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Musical Practices of Afro-Descendant in the southwest of Colombia: Alliances and Negotiations in the Political Dimension of an Acoustemology

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The local musics of the afrocolombian population in the southwest of the country build a heterogeneous framework of actors and practices that articulates a territoriality and a memory of collective knowledges based on corporalities, oralities and audible sensibilities of their world. In the sense proposed by Feld (2015), an *acoustemology*, where the sound is a way to know and to be in the world through contextual experience. The musical knowledges were formed in a process in which black people was subjected to the racialization of modernity, which counterpart is the coloniality, and both are the basis of capitalism (Quijano, 2000).

The local musics tune in with the process of building an ethnicity that afrocolombian population has experimented with the multicultural Political Constitution of 1991, in which it was acknowledge as a cultural difference in cosmological tie with a territory. Thus, territoriality and memory articulate around some ideas: a permanent fight for the life and the autonomy in a postcolonial context in front of capitalist projects of spoliation that have interests in the wealth of the territory that they inhabit, as agroindustry, multinational mining, and the proximity with an armed conflict of a weak “post conflict”; in a regional level, an ancestrality, to live in the same territory as their enslaved predecessors since the sixteenth century working at the mining farms and domestic labor. The modernization at the beginning of the twentieth century with the urbanization and the expansion of media were crucial in the imagination of a global connection, transforming visual and auditive sensibilities. Thanks to the cacao commerce black peasants during the first half of the twentieth century were successful, however, in mid of that century the growing of sugar cane agroindustry at north, in a flat zone of the valley happened through the unequal fight between owners of sugar mills and small land peasants.

The fest of Worship of Child God where it is sung, danced and recited verses in his honor comes from an appropriation of Catholicism, mechanism of evangelization during the Spanish colony,

and carries ancient spiritualities of African west. The most relevant local musics “*fugas*” or “*jugas*” have place in the Worship and other occasions. The ambivalence of the pronunciations of *fuga/juga*¹ displays the discursivity in several meanings, besides the religious one, *juga*, similar to *jugar* (to play) as collective enjoyment. *Fuga* (run away), highlighting the dance as a chance of enslaveds in past for running away. The Worships are rituals of community participation that convoke friends and relatives who live in other villages, where it is created a social tie in performance. A space where sonorous sensibilities vivid in dancing bodies build a territoriality, affirm the ecology that they inhabit and the vital space that they experiment as one that is in permanent risk. The *fugas/jugas* in Worships alternate with moments of massified recorded musics in sonic encounters at the same time, tense and complicit, where all the actors demand participation.

In the last decades, ritual musics have begun an autonomy process guided by a neoliberal agenda of cultural industry. In particular, a spectacularized festival of afrocolombian musics stimulates the revitalization and transformation of musics to a western ear, where afro local musicians knit alliances with other of academic formation to participate with them. However, in performance tentative of alliances become weak and lose resonance at the festival frontiers. Besides, groups formed by most of peasants that live in the eastern could mountains have more difficulties to go due to the distance and the outlined problematics.

In this text I intend to explore the borders of this diverse acoustemology, focusing on its political dimension. In that sense, I sketch the idea that the local black musical knowledges of the Colombian southwest were configured through alliances and negotiations with various actors in its ecological, social and cosmological world as strategies for its reinvention and survival as a political acoustemology. This interpretation had its seed more than a decade ago, in subsequent journeys and grows with the ethnography I am doing since 2016 with my thesis in the interdisciplinary field of (ethno)musicologies. I am based on a collaborative or dialogic ethnomusicology, looking for the horizontality with the interlocutors, vigilant of the different positions and recognizing their knowledge production processes, to think *with* the people (Cambria, Fonseca, Guazina, 2016), just as they already have done it, by establishing alliances beyond their territorialities, expanding their worlds.

¹ The “J” has the sound of an “H”.

References

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