

## THE KOLADERA: HYPOTHESES FOR A GENEALOGY

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to present and reflect on some hypotheses for the emergence of *koladera*. This musical genre from Cabo Verde, West Africa, is about to complete a century of existence and is one of the most prominent in the context of musical practices in the country. However, it remains practically without academic studies that analyze its trajectory. Bibliographic research and interviews reveal the presence of inputs in Cabo Verde – such as the polka and gallop, from Europe, and the maxixe, from Brazil – which may have influenced the genesis of this musical expression. Connecting historical and ethnographic data with technical aspects of the rhythmic patterns, based on the analysis of a sample of records, is proposed as a path to understanding the birth of the *koladera* and a contribution to awakening interest in its study.

### KEYWORDS

Koladera; Popular Music; Cabo Verde; Cape-Verdean Music; Morna

The *koladera* (or *coladeira*) is one of the most prominent Cape Verdean musical expressions. Alongside the *morna*, with a slow tempo and generally sentimental lyrics, sometimes associated with the sound of Portuguese *fado* or Brazilian *samba-canção* (see Martins 1989), the *koladera* is the basis of the repertoire of a vast group of performers. At the same time, it shares a whole range of enjoyment with *funaná*, due to the proximity

between the two genres: the accelerated tempo, being considered as an invitation to dance. Funaná, originally associated with the peasants of the island of Santiago, also emerged in the 20th century. It is played, in its traditional version, on a “diatonic accordion, locally called harmonica (...) with the accompaniment of the ferro, or ferrinho, a metal bar – originally the blade of a hoe – with which the rhythm is marked, by being rubbed by a knife or other metallic object” (Nogueira and Bango 2014: 85, [www.rbec.ect.ufrn.br](http://www.rbec.ect.ufrn.br)). In the 1980s, it became an urban and contemporary musical genre. Like *funaná*, *koladera*, despite its prominent position in the Cape Verdean music context, remains having been little studied to this day.

In this article, historical and ethnographic data relating to the *koladera* are presented, based on written documents, whether in the press or in literary texts; information contained on album covers and other pieces with informative potential; interviews; and some literature on Cape Verdean music, remembering that specific academic studies on this topic have not yet been published. An attempt was made to relate these data with technical aspects linked to rhythmic patterns of musical accompaniment, based on listening and an analysis of a certain set of recordings. On the other hand, the analysis of certain scores also allowed some inferences. Considering this to be a path that can lead to understanding the genealogy of *koladera*, this text intends, rather than seeking to establish conclusions, to be a contribution to awaken interest in the study of this musical expression.

The spelling “coladera”, adopted here, follows the standard established by the Unified Alphabet for Cape Verdean Writing (Alupec in its acronym in Portuguese), approved in 1998. It should be noted that the spelling of many words in Cabo Verde is a reason for disputes between regions, a topic that cannot be further explored here. In addition, over time, the spelling of certain words varies according to the authors or the media in which they appear. In this text, although adopting “koladera”, the spellings used by the authors and research sources are respected. In older texts, the tendency is to find the spelling with “c” and not with “k”.

The *koladeras* began to be recorded in the mid-1950s, on albums by Fernando Quejas, released in Portugal (see Nogueira, 2016: 199). In 1959, the series of albums released in Cabo Verde began, lasting until the mid-1960s: “eight EPs (45 rpm) were released by Casa do Leão (a commercial company based in Mindelo) as a result of recordings made in the Rádio Barlavento studios. These are pioneering recordings in terms of their production in the archipelago itself – the records were then manufactured in Germany” (Nogueira 2020, 236). Even on those albums that only feature *koladeras*, the title is still, as in the entire series, *Mornas de Cabo Verde*. There are also *koladeras* in the first recordings of Cesária Évora’s voice on record: the two EPs (110.506 E and 110.507 E) published in 1965 by Casa Silva, in

the Netherlands. Also, in both of these records the title is *Mornas de Cabo Verde*, although she only sings *koladeras*. The word “morna” in the title or being the title itself is common during this period, which suggests that the expression “coladeira” had not yet been adopted to appear on the cover of an album.

Despite being covered by the term *traditional* and even by folklore (for more about these two categorizations in Cabo Verde, see Nogueira 2020, 12-14), *koladera* was recorded in electric versions from early on – starting with the groups Ritmos Cabo-Verdianos, which emerged around 1963, in São Vicente, and Voz de Cabo Verde, a group that released their first album in 1965, in The Netherlands. The first recording by Voz de Cabo Verde, using the name Os Verdianos, came out in 1966, accompanying Bana on the LP *Nha Terra*, which features *koladeras* and *mornas*. From then on, the *koladera* became one of the highlights of Cape Verdean music nights at dances, nightclubs or concerts, becoming mandatory in the groups’ repertoires, or played at home on record players. Meanwhile, among the Cape Verdean community in the United States, Joli Gonçalves and Vickie Vierra recorded *koladeras*. One of them, “Tunga”, was also recorded by Harry Belafonte and the group Belafonte Folk Singers, which accompanied him and of which Joli Gonçalves was a member.

In the period following Cabo Verde’s independence (1975), there was a recording explosion, with productions in various areas of the Cape Verdean diaspora, as Cabo Verde did not have recording studios. Several singers and groups have *koladera* in their repertoire. In Cabo Verde, Os Tubarões were successful from their first LP, in 1976, and from 1980 onwards the group Bulimundo emerged with the force of a revolution, bringing *funaná* from the countryside to the city, with electric instruments. Finaçon followed, starting in 1985, also focusing on *funaná*. Most groups and artists from that period who perform *funaná* also have *koladera* in their repertoire. At the end of the 1970s, the group Cabo Verde Show emerged, which would have the *koladera* as the flagship of its repertoire and introduced elements of Antillean *zouk*, giving rise to the so-called *kolazouk*, resulting in a lively music and, as the *koladera* has always been, an irresistible invitation to dance.

The *koladera* continued to reign in the 1990s, at a time when acoustic music gained ground, evidenced by the group Simentera, whose first album was from 1994; by Ildo Lobo’s solo albums, from 1997 onwards, and by Cesária Évora’s international career, in bands in which the guitar and cavaquinho were the basis. It was with very lively *koladeras*, such as “Stanhadinha”, “Nho Antone Squederode”, “Sangue de Berona”, and others, that Cesária made audiences stand up and applaud her from all over the world, always ending her shows with one of them.

## THE KOLADERA BY THE PRESS: REFLECTIONS AND CONTROVERSY

If in the mid-1960s the *koladera* had already been recorded for a few years and was common in the repertoires of groups performing live, it is understandable that observers of cultural issues would be stimulated to reflect on it. Especially after Bana, in the summer of 1967, with several recordings already on the market, passed through Cabo Verde on a tour that took him to several capitals of the Portuguese colonies in Africa and after the group Voz de Cabo Verde, in turn, had made their first performances in the archipelago, at the beginning of 1968.

“What’s going on with Cape Verdean music? This is the question that comes to our lips when listening, with deep attention, to the music from the latest album released by the group «Ritmos Caboverdeanos».” This is how the unsigned text begins, entitled “New rhythms”, which is possibly the first in which questions are raised about the musical genre that was conquering the public. It comes from the newspaper *O Arquipélago*, the only one published in Cabo Verde at that time. “The «SAI’KO» is the basis of our question”, continues the text, stating: “(...) the evolution of Cape Verdean music led us to the semi-fast morna, with a dance rhythm, born in Boa Vista”, as opposed to what is considered to be born on the island of Brava, “a sentimental musical creation more for listening than for dancing”. (“New rhythms”, *O Arquipélago* 18/01/1968, 6).

The author then explains that, “in ancient dances, some couples, in order to escape the normal rhythm of the morna, performed a kind of dance transposition to a faster rhythm which later came to be called «morna danced ‘offbeat’»”. The text continues:

The rhythm of Brazilian music influenced the morna in S. Vicente, which allowed itself to be dragged into a faster tempo. Thanks to this influence, over time, the first coladeiras began to appear in S. Vicente, perfected day by day and which today, under the influence of the foreign rhythm of Yé-Yé, have already been transformed into modern rhythms (*sic*). The influence of the rhythms, in each musical era, has created guitar solos with different tempos, from those that resemble samba to those of bolero, these of more recent creation. (*ibid.*)

Ti Goy’s composition “Saiko Dayo” (title spelled above as “SAI’KO”), recorded by Cesária Évora<sup>1</sup> and by the Ritmos Caboverdianos group, is, as stated in the text, the one that led to the article. It is a *koladera* in which one can

1 “Saiko Dayo” appears on the compilation by Cesária Évora, *Radio Morabeza - Early Recordings*, released in 2009, <https://open.spotify.com/track/1LjtgWhsp70-Qp1ENAOjJe?si=d76e167c2ac64cfe>.

see the use of the Brazilian composition “O sanfoneiro só tocava isso”, recorded by Dircinha Batista in 1949, which was described at that time as a polka.<sup>2</sup> The appropriation of a Brazilian composition in Cabo Verde is not surprising, and other cases can be cited, such as “No rancho fundo” and “Perdão Emília” (see Nogueira, 2020: 206; 219), since: “diverse cultural inputs originating in Brazil can be identified in Cabo Verde. Initially, they arrived through maritime navigation, which had brought the crews of Brazilian ships into frequent contact with the population of the islands” (Nogueira, 2020: 142), since the 18th century. Later, “shortwave radio – which began operating in Brazil in 1922 – was another way for musical fashions to enter Cabo Verde, including Brazilian ones” (*ibid.*: 145), making certain artists, such as Nelson Gonçalves, Orlando Silva and Sílvio Caldas, as well as the sambas of Ary Barroso, well known in the archipelago (to delve deeper into this topic, see Nogueira 2020, 142-147).

Returning to the article in *O Arquipélago*, the anonymous author can be assumed to be its director, Orlando Levy. He wrote several texts about the music that was produced at the time and, in 1963, accompanied the group Ritmos Caboverdianos to Senegal (see Levy, *O Arquipélago* 04/25/1963, 4). He writes, waiting for contributions that answer the question that opens the text:

Given this evolution of Cape Verdean music that we see today being particularly accepted by everyone in dance halls, both in Cabo Verde and abroad, we leave the door open to our composers to bring to our readers the secrets of the evolution of music, as we enter decidedly in modern rhythms. (New rhythms, *O Arquipélago* 18/01/1968, 6)

The answer arrives about two months later, sent by Manuel d’ Novas (Manuel de Jesus Lopes (1938-2009), a musician whose *koladeras* were in vogue at that time when his journey as one of the main Cape Verdean composers was beginning. Novas worked on boats and on his constant travels he came into contact with different musical styles. His answer clearly shows the influences received by *koladera*: influences that are not only musical, but have to do with marketing strategies.

Given the commercial problem, our music is undergoing a small change in rhythm, in line with the international media. This is why today’s *coladeiras* are born with a different characteristic from the old ones. The secret of our music is no

<sup>2</sup> Composition usually played at Brazilian June festivals for square dancing. V. 1949 - Dircinha Batista - O Sanfoneiro Só Tocava Isso (Polka), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2\\_-TkoniIo0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_-TkoniIo0). See Mio Matsuda “SAIKO” at the Cape Verdean Association in Lisbon, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TeeZ3RWgtFI>; O Sanfoneiro Só Tocava Isso, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JM-prGncj2w>.

different from that of Latin America or elsewhere, which in the last decade has undergone harsh metamorphoses, meeting the demands of Yé-Yé. (Lopes, *O Arquipélago* 07/03/1968, 5)

And he continues: “In Cape Verdean commercial music there will be no nostalgia, romanticism and poetry, which can be compared with the creations of the extinct B.Léza, Eugénio Tavares, António Tchitche, Jacinto Estrela, etc.” (*ibid.*). The author also mentions that he heard an album with the songs “Contam’ nha cretcheu” and “Nha Cabritinho” (the first a *morna* by Eugénio Tavares and the second a *koladera* with no known author) “recorded by a Central American group, in Bolero-chácháchá rhythm”. There is a high probability that he is referring to the LP recordings *Paul Gonsalves & Phill Barboza Latin Orchestra*, in which these two musicians (not from Central America but North Americans of Cape Verdean descent) recorded several *mornas* and *koladeras*, including the two mentioned. The musician states that following “their examples and those of the Voz de Cabo Verde ensemble, creating faithful interpreters, capable composers and moralized arrangements in good melody, our folklore could reach an international level. This is the secret of modern music, and always” (Lopes 1968, 5).

It is evident here not only the interest in achieving commercial success but also the pressure exerted on Cape Verdean creators by Anglo-Saxon pop music, in the form of *yé-yé*<sup>3</sup> [3]. It should be noted that at that time, on the island of São Vicente, several groups had already emerged with electric instruments and emulating the Beatles both in the music they produced and in the clothes they wore, such as Os Caites, West Side and Kings. One of the members of Kings says: “When we built the ensemble in 1970, we were all students. There was a great influence from English and the Beatles” (Nogueira, 2016: 301). As for the West Side, “in tune with the fashion of the time, they dress inspired by the hippie style and imitate the Beatles, but their repertoire is very eclectic, since the entertainment of dances presupposed playing not only pop music but also other styles that pleased the public” (Nogueira 2016, 566).

The *yé-yé* is part of the history of the aforementioned Ritmos Caboverdianos, one of the first groups to use electric instruments in Cabo Verde, in a way that is also related to the *koladera*. In 1966, this group was chosen to represent Cabo Verde at a *yé-yé* festival in Lisbon, in which groups from Portugal and Angola also competed. It was the *rock and roll* reaching the Portuguese colonial empire. “We didn’t know anything about *ié-ié* in São Vicente. When I arrive in Portugal, I will hear Roberto Carlos’ *ié-ié*”, reported the group’s lead singer, Longino Baptista, almost 40 years later (Nogueira 2016, 461). The

3 The term “yé-yé” (France), or “iê-iê-iê” (Brazil), arises from the expression “yeah, yeah, yeah”, present in some Beatles songs (<http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iê-iê-iê>). We chose to maintain here the way it is written in the cited texts.

group doesn't win the competition (Os Rocks, from Angola, won), and doesn't even play anything that resembles the new style. An article published in *O Arquipélago*, after praising the Cape Verdean boys for not having "idiotically confirmed themselves as `Stars', `Rocks' or `Sheiks'", reports the initial coldness of the public upon hearing a *morna* and their enthusiastic reaction to the next topic, an infectious *koladera*: "And then, as if by magic, no one remembered the *ié-ié* anymore" (Zorro, *O Arquipélago* 19/05/66, 9).

Another text that refers to *koladera* at that time is the article "A coladeira, ou a alegria de zombar" (The *koladera*, or the joy of mocking), by the Portuguese writer Manuel Ferreira.<sup>4</sup> Arriving in São Vicente around 1942, integrated into the military force that was established there during World War II, Ferreira lived on the island for several years, where he married a Cape Verdean woman, having produced several works related to Cabo Verde, in fiction and essays. In this 1968 text, he states that the *morna* and the *koladera* are "two poles of the same nature, following non-coinciding paths. Equally desired, and so much so that they are associated on the same album" (Ferreira, *O Arquipélago* 16/12/1968, 1).

However, contrary to what the less-informed might think, the importance of the *koladera* is very recent. And if it was during the second half of the 1950s that it began to make its presence known, the truth is that around 1960 this form of musical (and literary) expression broke out in S. Vicente, spreading and gaining popularity throughout the entire archipelago. On recordings, at dances, on radio programs, at family parties. A sovereign place on a meteoric rise. In such a way that there is no *morna* player today who has not divided himself between both genres. (*ibid.*)

The author comments that, as it was so new, this musical genre had not yet been registered in the *Dicionário de Música* by Tomás Borba and Fernando Lopes Graça. And even Jean-Paul Sarrautte did not feel the need to mention it in his study on the *morna*, *samba* and *mandó* (he refers to "Trois forms d'influence portugaise dans la musique populaire d'outre-mer: le samba, la morna et le mandó", published in the acts of the Congresso Internacional de História dos Descobrimentos, in 1960, see Sarrautte, *Gazeta Musical e de Todas as Artes*, 1960). It continues by drawing a comparison between the divergent characteristics of *morna* and *koladera*, summarizing that the first "reflects a facet of the Cape Verdean [character]: the *morabeza* (*kindness*), the dream, the nostalgia, the painful taste of

<sup>4</sup> The text reproduced in the newspaper we mentioned is part of *A Aventura Crioula*, a book by Manuel Ferreira that was first published in 1967.

things or the contained suffering” and the other reveals his “sarcasm, the joy of mocking, of criticizing” (Ferreira, *O Arquipélago* 16/12/1968, 10).

“But naturally the question immediately jumps out: why the recent explosion of the *koladera*? How can you explain such new, different music, which reveals itself, one might say unexpectedly, as an integral part of a people?” asks Manuel Ferreira, recalling that, 25 years earlier (1943, when he lived in São Vicente), it cannot be said that the *koladera* already existed. Noting that the big names in Cape Verdean music until then, such as B.Léza and Eugénio Tavares, had not created *koladeras*, he recalls; on the other hand, that “in the 40s, when a *morna* had a livelier tempo, it was called a *morna-coladeira*”. And he also mentions that, during the period in which he lived in São Vicente, he never saw the *koladera* sung or danced, “except for one or two street kids (the *tonguinha*), but this is almost always a chance event and very rare. Would it be something vague, without defined structure, as if looking for a path?” (Ferreira, *O Arquipélago* 12/16/1968, 10). When mentioning “a *tonguinha*”, it can be assumed that the author is referring to the composition “Tunga”, previously mentioned by recordings in the USA in the 1960s and later. “Tunga” (or “Tunga *Tunguinha*”, as the chorus says and sometimes appears as the title) is, according to Henrique Teixeira Oliveira (“Djick”), a musician and guitar teacher born on Ilha Brava in 1943, a composition he listened to in his childhood, spent on that island. “I think that Tunga from Brava ended up in the United States, with the emigrants” (Oliveira, personal communication to the authors, 09/22/2022). Given the intense migratory flow from the islands of Brava and Fogo to the USA since the 19th century, it is not possible to rule out the possibility that Joli Gonsalves heard it and created lyrics different from those usually sung in Cabo Verde.

Questioning the reason for the “surprising explosion” of *koladera*, Ferreira comments that apparently nothing had been written on the subject until then, other than the text by Luís Romano entitled *Cabo Verde – Renascença de uma civilização no Atlântico médio*, the first edition of which is from 1966.<sup>5</sup> What Romano proposes in this text will be presented later. Ferreira emphasizes that in that same year, before the publication of Luís Romano’s text, he himself had provisionally “suggested two joint hypotheses to explain this outbreak of *coladeira*”: one would be “the influence of modern African-American rhythms, and in many aspects the *coladeira* weaves itself”; the other would have to do with “the revitalization of certain

<sup>5</sup> This text, a lecture given at the Historical and Geographic Institute of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil, on July 9, 1966, was published in the journal *Ocidente* vol. LXXI (p. 209-222) in the same year. In 1967, *Ocidente* published a reprint with an interview with Luís Romano with the same title, and in 1970, also with the same title, a book was published by Edições Ocidente, designated as a second edition. Thanks to Simone Caputo Gomes for her help in clarifying this sequence.

African survivals linked above all to a sensual and rhythmic background” (Ferreira, *O Arquipélago* 16/12/1968, 10).

In December 1968, the author presents another hypothesis, “based on the evolution of the social process on the islands” (*ibid.*). Therefore, the *koladera* could derive “from the fact that the Cape Verdean has reached his social majority, having reached his adult stage” and through it, “he reveals himself and rebels, with an ease typical of someone who does not fear ridicule. Of those who are not afraid of censorship. Of someone who doesn’t care about being more or [being] less. Of those who assume and do not presume” (*ibid.*). Taking into account that these reflections by Manuel Ferreira have remained hidden in the archives for a long time, it is worth bringing them to light now, when taking a retrospective look at the trajectory of *koladera*:

It corresponds to a manifestation that emanates spontaneously and reflects an uncontained force that nothing dominates. It is not a meditated or premeditated process, a guided awareness, but rather comes from a natural gesture due to an intimate current that circulates within the people themselves, since the *coladeira* is profoundly an act of the entire people. And here it identifies with the *morna* – and only here! Both, however, define, through different paths, characteristics of the same entity, functioning complementarily in the dimension of the same man: the Creole man who, over a journey of centuries, has known how to build, violating multiple manifestations of his personality (*sic*). And in this context, the *coladeira* is by no means the smallest. It would not be a coincidence that Harry Belafonte would have used a *coladeira* theme for one of his rhapsodies of Afro-black music. (Ferreira, *O Arquipélago* 16/12/1968, 10)

Manuel d’Novas responds to this article by correcting Ferreira regarding the period in which he considers that the *koladera* appeared – “before 1940, and not in the second half of the 1950s” – and stating: “The first in São Vicente was due to an inspiration from Jack do Carmo. B.Léza also composed the ‘Gaivotinha branca’, which proves that the friend in question was wrong, which is not so surprising” (Lopes, *O Arquipélago* 01/30/1969, 6). Jack do Carmo (1910-1949) was a composer of *mornas*, one of which, “Flor formosa” is usually referred to as *morna-galope*, due to its faster tempo than the *morna* (see Nogueira 2020, 205). It is probably this song that Manuel d’Novas would refer to when he indicated Jack do Carmo as a pioneer in *koladera*. B.Léza (1905-1958), too, is one of the most famous composers of *mornas* but he also made forays into other genres.

Apparently, Manuel d' Novas interpreted Ferreira's considerations as undue or unfair criticism: "What left me astonished was the skillful way in which this friend condemns *coladeiras* – in general – even though he knows that from a family, not only good children are born (...)", and: "It's not worth ruining other people's inspiration, serving with partial criticism" (*ibid.*). Possibly the composer did not like expressions such as "the *coladeira* is perfect nonsense"; "sarcasm, the joy of mocking, of criticizing, the tendency to taunt, mockery, shameless laughter, barbed jokes, foul-mouthed irreverence"; or "the *coladeira*, so often outrageous, violent, daring, no one can control it, so bare is its language at times, so discourteous is its intention (...)" (Ferreira, *O Arquipélago* 16/12/1968, 10).

However, in summary, Ferreira's article, in addition to expressing surprise at the success achieved by the *koladera*, highlights its differences compared to the *morna* and proposes a hypothesis that even enhances the [image of] the Cape Verdean people in its development. In this way, Manuel d'Novas' reaction, suggesting that he should not discourage composers and not speak figuratively (which may suggest some hidden question), is difficult to understand for anyone who, half a century later, reads both texts. It was difficult to understand for Manuel Ferreira himself, who in his rejoinder months later expressed surprise at the composer's reaction (Ferreira, *O Arquipélago* 05/08/1969, 1; 6). Susceptibility aside, what matters for what is analyzed here is the following excerpt from Manuel d'Novas' text: "In fact, you should check the different tempo of the *coladeira*. It is sometimes performed in the rhythm of *baião*, *march*, *samba*, and finally in rhythms of etc., (*sic*) but always in Creole, which characterizes its name" (Lopes, *O Arquipélago* 30/01/1969, 6; authors' translation).

In the following decade, the *koladera* appears once again as the culmination of a process in which the Cape Verdean people, maturing and freeing themselves from certain constraints, assume their "[cultural] adulthood". Teobaldo Virgínio, a writer based in the United States, publishes this analysis:

Emerged as a reliever of centuries-old repressions of [emotions] – supported in the resigned cadence of the *morna* while speaking of intense feelings in which personal desires were instinctively confused with the general tragedy –, the *coladeira* stands out as a cry of defiance and strength of desire, giving us a cheerful, relaxed, uninhibited Cape Verdean... not the man crying sorrows but the joyful and happy environment of his vocation. (Virgínio, *Terra Nova* March 1979, 2; authors' translation).

Four years had passed since independence, and the tone of the text reflects the moment of nationalist euphoria that was being experienced: "The

coladeira, freed today from the police limitations that all Cape Verdean cultural flourishing suffered, is documented with a varied range of interventions. Not only singing, «danças pertód/falás n'uvid» (dancing close together, the man whispering seductively in the woman's ear), it is also an instrument of social commitment", writes Teobaldo Virgínio, concluding that *koladera* "Today it is the Cape Verdean soul in its celebration of nationality" (*ibid.*: 8). More recently, Carlos Gonçalves (*Kab Verde Band*, 2006) and Manuel de Jesus Tavares (*Aspectos Evolutivos da Música Cabo-Verdiana*, 2006) wrote about *koladera*, focusing on some of the topics covered here. However, the choice in the present article was to analyze older texts, some of which were also sources of research by these authors.

### **KOLADERA – SIMILARITIES AND DISTINCTIONS COMPARED TO OTHER MUSICAL EXPRESSIONS**

Juliana Braz Dias points out in her thesis *Mornas and Coladeiras: Versões Musicais de uma Nação*, whose title is in itself elucidative of identity aspects related to these musical practices, the similarity between the *koladera* and the *funaná*, "due to its accelerated tempo and appropriateness for dance, with similar instrumentation and contesting lyrics, often related to national independence", which means that, in this historical period (1970s/1980s) they have "a close relationship, making part of a new symbolic field" (Dias 2004, 33). At the same time, the *koladera* continues to share with the *morna* other situations and other symbolic universes, argues this author who sees both as a connected pair "(...) together, they are experienced in various acts of sociability as an indissoluble pair" (Dias 2004, 5), the *koladera* as a "counterpart to *morna*" (*ibid.*), he says, following the same line of thought as Manuel Ferreira. And again, when pointing out the *koladera* as a "place of criticism and contestation" (Dias 2004, 9), while the *morna* is seen as related to romanticism, the idealization of women, the suffering of longing, melancholy.

This distinction, although quite widespread, has several possible caveats, with regard to both the *morna* and the *koladera*. While *mornas* do refer, in large part, to situations of the romantic couple, the number of times in which the text has another theme is not negligible. As Nogueira and Amado (2023a, <https://www.caboverdeamusica.online/morna-ca-e-so-dor/>), who researched "issues outside the sentimental context" in *morna* lyrics, sentimental themes are present in many of them "just as they are in compositions in the most varied genres, around the world. But it is also true that other subjects have been brought into the lyrics of *mornas* over Time."

As for the *koladera*, if the characterization as being centered on criticizing customs focusing on women was valid for its first phase,

over time, however, this pattern of koladera with lyrics criticizing female attitudes did not remain, although to this day it is sometimes indicated to characterize this musical genre. And even the characteristic of koladera as satirical is not maintained in the productions of composers from later periods (Nogueira and Amado, 2023b, <https://www.caboverdeamusica.online/a-koladera-ou-a-alegria-de-nao-zombar/>; authors' translation).

Nor is its greater connection to protest themes, as opposed to the *morna*, evident, as shows the list of examples the authors give. On the other hand, with the emergence of female composers, recording their own koladeras, “this characteristic also tends to remain as a mark of the times in which koladera began to be recorded, and it is no longer valid to characterize the musical genre as a whole” (*ibid.*).

### **THE KOLADERA AND THE WORD “COLADEIRA”**

Tracing the route of *koladera* over time opens up space to think about hypotheses for its emergence, going back to a time when it did not yet exist, or was in an embryonic state. The sources from this period – the first decades of the 20th century – bring several possibilities for what may have been the basis from which the *koladera* germinated, becoming a Cape Verdean musical genre.

It is appropriate to present, before continuing with the possible contributions to its emergence, a clarification of the term “coladeira” (*strainer, koladera*), which has several meanings in the Cape Verdean language. It can currently designate the women who sing songs during the celebrations of the *Kola Sanjon* (or *Kola Sonjon*) and at the *feira de bandeira* (flag festivals) on the island of Fogo. In the first case, it is the celebrations of Saint John the Baptist Day, held on several of the Cape Verdean islands and which has as its main musical characteristic the playing of drums. The dance that is most popular during this event, depending on the island, at certain times includes an *umbigada* (when dance partners touch belly). The so-called “flag festivals” are the celebrations of Catholic saints on the island of Fogo, with emphasis on Saint Filipe and Saint João. And in several ancient sources the word “coladeira” appears related to the *kola Sanjon* with different meanings.

In 1892, *Novo Almanach de Lembranças Luso-Brasileiro* brings a description of the celebrations of Saint Anthony's Day on Boa Vista Island. At one point, a reference to the “coladêra” appears, which a footnote explains is a “group of women divided into sections singing songs in turns accompanied by

drum rolls and loud clapping” (Fortes 1892, 255; authors’ translation). This description, more than the contemporary *kola Sanjon*, which is the biggest festival in Santo Antão today, makes us think about the *batuku* of Santiago, as we know it today, in particular due to the use of the cloth or cushion as an instrument (see Nogueira 2015: 27).

In *Aventura*, a novel published in 1937, the Portuguese writer José Osório de Oliveira, who lived in Cabo Verde, uses the term “coladera” in the sense of the dance of *kola Sanjon*, when describing the traditional festival in the town of Ribeira de Julião, on the island of São Vicente, emphasizing the African heritage that this expression represents in Cape Verdean society:

Saint John’s Day arrived (...) There was no man or girl who, as soon as it was dark, didn’t leave for Ribeira de Julião, the only place on the island that was a little wooded. And it was not just the city but what Europe had lent them, that they left, for one night, to go dancing the *coladera* (...) (Oliveira 1937, 117; 119; authors’ translation).

In 1938 the *Monografia-Catálogo da Exposição de Cabo Verde*, published by the Lisbon Geography Society for the Cabo Verde Exhibition, refers to the word “coladeira” as being associated, in the past, with lewd gestures and attitudes. When mentioning the music that can be heard at the exhibition, it indicates the *morna* (a “Mix of polka and very slow waltz, perhaps reminiscent of tango in rhythm and cadence”), without any reference to the *koladera* that we are dealing with here, but informing [readers] that Cape Verdeans appreciate cosmopolitan music, such as Brazilian *maxixe* and *samba* (*Monografia* 1938, 55). In other words, at the end of the 1930s, songs with a faster tempo than the *mornas*, which came to liven up the monotony of a dance, was still not mentioned in a representative event in Cabo Verde. It possibly already existed, but was not recognized enough to appear in an ethnographic exhibition catalogue.

The guitar player Luís Rendall (1898-1986), in an interview with Moacyr Rodrigues (2017, 151), states that at the beginning of the 20th century “there was no coladeira yet. Coladeira was [only] the music that was played with drums, at the festivals of São João and Santo António. At that time we still did not have the coladeira that we came to know a few years later” (authors’ translation).

For Manuel Ferreira, in the 1968 article cited above, “this coladeira [the one that is the subject of his article, available on records and then in vogue in urban dance spaces] should not be confused with the other one that, at least on the islands of São Vicente and Santo Antão, designates the dances of the festive period of São João, São Pedro and São Paulo, which

took place outdoors, and to the sound of the drum” (Ferreira, *O Arquipélago* 12/16/1968, 10; authors’ translation). The author then presents the following question: “Is there any connection between the current coladeira and that other rudimentary, poor, less organized one? Or are these two different phenomena designated by a word in common?” (Ferreira, *O Arquipélago* 16/12/1968, 10; authors’ translation).

Luís Romano, for his part, tries to look for the origin of *kola Sanjon*, and by extension, of the *koladera*, by establishing a supposed relationship, although without sources and spanning several centuries, with the “Malês, Afro-black Muslims, originating from the great Mali Empire” (13th-14th century). He states that their “religious festivities of Circumcision, with special music ceremonies, lascivious and licentious dances and secret practices, were called «KOLA»” and that this cultural heritage was “transported and worshipped syncretically by «KOLA SANJON» in the Cabo Verde Islands, and later nationalized under the local name of «KOLADERA»” (Romano, *Terra Nova*, July/August 1989, 4 – caps in original). Romano continues: “We assume that from the Malian root «KOLA» there would have been no difficulties in transforming it into Cape Verdean «KOLADERA» (...) It may be that there was another path in this trajectory of the name, which we leave to the experts on the subject” (authors’ translation).

In turn, Moacyr Rodrigues, in *Mornas e Coladeras de Frank Cavaquim*, states that the name “coladeira” originates from the Creole expression “colá benfê”, which consists in pointing out the mistakes “of those who prevaricate and slip morally. It has a pedagogical objective” (Rodrigues, 1992, 14). The *Léxico do Dialecto Crioulo do Arquipélago de Cabo Verde*, which compiles terms from the Cape Verdean language from a collection assembled in the mid-20th century, does not contain “colá benfê” but only “ben-fêto”, with the definition “*f.* it is very well done” (Fernandes, 1991, 30), probably with the same meaning that the expression has in Portuguese, however, without truly explaining its ironic meaning.

Other terms also appear in this work: “Coladera: Bv and Bar.<sup>6</sup> Woman who plays (*colá*, read *collar*) at regional festivals to the sound of drums, or who claps and sings (from *collareja*?)” (*ibid.*, 36). In other words, the author points to the Island of Brava and the Barlavento islands (in the Northern region of the archipelago, where the islands of São Vicente and Santo Antão are located) as being the places where the term “coladera” appears meaning a woman who celebrates with songs and clapping. On the other hand, the term “Colá” is defined in the work of Fernandes, referring to the island of Santo Antão, “colar or grudar [to stick] (in Santo

<sup>6</sup> Abbreviations of the *Léxico...*: Bv – Island of Brava; Bar – Barlavento, Northern region of the archipelago of Cabo Verde.

Antão): Act of touching belly buttons to the rhythm of the sound of the drum and whistling with many movements in the Popular festivals of Saint Antony, Saint John and Saint Peter” (*ibid.*). When referring to the island of Boa Vista, the author describes, the term “colá”: “it consists only of clapping along with special songs called *currem riba sabe*, to the sound of the drum, which is practiced not only in the open air and in front of the mast,<sup>7</sup> but also in the sorcerer’s house; to jump; to clap” (*ibid.*).

It is advisable to be careful with words used in the past, designating this or that activity, when they are similar or the same to designations we use in the present. If the word “coladera” was, in the 19th century, used for the dance of the *kola* during the festivities of Saint John on the island of Santo Antão (which makes sense, since the bellies “glue together” momentarily); and if the same word was also used, on another island, to describe something that resembles the current *batuku*, this does not allow us to assume, without significant room for error, a direct relationship between these names and what they refer to in later times.

It is not known from what moment the musical expression *koladera* was “baptized” as “coladeira”. It is noteworthy, however, that Maria Helena Spencer, when writing in around 1953 about a performance by the composer Jorge Pedro Barbosa (1933-2022), then around 20 years-old who went on to compose some classics in the genre *koladera* (“Chapéu di padja”, “Saia travada”), does not at any point mention the word “coladeira”, but rather, at a certain point, the *rabolo*, a designation given, on the island of Fogo, to the mazurka (see Rabolo, *Cabo Verde & its Music – A Virtual Museum – www.caboverdeamusica.online/rabolo/*). “When he sings, his whole body has a different expression: his eyes laugh, his hands wave in a nervous gesture towards the group that accompanies him, as if to say: More joy! More joy!”. With him, the journalist writes, “Cabo Verde is not just tears and hunger, absence and longing... it is also joy and abundance, youth and pleasure” (Spencer, 2005, 103-105). If Barbosa’s performance was so joyful and full of vivacity, wouldn’t there have already been *koladeras* in his repertoire, since we know who composed them? If so, one might think that the name was not yet sufficiently established and so it escaped the chronicler.

However, or when, the term “coladeira” began to be applied to urban ballroom dancing, practiced by linked couples who emerged in the mid-twentieth century - it is on this that we focus our attention on this article, seeking to glimpse possibilities of certain *inputs* from outside

<sup>7</sup> The Mast, like that of a ship, was an element usually present in the traditional festivals of Catholic saints, in Portugal and places that received its cultural influence, such as Cabo Verde and Brazil.

the archipelago that have been reworked, leading to the *koladera* that we know today.

### **CLUES TO A POSSIBLE GENEALOGY OF KOLADERA: POLKA, MAXIXE AND GALLOP**

Texts and interviews reveal the foreign musical genre that were present in dance events in Cabo Verde, in the mid-20th century. There are several references to polka, maxixe and gallop, which, having emerged in the 19th century, were still part of what was appreciated and danced in the Western world in the first decades of the 20th century (to delve deeper into this topic, see Nogueira, 2020, 133-140). Pedro Cardoso explains the mixture of rhythms and new musical trends that took place around the world in the 1930s and that could be felt in Cabo Verde:

(...) *le monde marche* – they dance, in the humblest hut, dubiously lit by an old and smoky oil lamp, as in the most presumptuous hall, illuminated *a giorno* by constellations of electric globes, the tango, whose tempo seems plagiarized from the morna, the maxixe and the foxtrot, followed by a lancer’s quadrille. All this interspersed, at times, with chants of modinhas and fados taken from memory on the gramophone (...) (Cardoso, 1983/1933: 40; authors’ translation).

This period corresponds to what is generally considered to be the emergence of the *koladera*, as stated by Manuel d’Novas (Lopes, *O Arquipélago* 30/01/1969, 6) in the cited text.

In addition to ethnographic and historical analysis, to understand the relationship or not of *koladera* with the polka, the maxixe and the gallop, we propose the analysis of rhythmic patterns of the accompaniment of the *koladera* which are repeated, especially, in the acoustic and electroacoustic formats. This is because, in these, there are well-defined rhythmic patterns in the form of an ostinato, performed by the *reco-reco* (*guiro*-like instrument) and/or ukulele and, in certain cases, by the guitar. For the purposes of this article, acoustic format refers to the execution and fixation, through microphone capture, of *koladeras* based, particularly, on guitars, ukulele, *reco-reco* or rattle and vocals, and in some cases, a wind instrument; electroacoustic format, when there is the presence of electric bass and drums (or percussion), but also with or without the presence of acoustic guitars and ukulele or wind instruments.

In *Samba e Suas Fronteiras* (2011), Felipe Trotta highlights the importance of repetition in music: as “a structural element of musical creation,

responsible for the recognition of style, motifs, musical ideas, which also functions as an axis of intelligibility and symbolic understanding of the musical work”. Without the repetition “of models, phrases, sounds, narratives, excerpts and ideas, the songs are simply incomprehensible, and their interest is practically null” (Trotta *at Cazes* 2019b, 3; authors’ translation). In turn, Vasco Martins points out the ukulele as a “support and rhythmic instrument par excellence” (1989, 33) in the acoustic instrumentation of *morna*. This statement also applies to *koladera*:

All the players are led by the ukulele musician, who has to have certainty and security, as the slightest rhythmic or chord failure is very audible in the high registers: this instrument is said to be a “small body with a big heart” (Martins 1989, 33; authors’ translation).

The rhythmic patterns mentioned above have been present since the first recordings of *koladeras* in the 1950s and 1960s.

For the analysis we intend to present, 31 phonographic recordings were selected and aurally appreciated, so described because there are themes that appear in the voices of different performers or by the same performer in different albums. The audition process was based on listening, via on-ear headphones with a cable, connected to a portable computer that made the recordings of interest through the respective links on the internet. It should be noted that no software was used to separate the audio tracks of a recording (meaning separation of vocal performance and different instruments) nor to change the tempo of the recordings.

Such recordings, some of which are referred to in the section on *koladera* discography, recorded between 1959 and 1967 (see Annex), can be considered as *koladera* due to the fact that their composers are linked to this field, as they appear identified on the records as such – even though one cannot fully trust these categorizations, because, as we have already seen, especially in the first albums recorded, back in the 1950s, the designation *koladera/coladera/coladeira* did not appear – or even because they are compositions historically identified as classics of the genre.

The main criterion for choosing such records was antiquity, as it is assumed that the older the records, hypothetically, the more they will present characteristics closer to standards used in the most remote phases of the *koladera*, in its development process. But, more than that, antiquity allows us to appreciate the process of establishing new standards and new genres. The second criterion for choosing recordings for the analyzed corpus relates to prominent artists, which is why priority was given to Cesária Évora, the greatest reference point in Cape Verdean popular music,

and Bana, another of its most famous performers. Thirdly, as a criterion, the possibility of online access to such records.

Polka became popular throughout the world from the mid-19th century. In Brazil, *choro* groups performed it on guitar, flute and ophicleide (a 19<sup>th</sup> century keyed brass instrument). “The polka danced by the people of Rio de Janeiro would transform into something original (and finally into a new dance, the maxixe) through the incorporation of a typical *lundu* movement” (Sandroni 2001, 69; authors’ translation). The *lundu* – a group dance, with claps and songs in which there was no physical contact between the linked couple – had in its way of dancing, swaying the hips, what would be passed on to the maxixe – ballroom, urban and pair dance – in the process of its formation, like a Brazilianization of polka (to delve deeper into this topic, see Sandroni 2001, 63-69).

In Cabo Verde, polka appears mentioned in several texts, since the 19th century: Francisco Travassos Valdez (1864, 250-251), in his description of a wedding in São Jorge, in the interior of the island of Santiago, reports: “Once dinner was over and coffee and liqueurs had been consumed, the dancing followed, and the guests were entertained with polkas, mazurkas and other favorite dances, the time was passed in the most pleasant way” (authors’ translation). Joaquim Vieira Botelho da Costa, in turn, gives an account of what he witnessed on the island of São Vicente around 1882: “(...) French contradances, with many and complicated marks, waltzes, mazurkas, polkas and *schottisches*” (Costa, *Raízes*, Dec 1980, 183; authors’ translation).

References to polka among the music played at dances in the main Cape Verdean cities in the second half of the 19th century are abundant in several editions of the *Boletim Oficial*, in its “Unofficial Part” and in other publications, such as *Revista de Cabo Verde*, published throughout 1899 (see Nogueira 2020, 118-125). At the beginning of the 20th century, the newspaper *A Voz de Cabo Verde* also brings frequent allusions to polka, like this one, in the serial “Amores de uma Crioula”, in the description of a dance. The musicians who would perform the animation, “after having given several chords, running through all the major and minor tones, began to play one of the polkas that were the delights of those times” (Arteaga, *A Voz de Cabo Verde*, 04/12/1911, 7; authors’ translation). It is possible to infer, from written sources from the first decades of the 20th century, that the polka was present at dances – and therefore in the repertoire of the musicians who played at them, usually recruited from popular circles – and in the repertoires of municipal bands until around the 1940s: “In these first decades of the 20th century (...) mazurkas, polkas and waltzes (...) still had their place in the repertoire of bands and at dances, as the documents attest” (Nogueira, 2020, 195; authors’ translation).

With regard to oral sources, the testimony of Nho Raul de Ribeira da Barca (Lourenço Rosa Andrade, 1927-2005), a violinist born on the island of Fogo and who lived a large part of his life in the town of Ribeira da Barca, in the countryside of Santiago, is enlightening. In an interview with the author carried out in 2005, when asked about songs he remembered from his childhood and youth, Nho Raul replied: “*Morna, koladera*, which at that time was called ‘*pólica*’ [his pronunciation of the word *polka*], *schottische*, *samba*...”. This mention of polka makes it clear that for this musician, a septuagenarian at the time of the interview, the *koladera* in those days was then called “polka”. The aforementioned Luís Rendall says about the dances of his youth: “they opened with a march and then they played a *morna*. Polka was the music used when you wanted to change the rhythm, leave the slow rhythm of *morna*” (Rodrigues 2015, 118; authors’ translation).

In turn, the already mentioned Eugénio Tavares, in a text about the *morna* which to this day is cited as a reference in the history of this musical genre, refers to the presence of polka among the music of its time: “The polka rhythm served to sing the loves of Nho Dondon, in that sweet tune of *Manchê* (...)” (Tavares 1932, 8). “*Manchê*” is a composition by an unknown author, which around 1885 was quite popular, so much so that it is included in the brochure *Músicas Populares de Cabo Verde* (n.d., c. 1885), with scores of Cape Verdean music, published by the Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa.

Several polkas appear on the first albums recorded by Cape Verdeans. They were published by Columbia Records, in New York, between 1929 and 1933. The repertoire also includes *mornas*, mazurkas, marches and *tango* (see Nogueira 2020, 152-155). These records arrived in Cabo Verde, as the publicity in the press shows. Among other examples, through this advertisement: “Cape Verdean music – Mazurkas, polkas, mornas, etc. For sale at the office of António Miguel de Carvalho and Co.” (*ibid.*, 155). From the 1940s onwards, it was observed that polka entered a process of obfuscation. After around four decades without references to polka recordings, it was only with the violinist Travadinha, in the 1980s, that compositions identified as such would appear on records. In general, they are scarce in Cape Verdean discography. If in those pioneering records the polka appears “in eight out of a total of 40 pieces” (...) in the most recent records, the designation ‘polka’ appears six times (excluding those repeated in compilations), in around 160 recordings” listed in the survey carried out by Nogueira (2020, 232). On the other hand, on the pioneering albums, there is no song designated as “coladeira”.

One might think that the polka, whose name has practically disappeared, would have transformed into something different, for example, the *koladera*? Drawing a parallel with Brazil, observe what Sandroni states, evoking the idea of “cultural anthropophagy” when analyzing what

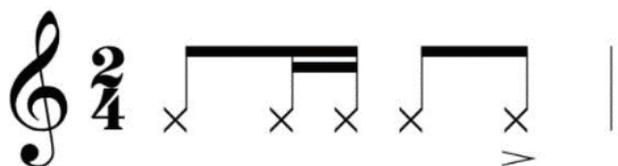
happened with the polka in Rio de Janeiro, in the 19th century, among the popular classes. The locals “digested” the polka, he says, “incorporating what they liked in it and at the same time making it something intrinsically theirs” (Sandroni 2001, 69; authors’ translation). This author states that there was a *transformation* (italics in original) and compares this process with that described by Alejo Carpentier in *La Musica en Cuba* when he deals with the adoption of contradance by black musicians in São Domingos, who gave it a “rhythmic vivacity” that did not exist in the original (*ibid.*: 68). Then came a “singular trepidation that filled in the bars with augmentation dots and Sixteenth Notes. The so-called ‘tango rhythm’ was installed in the bass”, writes Carpentier (1988, 114; authors’ translation) Could a similar process have occurred in Cabo Verde?

In terms of analyzing rhythmic patterns, the first aspect to highlight in 28 of the 31 records analyzed (See Annex) is the presence of a rhythmic pattern performed in the form of an ostinato on the reco-reco or the rattle, represented in the figure below (Fig 1), and which is associated with what Paulo Roberto Peloso Augusto calls “(...) polka with Carioca features (...)” (Augusto 1997, 110; authors’ translation).



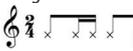
**FIGURE 1**  
Polka with Carioca Features  
Source: Augusto (1997: 110)

However, only one phonographic record (see Annex) is based on a rhythmic cell of accompaniment for the guitar (see figure 2) which Henrique Cazes identifies as the Predominant Rhythmic Cell of Polka Accompaniment in the 1910s (Cazes 2019a, 103).



**FIGURE 2**  
Polka on Guitar.  
Font: Cazes (2019a, 103).

Polka is intrinsically linked to *koladera* from the point of view of its rhythmic accompaniment pattern, particularly the rhythmic cell called

polka with *Carioca* Features , strongly present in the reco-reco (or rattle) in 28 of the 31 records analyzed. However, at the level of ukulele/guitar, it is very underdeveloped, as the rhythmic cell identified as a variant of Brazilian polka from the 1910s  || was only found in one of the 31 records analyzed.

\*

Another clue that emerges when researching Cape Verdean music from the mid-20th century is the maxixe. Appearing in Rio de Janeiro in the second half of the 19th century, at first it was a couple dance linked with “lascivious, almost acrobatic twerking” (Jotaefegê 1974, 15). At the time, there were countless descriptions of its sensuality, as Jotaefegê’s work exemplifies. This author recalls that it was only in 1883 that the word “maxixe” appeared in the press, although he considers that it was already a dance that had been enjoyed for several years, in popular environments, until it was adopted by the middle class (see Jotaefegê, 1974, 21-29). At the beginning of the 20th century, “maxixe” was already the name of a musical genre, which is why this author dedicates a chapter of his work to “music called maxixe” (*ibid.*, 41-46).

Making a parallel between the adoption process of *koladera* by the Cape Verdean public and what happened with maxixe in Brazil some time before, we can consider its existence in dance spaces preceding the appearance of its designation [as such] by several years, this being a significant part of the process of its construction as a musical genre. The parallel could include the fact that “the word ‘maxixe’, at the turn of the century, had a stronger connotation of vulgarity than ‘tango’ (Sandroni 2001, 79), and the word “coladêra” in turn had the pejorative charge of the lubricity attributed to it by the authors who described the *kola Sanjon* and its navel-touching.

In Cabo Verde, references to maxixe can be found in texts by at least two observers attentive to aspects of Cape Verdean culture: Desirée Bonnaffoux, author of *Música Antiga de Cabo Verde* (1978), and Manuel Ramos, memoirist, and author of *Mindelo de Outrora* (2003). The latter mentions that at the ball, after dancing a few pieces with the chosen girl, “we would invite the girl’s mother to a waltz or a maxixe and she would be happy with our gesture” (Ramos 2003, 128). Bonnaffoux (1978, 9), in turn, writing about the island of Boa Vista, where he lived, includes maxixe among the types of music used to liven up the dances. According to this source, they played not only *mornas* and gallops, which according to him made up the essential part of the dance repertoire “but also maxixes, waltzes, lunduns, contradances and mazurkas” (Bonnaffoux 1978, 9).

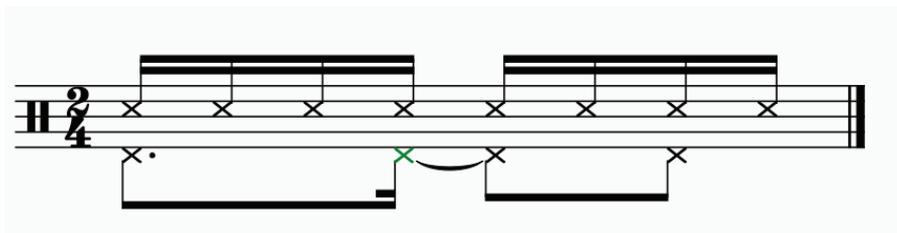
In addition to these authors, older Cape Verdean musicians remember the maxixe in various entertainment situations in the archipelago. Regarding the island of Santiago, and more precisely its countryside – in São Salvador do Mundo and Tarrafal –, maxixe and samba appear twice as songs that were played at dances in the mid-20th century, which has special relevance for this island, not usually designated as a reception space for foreign music (unlike São Vicente, whose port has always been an open door to the outside world). When describing the traditional feast of *Sao Salvador do Mundo* (which takes place in Picos, a village in the municipality of São Salvador do Mundo, on the third Sunday after Easter), Juvenal Cabral reports, in his book *Memórias e Reflexões* (1947): “The dances are very lively; mornas, sambas and maxixes are danced, to the sound of the violin, or to the trembling voice of a diatonic accordion” (Cabral 1947, 71; authors’ translation).

Also from this island, Nho Eugénio (Tomás Mendes Cabral, b. 1936), born in Tarrafal, when answering the question about what the dances were like in his youth, firstly mentions “samba and maxixe” (Nogueira 2020, 146). Another reference to the presence of maxixe, this time on the island of Boa Vista, can be found in an interview with guitarist Nonhe (Olímpio Estrela, 1922-2005) with *Novo Jornal Cabo Verde*: “(...) At these parties, the morna, the coladeira (maxixe as they called it), the waltz, the polka and the *ril* (from English *reel*, a now extinct style of music and dance)” (Castro, *Novo Jornal Cabo Verde* 07/11/1993, 8). Here, the musician clearly states that what was called “coladeira” in the 1990s, when he was interviewed, was called “maxixe” at the time when he sometimes played on board English ships that stopped at Boa Vista Island.

Therefore, we can see the presence of maxixe in Cabo Verde, which ultimately consists of polka recreated by Brazilian musicians from the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Jotaefegê 1974; Sandroni 2001). Brazilian influence in that territory was due to shortwave radio transmissions and to merchant ships that brought Cape Verdean musicians into contact with sailors who, in general, had musical instruments on board (see Nogueira 2015, 89; Nogueira 2016, 322). Could the *maxixe* have been an ancestor of the *koladera*?

In terms of rhythmic analysis of the presence of maxixe in *koladera*, what Henrique Cazes calls “Maxixe Levada” (Cazes 2019a, 104) on the ukulele<sup>8</sup>, was identified in six of the 31 records analyzed (see Annex). This characteristic rhythm is present in the variant called *koladera samba* or *koladera sambada*.

<sup>8</sup> See rhythmic accompaniment of maxixe on ukulele in [https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=\\_FcDrRS9gpM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=_FcDrRS9gpM).



**FIGURE 3**  
 “Maxixe Levada” (*maxixe* groove) on ukulele.  
 Source: Authors, using MuseScore 3.

Therefore, from a rhythmic point of view, there is a direct relationship between the maxixe and the *koladera* called “sambada”, which would not be misnamed if it were called the *koladera maxixada*. Remember, by the way, that in his statement mentioned above, the violinist Nonhe, from the island of Boa Vista, states that the *koladera* was called “maxixe” in its youth.

\*

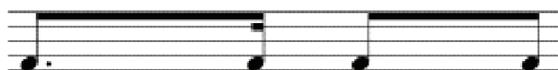
A third hypothesis for the emergence of this musical genre has to do with the gallop, which arrived in Cabo Verde just like polka and other music imported in the 19th century. The term “gallop” is not generally agreed and currently appears associated with *morna* – as *morna galopada* ou *morna galope*, in the local language. “*Morna-galope* is still a term used today when it is intended to indicate a *morna* slightly faster than usual for this genre” (Nogueira 2020, 186). For Bonnaffoux (1978, 1-2), the *koladera* is the gallop that resurfaces “with a more elaborate musical design, after a period of oblivion”. Placing the emergence of the *koladera* between the 1930s and 1950s, this period effectively coincides with the obscuring of old European music in the face of new musical fashions, hence one can think in terms of the resurgence of gallop, already Cape Verdeanized and with another name.

From the point of view of the rhythmic pattern of accompaniment, the analysis of the piano score of the theme “Galope de José Carolino” (from the brochure *Músicas Populares de Cabo Verde* (1885: 7) shows that bass accompaniment essentially has the commetric rhythmic cell , which was not identified in any of the 31 records analyzed. Another theme that appears in the analysis of gallop and which is also part of this publication is the aforementioned “Manché” (ibid: 1). In the score included in this collection, the theme has the same commetric rhythmic cell as “Galope by José Carolino” accompanied by the piano bass, as can be seen in this extract (Figure 4).



**FIGURE 4**  
Extract of the first 3 bars of the composition “Manchê”.  
Source: *Músicas Populares de Cabo Verde*.

The difference is in the tempo, as previously mentioned. On the other hand, the theme “Manchê”, given the period in which it was recorded, which coincides with the antiquity criterion, is part of the 31 records analyzed for the purposes of this article, in a song version performed by Fernando Quejas (EP *Cabo Verde Mornas*, 1959).<sup>9</sup> In this case, the ukulele accompaniment is based on the rhythmic cell known as *Habanera* (Figure 5).



**FIGURE 5**  
Habanera Rhythmic Cell  
Source: Sandroni (2002, 102)

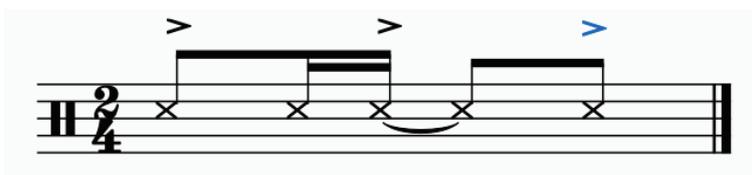
The most recent version of this number, performed by the group Simentera on the album *Raiz* (1993)<sup>10</sup>, is clearly a *koladera sambada*, marked by the presence of the maxixe groove in the ukulele. In addition to “Manchê”, two other themes deserve to be highlighted in this analysis, that is, “Nha Kodé” and “Nhontone” (in some albums with the title “Galo Bedjo”), both present in the list of 31 selected records and whose versions analyzed<sup>11</sup> present the maxixe groove in the ukulele and can be considered as *koladera samba* or *koladera sambada*, although there are those who consider them to be originally gallops.

<sup>9</sup> Manche (cladera (sic) de Cabo Verde), recording by Fernando Quejas, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVYia5f4Jws>.

<sup>10</sup> The instrumental version of the composition appears in two moments on the album: as “Intro” (<https://open.spotify.com/track/09VYD6nCDqWyIHiykztlyG?si=cfcfccf10d2346ab>) and as “Coda” (<https://open.spotify.com/track/09VYD6nCDqWyIHiykztlyG?si=cfcfccf10d2346ab>).

<sup>11</sup> The song “Nha kodé” interpreted by Fernando Quejas, on the album *Mornas de Cabo Verde* (1959) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pOMm9RfU6l>) is found between 2mn:38s and 5mn24s of the link that reproduces the compilation *Cap Vert: Anthology 1959-1992*. As for “Nhontone”, the version is Bana’s interpretation on the album *Bana a Paris* (1967) (<https://open.spotify.com/track/7EsHGQW2XfdTiForSgMWv9?si=5d-197c5f8021497a>).

As for the *morna-galope*, in two of the 31 records analyzed (see Annex), the presence of a variant of *tresillo*, the Cuban *tresillo* [was noted] – the division of the eight beats (sixteenth notes) of the binary measure in a 3-3-2 pattern (Miller, 2011) – that characterizes this subgenre of *morna*. These are two different variants of *tresillo* (Sandroni, 2011), because, as can be seen in the figure below, there is accentuation in beats 1, 4 and 7 and it divides the measure in pattern 3- (eighth note and sixteenth note) -3- (sixteenth note with eighth note ligature) -2- (eighth note).



**FIGURE 6**

Variant of *tresillo* and *morna-galope* (ukulele or guitar).  
Source: Authors, using MuseScore 3.

This variant of *tresillo* was identified in a set of compositions considered *morna-galope*: “É sim kel ta fazedo”<sup>12</sup>, “Rabilona”<sup>13</sup>, “Saiona de Vinte One”<sup>14</sup>, “Ribêra d’Paul”<sup>15</sup>, “Fusquinha”<sup>16</sup> and “Desaforo”.<sup>17</sup> To conclude the analysis carried out on this sample, it can be inferred that, from a rhythmic point of view, the *polka*, the *maxixe* and the *morna-galope* are present in the records of *koladera* from the 1950s and 1960s. On the other hand, rhythmic elements characteristic of the European gallop were not identified in these recordings.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Bringing together information from the press and literature, from oral testimonies and from the discography produced containing *koladeras*,

<sup>12</sup> “É sim kel ta fazedo”, Gardenia, CD *É sim...* (1993) <https://open.spotify.com/track/1LJOG1wpVak2gvOzmEd25D?si=96c858526ca54bb1>. Although the arrangement is more like a *bolero* than a *morna-galope*, the embedded presence of the *tresillo* in the rhythm section is still noticeable.

<sup>13</sup> Regarding the song “Rabilona”, it is interesting to note that in two different versions, the oldest, by Marino Silva (EP *Morna pa Mamãe*, 1975) (<https://open.spotify.com/track/2000zBEn72b7rEHtaY0aco?si=dfa823dd60ac4670>), and the most recent, by Celina Pereira (LP *Forsa de Cretcheu*, 1986) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCTKaBP3TjQ>), the rhythmic pattern characteristic of the subgenre is maintained.

<sup>14</sup> “Saiona d’Vinte one”, Celina Pereira, CD *Areias Mornas de Bubista* (2019) <https://open.spotify.com/track/3YZj3ewhgJPrN9jOvruRj?si=4b6671de18bd4455>.

<sup>15</sup> “Ribera d’ Paul”, Djosinha, LP *Djosinha* (s.d.) <https://open.spotify.com/track/2ezUVD2p3JMvqJGWYiOvqC?si=e7aeea4b81ee4ffb>. Note: the title of the song appears wrong, like “Balaio d’Gato” but the audio corresponds to “Ribera d’Paul”.

<sup>16</sup> “Fusquinha”, Ary Morais, CD *Cruzando Fronteiras* (2023) <https://open.spotify.com/artist/3NYDqroDZ7BNK3dMrQkmSJ>.

<sup>17</sup> “Desaforo”, CD *Homenagem a Djedjinho* (José Gomes da Graça) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGJ\\_RkAHKMo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGJ_RkAHKMo), composer of the composition.

with listening to the themes recorded on disc, we have sought to draw up a table with different narratives about the *koladera*, relying on the reflections of authors who focused on the popular music from Cabo Verde and from other spaces with which analogies can be established. At the same time, we present hypotheses for a possible genealogy of this musical genre, based on the analysis of the rhythmic structures found in recorded pieces that are probably the closest to the way the *koladera* appeared in its early days.

The analysis of rhythmic patterns of 31 phonographic records from the 1950s and 1960s, which are associated with *koladera*, allowed us to identify the presence of the polka with carioca features in 28 of them, while the *maxixe*, which is part of the *koladera samba* or *koladera sambada*, appears in six recordings, and the *tresillo* variant of *morna-galope*, in two recordings.

It is clear that the polka with carioca features, performed in the form of an ostinato on the *reco-reco*, can be considered a key element of the *koladera*, whether in the classic variant or in the so-called “samba” or “sambada”. In terms of rhythmic accompaniment patterns, it can be summarized that the *koladera sambada* is based on the combination of the polka with carioca features on the *reco-reco* with the *maxixe* on the ukulele, while the *koladera* considered “classic”, faster, is characterized by the combination of polka with carioca features on the *reco-reco* with the *tresillo* and *morna-galope* on the ukulele. Therefore, it can be inferred that the distinctive feature of polka with carioca features in the musical genre *koladera* as a whole is that it is present in both the “classic” variant and the *koladera samba* or *koladera sambada*.

We consider that these materials can constitute a basis from which to deepen studies on this musical expression that has not yet prompted specific academic research that can trace its history. On the other hand, the analysis of the patterns found in rhythmic structures provides support for this aspect, as well as a starting point for other studies.

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## ANNEX - ANALYZED PHONOGRAPHIC RECORDS

For formatting reasons, this part of the work can be found in a Google Drive document: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v56jxYp5-t27kuqb1fjSpC6TiCr\\_8K7RqQghicnkbjc/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v56jxYp5-t27kuqb1fjSpC6TiCr_8K7RqQghicnkbjc/edit?usp=sharing)

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