entire country that historically were related to the expressive practices of slaves, free blacks and mulattos, among which the *lundu*, *samba-de-roda*, *partido alto*, *coco*, and others. Beyond the *umbigada*, all these dances were characterized by common traits such as: the circular disposition of the dancers, the call-and-response singing style, and the accompaniment of handclapping and percussions (mostly pandeiro).

As one of the major researchers on Afro-Brazilian culture in the first half of the twentieth century, Carneiro sought to discover more about the transatlantic roots of the dances, rituals and customs he was documenting. This may be evident in his publication in 1961 in which he devoted an entire paragraph to the discussion of the "batuque in Africa", as the major ancestor of Brazilian dances (Carneiro 1974, 37-40).[10] Here, Carneiro traces the origins of the dances of the *negros* to the Kingdom of Congo relying on the analysis of the written accounts of the uses and customs of the Portuguese African colonies, that were available at his time.[11]

The sources available to Carneiro and his coevals were all written by Portuguese authors between 1880 and 1890 (cf. Carneiro 1974, 37). Although rich in details about the Angolan

flora and fauna, these texts seemed to not provide a great deal of information about local expressive practices of music. Nonetheless, through a careful comparative exam, Carneiro was able to classify three types of dances which were performed in Angola and remitted to Brazilian expressive forms, such as: partner dance, round dance, and *umbigada* dance. Regarding this last one, in 1880 the Portuguese official and settler Alfredo de Sarmento wrote:

> In Luanda and in several prisons and districts [...] the batuque also consists of a circle formed by the dancers, with a black man or woman in the middle, who, after performing several steps, will give a umbigada, which they call semba, to the person he or she chooses, who will go to the middle of the circle to replace him or her. (Sarmento 1880, 127)[12]

According to the Brazilian ethnologist, this short passage provided enough evidence for affirming that "samba came from semba", adding then "the reverence with which the batuque dancers in Africa took their turn to dance the Brazilian umbigada" (1974, 36). Additionally, confirming his hypothesis, Carneiro recalled the work of Aires da Mata Machado Filho who in his research in the mining areas of Brazil had discovered that "Blacks correct to semba if someone tells them samba" (quoted in Carneiro 1961, 7).

The widespread presence of the *umbigada* in many Brazilian dances historically related to the practice of African slaves, and the terminological affinity between samba and semba, urged Carneiro to come quickly to conclusions. In turn, the plausibility of these factors would also persuade quite easily the following generations of scholars to accept the samba origins' narrative as proposed by Carneiro.

Two decades later, the Austrian ethnomusicologist Gerhard Kubik linked again the term 'samba' with the word 'semba', which he said to be found in many other Angolan languages, meaning pelvic movements that were often considered indecent by the colonizer, among which the belly-bump, equivalent of the Brazilian *umbigada* (Kubik 1979, 18). Thus, he attributed to the Portuguese phonetic adaptation the change of the Angolan term 'semba' into 'samba'. Kubik claimed that stylistic features of dance or other movement tended to be conservative ("an important area of *historical inertia*") and could provide a strong proof of the process of transatlantic "acculturation" just as the Brazilian *umbigada* could suggest its Congo/Angolan background (Kubik 1979, 20).

Difficult to prove as this hypothesis could be, it has nonetheless revealed a strong and, mostly implicit, acceptance in studies about Afro-Brazilian cultural forms which often rely on tracing their 'Africanity' through the analysis of movements, ending up reducing the multisensory dimensions of the expression under observation to its dance component and often exoticizing it (e.g. the vast literature on capoeira, some examples in this regard: Rosa 2012; Downey 2005).

The etymological derivation of 'samba' from the Kimbundu term 'semba' seems to have generally prevailed over the years in the academic literature on samba (Sandroni 2001). The

preference for an etymology of 'samba' that privileges a movement, the *umbigada* might have implicitly reproduced a colonial attitude that was more generally at work in the examination and classification of the cultural expressions of the African colony. This could have implied a process according to which the *umbigada* would have received much more attention than other elements in the description of the African dances (on the topic, cf. Lima Silva 2010).

As Elizabeth Travassos has shown in the Brazilian context, the dominant tendency in dealing with the *umbigada* was the sexualization of the dances of the African, their descendants and *mestiços*: "se rude é africano e se langoroso é mestiço" (Travassos 2004, 232). Consequently, the movements of the hips and bottoms in the African dances and African-American dances have always called the attention of the Europeans, who were inclined to read the behavior as erotic and scandalous and as such, a crucial marker of otherness.

As we have seen, the first written reference to semba appears in colonial accounts realized by Portuguese travelers and officials. Instead of reporting the name of the dances, Sarmento registered the name of the belly-bump as semba. The same occurred in another coeval account, the novel written by Alfredo Troni (*Nga Mut*úr*i*, 1973 [1882]). Describing a *batuque* in Luanda, at Nga Mutúri's house, Troni says: "It was a spoken batuque. (…) At midnight, they knocked at the door, and the Serra, who had just arrived at Casengo in Cunga, came in. Nga Mutúri was very pleased and she corresponded to him to two *sembas* that he gave to her." (Troni 1973, 54)

However, two main aspects could easily challenge this interpretation revealing the dubious foundations of this hypothesis. Both the aspects in question have been apparently underestimated, if not totally removed, from the discussion. First, in Sarmento's text as well as in Alfredo Troni's novel that quotes the term 'semba' for the first time, there is no element that allows us to conclude that the word 'samba' originates from the Angolan one. Second, the term 'samba' in Kimbundu – the Bantu language often called into question in relation to the borrowings in Afro-Brazilian practices – carries its own meaning, that is totally independent from the significance of semba. According to Jose Soladi, professor of African Literature and Kimbundu native speaker, while 'semba' means 'dance' and could be later associated with a specific dance movement, the Kimbundu term 'samba' is completely unrelated to 'semba' and represents the imperative mode of the verb 'kusamba' meaning 'to pray, to devote oneself to God'. This interpretation was briefly illustrated by the DMPB, next to the more commonly accepted etymology. In line with this opinion, the carioca journalist and composer Floriano de Lemos who wrote for the *Correio de Manha* in 1943 said: "[…] samba is a Congolese verb, meaning to complain, to pray. And it is also a religious dance, in praise of divinity, a cult ceremony." (Lemos 1943, 454) Although this explanation was documented in an authoritative source like the DMBP, it has been scarcely referred in other works and did not find any follow up. Many reasons behind this intellectual removal could be formulated, among these we could consider the long-lasting emphasis on the profane connotation of the Afro-Brazilian popular style, and the focus on its dance rather than ritualistic or musical dimension.

Yet, it is true that since its earliest written references, 'samba' as a generic synonym for *batuque* appears frequently associated to religious practices like for example the *calundus*, ceremonies of possessions largely documented in eighteenth century's Brazil (Sweet 2003, 145-151; Mott 1996, 131). As Iyanaga claims, "perhaps samba developed as something of a musico-choreographic (*even religious*) lingua franca by which the black population in Brazilian could begin to create a local, shared history" (Iyanaga 2015, 132). In his 2015's article on the relationship between samba and Catholicism, surprisingly, Iyanaga did not take into consideration the other possible etymology of 'samba' from the Kimbundu 'kusamba' 'rezar, pedir a deus' (Ngana Zambi), omitting an essential information that could give further fundaments to his reasoning.

For a Kimbundu speaker like Dom Caetano, these connections are so vivid in his mind that they encourage his imagination to explore different paths in relation to the origins of samba and suggest an interesting history as explanation. During the same interview, I quoted at the beginning, the Angolan singer would share his own ideas regarding the relationship of samba manifestations with Angolan culture. He said:

> The very origin of the word 'samba' is a Kimbundu word meaning 'pray, or prayer'. The first samba was recorded in 1917 (*Pelo Telefone*). It was called 'semba', because of the relationship between the word 'samba' and the dance of *massemba* [...] And if the word 'samba' is of Kimbundu origin, where did the Brazilians find the source of this name? From the slaves... It is obvious, in my opinion, that a person who is taken to an unknown destination, has to pray, and when combining to go to the place of prayer the word heard is "*ndoko tusambe*", 'let's pray' [...] And maybe when the patron wanted to understand, they said "*twoloya ku samba*", that is 'we are going to pray'. The word 'samba' ended up being used by the slave master who certainly gave this name to the rhythm of the music made by them [the slaves], which was the *batuque*, *reco reco* and *berimbau*, all [Angolans] instruments, that entered Brazilian music. (Personal communication, 02.07.2018)

Dom Caetano's interpretation offers a powerful narrative which is entangled both in history and popular imagination. It speaks about one of the possible ways to imagine how the musical relationship between Brazil and Angola was gradually forged over multiple centuries within the Lusophone Atlantic. It also relates to the ways in which contemporary diasporic sensibilities may emerge from looking at musical expressions and enrich the dialogue around Afro-Brazilian expressive practices. Of course, Dom Caetano represents just one of many other possible attempts of tracing affinities and eliciting forms of belonging across the Atlantic that still need to become audible and 'navigate the ocean'.

Beyond offering a counterpoint to the academic debate about the origins of the term 'samba', Dom Caetano's narrative recalls a further connection between the expressive universe of Angola and Brazil, a connection that develops from and complicates the association between samba as a heterogeneous Brazilian popular music style and semba as a

choreographic gesture of Bantu origins. I refer to the role of the *massemba* dance and how this dance relates to the modern Angolan semba and Brazilian samba.

From Massemba to Semba

In Angola, the term 'semba' is a polysemic word as much as 'samba' is in Brazil. Just in the district of Luanda, 'semba' indicates a complex of different musical and dance expressions, mostly related to the Kimbundu culture, such as: a choreographic gesture (*umbigada*), a Carnival rhythm, one of the most important Angolan popular music styles, and the *massemba*, a ballroom dance also known in Portuguese as *rebita*.

The *massemba* is a dance that was widespread in Luanda until the 1980s when it starts to gradually decline mostly due to the effects of the civil war and a generic lack of interest in its preservation and transmission by political actors and local communities. While in 1982 Kubik registered the existence of four *massemba* clubs officially promoted by the first president of the People's Republic of Angola Agostinho Neto (Kubik 1997, 410), today there is only one active group in Luanda, called Os Novatos da Ilha and few others which occasionally join to perform (Image 2 and 3).

Image 2. Os Novatos da Ilha dancing massemba. Ilha de Luanda, 06.07.2018.
Photo by the author

Image 3. Os Novatos da Ilha rehearsing the musical accompaniment. Ilha de Luanda, 06.07.2018. Photo by the author

The organization of this dance in clubs reveals the influence of the European dance schools in the style of the 1920s on the recent form of the *massemba* that however has always been strongly marked by the Kimbundu motional-kinetic culture (Kubik 1997, 409).

The term 'massemba' is the plural of 'semba' which in turn is often used by Angolan musicians as an alternative name to call it, originating further confusion in the transmission of knowledge on the dance style and the modern semba abroad. As the etymology evokes, *massemba* is strongly characterized by the gesture of belly-bump (semba). Men and women in a circular disposition approach each other during the dance and, at a moment indicated by the music, stamp their feet, touching each other lightly with the abdomen, thus giving acoustically the impression of a violent shock. All the participants sing collectively in response to the calls of the solo singer who usually stands next to the musicians, singing in Kimbundu songs about quotidian events or locally known figures who lived at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The instruments which accompany the dance are usually one or two *dikanzas* (Angolan *reco-reco*), ngoma and accordion.[13] According to the performers, the presence of the accordion allows to distinguish the *massemba* from its earlier form known as *kaduque* (on this dance cf. Ribas 1965 and Kubik 1979, 408). For Horacio da Mesquita, one of the most authoritative voices on urban musical practices in Luanda and Os Novatos da Ilha's President, the accordion was added to the dance at the beginning of the twentieth century, as a result of the circulation of European instruments and the settlement of foreign musicians from Portugal and Brazil in the Angolan capital (Personal Interview, 12.07.2018). In this period, the practice underwent a process of embourgeoisement as it came to be performed

in clubs, moving from the *musseques* (Luanda informal settlements) to the upper-class neighborhoods, and acquired a set of strict rules like for example the obligation to wear elegant clothes for its performances.[14]

The crucial presence of the Bantu motion has prompted Edison Carneiro (1974, 93) to define it as a close-related practice if not an ancestor of the old Brazilian dance *coco em fileira*. Although the connection between variants of *samba de umbigada* and *massemba* is not mentioned in other Brazilian sources, it was often claimed by Angolan practitioners and modern semba musicians during my fieldwork in 2018.

As Dom Caetano briefly evokes in our above-quoted conversation, it would be possible to illuminate the affinities between samba and semba by looking at the *massemba* as the practice that most has preserved gestures and musical traits that are common to several expressions of samba. Not only its etymology and choreography (the *umbigada* and the circular disposition of the dancers) would resemble Afro-Brazilian dances, but also its percussive timber and the highly syncopated rhythmic line performed by *dikanza* (Angolan *reco-reco*) and *ngoma*.

3 2 2 (1 + 2) 2 2 2

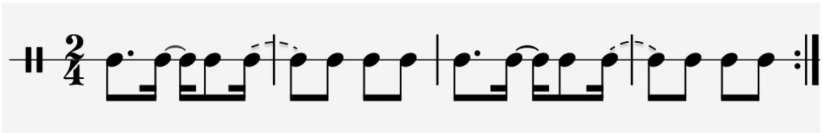

Image 4. *Dikanza's* dominant rhythmic pattern in Novatos da Ilha's *massemba* (cf. video excerpt)

The rhythmic cycle more generally recalls the Angola sixteen-pulse standard pattern defined by Kubik as the basic pattern of the Congo/Angola region. Moreover, the *massemba* rhythm presents a seven-stroke version (3+2+2)+(3+2+2+2) that strongly recalls the urban samba rhythmic structure but reversed (2+2+3)+(2+2+2+3). According to Kazadi wa Mukuna, this last rhythmic line – usually attributed to the *tambourim* in samba percussion ensemble – is the heir of lundu and can be considered as the most representative rhythm of samba in its popular urban form (Mukuna 2000, 103). Sandroni (2001, 32) also recognizes this pattern as the basic rhythmic language of carioca samba in his section devoted to the *Paradigma de Estacio*. Indeed, he reports a brief transcription of a samba composition by Ismael Silva and Nilton Bastos that corresponds perfectly to the *massemba* rhythmic subdivisions we have just seen (Sandroni 2001, 32). The multiple affinities between the Angolan dance of *massemba* and various Afro-Brazilian manifestations of samba could shed light on a more distant relationship between samba and the modern popular music style of semba. This is a crucial passage that requires some clarifications. During my fieldwork in Luanda in summer of 2018, musicians often repeated that *massemba* was the mother of semba (*a massemba é a mãe do semba*) and as such was the cradle of Angolan popular music. In this regard, the Angolan music critic and journalist Jomo Fortunato wrote:

> *Massemba*, a popular belly dance performed by dancers' pairs, is plural of semba, a name that came to designate the most representative music genre in the Luanda region. Danced on the street, on recreation afternoons and moonlit nights, the massemba passed into the virtuosity of the guitars of the Liceo Vieira Dias, Jose Maria and Nino Ndongo, giving rise to the semba, and took the name, Portuguese, of rebita, when it emigrated to the dance halls, integrating the accordion and the harmonica. The process of transposing the massemba and rhythms of kazukuta to the guitars, a kind of massemba in faster rhythms, gave rise to Liceu Vieira Dias's "mismatched beat" and semba, thanks to the innovative proposals of José Maria and Nino Ndongo, in its various known rhythmic figures. (Fortunato 2019)

A similar narrative is published in the booklet of Ariel Bigault's famous CD collection on Angolan urban popular music (1999). The CD booklet's author affirms that already in the 1920s the guitarist of the Trio Assis, Guilherme de Assis Junior, played his guitar to the rhythm of *massemba* (Bigault/Arriscado 1999, 16). It was this innovation, i.e. the transposition of the rhythmic pattern of the *massemba* from the drums to the melodic line of the guitar, that allows a new sonority and musical sensibility to emerge and become popular thanks to the group Ngola Ritmos. This musical group was created in 1947 and is generally credited to be the founder of Angolan popular music. In the end of the 1940s, in fact, the group leader and guitarist Liceu Vieira Dias begun to arrange traditional melodies and local rhythms in Western derived instrumentation and harmony, with the aim to create a new modern musical language. Semba became to be identified as the most representative popular music genre of Angola and a vehicle for forging a sense of national identity and promoting anticolonial sentiments, becoming very popular with the flourishing of the music industry in Luanda in the 1960s and 1970s (Moorman 2008).

In this context, the *massemba* may have musically influenced the formation of modern semba for what concerns the rhythmic structure, the crucial role of the *dikanza* and the call and response singing style. On the other hand, despite its etymology, the modern semba did not incorporate the *umbigada* or any other choreographic gesture that have evoked direct associations between the *massemba* and Afro-Brazilian dances. In this sense, *massemba* came to be identified as the junction point of samba and semba, two genres that apparently would not share direct affinities.

On the other hand, samba would have affected the creation of semba in so far as along with the *massemba* and other local rhythms, Brazilian music was another musical source for the musicians of the time. In the foundational text for Angolan urban culture, *Intonations*, Marissa Moorman reports that Liceu Vieira Dias, the leader of Ngola Ritmos learned guitar with a Brazilian teacher and formed the Grupo dos Sambas in the late 1930s. In conversation with the scholar, Liceu claimed that "it was Brazilian music that brought us to discover our culture and the value it has" (Moorman 2008, 90). Although this affirmation would open a different set of questions, it highly illuminates the process of mutual relationship that has always existed within the space of the Lusophone Atlantic.

Final Remarks

In this essay, I have tried to start illuminating the complex musical and discursive trajectories in which Brazilian and Angolan popular music are entangled in light of four centuries of slave trade, a shared colonial past and more recent south-south dialogues emerging across the twentieth century within the Lusophone Atlantic. As we have seen, the long-lasting association between samba and semba runs across centuries and evokes multiple rhythms, bodily gestures, sonorities, and sensibilities whose historical route is often difficult to trace and whose direction is not always univocal. These traces nonetheless encourage to explore new research horizons. The lack of musicological literature on Angolan music and the scarcity of historical written references, along with the gradual disappearance of some of the traditional dances from the urban scene, complicate the production and transmission of knowledge and make any attempt at understanding this rich expressive musical world more urgent. In this sense, investigating the musical flows between Angola and Brazil may provide a potential tool and a valuable strategy to get some insights into practices that if seen at local level do not always allow to be understood, contextualized and transmitted. I believe that this perspective may be also applicable for musical practices like samba, which count extensive literature and historical debate but scarcely are observed in their very diasporic nature. Looking at the way samba in all its forms is explained and conceived in Angola may be not only a way to legitimize old dialogues across the Atlantic and create new ones, but also a way to demystify exoticized representations of Africa, and critically reflect and rethink the place of the Black continent and its legacy within the contemporary Brazilian society.

Endnotes

1 Nina Baratti is a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at Harvard University. Her doctoral project, entitled *Listening to Petro-Luanda: Music and Citizenship in Post-war Angola*, investigates the ways in which sound and music-making mirror and interact with the fissures and frictions of the African country's reconstruction process through an ethnography of folk and urban music practices in the contemporary capital city scene.

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2 The song is featured on Dom Caetano 1997. To listen to the song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzjVZy0hvxk (last access 28.12.2021).

3 In her introduction to the volume *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, the influential scholar Linda Heywood traces the historical development of African diaspora studies and points out the over-emphasis that has long been placed on West African cultural influences in the formation of Afro-diasporic cultures at the expense of Central African ones (Heywood 2002, 1-21). Since the appearance of this key work, an increasing number of studies have been published on the Central African cultural contributions in the New World. Some of these works are cited later in the article, although references are limited to the Angola-Brazil musical connections (Kubik 1979 and 1997).

4 For a detailed historical account of the Angola-Brazil slave trade on a micro-scale cf. Ferreira 2012; about the proportions of the transatlantic slave trade cf. Eltis 2001, quoted in Ferreira 2012, 1.

5 Despite these rhythms have been spread nationally through the production of semba and Angolan electronic music *kuduro* (an Angolan electronic music genre), these dances traditionally belong to the urban culture of the Angolan capital. While *rebita* and *massemba*, as we will see later in the article, are different designations of the same choreographic style, *kazukuta* and *kabetula* are two distinct dance practices that are both related to Carnival, the main occasion during which Angolan folkloric dances are still performed today.

6 To a certain degree, this view may be explained in light of the limited scholarship about Angolan music on the one hand and the desire of old and young Angolan performers to build new bonds and have a stand in the south-south dialogue on the other. In a recent publication, anthropologist Katya Wesolowski addresses this aspect by exploring the transnational circuit of capoeira and the ways in which young Angolan *capoeristas* aspire to forge a cosmopolitan and global identity through engaging with it (Wesolowski 2020).

7 For this article, I refer to my first fieldwork in Luanda that occurred in June and July 2018 and was supported by Harvard GSAS Summer Predissertation Fellowship.

8 While an extensive literature on the Africa contribution in the formation of Afro-Brazilian music and identity has been produced over the past decades, this has always been focused on privileging the voice and musical experiences of Brazilian interlocutors (Díaz 2021). Few works have addressed views and practices from the point of view of Angolan practitioners in the contemporary context. On recent publications, specifically about the Angola-Brazil musical connections in the English-speaking world, cf. Moehn 2011; Wesolowski 2020; Díaz/Röhrig Assunção/Beyer 2021.

9 In this regard, Dom Caetano's reference to Martinho Da Vila, the so-called "Angolan embaixador", whose work has always been dedicated to cultivating an intense relationship with Angolan artists, is emblematic. In his book *Kizombas, andanças e festanças*, the Brazilian singer recalls several musical initiatives of cooperation between Angola and Brazil among which the *Kalunga Project* and the festival *O Canto Livre de Angola* should be mentioned (cf. Barros De Castro 2015).

10 *Batuque* as much as samba was a generic term to refer to the musical and dance expressions of the slaves early on.

11 In his research on the African *batuque*, Carneiro identified and consulted four books that – he said – were pretty famous and quoted at his epoch, such as: *Os Sertoes d'Africa* by Alfredo de

Sarmento, *De Benguela as terras de Iaca* by Hermenegildo Capelo and Roberto Ivens, *Angola* by Ladislua Batalha, and *Etnografia e historia tradicional dos povos da Lunda* by Dias de Carvalho.

12 All translations in the article are by the author.

13 Additional percussion instruments may be added such as *mukindu* (Brazilian *bate bate*), and *alguidar* (steel bowl). In the rehearsals of Os Novatos da Ilha that I attended, the group was playing all these instruments, while the *dikanza* kept to be the leading one (Personal Interview to Raul Tolinga, 23.06.2018). During interviews, musicians have also claimed that originally the massemba may have be performed with a harmonica (mouth organ) known as a *ngaieta* (cf. Kubik 1997).

14 This moment corresponded to the reinforcement of the Portuguese administration which since the 1920s begun to show an increasing interest in developing Angola's economy and social infrastructure as a crucial node of the empire (on the modern and late history of Angola's Portuguese colonization and its cultural policies see Bender 1978 and Moorman 2008).

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