



EDM Analysis by Synthesis: The Case of Angolan Kuduro

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Kuduro

- Kuduro (“Hard Ass”) is electronic dance music (EDM) from Angola, typically around 140 BPM.
- *Bit* (percussive instrumental), *toque* (dance-move) and shouted vocals dynamically interact.
- In Angola and the Angolan diaspora kuduro is the most prominent youth culture. Yet, kuduros has low social prestige. Conservative voices claim that kuduro “has no history”, is “disposable music” and “mere shouting” as it “requires no skill”.
- For kuduristas the opposite is true. Good kuduro is marked by *carga* (“charge”), a powerful impetus produced through boasting, battling and collaboration, audience interaction, good preparation, hyperbole, volition and skill.
- Kuduro’s collective creativity is driven by sociability, play, banter and vocal or kinetic antiphony with quotidian references.
- Since 2003 DJs produce kuduro with Fruity Loops or FL Studio Software

Star kuduro vocalist and dancer Noite Dia, Luanda 2011.

Photo: Paulino “Cinquenta” Damião

Apaga Fogo (“Put the Fire out”) by Noite Dia (click to play)

- Song and *toque* go together
- Massive kuduro hit 2011 – 2013 in Angola and Angolan diaspora
- Produced by DJ Killamu at Gueto Produções in Luanda, Rangel
- Artificial duet of Noite Dia and Puto Lilas arranged FL Studio
- Song-*toque* critiqued for being too sensual → Noite Dia adapted the dance move in public performance

Guiding questions to analysis

- Which elements comprise the song-*toque* “Apaga Fogo”?
- How are the three streams of performance (bit, lyrics and dance) designed individually?
- How do sound, dance, and lyrics point to one another?
- Which semantic & aesthetic effects unfold through their performance in conjunction with each other?
- How does this produce *carga*?

Methods

- In-situ interviews and thick participation in Luanda, Paris, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Berlin (2011-2017)
- Analysis per synthesis → rebuilding *bits* in FL Studio → emic visualisation of *bit*
- Follow-up interview with DJ Killamu with picture elicitation of FL Studio screenshot via Facebook
- Transcription of lyrics in dialogic listening process with research participants
- Reseacher’s own dancing & DJing of *Apaga Fogo*

Results of metro-rhythmic analysis by synthesis in FL Studio Software

- *Apaga Fogo* comprises two main patterns: Zaire Pattern & Soca Pattern (click on patterns to play.)
- Salient bass drum beat plays (nearly) throughout whole song (Butler 2006).
- Asymmetrical subdivision pulsations play through both pattern.

Zaire Pattern rebuilt in FL Studio (click here to play)



Zaire Pattern is sparse, pitch not relevant, forward-driving, opens song, marks it as a kuduro song, creates anticipation and breaks during song. Zaire Claps resemble Cavacha Timeline (White 2008) → Reference to popular music from neighbouring Congos.

DJ Killamu says regarding Congolese pop music by Werrason, Pépé Kallé, or Koffi Olumide:

Their music inspires me immensely. Their complementing offbeat rhythms inspire me as well, their *bits* inspire me as well. I listen to this a lot. [And I say to myself] "Damn it, that's what I am going to do". I do it, but in kuduro. This gives more ... better sugar.

→ Kuduristas commonly invoke sweetness to reference to *carga*

Soca Pattern rebuilt in FL Studio (click here to play)



The Soca Figure plays throughout most of the song and plays during the prominent chorus, when

performers and audience members dance the *toque* and join in the chorus in response. As the two kick

drums in line 1 and 2 differ in timbre, they are represented separately. They do, however, form one metrical

stream. The arrows indicate how less salient elements support the first and fourth beat, thus reinforcing the

beat-cycle. The ellipse indicates how the scraper works as pick-up gesture (Danielsen 2006) for the vibra

slap, thus reinforcing beat four and in turn accentuate boundaries of the beat-cycle. The five-pulse dúndún

figure alludes to Caribbean *cinquillo* pattern (Hutchinson 2020).

Lyrics

Vocalist Puto Lilas in verses:

→ Flows over *bit* with boasting, hyper-local references, slang, *bife* (beef) with kuduro group Os Lambas.

Vocalist Noite Dia in verses:

→ Boasting, hyper-local references, slang, sexual innuendo.

in chorus: Call-and-response inviting audience.

Toque

→ danced during chorus

→ tapping foot on floor as if to put a fire out while rotating backwards

→ waving hand towards crotch as if to cool it or as if to fan a fire on

→ final dipping move to close off *toque*

→ easy and fun to dance

Multi-modal analysis

→ cycles of Soca Pattern, chorus lyrics and *toque* have same length

→ they are phase-shifted by one beat

→ final response word “fogo” lands on beat 1 of Soca Pattern

→ final dip of dance-move lands on beat 1 of Soca Pattern

→ call “olha fogareiro” in chorus drives antiphony with audience and dancing forward

→ beat 1 of Soca Pattern is pivotal point of interlocking phase-shifted cycles of *bit*, *toque* and chorus.

→ beat 1 provides a sense of departure for the rhythmic cycle, a sense of arrival for the dance move and

response chorus.

→ *toque* disambiguates ambivalent lyrics.

Conclusion

The juncture of phase-shifted cycles of *bit*, lyrics, and *toque* in “Apaga Fogo” produce the sensation of

a perpetual motion machine. *Bit*, lyrics, and *toque* appear to propel each other forward through metric and

semantic pointing gestures. The resulting propulsive effect becomes most evident at the moment when the

interlocking cycles unravel during the final chorus. *Carga* is produced through propelling rhythmic effects,

antiphony, boasting and sexual innuendo.

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