

Introduction

Em Angola, até o passado é imprevisível.
(In Angola, even the past is unpredictable.)

—*Christine Messiant*

IN MAY 1998, Alberto Teta Lando, a musician and local businessman in the capital Luanda, told me that three of the most popular musicians from the late 1960s and early 1970s had been killed by the government of independent Angola in 1977.¹ They had too much power over the people, he said. Teta Lando implied that these musicians were more popular and better-known among the populations of Luanda's *musseques*, or urban shantytowns, than were the new leaders of the ruling MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola). In fact, these three were among thousands of people massacred in the repression that followed an alleged coup attempt against the leadership of the ruling party in 1977.² Civil war had broken out with independence in 1975, and in 1977 contention within the ruling party erupted into a violent purge when the attempted coup was squelched. Most people I asked later about the murders of the three musicians claimed that the men had been involved with the coup plotters. But it was Teta Lando's suggestion that their demise was related to their music and to their power as musicians that intrigued me.

A few months after that interview, on August 8, 1998, Fernando Martins, a Luandan journalist, opined in the local press that "it is unpatriotic (with all the excesses that the expression implies) to be Angolan and over the age of 15 and to never have heard of Os Kiezos. Perhaps it would be easier to tolerate someone who did not know the name of the ocean that bathes the Angolan coast."³ Os Kiezos was a band formed in the late 1960s. It was one of the most popular bands, if not the most popular, during the period in which David Zé, Urbano de Castro, and Artur Nunes, the three murdered musicians to whom Teta Lando referred, were also at the height of their popularity. Martins's claim

appeals to the cultural bases of the nation more than to the politics of nationalism. He humbles the bombast of nationalist politics by locating patriotism not on the battlefield or in the political arena but in the practices and sounds that permeate everyday life, such as music. He is concerned with what makes the residents of the country Angolans. It is not enough, Martins implies, to be born in the territory. To be Angolan is located somewhere beyond the happenstance of birth and geography, if not in having heard this band then at least in having heard *of* them, and in knowing their style of music and the context of its creation and performance. In other words, one's *angolanidade*, or Angolaness, is less about knowing where one is located physically than about knowing where one is historically and culturally. And, in Martins's estimation, that place is fundamentally defined by the music of the 1960s and 1970s.

Lando's sketch of the political power of musicians and Martins's evocation of Os Kiezos and its milieu summon a history normally associated with the nationalist armed struggle for independence waged between 1961 and 1974. Their comments link music and nation, culture and politics, and in doing so they force us to reconsider the dominant nationalist narrative of Angolan history. In temporal terms, the dominant narrative reduces culture to a proto-nationalist moment of "discovering our identity" and to a postindependence nation-building project. In spatial terms the narrative pivots on the actions and thoughts of political leaders, primarily men, who were in exile or were part of the guerrilla forces based along Angola's borders. It is a curious feature of the narrative of Angolan history that the story of nationalism unfolds almost entirely outside and on the margins of the country.⁴ The absence of activity with political consequence within the Angolan territory is improbable. Therefore, at the simplest level this book tries to answer the questions that emerge from the contradictions between Lando's and Martins's comments on the one hand and the dominant historical narrative on the other. What was the relationship between politics and culture inside Angola while the war for independence, for political sovereignty, was being waged primarily along the country's borders and in the international public sphere? What purchase does culture give us on politics in this period? And what is the relationship between the cultural nation and state formation?

I argue that it is in and through popular urban music, produced overwhelmingly in Luanda's musseques, that Angolan men and women forged the nation and developed expectations about nationalism and political, economic, and cultural sovereignty. They did this through the social relations that developed around the production and consumption of music. Lyrical content and musical sound mattered, but audiences and musicians gave them meaning in context. In other words, music in late colonial Angola moved people into nation

and toward nationalism because it brought them together in new ways: across lines of class and ethnicity, through the intimate yet public politics of gender, and in new urban spaces.⁵ Music created an experience of cultural sovereignty that served as a template for independence. The spread of radio technology and the establishment of a recording industry in the early 1970s, and the complex ways in which Angolans used these media, reterritorialized an urban-produced sound and cultural ethos across the whole territory, far beyond the capital city. This story of cultural practice with political import is barely glimpsed in standard historical accounts of Angolan nationalism.

Even if the cultural sovereignty achieved in the musseques remained invisible to colonial authorities, political agitation did not escape notice. As the independence movements waged armed struggle outside Angola and along its borders, colonial authorities occasionally recognized that the music scene inside the country was politicizing Angolans and feeding a generalized sense of revolt. The colonial police archives contain reports of disruptive parties and music festivals in the musseques,⁶ but police also turned a watchful eye on secret meetings, plots to attack military patrols,⁷ individuals suspected of supporting guerrillas,⁸ and liberation-movement acronyms painted on the walls of homes and shops.⁹ Anticolonial agitation and sentiment lurked inside the capital city—inside the musseques—and not only at the country’s distant borders. Indeed, it was present inside the music scene. One night in 1967, for instance, the police broke up a drumming session in the musseque Marçal in which the drummers shouted the familiar admonition, “Go back to your land because this here is ours!”¹⁰ Along with guerrilla radio broadcasts from abroad, the music scene in Luanda aroused the concern of colonial authorities. Even if they did not recognize the creation of cultural sovereignty by way of music, the police certainly deemed the musseques worthy of surveillance and found even the smallest moments of political expression worthy of note. This book recuperates what colonial authorities and liberation movements both failed to recognize in the 1960s and 1970s: the direct and the indirect ways that music created nation from inside as well as outside Angola.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STANDARD NARRATIVE OF NATIONALISM AND INDEPENDENCE

The standard narrative of Angolan nationalism begins in the 1950s, though it locates fraternity in precolonial states and kingdoms, in resistance to Portuguese incursions that began in the fifteenth century, and in the development of a distinct Angolan identity among late nineteenth-century urban intelligentsia. António Salazar’s fascist regime, the *Estado Novo* (New State), rose to power

in Lisbon in 1932 and promoted a new wave of Portuguese immigration to Angola in the 1940s.¹¹ With this influx of immigrants to Angolan cities, especially Luanda, many African civil servants lost their jobs to Portuguese less qualified than they were. As colonial society became more racially segregated and racist, these African elites, known as *assimilados* or assimilated persons, turned away from metropolitan culture. They became increasingly identified with African cultural practices and the Angolan territory and with the majority of Africans, referred to as *indígenas*, that is, indigenous persons or natives.

The colonial government accorded no political representation to Africans either locally or in the metropole, and it banned all political activity that did not support the state. Clandestine political cells in Luanda, Benguela, and Malanje began to develop in the 1950s.¹² In Lisbon, Angolan students gathered with other African students from the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe to form organizations that began to push, often clandestinely, for independence from colonial rule.¹³

In 1959, in what is known as the *Processo de 50* (Trial of 50), the colonial government arrested, tried, and jailed fifty-seven Angolans and a handful of Portuguese whom it accused of “activities against the external security of the state.”¹⁴ Most were civil servants, nurses, workers, and students from the most educated strata of Africans, although many of them lived or spent their free time in the musseques where the majority of Africans in Luanda lived. Both in Angola and in Lisbon, the authorities targeted with repression all the activities of organizations that had been formed earlier in the decade. Many of the individuals involved fled into exile on the African continent or in European countries other than Portugal.¹⁵

Armed struggle broke out in 1961 when the colonial state responded violently to three otherwise unrelated rebellions in the Angolan territory.¹⁶ The two existing liberation movements, the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA) and the *Frente Nacional para a Libertação de Angola* (National Front for the Liberation of Angola, FNLA), saw no alternative but to take up arms against the colonial state.¹⁷ By 1966 a third movement, the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, UNITA), joined the fray.

Division of the nationalist movement into three groups generally followed social, cultural, regional, and political lines drawn in the colonial period.¹⁸ The armed struggle continued until April 1974. In all three cases, the movements’ leaderships were based in neighboring countries (in the Congos and Zambia). They waged war primarily from bases in these countries although

the MPLA, in particular, and UNITA had bases inside Angola as well (in the Dembos and the far east for the MPLA and in the southeast for UNITA, who in the 1970s began to fight against the MPLA with the support of the Portuguese army). Contact between internal bases and external leadership was notoriously poor.¹⁹ A military coup in Portugal in 1974 toppled the fascist government and set in motion the transition to independence. The three armed movements returned to Angola to become political parties and negotiate joint rule. Negotiations foundered and fighting erupted between the groups, becoming particularly heated in Luanda in July and August 1975.

Shortly after the MPLA declared Angola's independence on November 11, 1975, a civil war began in earnest. The FNLA was quickly eliminated as a viable contender. The next twenty-seven years saw the MPLA, which controlled the new state, fighting UNITA, the rebel forces. As a socialist-oriented ruling party, the MPLA attempted to implement policies that addressed the grievances and divisions created by colonial rule, but with limited success. The civil war unfolded in the context of the Cold War: Cuban troops, doctors, and teachers and Soviet military advisers supported the MPLA, while the United States and apartheid South Africa backed UNITA. Despite the end of the Cold War and of external support, attempts to broker a durable peace, and elections in 1992, the war continued until February 2002 when state military forces shot and killed the rebel leader, Jonas Savimbi, in battle. The two parties signed a peace accord in April of that year. As of this writing in 2008, Angolans still await the first round of postwar elections.

Since the opening afforded by the cease-fire and elections in 1992, revisionist scholars have been contesting the official narrative of the MPLA and, to a lesser extent, those of the FNLA and UNITA. In particular, they have developed a much more nuanced understanding of dissent and struggles within the MPLA, reflected in the large number of individuals whom the party has excluded or who have left over the last quarter century.²⁰ They point to the diversity of groups and activities, like church-related and messianic movements, in the 1950s, which the official MPLA historical narrative omits.²¹ This new scholarly work has been important in chipping away at the party's hegemonic hold on the history of struggle, a hegemony that, as Christine Messiant has pointed out, the party has used not just against the other political parties but also against those within its own ranks.²² These studies have not, in general, looked beyond political elites, mostly men, or the realm of formal politics to ask questions about popular consciousness, mobilization, or culture. An exception is Inge Brinkman's work, which focuses on the experiences of civilians in southeast Angola during the anticolonial and civil wars. She asserts that "'popular support,' or the lack of it, for the nationalist movements in Angola has been

mentioned only from the perspective of the nationalist movements themselves . . . The motives of civilians for supporting or not supporting the nationalist groups do not become clear. Their views have remained by and large unstudied.”²³ That is the historical terrain this book seeks to open up.

THE ARGUMENT

This book offers a different reading of Angolan history from 1945 to 1990. It is a social history of culture and politics, more specifically of music and nation, that takes the everyday cultural practices of urban Angolan men and women as the very essence of the nation’s political life.²⁴ It is a history of the relationship between culture and politics in two critical periods of Angola’s history, namely the late colonial and postindependence periods. In the late colonial era, culture thrived separate from politics but was often intertwined with it. In the postindependence period, while politics did not completely erode cultural autonomy, the independent state attempted to use culture to its own ends in a way that the exiled liberation struggles never could. The conditions that had converged to create the vibrant urban cultural world of the 1960s and early 1970s changed quickly after independence. The new state attempted to culturally engineer the nation, thus reconfiguring the connection between culture and politics. Developments in the postindependence period underscore the historically contingent relationship between culture and politics and highlight the distinction between popular intonations and intimations of nation, on the one hand, and a state-driven project of nation building, on the other. During the period of the liberation struggle, popular music helped Angolans create an autonomous cultural domain outside the realm of formal politics, and through that space, it helped politicize them. After independence, however, the state usurped both autonomous cultural spaces and politicization, thereby attempting to contain and redirect music’s previous dynamism.

Popular music emerged as first among cultural practices during the period in which the nationalist movements were waging an anticolonial war for liberation. Gage Averill, in discussing music in twentieth-century Haiti, has argued: “Emerging in the context of power relations, popular music bears the traces of those relations.”²⁵ In Angola, too, popular music carried the imprint of power. However, the meaning of that imprint is not straightforward. In Angola, music was not a cipher for nationalist politics. At least until independence, it was an autonomous realm, the site of what James Scott calls “infrapolitics”: “the immense political terrain that lies between quiescence and revolt.”²⁶ This terrain is often misrecognized or misunderstood as apolitical or protopolitical. In late colonial Angola, men’s and women’s production and con-

sumption of music politicized them and informed their expectations of what politics in independent Angola would look like. When independence arrived, they were not just putty, infinitely malleable in the hands of their leaders; rather, they pushed back with their own hopes and desires.

Music was not simply resistance or cultural distraction from economic and political oppression. Above all, culture inflamed political imagination. Culture in late colonial Angola did not merely reflect social, political, and economic relations and ideas; it produced them.²⁷ As Laura Fair frames it, “pastimes and politics were not discrete categories of experience . . . they were intimately connected.”²⁸ Music was where the nation was imagined and even lived.²⁹ So it was that in 1974, before the official arrival of the MPLA in Luanda, a number of musicians and club-goers began organizing in support of the MPLA, translating their cultural savvy and autonomy into political will and mobilization.

I use the term “cultural sovereignty” to denote the autonomy and sense of self-rule that urban Angolans experienced in relation to the production of music and a music scene centered in Luanda’s musseque-based clubs. The music scene was not so much outside the gaze of the colonial state as it was misapprehended by it. Attempts by colonial administrators to co-opt music or direct it to colonial or commercial purposes served instead to propel Angolan music further beyond state control. To the degree that clubs and the music scene represented a dynamic the state did not understand and could not capture, it was an autonomous space. But it was more than that. Angolan musicians and audiences transformed autonomous spaces into an experience of sovereignty as they began to imagine an Angola in and on their own terms.³⁰ This dynamism was the product of urban men and women who created an *angolanidade*, a sense of identity both rooted and cosmopolitan, and who secured it in the beat of a song, the lilt of a dance step, or the fold of a headscarf—and in the shuffle of bills and the ring of coins in the club’s cashbox. Riffing on Benedict Anderson, I argue that “sonorous capitalism” was the motor that circulated this new sound and sensibility throughout the territory. Unmoored from the strictures of literacy, the cultural coordinates of nation traveled on the airwaves and on the vinyl singles manufactured in Angola.

Angolans refer to the music from this period as *semba*. They employ it as an umbrella term that gathers other musical rhythms and covers them with its imprimatur of authenticity: “made in Angola by Angolans.” However, ethnomusicologists, musicians, and astute music lovers define *semba* as the unique beat that gives this music its distinctive Angolan sound. In a 2000 article in the Angolan press, António Venâncio asserted that “*semba* is not the music itself. *Semba* is simply the rhythm. The rhythm is a part and not the whole of a

piece of music. Music is the combination of lyrics, rhythm, voices, melody, and all the other remaining ingredients. A music can be played or sung on the base of semba and it is in this case that we can say that we are in the presence of a music played in semba.”³¹ With all due respect to musicological precision, the word *semba* in this book refers to the first, more popular definition, and indexes a more ample social meaning. In this iteration, semba includes other genres of popular urban music (rumba, *kabetula*, *kazekuta*, and *rebita*, among others) that were played and refined in the 1960s and 1970s. Semba symbolizes that crucial moment in Angolan history, in the late colonial period, when a new conception of *angolanidade* emerged and engaged the nation. That is why Angolan musician Paulo Flores, in the song entitled “Poema do Semba” or Semba Poem, sings that “semba is our flag.”³² Semba is not only a musical genre to be parsed by ethnomusicologists, but a cultural style with historical depth and purpose that should interest historians.

Intonations is a story about Angolan men and women bringing the nation into being through cultural practice. “Intonations” as a title works at three levels. First, it invokes the musical sense of the word—“the utterance or production (by the voice, or an instrument, etc.) of musical tones”³³—to underscore the agency of Angolans in singing, dancing, and imagining their nation. Second, it plays on the word’s other sense, of variations in tone—“manner of utterance of the tones of the voice in speaking; modulation of the voice; accent”³⁴—to suggest that the same word, “nation,” or the same words, in lyrics for example, can have different meanings depending on who is speaking or intoning. Put another way, the story told in *Intonations* contests and cohabits with other narratives, like the standard narrative of nationalism and independence. Third, with a tap of the space bar, intonations becomes “into nations.” Angolan musicians and audiences in part developed their politics and sense of nation in and through the activity of producing and consuming music: buying records, hanging out with friends and family, and dancing in clubs moved them “into nation.” And there is yet another shade of meaning: at its most colloquial in American English, being “into” the nation means insertion, involvement, and investment in the nation. Coming from the U.S. youth context, this may at first seem irrelevant to Angola in the 1970s, but I mention it here to recall the significance Angolans placed on the question of style and the aesthetics of being hip, hot, or cool as they went about imagining their nation and producing *angolanidade*. In other words, as Robin D. G. Kelley suggests, “what might also be at stake here are aesthetics, style, and pleasure.”³⁵ Young, urban Angolans invested their time, money, energy, and talent in the music scene because they enjoyed it and not only because it was an outlet for sorrow or oppression, although it was that too.

Created in clubs by an emergent musseque elite, popularized in street festivals, and massified and reterritorialized through the technological developments of radio and recorded sound, music in late colonial Angola produced an experience of nation in which urban men and women crafted their investments in and expectations of state independence, political nationalism, and cultural sovereignty. This experience, in part, generated both adherence to and critiques of the MPLA's own nationalist project. The resonance between the internal cultural scene in Angola and the external political movement had more to do with the activities and consciousness that ordinary people developed than with exiled movement leaders' attempts to reach out to them with news of the struggle, encouragements to resist, and the limited clandestine organizing that occurred in urban areas.³⁶ While the liberation movement leaders had heard this new music, they were oblivious to its power to rally urban Angolans. Even as the music scene and music itself informed popular mobilization around those movements when the exiles arrived back home, the movement leaders did not recognize that music had nourished a politics inside Angola that resonated with their own politics while not being entirely of it. For instance, musseque residents organized themselves for self-defense in the name of the MPLA, long before the party returned to Luanda. They put their consciousness and organizational skills to work for the party and for themselves without being asked to do so.

Thus, when musicians in today's Angola remember the late colonial period, their memories of cultural and economic self-sufficiency do not only critique the failures of the present regime to deliver the promises of independence; they also assert that the participants in the musseque world of cultural production created and defined their nation in terms of cultural and economic, not only political, sovereignty.

Although the book centers on the music scene in Luanda's musseques, the argument is of national relevance. From the late 1950s on, Luanda and its musseques grew rapidly, drawing people from the rural areas and from other cities in the territory. The city's young musseque population hailed from throughout the territory, and the new *angolanidade* in the musseques was created as much by them as by city residents with a deeper urban history.³⁷ While the musseques were defined in opposition to the *baixa*—the European city center—in the Manichean divisions between black and white, sand and asphalt, they were in no sense hermetically sealed off from the modernity that the *baixa* symbolized. Nor were they cut off from the rural world of agricultural production and colonial exploitation. Luanda's population represented the nation in terms of both its geographic mobility and its cultural vibrancy. Musseque residents put this diversity of experience to work in music, especially

in semba, where they created a new political consciousness and cultural glue called nation.

NATION AND NATIONALISM

In order to recount the history of music and nation in Angola and in order to make sense of the comments by Lando and Martins that open this chapter, we need to linger on the distinction between nation and nationalism. In the simplest terms, nation refers to a sense of “we-ness” that is mapped both territorially and culturally. Nationalism takes this collective sensibility of being distinct to the political level and makes a claim for sovereignty and the establishment of a state based on this difference. Scholarly literature distinguishes between nation, the cultural formation, and nationalism, the political project. In Eric Hobsbawm’s rendering, nationalism presupposes, and usually even forges in its own image, nation: “Nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round.”³⁸ Nation does not require nationalism, but nationalism’s need to rewrite the past in the service of its teleology does shape the way we conceptualize nation. In Hobsbawm’s telling, then, culture follows politics. Moving in the opposite direction, Benedict Anderson places cultural systems, technologies, and economic processes at the center of his study of the nation as an “imagined community.” Anderson asks what it is that makes it possible to conceptualize the nation and, to a lesser extent, how it is produced officially once the institution of the nation-state is in place.³⁹

Like Anderson’s work, this book does not prioritize nationalism over nation but emphasizes the centrality of cultural practice to political imagination to assert that politics emerges as much from culture as vice versa. Like Partha Chatterjee, I argue that political imagination is culturally specific and is not exhausted by the Euro-American model Anderson proposed.⁴⁰ Indeed, the histories of nations in Africa and Asia emerging from and against the colonial yoke, and the study of these histories in a postcolonial analytic, point to the ways that nation is intertwined with histories of empire and colonialism.⁴¹ One of the useful things this literature does is jettison a stable notion of “national consensus” in favor of a reading of the nation based on continuous contestation.⁴²

Africanist scholars have placed the state, more than the nation, at the center of their analyses of postcolonial life and politics. While Basil Davidson bemoaned “the curse of the nation-state,” Mahmood Mamdani emphasized state over nation in the continuity of authoritarianism produced both by colonial regimes and by their only partially reformed successors. Likewise, Achille

Mbembe and V. Y. Mudimbe further shift the terms away from the nation by subsuming the state in the production of knowledge. More frequently, the work of anthropologists and historians has brought the questions of nation and nationalism, culture and politics into focus.

Such work takes up the relation between music and popular politics to elaborate on Chatterjee's riposte to Anderson while also shifting from his emphasis on the intelligentsia to consider how both elites (colonial and post-colonial) and subalterns mark and make the nation in and through music and dance. Susan Geiger's work on gender and culture in Tanganyikan nationalism, Kelly Askew's work on Swahili music and cultural politics in Tanzania, and Thomas Turino's work on popular music and nationalism in Zimbabwe all demonstrate how cultural practices are constitutive of the politics of nationalism in African nations.⁴³ These three scholars build on work by other Africanists who have pioneered analysis of the connections between a variety of forms of cultural practice and different forms of political power.⁴⁴ This groundswell of scholarship creates the opportunity for an interrogation of the significance of popular music to liberation struggles and nationalist politics in Angola.

The historiography and the scholarly literature on Angola (whether in English, French, or Portuguese) is small relative to that written on other African countries, but work on nationalism in Angola is similar in that it focuses on nationalism, the political project, and not nation, the cultural formation.⁴⁵ Much of this work was produced around the time of independence. Some of these scholars were scholar activists, that is, people who were themselves involved in, directly or via solidarity work, the struggles to decolonize.⁴⁶ Here, the nation is subordinated to nationalism in terms of its political value.⁴⁷

In Angola, the privileging of nationalism over nation, the political over the cultural, has a more specific provenance as well. Portugal's defense of its continued colonial relations long after most African nations had won their independence was based on the culturalist argument known as *lusotropicalismo*.⁴⁸ Cláudia Castelo argues that lusotropicalism never became official discourse but that the Estado Novo adopted it in the mid-1950s to counter global support for decolonization. In fact, the Estado Novo used lusotropicalist theories about the Portuguese personality to justify ongoing control of the "overseas territories" (as the colonies were called after 1951) as part and parcel of governance in a multi-continental nation.⁴⁹ Thus the Estado Novo used a culturalist argument and a nationalist one at the same time.

Lusotropicalismo was a theory produced by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre to explain Brazilian national difference. He asserted that Portuguese culture was uniquely predisposed to produce multicultural, racially harmonious

societies in the tropics. While his theories, circulated and debated in Portugal in the 1930s and 1940s, had a following among Portuguese cultural elites, they met with a hostile reception from Portuguese politicians in that era.⁵⁰ That changed in the 1950s. The state even went so far as to mail out copies of some of Freyre's books to foreign diplomats.

From then on, the use of culture to define Portuguese difference with respect to other colonizing powers, to distinguish Portuguese rule from the explicitly racially segregationist regimes in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, and to justify ongoing colonial control made culture suspect as a term of analysis for those who opposed the regime. Social scientists and politicians critical of Portuguese overseas rule wanted to make a broad rational appeal to an international audience. They surmised that they required incontrovertible hard data to bring international pressure to bear on the Portuguese government and to counter Portuguese propaganda circulating in diplomatic circles that claimed that Portuguese colonization was culturally, not economically, driven.⁵¹

Literature written on the nationalist struggle sought to explain the history of Portuguese colonialism and the three different movements for national liberation to an international audience that knew little about them.⁵² These were narratives centered on political figures and events and on the armed struggle. Scholarship produced since the early 1990s maintains this approach but has also sought to expand the history of nationalism beyond the official history of the MPLA, even as the focus has remained on that party.

Yet it would be incorrect to characterize work on Angola as completely ignoring cultural practices. Angolan literature has been the subject of a good deal of research and analysis.⁵³ Both historians and literary critics of Angola look to Luanda's creole elite of the late nineteenth century as the precursor of the nationalist politics that arose in the late 1950s.⁵⁴ But once this sort of backdating nationalism has occurred, most historians leave culture to the literary critics and return to their analyses of formal nationalist politics.

Culture surfaces in two other ways in the work on Angolan nationalism: as propaganda, that is, as an expression of political ends, or as camouflage, that is, as a cover for political activity. Both John Marcum and Jean-Michel Tali identify songs that explicitly supported one party or another as effective propaganda tools.⁵⁵ Examples of cultural practice as camouflaged political activity open a clearer trail for this book to tread. Marcelo Bittencourt suggests that creoles in the 1950s used their associations and some soccer clubs as avenues of political contestation.⁵⁶ He notes that literature and the press were particularly important in questioning colonialism and that with the passage of time this role was shared increasingly with "music, theatre and other cultural manifestations in an attempt at diversification and flight from repression."⁵⁷ Similarly, Christine

Messiant points to the need to clarify the role of groups and associations, like *Bota Fogo* and *Ngola Ritmos* (discussed in chapter 2 of this book), whose histories have been disregarded entirely or digested by official MPLA accounts.⁵⁸ Implying that culture has transformative qualities, Mário de Souza Clington, a participant in the early days of anticolonial struggle, points to recreational associations and, in particular, the *Escola do Samba* as having been critical sites of anticolonial sentiment that brought together urban elites and the dispossessed of the *musseques* before 1961.⁵⁹ Lúcio Lara, a key figure in the history of Angolan nationalism and the MPLA, contains the subversive impulses of culture within the confines of the party when he notes that sports and musical groups like *Ngola Ritmos*, *Bota Fogo*, and *Ngongo*, along with other more specifically politically defined groups, were involved in the origins of the MPLA.⁶⁰ While cultural practices may provide camouflage for political activity, they are not necessarily only proto-political in a directly institutional sense. If Messiant is right, and Angola's past is unpredictable, then more work remains to be done in formerly unexplored areas like the relation between politics and culture. Contributing to such a project, a study of cultural practice at close range shows that in late colonial Angola music generated cultural sovereignty, political consciousness, and even nationalist activism.

A social and cultural history of music and nation, looking at music in the context of daily life inside Angola during the period of the anticolonial struggle from 1961 to 1975, disturbs the standard nationalist narrative of Angolan history. It puts nonpolitical elites, everyday lives and cultural practices, and the memories of those who experienced late colonial life in Angola at the center of a political story. This book thus travels to politics through cultural practice, taking culture on its own terms and not simply as the handmaiden of politics. The anticolonial nationalist struggle was experienced not only in the bush, in the different politico-military regions established by the MPLA, and in the exile bases of the FNLA in Zaire and UNITA in Zambia, but in the day-to-day lives of those who "stayed behind." Their stories are not present in the nationalist narrative; they are represented only as grim figures of exploitation, as anonymous masses. By taking the experiences of life inside late colonial Angola seriously this book adds a different "nation-view," to borrow Prasenjit Duara's term, to those of the movements and parties typically represented in the literature.⁶¹

The "nation-view" or fragment of the nation, in Chatterjee's language, at the center of this book shifts the perspective of nation from outside to inside and from rural bases to urban ones. Anticolonial armed struggles, in particular, such as those in Algeria, Angola, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe are overwhelmingly represented in the literature

as rurally based.⁶² Peasant and intellectual leaders, political parties, and international geopolitics drive the narrative. But the experiences of Luanda's musseque residents show that even if Angola's nationalist movements forfeited the urban areas as a terrain of struggle, residents of the cities did not.

This book thus offers a different angle on struggle by way of cultural practice in urban spaces and places. As the colonial state attempted to avert nationalist mobilization and consciousness by banning political engagement, Luanda's musseque residents generated novel political terrain when they imagined their nation in and around music. Their political imagination filled the spaces where the colonial state expected to distract them from their disenfranchisement with the accoutrements of modernization and development. And in so doing they made their nation and their city. As Martin Murray and Garth Myers argue, "Besides their morphological form, their built environment, and their physical infrastructure, cities also consist of an imaginary dimension through which urban residents define themselves and give meaning to their daily lives."⁶³ This book focuses on urban residents' imagination in the late colonial period and thereby brings a historical perspective to a growing literature on contemporary African urban life as well as to a more established body of work on shantytowns in colonial cities.⁶⁴ It brings together nation, city, musseque, and popular culture to limn the dynamics of cultural sovereignty and political nationalism in a decisive phase of Angola's contemporary history.

ON THE TRAIL OF MUSIC AND ON THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

My argument is born of a tension in oral testimonies in which the usual depiction of culture and its standard-bearers is both repeated and contested. In civil war-torn, independent Angola the authorized, if not yet official, history limits the discussion of music and politics to the story of the band Ngola Ritmos.⁶⁵ Everyone I spoke with noted the importance of this band. Indeed, historians of Angola, if they gesture to music at all, consistently refer to this group when they discuss the relationship of culture to nationalism. Formed in the late 1940s by a group of young men who were well-educated civil servants, Ngola Ritmos sought to recuperate, revalorize, and reimagine musical practices by singing in Kimbundu and other Angolan languages and by using local instruments and music drawn from a repertoire of songs sung at wakes, at work, and in worship. Many of the band members were politically active and the band's music had a message that was meant to awaken people to their oppressed condition and its colonial causes.⁶⁶ Because of the explicit involvement of some of the band's members in nationalist politics, and because they

were one of the earliest bands to experiment with new forms of Angolan music, Ngola Ritmos is offered as the epitome of the relationship between music and politics. The band has become iconic, remembered in Agostinho Neto's poem "Içar da bandeira" (Raise the Flag), in José Luandino Vieira's novel *A vida verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* (The True Life of Domingos Xavier), and in Jorge Macedo's impressionistic memorial *Ngola Ritmos* (a pamphlet in a series entitled "Works on Angolan Nationalism"). It was also eloquently eulogized and historicized in Angolan filmmaker António Ole's documentary *O Ritmo de Ngola Ritmos* (The Rhythm of Ngola Ritmos). In 1998, a journalist writing in the national daily paper proposed that the birthday of the band's founder, Carlos do Aniceto "Liceu" Vieira Dias, be made a national holiday.⁶⁷ These voices have all contributed to producing Ngola Ritmos as part of "dominant memory."⁶⁸

But why was it, then, that Fernando Martins's article (quoted near the beginning of this chapter) made familiarity with Os Kiezos and not Ngola Ritmos a condition of being Angolan? In conversations and interviews with Angolans I began to notice a difference between the way people spoke about Ngola Ritmos and the way they spoke about the music from the period in which Os Kiezos, and bands like them, dominated the cultural scene. The women and men I interviewed were in no way dismissive of Ngola Ritmos, but it was not the music they associated with the club scene, the street festivals, and the radio. People became animated and enthusiastic when recounting their memories of the clubs, parties, street festivals, and music of the 1960s and 1970s—singing to me, describing in detail and with delight the dancing, the romantic intrigue, even the clothes they wore. The very things we are taught to distrust as romanticization of the past—vibrancy, nostalgia, and emotion—became impossible for me to dismiss as simply embellishments of memory. When I listened more closely I heard people speaking of their pride and a limited economic self-sufficiency that helped fuel a cultural world defined, owned, and produced by Angolans themselves.

This tension between asserting the foundational status of Ngola Ritmos in the late 1940s and an emotional investment in and attachment to what is considered the golden age of Angolan music in the late 1960s and early 1970s is part of a struggle over the history of nationalism and over politics. It is part of a larger process that scholars of oral history call the "social production of memory"—a process in which everyone participates, albeit unequally, and one that is structured by tensions produced between and within public representations and private memory.⁶⁹ In this case, public representations limit the history of music and politics to Ngola Ritmos, while private memory (which can also be collective) at once affirms that connection and uses it to contest

the way that the broader narrative of nationalism overlooks the lives and practices of those Angolans who did not go to fight in the armed struggle.

Cultural producers including musicians, emcees, club owners, and dancers construct a genealogy in which the music of the 1960s and 1970s is heir to the practice of *Ngola Ritmos*. This is articulated in a chronology that places *Ngola Ritmos* at the beginning of Angolan popular music in the late 1940s and has their musical style adapted and elaborated in the late 1960s in what the scholar and musician Jomo Fortunato terms “the consolidation of *semba*.”⁷⁰ But it is also apparent in the oft-repeated phrase “the music had a message.” In saying this, Angolans claim not just a stylistic legacy for the music of the late 1960s but a political one as well.

However, between the heyday of *Ngola Ritmos* and the golden age of Angolan music the political atmosphere changed dramatically. Along with more than fifty others, some *Ngola Ritmos* band members were jailed for nationalist activities in 1959 and 1960 in the notorious *Processo de 50*. When three armed rebellions broke out in various parts of the country in 1961, the colonial government responded with extreme violence, napalming villages and beheading insurgents, and heightened political repression. Part of the counterinsurgency policy attempted to improve the day-to-day lives of Angolans in hopes that this would win their loyalty to the Portuguese state. The kind of politico-cultural involvement symbolized by *Ngola Ritmos*, that kind of music with a message, was simply no longer possible.

Angolan cultural producers today reaffirm the foundational status of *Ngola Ritmos* and lay claim to that legacy in order to assert that their own music, and their own cultural activities, were politically relevant even in the more stringent and severe political conditions of the 1960s and 1970s. The outbreak of armed struggle dislocated nationalism from its cultural bases in Luanda’s musseques to guerrilla bases mainly along the country’s borders and to metropolitan centers of exile activity. The narrative of nationalism also left the country, trailing political elites from Lisbon to Paris, from Kinshasa to Brazzaville, from Algiers to Dar es Salaam, and detecting the pulse of the masses in the troops and among the few civilians at guerrilla bases. Those who “stayed behind” were largely absent from the standard nationalist narrative—but not, I argue, from the politics of the 1960s and 1970s, nor from the popular memory of that era.⁷¹

In my conversations with musicians and other cultural producers I began to hear a narrative of Angolan music that ran deeper and wider than the story of *Ngola Ritmos* and that could not fit neatly within the narrative of Angolan nationalism. The musicians and other cultural producers I interviewed formally, as well as the countless friends, acquaintances, and colleagues I spoke with informally, all waxed lyrical and nostalgic about the music and the music

scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Often in interviews my informants would unravel the present and rethink it with the past—either in their careful reconstruction of seemingly trivial details or in their claims on and critiques of the ruling party and its political elite. What came out of these conversations had as much to do with economic hardship in the present as with nostalgia for the past. Most crucial for Angolans was remembering a time when they were able to construct a thriving cultural scene despite material hardship. They crafted a cultural sovereignty in clubs and around the production of music that helped point them toward an imagined future of national independence.

Angolan cultural producers claim the legacy of *Ngola Ritmos* in order to enter the narrative of nationalism. Once there, they unfurl memories rich in detail and emotion that contest the silence in the standard nationalist narrative that leaps from *Ngola Ritmos* to the politically engaged music of post-1974 independent Angola. Not content just to fill in a lacuna, these musicians then go on to disrupt the chronology again by claiming that in the history of Angolan music, independence marks a “hiatus” or “moment of crisis” for music.⁷² According to their narrative, the music of the 1960s and 1970s, music that for them defined the nation, should have become the national music at independence. Instead that music stopped at independence. The hiatus was marked by the official deployment of music as a means to build the nation under unstable conditions that included civil war and the control of dissent in the wake of the attempted coup in 1977. The state took over all musical production. Musicians from the earlier period found work performing and recording music for state institutions. But the music was different. It had to be music that sang about the new nation, taking up the socialist-inspired themes of yearly or biennial production goals and extolling the MPLA heroes and martyrs as the only true nationalists.⁷³ Many musicians joined the ruling party and undertook this work with enthusiasm. But they all mentioned that the tenor of the music had changed and that the music of this period did not embody *angolanidade* as had the music of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

When Angolan cultural producers recounted the past and talked about the history of music, they both affirmed the official narrative of Angolan nationalism and disputed it by insisting that the cultural world of the musseques was as important to independence as was the armed struggle in the bush. In other words, when cultural producers decoupled the history of music from that of nationalism, they insisted on the irreducibility of music to politics while also showing that the cultural world of late colonial Angola was politically significant: they offered a political history in cultural terms. And to a certain extent, they challenged a narrative of nation sanctimonious with sacrifice by offering one leavened with pleasure.

COSMOPOLITANISM

Musicians and audiences alike often described themselves and their scene as cosmopolitan. The music scene in Angola was composed of a set of cosmopolitan practices, no less African for incorporating modes of articulation and ideas considered to be European.⁷⁴ This was true both at the level of music, where European instruments were adopted, and at the level of politics, where ideas like nationalism took hold.⁷⁵ With cosmopolitanism Angolans moved toward nation and not away from it. They claimed national sovereignty through worldliness, instead of opposing one to the other.⁷⁶ In particular, Angolans used cosmopolitanism to situate themselves beyond the bounds of the fascist Portuguese colonial state and in a world upon which they could make claims and that they hoped would make claims on them. Discussing music, cosmopolitanism, and nationalism in Zimbabwe, Thomas Turino argues that musical and political forms become internalized and integral to the people in the group: “This is part of who they are.”⁷⁷ Pushing this one step further, Bob W. White asserts that “unlike ‘globalization’ or ‘modernity,’ cosmopolitanism is not something that happens to people, it is something that people do.”⁷⁸ This doing is at the center of James Ferguson’s discussion of cosmopolitanism as a style that is “motivated, intentional, and performative but not simply chosen or lightly slipped into.”⁷⁹ In such a reading, culture in the musseques is a dynamic mode of African self-articulation rather than a European imposition.

Cosmopolitanism thus opens up an analysis of cultural practice, change, and mixing that avoids both the pitfalls of Portuguese exceptionalism as proposed in lusotropicalism as well as the too-narrow sense of cultural nationalism offered in calls for African authenticity. In fact, if *angolanidade* was a rejoinder to colonialism’s *portugalidade*, then cosmopolitanism was urban Angolans’ riposte to lusotropicalism. Angolans living in the musseques drew upon European cultural resources in crafting their own way of being and in so doing saw themselves as part of something located both in and far beyond the musseques. In creating their own clubs, styles of music, ways of dressing and dancing, and their own scene, Angolans in the musseques conceptualized their own culture as on a par with those defined in discrete national units like Brazil, Cuba, France, and Zaire. They developed a cultural self-sufficiency, style, and independence that resonated with cultures beyond theirs and yet was particular to Angola.

In this way, Angolans not only imagined but in fact lived and created the conditions of the Angolan nation in cultural terms even as they were prohibited from actualizing it in the political realm. Aware of the guerrilla struggle and the fact of independence in almost all other African countries, they culti-

vated a latent nationalism in these practices. They achieved cultural sovereignty and political consciousness *before* gaining political independence. Looking at the music scene, that is, the social relations involved in the production and consumption of music, we can locate the cosmopolitan imaginings of the Angolan nation that became central to the ability of exiled nationalist parties to establish themselves as representatives of the nation when they returned to the country and specifically to Luanda in late 1974.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The afternoon I interviewed Teta Lando we met in his store just off the Marginal, the paved boulevard that skirts Luanda's bay and is the locale of many of the city's high-rises and government ministries. Here, in the shadows of political and commercial power, was a small music shop, its windows and doors covered with metal grating, its mirrored shelves graced with a few old LPs. Glass cases displayed neatly stacked CDs, and a single spinning rack of cassette tapes offered as much music from the Congo, Brazil, and Cape Verde as from Angola. In 1998 Lando operated one of only two such establishments in Luanda, but unlike the other (RMS) he was also reediting music from the 1960s and 1970s through his music production company Teta Lando Produções. As we sat in his office at the back of the store I worried that the whirr of the fan that kept us comfortable in the otherwise stifling heat was going to drown out our voices on my low-tech tape recording. That worry was soon overshadowed by another as the fan suddenly slowed, then stopped, and the hush of a power outage settled upon us. This is but one small example of how the exigencies of life in war-torn, infrastructure-stressed Angola shaped my research.

The evidentiary bases of this book are interviews, colonial social science studies, the popular press of the late colonial period, music obtained from the National Radio Station collection, record album covers, and material from the archive of the PIDE (Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado, or International Police for Defense of the State—that is, the Portuguese secret police).⁸⁰ Over the course of the time in which I did my research, the music from the late colonial period started to become more available. It was played more frequently on the radio, and collections and reissues of music from the golden age began to appear.⁸¹ Forthcoming works by Angolan scholars who are also musicians—Jorge Macedo, Jomo Fortunato, and Mário Rui Silva—elaborate the technical elements of urban popular music, known as *semba*, as well as the history of its primary innovators and its social insertion.⁸² The musician and historian Carlos Lamartine and the musician and cultural worker Dionísio

Rocha, though they have not published on music, regularly appear on television and radio as authorities on the history of popular Angolan music. But, by and large, the airwaves and the turntables of disc jockeys at parties and at clubs still do not highlight this music except for programs and shows directed to aficionados and devotees.

The written record offers rather paltry resources for the researcher interested in cultural questions. The collection at the Angolan Historical Archives is richest for the distant past, that is, the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. The archive has material on the twentieth century, but for the most part it is not catalogued and is therefore inaccessible.⁸³ What is available, mainly government-sponsored bulletins and colonial social science material, speaks only elliptically if at all about culture. Other potential sources that I identified as useful to my study are no longer available, having been either destroyed by the war or removed because of political paranoia. Specifically, the archives of record companies,⁸⁴ a crucial musseque newspaper,⁸⁵ and documents pertaining to the colonial Angolan Center for Information and Tourism⁸⁶ that oversaw many cultural events have all disappeared.

A small body of work on the musseques, mostly social science tracts and journalistic accounts, exists and forms the basis for the analysis in chapter 1. They are all, to varying degrees, imbued with the racism and paternalism that characterized colonialism in general and Portuguese colonialism in particular. For example, when it comes to talking about culture, none fails to note the timeless love of “the African” for song and dance. Popular magazines produced in Luanda for a territory-wide readership in the late colonial period (*Semana Ilustrada*, *Noite e Dia*, and *Notícia*) take a more colloquial approach to urban Angolan culture but offer little sense of what cultural practices meant to most Angolans. Articles about African performers and performances in the musseques, and about music festivals, cinemas, and local clubs in the baixa, all provide a window onto a young white Angolan world that complicates and disaggregates the notion of a singular “white” or “Portuguese” or even “colonial” perspective. Furthermore, these magazines had a readership, or at least an audience, far beyond their target audience of white urban youth. Almost everyone I spoke to was familiar with the magazines and had perused them at barber shops, newsstands, or homes of friends. As a result they constituted one of the ways in which the music scene of the musseques garnered an urban and cosmopolitan profile in a nationally distributed medium.

Much of the evidence for my discussion of the radio and its uses by the colonial state and the anticolonial movements derives from material I found in the PIDE archive at the Torre do Tombo in Lisbon. As many scholars have pointed out, although this archive contains a wealth of material, researchers

must approach it with great care.⁸⁷ Commentaries by PIDE agents often involved much speculation, trials included feints and dodges by arrested activists, and original pieces of evidence are usually only available at one remove—photocopied or transcribed. Finally, these archives, only recently made available, have been used to defame prominent political and social figures, resurrect sullied reputations, and cast new stones. To the extent that such moves generate polemics and debate, this fascist colonial institution still shapes politics in independent Angola. With all this in mind, I looked carefully at the files of people I had interviewed as well as other prominent nationalist figures. Very little of this material enters my analysis because, for the most part, PIDE files only repeated what the people I interviewed had told me about their own activities. I found the richest material on radio and the counterinsurgency program in general. The files on the *musseques*, largely reports on incidents that punctuated daily life, depict a sense of generalized revolt and support for the nationalist cause among *musseques* residents that no secondary source has yet recognized.

Interviews helped me plot my navigation of the PIDE archives. But more than that, the interviews are at the center of my argument and of the story I tell. In particular, to get at the meaning and experience of cultural practices, to fill in details about the development of a new musical form including structural aspects related to the growth of a small recording industry, and to understand the significance of radio broadcasting, I rely predominantly on material from interviews I conducted. In total, I interviewed forty-one different people, speaking with ten of them more than once.⁸⁸

I spent roughly three and a half years in Angola over the period 1997–2002 and made a return visit in the summer of 2005. This entire period was marked by the vicissitudes of civil war: failed peace accords, a return to active fighting, a tremendous humanitarian crisis throughout the country, and finally the death of the UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi and a cease-fire, signed one month before my departure from Angola in 2002. The poor condition of local infrastructure—frequent cuts in water and electricity, shabby health care services in a country with rampant malaria, unreliable transport—created daily crises for the people whom I sought to interview (and for me). These, together with the constant struggle to make ends meet, resulted in frequent cancellations and postponements. I had initially thought that given such conditions, people would be reluctant to speak with me. But to my initial surprise, the cultural producers I sought out to interview were welcoming and enthusiastic. However, the daily struggle to put food on the table, pay school fees, find or maintain employment, and preserve the integrity of body, family, and domicile often foiled the best-laid plans for scheduling conversation.

When I did manage to meet with someone, the interview generally began with a set of questions about when and where he or she was born, grew up, and went to school, and family background: this could include material conditions, racial, ethnic, and religious designations, marital status of parents, and educational history. I would then turn to music, if my interlocutor had not already moved our conversation in that direction, by asking how the person started playing and what the music scene was like at that time. Certain generic themes emerged in these conversations: the foundational status of the band *Ngola Ritmos*, the idea that music had a message that only Angolans understood and that duped the colonial state, the authenticity of music from the late 1960s and early 1970s, the injustice of five centuries of colonial rule, and the misfortune of Angolans to have been colonized by the Portuguese. I consider such repetitions both as “authorized texts”⁸⁹ that people use to narrate their lives and offer a common history and as a kind of established rhythm that people repeat, sometimes only in order to then contradict.

The conditions of daily life affected not only whether or not interviews came to pass but their content as well. Far from being grounds for dismissal of interviews as illegitimate historical sources, the presence of the present in interviews not only “speaks truth to power,” as the past is mobilized to criticize current leaders and set the record straight, but yields meaningful historical material. The past and present were intricately interwoven in the narrative performances, making it impossible, if indeed it is even desirable, to untangle data from discourse. Here I follow Susan Geiger:

While I assumed that the filter of present socioeconomic conditions and health would shape women’s remembrances of past political activities, I had not considered the extent to which women’s accounts of their own lives in the past, as well as in the present, expressed what nationalism in Tanzania was most significantly about.⁹⁰

While nostalgia may be the form for reflection on the past, when musicians and other cultural producers talk about music and the music scene, they do not glorify colonial rule but instead remember their own ability to secure cultural sovereignty, make music a respectable profession, manage club affairs and daily life, and inspire political consciousness.⁹¹

Angolan men’s and women’s characterization of the late 1960s and early 1970s as a time when they could provide for themselves (albeit with a struggle) is in part a comment on the present, a criticism of the harsh material conditions created by civil war and economic and political mismanagement. Initially, I thought that was all it was. While these privations of the present throw

the past into relief, they do not evacuate it of all meaning. When Angolans remember and reflect on the late colonial period, they do say something about the past, about what people valued in that earlier experience and what they hoped for from independence, even if today's difficult conditions tend to make the past look rosier than it was. I refer to what people valued as "cultural sovereignty," and I argue that it both produced the experience of nation and shaped urban Angolans' expectations about the dividends of national independence.

This book foregrounds the urban as an analytic for understanding the relationship between music and nation. Yet gender and class were dimensions of urban experience through which the nation was inflected and to which I therefore give distinct attention. My analysis of gender has two components. First, women were active in cultural organizations and in politics in the 1950s to a degree as yet unrecognized in current scholarship. Second, and by contrast, female musicians were few in the club scene during the 1960s and 1970s, even though women served as important figures in song lyrics and were critical members of audiences. For women to perform music on stage threatened to impugn their respectability, while for men, work in the music industry enhanced their status in society. Men dominated the production and commercialization of music, and audiences revered them as public figures. In a context where Angolans had no political representatives on the public scene, male musicians seized the limelight. With this newfound social prominence and prestige, male musicians came to symbolize as individuals what the music clubs symbolized as institutions: cultural sovereignty and national pride.

Often what gender differentiated, class put back together. Angolans of both sexes described themselves and their families as having been "middle class" in the late colonial period. This meant they had access to amenities like education, lived in modest cement or improvised homes but not huts, and occupied a social space between Europeans living in comfort and poorer Angolans recently arrived from rural areas. Such memories of economic well-being, no matter how modest, nevertheless have had no place in the official line of the different liberation struggles, which portrayed Portuguese economic exploitation of Angolan life and labor as a five-hundred-year constant. But these memories have been confirmed by scholars who point to economic improvements in the late colonial era, primarily to the benefit of an expanding social class labeled "petty bourgeois."⁹² Most musicians and other cultural producers belonged to this petty bourgeoisie. They operated the businesses that drove the vibrant urban culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s: the music clubs, the recording studios, the radio stations, and all the other institutions of "sonorous capitalism." Significantly, members of this social class initiated the

cultural activities and imagined the *angolanidade* that is still a vital point of reference today.

Class more than gender identity affected how I was received during my years of field research in Angola. No matter how many times I explained that I was a researcher studying history, many musicians and others I approached to talk about music referred to me as a journalist. Thus, I learned that in our conversations Angolans not only were educating me about musical and political history but were positioning me, in some cases, to speak out and speak for them. In other words, the people I interviewed had their own ideas about who our audience was or should be. My whiteness and foreignness (both unstable and shifting designations) marked me as a potential resource and a potential plunderer. People assumed that I was in Angola with support from my own government, and they were always shocked when I told them that I was not and that the folks at the U.S. embassy could not have cared less about my work. Some suspected that I was out to make money off what I was doing.⁹³ The asymmetries of global power and resource allocation could not help but shape my interviews at some level and quite possibly in ways still imperceptible to me.

With the exception of a few big-name figures, most musicians are worse off economically than they were prior to and just after independence. Many hold fond memories of the colonial period and of the early socialist republic (1975–91) of independent Angola. Interviews were often thick with sentimentality and nostalgia, particularly with reference to a nonpartisan national sentiment, but my conversations also revealed class, ethnic, political, and gender tensions that trouble any facile sense of unity in the past or the present. Musicians criticized the political elite, and those musicians who are a part of it, while simultaneously hoping for patronage from those same people. At the same time, memories of a common sense of purpose and a shared desire for independence superseded the identification of individuals with particular liberation movements.⁹⁴

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

The book is divided into six chapters and a brief epilogue. Chapter 1, “Musseques and Urban Culture,” decolonizes colonial social science material by reading it in light of interviews and secondary sources. Where colonial sources saw a cultural backwater and potential social crisis, I see an urban crucible that produced a distinctly Angolan culture that was neither purely African nor predominantly European. This chapter offers a modest social history of the musseques as a starting point for entering a more specific history of culture and politics.

Chapter 2, “In the Days of Bota Fogo’: Culture and the Early Nationalist Struggle, 1947–61,” delves into the associations and political activities of the urban elite as they began to define *angolanidade* and sought common cause with the population of the musseques. Urban elites sought to revalorize Angolan cultural practice in the music, poetry, and theater they created in small groups and in larger associations. Here I introduce a discussion of gender by adopting the strategy of women’s historians who seek to make women visible. The early involvement of women in politico-cultural organizing serves as a counterpoint to their engagement in the music scene in the later period. Why, if women were so central early on, did they become marginalized as cultural producers in the later period?

This question is a central concern in chapter 3, “Dueling Bands and Good Girls: Gender and Music in Luanda’s Musseques, 1961–75.” Here the focus is the music scene and the growth of clubs in Luanda’s musseques as the war for independence was being waged by guerrilla fighters on the borders of the country. The music scene was gendered terrain. Women were central to the meanings of the scene but were sidelined as producers, marking a shift from earlier forms of cultural production. Masculinity came to define the musical nation-space through associations between sports, rivalry, and bands just as fame came to be measured in the number of girlfriends one had. Nonetheless, both women and men identified this music as truly Angolan and fondly remembered an experience of self-sufficiency or sovereignty—culturally and, to a limited degree, economically.

Chapter 4, “‘Ngongo Jami’ (My Suffering): Lyrics, Daily Life, and Social Space, 1956–75,” takes a closer look at some popular song lyrics and at musical performance spaces. Conscious of the limitations that come with trying to freeze as text what was a dynamic performance, I look at song texts in order to show the different ways in which lyrics signified: they made individual suffering collective, they criticized colonialism, they offered social critique, and they very often told of loves lost and found. The new musical style itself became the national lingua franca. This novel style, called *semba*, and its companion style *rumba*,⁹⁵ represented and were used to construct an urban Angolan experience and sound that was locally rooted and internationally resonant. The music gained in popularity and range as it moved from the backyards of musseques to public festivals in the streets and cinemas of those same neighborhoods, and ultimately throughout the territory of Angola.

Chapter 5, “Radios, Turntables, and Vinyl: Technology and the Imagined Community, 1961–75,” investigates the dissemination of music throughout the Angolan territory. How did music produced from Luanda’s musseques make it to other areas of the country? Radio and the recording industry reterritorialized

the musseque-produced music and made it national, not just by spreading it but by providing a means through which people could actively associate it with the armed struggle and with a wider world of independent nations and national cultures. Angolans used radio to actualize the “imagined community” of nation by connecting discrete “meanwhiles” across time and space.

Chapter 6, “The Hiatus: Music, Dissent, and Nation Building after Independence, 1975–1990s,” examines the changes that occurred in the relationship between music and nation once independence was declared. I revisit the events of May 27, 1977, in light of what musicians told me about their involvement in turn-of-independence politics in Luanda’s musseques. After a period in which music became politicized and implicated in the politics of the civil war, music in the 1990s and the first years of this millennium has again left party politics for the politics of daily life and the imagination of nation. The fact that musicians use the intertwined relation of music and nation to speak about and make claims on the current government and political leaders indicates how the formation of new elites is contested in cultural terms.⁹⁶ Music also continues to be a means of reflecting on daily life, transcending individual suffering, performing and thus constructing gendered roles and relations, and showing that fun can be subversive and subversion can be fun. At the same time, music continues to be a serious and sometimes deadly business, something I take up in the epilogue.

Before turning to the brief social history of the musseques, play and listen to at least some of the CD that accompanies this book. Imagine that it is a few days after payday in late colonial Luanda. You don the new duds commissioned from your tailor or seamstress—for men, low at the hip and wide at the ankle, and for women, a natty short-waisted jacket, big fabric buttons, an A-line skirt, and an African print head cloth to match. Outside the club you stand in line with others equally resplendent in new or newly pressed attire, undaunted by the dust of unpaved musseque streets. The air is tinged with the scent of grilling chicken and animated by the polite greetings of friends, cousins, and acquaintances (handshakes for the gentlemen, kisses on the cheeks for the ladies). You can hear the band inside checking their instruments as the great Franco’s “On Entre OK, On Sort KO” (You Enter OK and Leave KO) plays in the background. Meanwhile, you wait for the bouncer’s scrutiny to produce approval, registered only as he steps aside to let you in. As you pay the entrance fee with Portuguese tender and step across the lintel, you leave Portuguese rule behind. Nicely dressed couples sit with friends at well-appointed tables in this Angolan-owned and -run establishment. Young folks stand in small groups near the bar, sipping bottled Coca-Cola through waxy paper straws or drinking cold Cuca beer from brown glass bottles. Leaning against

the bar, a musician, graying at the temples, lights a Caricoco cigarette, as much to dangle over his whiskey as to smoke. He tells his friend that he knows every James Brown hit by heart but that Tio Liceu (“Liceu” Vieira Dias of Ngola Ritmos) is his hero. He wonders aloud, though quietly, whether Tio Liceu is still composing even in jail in Cape Verde. By and large such *sotto voce* topics are drowned out by gregarious chatter—speculations about whether or not Urbanito’s new single will go gold, invitations to picnic on Mussulo Island, gossip about how quickly Tia Lourdes will recover from the paraffin burns she recently suffered. Suddenly there is silence. Six band members leap onto the stage, clad in wide-lapelled suits, shiny shoes, and tailor-made shirts of tyrilene fabric. As they grab guitars, position a drum, and pick up a *dikanza*, the audience bursts into applause and whistles.