
Conservation and Digitisation of the Musical Archive of Rádio Nacional de São Tomé e Príncipe

Barbara Alge*¹

¹Goethe-University Frankfurt – Germany

Abstract

This paper presents the ongoing project Conservation and Digitisation of the Musical Archive of Rádio Nacional de São Tomé e Príncipe (RNSTP)”, led by RNSTP in cooperation with a German university and funded within the Patrimonies” line of Gerda Henkel Foundation for 17 months since March 2025. The so-called ”Arquivo Musical” collection and its copies in the ”São Tomé” collection consist of around 2.000 magnetic audio tapes with traditional and popular music from São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) recorded between the 1950s and the 1990s by Rádio Nacional. The project is divided in 6 phases, of which three phases shall be concluded in October 2025, including the workshop on copyright and intellectual property issues in São Tomé, the trainings in conservation and digitisation of magnetic audio tapes for local technicians in cooperation with South-African and German partners, the creation of the website of the project, the intermediate evaluation as well as public relations work. The paper will discuss different dimensions of conflict that I, as an ethnomusicologist and mediator in this project with some field experience in STP and research interest in the transformation of Santomean music from acoustic to electric as well as the role that popular music played for the country before and after independence from Portugal, observe. These dimensions range from (1.) hints on censored tracks on covers of audio tapes dating from before 1975, to (2.) conflicting interests regarding the choice of what had been recorded, to (3.) conflicting interests regarding copyright and intellectual property, to (4.) conflicting interests in the project by local institutions as well as (5.) administrative conflicts in North-South collaborations.

Keywords: São Tomé and Príncipe, National Radio, Archiving

*Speaker