

The Cultural Identity of Cape Verdeans from a Study of Musical Structure in Morna

Year: 2013

Place of fieldwork: Republic of Cape Verde

Name: Kei Aoki

Key Words: Morna, Creolization, Identity, Sentiment, Syncretism

Research background

Cape Verde is an archipelago of nine inhabited islands that became independent from Portugal in 1975. After independence, the people started to establish their own identity by focusing on their mixed culture and language, in other words, creolization. The Cape Verdeans call this “Capevernity.” This is especially true of *morna*, a popular music style in Cape Verde that represents the essence of Cape Verdean spirit in its songs’ lyrics.

There are two types of *morna*: traditional and modern. It is clear that the interest of musicians is how to maintain the two *mornas*, which absorb intercultural sounds from both within and outside of Cape Verde.

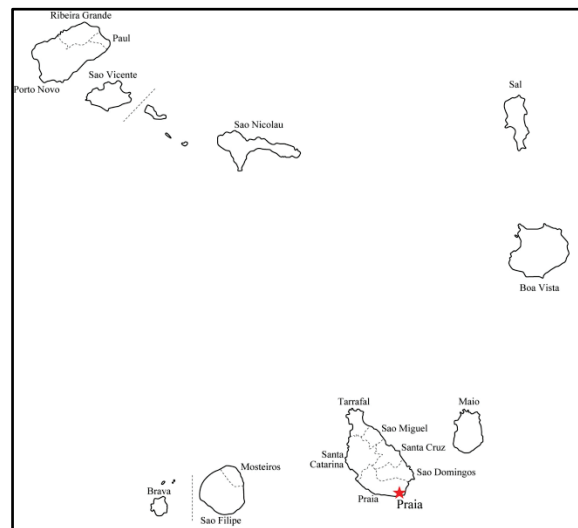


Fig.1 Republic of Cape Verde

Research purpose and aim

The objective of this investigation is to clarify the cultural identity of Cape Verde, which has the complex characteristic of Portuguese-based creole, through the musical aspect of *morna*. Here, it is effective to analyze from a structural aspect: (1) how *morna* is evolving in terms of instruments, performance styles, rhythms, and melodies and (2) where the music is played (at home, schools, roads, at workplaces, at leisure venues, etc.). It is

also of interest to (3) evaluate *morna* in relation to society and culture (climate, dialect, daily life) by interviewing people, especially musicians, and collecting primarily discography and bibliographical data.

Results and achievements of the fieldwork

Today, *morna* has become creolized in the city of Mindelo (island of São Vicente)—traditional music from the southern archipelago, funaná, jazz, fado, and bossa nova were factors in this phenomenon—whereas the preservation of the traditional lifestyle on the islands of São Nicolau and Santo Antão was remarkable. In reality, there are many types of *morna* in addition to traditional or modern: *morna* slow, *morna coladeira* (or *galope*), and *morna* fusion.



Fig.2 Modern *Morna*



Fig.3 Traditional *Morna*

This research clarified how major concepts (*sodade*, *cretcheu*, *morabeza*) were interpreted in everyday life. Compared with the islands of Santo Antão and São Nicolau, São Vicente was urbanized, and it therefore lost the significance of these concepts. It can be said that this situation of urbanization is affecting the process of creolizing *morna* that caused the surge in *morna* fusion, which is the case in Mindelo City.



Fig.4 Mindelo City



Fig.5 A village in Santo Antão

Implications for and impact on future research

Following the examination of the creolization and structure of *morna* on the three islands mentioned above, a redefinition and classification must now be undertaken and analyzed. Moreover, the data that have been collected must be structured in order to gain a wider aspect before proceeding with research in the rest of the islands.