

AC MUSEU CAVAQUINHO

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2014

The *cavaquinho*

TIMES AND WAYS FASHIONS AND PLACES

Why should an old, small and simple – almost rudimentary – four-stringed instrument play nowadays a relevant role in contemporary artistic expression on a global level?

In fact, in a world of music and of music of the world, the strength held by Brazil or the Cape Verde of the Atlantic are inseparable from the acoustic presence of the Brazilian or Cape Verdean *cavaquinho*; and the American ukulele from Hawaii, a migrant grandchild of the Portuguese instrument – we will later see why ‘grandchild’ rather than ‘child’ - is the present leading character of a powerful World music movement despite its aged and ever-melodious grandfather, the *cavaquinho* from Minho, still being played in the Portuguese northwest in a unique and unrepeatable way from any other string instrument.

It should be noted – only as an example but without ignoring in the 21st century the strength of electronic communication – that looking up in the world’s most used search engine in the web, at the time when this piece was being revised, in March 2013, it registered 3 million videos and 4 million references to the word «cavaquinho». And the research on the «ukulele» registered the immense number of 86 million videos in almost 40 million results with a daily increase of hundreds of registers.

What is aimed at here, through a collection of notes and references, is to examine this singularity by going over and commenting the historic, geographic, social and aesthetic turns of the *cavaquinho*. Far from being an original investigation – others, duly mentioned, have done it – and also not being a scholarly study, it does not mean to be a list of quotes, or an organised register of common knowledge either. In this way is rehearsed an answer to the question which relates the tradition to the contemporary by confronting the old with the modern and keeping up with the permanent challenge of refreshing and translating the artistic creations into new and ever different social and everyday life contexts.

Let us then look at the wanderings of the *cavaquinho* with the certainty that, even when we mention the past, it is the present that interests and propels us.

The Minho cradle

If, in a Portuguese perspective, the *cavaquinho* must be associated to a region, that region is without question Minho; and the Portuguese perspective is nevertheless relevant since it is from here that the instrument radiates alive and present to the whole world. But the sacred defence of the absolute Minho origin of this small four-stringed instrument – thesis which meets with patriotic pride – is immediately denied by the profane but fatal evidence that creation must begin with something.

In fact, with a remote and still questionable Greek-Latin ancestry – directly or through Arab versions divulged from the Muslim invasions of the Iberian Peninsula -, string instruments spread out all over Europe in various shapes and with different characteristics.

Some disappearing and others recreated, the transformations were multiple and varied caused by the changing times, by the variation in geographic and social environments, by the availability of materials and the evolution of technical means, by the updating of aesthetics standards; in fact, by history.

Gonçalo Sampaio's investigation attributes a Greek origin to the small *cavaquinho* with Basque mediation; and goes so far as to infer similarities between the Hellenic genealogy and Minho's musical fashions (1).

Jorge Dias also follows the Mediterranean path and considers the «Spanish» *guitarrón* or *guitarrico* and the Italian *chitarrino* as its ancestors (2); the tuning is not the same but neither is the tuning of the Iberian partner *requinto* invoked by Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira in the valuable study on Portuguese traditional instruments (3); and even in Minho the *cavaquinho* can be tuned in different ways. However, it maintains the four strings with the neck flat on the top as well as its small size which shall be mentioned below.

We can be sure that if the instrument was not born in Minho, it is in the Portuguese northwest where this brilliant and strident instrument is nurtured. It is there that the sociological melting pot, the spatial population and the proximity to the sea – not because of the breeze, but due to the great highway that this sea has always been –

(1) Gonçalo Sampaio, *Cancioneiro Minhoto (Songbook from Minho)*, 2nd ed., Oporto: Livraria Educação Nacional (National Education Bookshop), 1944, pp. XXVI, XXX and 358.

(2) Jorge Dias, «O Cavaquinho. Estudo de difusão de um instrumento musical popular» (The *Cavaquinho*. Study on the diffusion of a popular music instrument), *Actas do Congresso Internacional de Etnografia (Minutes of the Ethnography International Congress)* – Santo Tirso, 1963. Vol. IV, Oporto, s/d, pp. 93-116.

(3) Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *Instrumentos Musicais Populares Portugueses (Portuguese Popular Music Instruments)*, 2nd ed., Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1982

providing a communicative sociability, festive and extrovert, that is expressed by the sound of the *cavaquinho*. However, it should not be assumed that traditional music from Minho, although excluding serious ceremonial events, is confined to light amusement at parties (1); or that, much less, that it reflected the happy dances to the accordion, laden with gold that the Estado Novo (literally New State – post 1928 dictatorship republic) wished to transform into the erroneous idea of “Portuguese folklore”. It aimed at a uniformity of what was distinct, in order to create a national consensus around a false homogeneity of traditional Portuguese music, the richness of which lies, on the contrary, in its great diversity.

But it is in Minho – particularly the areas of Braga and Guimarães – either accompanying solo the singing or together with other string instruments [*braguesa* guitar and more recently the *violão* (literally large guitar)] or percussion instruments [drums, triangle and at times the *reque-reque* (a type of fricative idiophone)] that the *cavaquinho* is to find a relevant place. Veiga de Oliveira registers that «not many decades ago [written in the 60s of the 20th century] rare was the rural household in the Guimarães district that did not own one or played this instrument.» (2).

Included in the *rusgas* (roundups), instrumental ensembles also called *toccatas*, *festadas* (feasts), *rondas* (type of circle dance), *estúrdias* (literally extravaganzas), *súcias* (gangs) - the *cavaquinho* was indispensable in dances of *terreiro* (yard) and *romarias* (processions), *desgarradas* (challenge singing) or challenges. It was generally played in *desgarradas* style, with the right hand (for the right-handed, of course) moving almost frantically: the arm level with the top and the metallic strings allowed this style of playing to produce sounds that conformed with the happiness of this type of music, married to the high pitch of the women singers from Minho; and – a singular characteristic related to all the forms in which this chordophone was to be included elsewhere – the same instrument was capable of combining rhythm, melody and harmony.

One should be aware that the vitality of the *cavaquinho* in Portugal is not indifferent to the clear tendency to recover traditional instruments, in particular as a result of the creation or generalisation of aesthetic horizons following April 1974 (end of the dictatorship); to the extent that, in relation to this instrument, the great driving force was the release of the record *Cavaquinho* (1981), by Júlio Pereira, a modern interpretation of its sounds. But, in Minho, it always resisted the (also modern) “invasion” of harmonicas, concertinas and accordions, which were to substitute the traditional string instruments; and it is there that *cavaquinho* orchestras have lasted, and also there that, in the suburbs of Braga, that its manufacturers have remained such as the late Joaquim Machado, whose craft was continued by his nephew Domingos Machado and by his grandchildren José, Manuel and António Carvalho. And if it is still debatable that the northwest was the Portuguese region where the instrument initially originated (3), it is there that we find the first written record of the *cavaquinho*, in Guimarães, in the «Regimento para o Ofício

(1) Listen the example, Michel Giacometti *et al*, «Minho», *Antologia da Música Regional Portuguesa (Anthology of the Portuguese Regional Music)*, vol. 3, Lisbon: Arquivos Sonoros Portugueses e de Valentim de Carvalho (Portuguese Sound and Valentim de Carvalho’s Archives), 1963 (LP).

(2) Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *ob. cit.*, p. 202.

(3) Cf. *infra*, p. 6.

Violeiro» of 1719 (Ordinances for the Guitar Making Crafts) (1), although it is referred to as a *machinho*, which is phonetically similar to the other terms for the same instrument — *machim*, *machete*, *manchête* or *marchête*. It is also referred to in this “*Regimento*” as *machinhos* of four or five strings, the latter probably stemming from the extinct *cavaco* (a larger guitar like instrument), which was of greater dimensions (and hence the name *cavaquinho* is only plausible if there was either a pre-existent or contemporary *cavaco*).

Thus, only a regular and formal practice can be established if it is rooted in daily life; and therefore, the making and the generalisation of the instrument must have been much earlier. Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira states its use in this city in the 17th century (2), but the presence and popularity of the *cavaquinho* must be older, given that the hegemony of Portugal in the maritime expansion of Europe occurred in the 16th century and therefore it must have been at that time that the instrument travelled, as we will see, across the Atlantic and to the East where it was then known in Malacca, brought there by the Portuguese sailors, hence the Indonesian origins of the *krontjong* or *ukélélé* (3).

But, also from Minho, accentuating the importance of the region in the history of the small string instrument, it will travel, directly or indirectly, through the world - a world which, as it became increasingly evident, was not confined to Europe or the Mediterranean; a world which contributed and contributes decisively to its modernity.

But it is also from Minho that, stressing the importance of this region, the history of this small chordophone will travel, directly or indirectly to the rest of the world; a world which was obviously not confined to Europe or the Mediterranean basin; a world which decisively contributed and still contributes to its modernity.

Wanderings through land(s)

Although emblematic in the regions of Braga and Guimarães, and in Minho in general, the *cavaquinho* is found – as has been mentioned - in other geographical areas in continental Portugal. Not always in the same way, its technical marks are not the same, nor is it played in the same way, with the same tuning or the same type of strumming; maintaining, however, the four strings, the high, bright, sharp pitch and its small size (generally 52cm): being easy to carry would be one of the reasons why it was taken to so many places, in many migrations.

Still in the northwest and besides the Minho region, the use of *cavaquinhos* with the same characteristics extends itself to the Douro Litoral region, as far as the Amarante area, integrated in the same *rusgas* (type of serenade), along with the traditional guitars (the *braguesa* now substituted for the *amarantina*) and/or the common six-string guitars; there, as in the region of Basto, substituted in the instrumental groups of the *chula* (type of dance and music) by the *rabeca* (type of violin), a string instrument also of «strident» friction. In fact, the same popular nature, rural and profane, accompanied singers in the challenge singing and dances of *terreiro* (yard); the same leisure functions and festivities.

Moving southwards, the *cavaquinho* can be found in the Coimbra area and here

(1) Pe. António José Ferreira Caldas, *Guimarães. Apontamentos para a sua História (Guimarães. Notes on its History)*, 2nd ed., Guimarães: CMG/SMS, 1996, part I, p. 100.

(2) Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *ob. cit.*, p. 202.

(3) Louis Berthe, «Ukélélé», *Encyclopédie de la Musique («Ukelele»)*, Music Encyclopedia, vol. III, Paris: Fasquelle, 1961

the debate is even more intense: on the one hand it has an urban use under the name of *machinho*, played by students of the Academy (1), but it is also an instrument in the popular hands in the region, who gather round the bonfires in the city at the feasts of S. João, together with the guitar, tambourine and triangle and which Veiga de Oliveira refers as still being common at the end of the 19th century. Furthermore, it is based on this popular use that the author considers the possibility that the *cavaquinho* is “a local instrument, which became extinct in the same way as the guitar [he is referring to a *toeira* guitar, characteristic of the region, that initially accompanied the serenades of Coimbra] usurped by the guitar” (2), and also ventures to suggest that the *cavaquinho* was “a frankly popular Minho instrument, but originally from Coimbra”. (3)

However, in a more moderate manner, in the same piece, instead of a statement of fact, the following question is asked: «Is the *cavaquinho* a type of instrument which in the past existed generally all over the country and which fell into disuse and has only remained in a few dispersed areas of greater or smaller importance in relation to the local music forms?» (4) Of a different opinion, however, is Jorge Dias, who – due to the lack of references to its rural use – attributed a merely town use justified by the luggage brought by the university students from Minho. (5)

But in fact there are references to its local manufacture which indicates some roots which go beyond mere academic usage; and there is even a sample from the end of the 19th century at the Museu Etnográfico de Coimbra (Coimbra’s Ethnographic Museum) made by the crafter António dos Santos who had a workshop at Direita Street.

Nevertheless it is an obvious «hybrid» (6) and it should be noted its already social and aesthetic variation with which it had sailed along the continent. Rural or urban, it was always festive and profane except when accompanying liturgies...but of secular sociability; with different tunings, but maintaining the flat scale on top, which made the *rasgado* bright, joyous and lively.

The same cannot be applied to other places in this western Iberian rectangle where the *cavaquinho* is found: in Lisbon, for instance, where has been referenced since the end of the 19th century as one of «the main musical instruments that the people promoted at that time» (7); and José Alberto Sardinha recognises it as predominant in the popular neighbourhoods, namely in Alfama (a Lisbon popular borough) where it was used to accompany challenge singing in taverns (8). There, besides a slight variation in dimension – shorter necked and longer body which is also wider -, the scale, of seventeen frets, and not the northern and central coastal regions’ twelve frets, is in rebound, raised in relation

(1) Alberto Pimentel, *A Triste Canção do Sul (The Sad Song of the South)*, quoted by Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *ob. cit.*, p. 204.

(2) Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *ob. cit.*, p. 204.

(3) *idem, ibidem*, p. 206.

(4) *idem, ibidem*, p. 209.

(5) Jorge Dias, *ob. cit.*, p. 98.

(6) António Manuel Nunes, *A Canção de Coimbra no século XIX (1840-1900) (The Song of Coimbra)* [online].

(7) Ernesto Vieira, *Diccionario Musical (Music Dictionary)*, Lisbon, 1890, quoted by José Alberto Sardinha, *Tradições Musicais da Estremadura (Estremadura’s Musical Traditions)*, Vila Verde: Tradisom, 2000, p. 428.

(8) José Alberto Sardinha, *ob. cit.*, p. 339.

to the top and reaching the sound hole as with the *violão* and the Portuguese guitar, which does not favour the *rasgado* style of playing so characteristic of Minho.

This journey with the *cavaquinho* from the north to the south (and not yet reaching the Algarve, which will also be visited) already allows us to view the change in social colours from which the music emerged; the variation in environments in which it would be listened to, from the rural yards to the urban taverns; the technical alterations which transformed the frantic *rasgado* sound to the *ponteadado* (plucked) melody accompanying singing, still maintaining its brilliant sound. Well, Lisbon was, as always, the urban estuary in which flowed the waters of a many faced rural world, and it was natural that the migrants from the northern coast brought the *cavaquinho* to the great city, thus accompanying the social changes that they themselves also lived. But, it could have turned out differently...

In fact, in Lisbon – as well as in the Algarve where the same differences with regard to Minho and the Coimbra region also appear – the *cavaquinho* is also an instrument of the *tuna* (student musical group), played with a plectrum together with other instruments such as the mandolin, the *violão* and the guitar and markedly urban and bourgeois, very far from northern rural countryside. In the capital, Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira states that “in the middle of the 19th century, the dance masters of the city used it in their lessons, and it was at times played by ladies” (1). But, returning to the statement that things could have worked out differently: this is the same commitment that the *cavaquinho* seems to have in its versions in Madeira and Brazil, in its longer journeys that will be explained next. It is in view of this that we may consider, or at least envisage the possibility, that this small four-stringed instrument took the return journey in the case of Lisbon and the Algarve; that is, its presence in those areas could have been the consequence of the return of migrants from Madeira and Brazil to continental Portugal instead of a direct import from the north (2.). The truth is that we have the *cavaquinho* travelling – roaming – across much geography, charting the traditional sounds of the lands where it leaves its mark and to which we can add the Ribatejo, also recorded by Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira(3), but always updated and again put in context according to the circumstances which it encountered; it is worth mentioning the referencing and fulfilment of its contemporaneity.

It should however be noted that the atmosphere in which it is most comfortable is that of the coastal festivity, recreational, profane and communicative; and will traditionally not be found in the austere, sacred and ceremonial interior.

Exception made for the single solemn use of the instrument at Correlhã and Seara, in the region of Ponte de Lima, where, together with the *braguesa* guitar, the mandolin, the *violão*, the *rabeca* (violin) and the flute, it accompanied the Catholic crucifixion at Easter(4). Alas, the merry making also carried its cross...

(1) Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *ob. cit.*, p. 205.

(2) *idem, ibidem*, p. 209.

(3) *idem, ibidem*, p. 78 and *idem, Pequeno Guia para a Recolha de Instrumentos Musicais Populares (Short Guide for the Compilation of Popular Music Instruments)*, stencilled sample, 1975, p. 3.

(4) Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *Instrumentos Musicais Populares Portugueses (Portuguese Popular Music Instruments)*, *cit.*, p. 38.

Sea, travel and modernity

But other and greater journeys awaited the *cavaquinho*. The European maritime expansion, believed to be from the 15th century, and motivated by the crisis which Europe experienced generally over the previous century, and not least by the brave Portuguese genius – aside from being directed by the Iberian states – was to carry the small instrument far. And in the Portuguese caravels (ships), it fitted in the big pocket of the cloak worn by the sailors and the colonial adventurer, arriving at different corners of the globe where it still remains today, in some, assuming - apart from its symbolic nature - a remarkable force of musical renewal (1).

It was the European sound which, with the entire continent, discovered the rest of the world in the first globalisation which created the economic, social and political webs of modernity, although also resulting in the known adverse effects (as with other globalisations). But, simultaneously, it made innovation possible, the gathering and cultural miscegenation of knowledge, ideas, artistic creativity, and from that perspective, only good results can be seen.

However, in Madeira, the first stage which we will consider, this mixture did not occur... the island was deserted. However, the small stringed instrument, there referred to as the *braguinha*, would have a place of relevance, going so far as being the platform from which it would radiate; and that importance is even hyper valued by some, more local and ethnic minds. Carlos Santos, for instance, claims that it is of local invention based on the name of the instrument notwithstanding the differences from the northern *cavaquinho*: the *braguinha* was played by people wearing *bragas*, name given to the local rural costume (2). But other local names were also *cavaquinho* and *machete de braga* – and this refers to the capital of Minho and the proximity with the name *machinho* used in the already mentioned Regimento para o Ofício de Violeiro (Ordinances for the Guitar Making Crafts).

It should be noted in this regard that the “*machinho* of five strings” referred to by the same *Regimento* (and which could be the extinct *cavaco*) could possibly have survived in Madeira, giving rise to the *rajão*, another island instrument, sometimes with four strings, but larger than the *cavaquinho*. He also argues in favour of the supposed origins of the *braguinha* due to the morphologic differences and social issues that were already referred to in the cases of Lisbon and the Algarve. In fact, the instrument made in Madeira has seventeen frets and a scale raised in relation to the top; its use, apart from the popular environment which remains in the insular rural region,

(1) Cf. Domingos Morais and José Pedro Caiado, *Os Instrumentos Musicais e as Viagens dos Portugueses (The Music Instruments and the Travels of the Portuguese)*, Lisbon: Ethnology Museum, 1986, *passim*.

(2) Carlos M. Santos, *Tocares e Cantares da Ilha (The Playing and Singing of the Island)*, Funchal: Tip. da Empresa Madeirense Editora, 1937, pp. 33 and ss.

assumes a bourgeois and urban nature, as an instrument of the tuna or accompanying the song melody in urban halls in Funchal.

Therefore, the thesis, although undervaluing the fact of these differences – that is, offering more adjectives than nouns – cannot make us forget the similarities with the continental *cavaquinho*, as also we note in other authors from Madeira(1). Nor can it be ignored that these characteristics are verified in Lisbon and in the Algarve, although it is possible that it reached these regions via Madeira, it remains, nevertheless, a *cavaquinho*. And it is the changes - ultimately resulting in the technical and sociological re-contextualisation – that are not alien to the proximity to other fashions, reflected in other string instruments (like the *violão*) and the change in the very social state of the continental coloniser, possibly from Minho.

The Portuguese Maritime discoveries follow – better to use the term ‘European expansion’ as above mentioned, since the prior Lusitanian (Portuguese) knowledge of these islands remains controversial – and the *cavaquinho* reaches the Azores, brought by the continentals, also highly probable of Minho origin, or at least, from the coastal festive regions. In contemporaneity (a misleading word and a trapped concept to which we will return) it is still considered traditional, with the same characteristics of the Madeira archipelago in the islands of Pico and Faial (2). That is, on a much smaller scale and without the strength propagated for the rest of the world which the migrants from Madeira had, as we will see. But the reaction is curious, as referred to by Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, that “ it is constructed today [the 1960s] on the Terceira Island, but only by order of the Americans stationed at the airport of Lajes, or for Terceira natives who live in North America and that have labelled it the ‘ukulele’(3).

The Atlantic insularity continues and the *cavaquinho* appears also in Cape Verde. But, this time, despite also being deserted islands, the colonisation not only reflects the European tradition but the weight of the African slaves – the archipelago was an important slavery trading post – was to reconfigure social and aesthetic contexts and reinvent the instrument far from the *rusgas* of Minho, the taverns of Lisbon and the halls in Madeira. Here, the *cavaquinho* was to share the boiling crucible of many influences of the rich Creole Cape Verde culture.

In all the islands – although the city of Mindelo, in S. Vicente, never ceases to be presented as a cultural capital – it was to characterise the sound of the *mornas*, *coladeras*, *funaná*s (typical music styles from Cape Verde) and *mazurkas* (4), although the latter genre originated in Poland, which only reinforces the rich diversity of Cape Verdean music and the capacity of the small travelling *cavaquinho* to adapt.

(1) Eduardo Clemente Nunes Pereira, *Ilhas de Zargo (Zargo Islands)*, 2nd ed., Funchal: Town Hall, 1957, pp. 1194-1196.

(2) Ernesto Vieira, *Dicionário Musical (Music Dictionary)*, Lisbon, 1890 and *Grove's Dictionary of Music*, quoted by Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *Instrumentos Musicais Populares Portugueses (Portuguese Popular Music Instruments)*, cit., p. 206.

(3) Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *ibidem*.

(4) *Chronos cavaquinho Cabo Verde (Chronos cavaquinho Cape Verde)* [online].

In a bigger form, with sixteen frets and at times, five strings, the *cavaquinho* accompanied the creation of the high profile which the music of Cape Verde today enjoys throughout the world.

Further south and now again in continental lands, this time in America, we will find the *cavaquinho* in Brazil where the cultural mix finds even more players: to the European and African traditions is added the local influence which resulted in the creative force and diversity characteristic of Brazilian music. Directly from continental Portugal or via the Madeira *braguinha*, as some authors claim (1), it cuts across all traditional Brazilian music, from *modinhas* and *choros* to *sambas* (all typical Brazilian music styles), sharing with it world recognition. *Samba* in particular, its most generalized icon, has the *cavaquinho* as its director, prompter and leading character and is played by the greatest names of this musical genre (2).

Of urban nature – and due to this fact its spreading in Brazil is associated to ball room dances such as the polka and the waltz – the *cavaquinho* from Brazil presents a rebound scale in relation to the top and the seventeen frets of the *braguinha*, but its city use is of an eminently popular character and it accompanies singing (3), singly or together with the *violão*, mandolin, flute, *pandeiro* (tambourine) and many others. This does not stop any consideration regarding its rural use (4).

It is now time for the *cavaquinho* to overcome the Cape of Torments (Cape of Good Hope as is now known)!

From the Atlantic it now reaches the Indian Ocean and it shall be recognised in that good hope route at least in Malacca, as has already been mentioned, already in the 16th century. From there it reaches Indonesia with the name *krontjong* where it can still be found today in orchestras of a type of local music bearing the same name (5). The instrument is also known here as the *ukulélé* but this is a more recent name and shows the importance of other travels made by the small instrument.

It is not, in fact, through the maritime exploration saga characteristic of the European expansion that the *cavaquinho* shall reach the destination where it will gain the greatest visibility and a markedly more symbolic status; it is through another Portuguese adventure, this time an epic which has reached our times and with other leading roles – that of immigration. It is from Madeira, first sea port in this voyage that the *cavaquinho*, in the 19th century, sails to other shores: those of the Pacific Ocean that washes the islands of Hawaii; this time by the

1) Luís da Câmara Cascudo, *Dicionário do Folclore Brasileiro (Brazilian Folklore Dictionary)*. 3rd ed., Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro, 1972, p. 207.

(2) Henrique Gazes, *O Cavaquinho* [online] and Henrique Gazes and Ivan Dias, *Apanhei-te Cavaquinho (Caught you Cavaquinho)*, Duvideo Filmes, 2011 [online].

(3) *Batidas de cavaquinho (Cavaquinho beats) (Renan do Cavaco, Brazil)* [online].

(4) Cássio Leonardo Nobre de Souza Lima, *Viola nos Sambas do Recôncavo Baiano [Guitar at the Sambas of the Bahia Recôncavo (area surrounding the Bay of All Saints in Brazil, both inland and on the coast)]*, Salvador: Bahia Federal University, 2008, *passim* [online].

(5) *Schoon ver van jou - Krontjong Toegoe (Clean away from you - Krontjong Toegoe)* [online].

hand of other travellers who are not braving the unknown but are also looking for a better life. There, baptised with the name *ukulele* (ie. «hopping flea» in local language) it has the same characteristics of the *braguinha* – seventeen frets and rebound scale reaching the hole – although Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira mentions a British made variant of the *ukulele* (the twists in this story...) with twelve frets and raised scale in relation to the top just like the Minho *cavaquinho* (1).

But in this case, the calendar and the characters are dated and identified with precision: on 23rd August 1879 the ship «Ravenscrag» arrived at Honolulu with hundreds of immigrants from Madeira destined to work in sugar cane plantations. Among them were two *braguinha* players – João Fernandes and José Luís Correia – and three crafters – Manuel Nunes, Augusto Dias and José do Espírito Santo (2)

Whether the small instrument pleased by its sound and simplicity of play, it surprised by joining these aspects to its small size, or for any other reasons – such as the alleged commitment of the king of Hawaii (3) – what is true is that the *ukulele* was to become the true symbol of Hawaiian music and culture (4). The archipelago's historic evolution from a traditional monarchy to a republic and in 1900 becoming part of the United States of America is accompanied by the stressing of that symbolic character especially as an identifying mark and social cohesion factor (the mixes of which an identity is made...); but, above all, it shall provide a large and powerful expansion in an increasingly Anglo-Saxon world (5).

The present strength of the *ukulele* is expressed in its increasingly universal practice and exemplarily pointed out, as already mentioned, by the dimension of its presence in the World Wide Web. Likewise, it should be stressed the iconic importance of various personalities being photographed with this grandchild of the *cavaquinho* from Minho: among many others, musicians like Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton or both Elvis (Presley and Costello), but also politicians such as Tony Blair or the Hawaiian Barack Obama; actresses and actors like Marilyn Monroe, Tom Hanks or Benny Hill but also Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the Moon.

In the end, the empire weaves, the demand for change is stressed, the creative meeting delivers and communication makes it effective.

(1) Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *Instrumentos Musicais Populares Portugueses (Portuguese Popular Music Instruments)*, cit., p. 207.

(2) John Henry Felix, Leslie Nunes [grandson of Manuel Nunes], Peter F. Senecal, *The Ukulele — A Portuguese Gift to Hawai*, Honolulu, 1980, quoted by Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *ibidem*.

(3) John King, *Prolegomena to a history of the ukulele* [online].

(4) A.A. Bispo, «Ukelele, Machete, Cavaquinho. Transformações inter e transculturais da guitarra e instrumentos afins no Havai: dimensões globais de sua difusão» («Ukelele, Machete, Cavaquinho. Inter and transcultural transformations of the guitar and similar instruments in Hawaii: global dimensions and its diffusion»), *Revista Brasil-Europa*, 126/16 (2010:4) [online].

(5) *Mighty Uke Trailer 3.0* [online].

Tradition and Contemporaneity

And thus, we have followed the chronologic, geographic, social and aesthetic journeys of the *cavaquinho*. The neck flat on the top or in rebound with changes in tuning or type of strings – of wire or metal; gut, or nylon – or variations in size, the journey was always accompanied by renovations and additions to the successive instruments according to the different conditions and environments in which its sound emerged. And it spoke repeatedly of the contemporaneity of a *traditional* instrument...

And it is true that, on the one hand, we automatically associate tradition to the spontaneous demonstrations sparked by a practice rooted and generally of rural matrix [in music, the work songs or those of religious solemnity, the dances and the *modas* (popular music and dance) of festivities]; on the other hand, contemporaneity takes us to the outlook of urban sophistication and performances. But the point which limits qualification is timing: the ancestry of one and the present character of the other.

Would it not be pretentious to wish to catalogue in an absolute and antinomic, although simple, way, two concepts (better still, ideas) that anchor on the very problematic concept (better still, idea) of *time*? More prudent and wiser was St. Augustine who wrote that «if nobody asks me I know what time is; however, if I wish to explain it to whoever asks me, I no longer know» (*Confessions*, book book XI).

In fact, how long is tradition? Why invoke the tradition of the students' academic costumes in recently established universities? And is contemporaneity today? And besides its pretentiousness, would it not be wrong to use lightly such a complex and delicate mental tool? The course of 21st century decade is not comparable to its apparent counterpart of the 17th century – when the word «decade» did not exist (and without a *name* there is *nothing*). History does not have the same time everywhere, nor the reference calendars are the same; ultimately, Humanity does not have the same time keeping...

In fact, how long does tradition last? Or do not the university students of recent universities invoke the traditional costumes? And is contemporaneity today? Or does it begin with the chronological limit of the liberal revolutions which occurred from the end of the 18th to the 19th centuries and to which historians attribute the beginning of the contemporary era? Is the historic course of Europe which limits time? Or is it the opening of Chinese shops in hidden away villages in the Iberian plateau?

Finally, is the *cavaquinho* traditional? From where and whence? From a Minho of 'dances *de terreiro*' (yard dances) dating back to the 17th century? Well, it can be said: it is there that it was played in an unequivocally particular and unique form, and the technique used and the morphologic characteristics of the instrument in the region (metallic strings and neck flat on the top) simultaneously permit the execution of the rhythm, the melodic contour and its harmonious accompaniment.

But can we exclude, in the 19th century, the Coimbra of the serenades and the Lisbon taverns? The island of Madeira, swivelling platform from whence it departed to other shores? Its *braga* wearing peasants or the ladies at the Funchal halls? The Creole *coladera* or the Brazilian *samba*?

The *krontjong* orchestras on the island of Java? And what about Hawaii, where its re-creation is a cultural icon and from where it radiates even more strongly all over the world? Or even ancient Greece, since the time trap situates its most remote ancestry there? And can we ignore Queirã, in the Viseu district, where it has never been seen or heard before but has been played from the end of the 20th century in popular orchestras, after the mentioned record by Júlio Pereira had re-created tradition and since then the instrument has been more manufactured and played in Portugal than ever before?

Tradition is the contemporaneity of the past(s)? Contemporaneity is the tradition of the future(s)?

Many questions for a statement which is itself somewhat assertive: the reason being that contemporaneity and tradition do not have a time or a place since they are of all times and of all places – one of those which are or have been in its origin; the other of those that remember it. And the mediating element between “ancient” and “modern”, in any chronology, is always memory: that is to say, only by living it and acting upon it will it become part of our memory. However, remembering some things implies forgetting others and memories are only created through the constant renovation and creative translation of what is ancient in the reality of those who live it; especially when considering a manifestation such as music which is so close to the body and soul – a word which has fallen into disuse but is being retrieved (1).

In fact, tradition does not exist without contemporaneity which brings it to life; although in a non-homogeneous and mass way; rather mixed and plural as with the universe, but rooted in a social and geographic daily life which integrates it and shares its meaning.

And this is only one *contemporaneity* that if it has the strength to be remembered and lived, it shall become a *tradition*.

(1) See the work developed on this subject by the director Tiago Pereira, in the documentaries *Significado. A música portuguesa se gostasse dela própria* (Significance. Portuguese music if it liked itself), Águeda: d’Orfeu, 2010 (dvd) and *Sinfonia Imaterial* (Immaterial Symphony), Lisbon: Fundação INATEL, 2012 (dvd), as well as *A Música Portuguesa a gostar dela própria* (Portuguese Music liking itself) [online].

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