Circulating Spirits and Dead Bodies

Funerary Transnationalism among Immigrants from Guinea Bissau in Portugal

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Abstract

Death is the ultimate rite of passage, one that no one can avoid, with multiple implications for the life of the individuals and of the groups within which they move. Throughout this article, I intend to show how death is a good metaphor to think about the production of places and spaces of belonging in transnational contexts, and how circulation is the key term to understand how such transnational trends are produced. I argue that in a transnational setting – in this case of Guinean migrants in Portugal – death functions as a true regeneration source as it shapes the continuity of the relationship between the migrant and the place of origin. The circulation of dead bodies, symbolic universes, spiritual healers and spirits re-shape the ties between the world of the living and the world of the dead across continents and oceans.

Keywords

transnationalism – circulation – place – good death – Guinea-Bissau

Résumé

La mort est le rite de passage ultime, que personne ne peut éviter, avec des implications multiples pour la vie des individus et des groupes dans lesquels ils se déplacent. Tout au long de cet article, j'ai l'intention de montrer comment la mort est une bonne métaphore pour penser à la production de la place et d'espaces d'appartenance dans des contextes transnationaux et comment la circulation est le terme clé pour comprendre comment ces tendances transnationales sont produites. Je prétends que dans un contexte transnational – dans ce cas des migrants guinéens au Portugal –

la mort fonctionne comme une véritable source de régénération car elle forme la continuité de la relation entre le migrant et le lieu d'origine. La circulation des cadavres, des univers symboliques, des guérisseurs spirituels et des esprits, refaçonnent les liens entre le monde des vivants et le monde des morts à travers les continents et les océans.

Mots-clés

transnationalisme – circulation – place – bonne mort – Guinea-Bissau

Introduction: Death in Transnational Settings

Death is the utmost rite of passage, one that no one can avoid, with multiple implications for the life of the individuals and of the groups within which they move. Throughout this article, I intend to show how death is a good metaphor to think about the production of places and spaces of belonging in transnational contexts. In the study of migrations (Gable 2006; Ho 2006; Lestage 2008), death and dying are good examples of the circulation of symbolic universes in which the notion of process is extremely important. Such arguments will be explored through the case study of Guinean migrants in Portugal.¹

In social anthropology, the conceptions of death and dying have deserved attention from several authors, such as the classics by Frazer (1934), Hertz (1960), Evans-Pritchard (1948), Vovelle (1983), Ariés (1989), and Vincent-Thomas (1975, 1982) and contemporary authors such as Bloch (1971, 1982), Gable (2006) and de Boeck (2008). As João de Pina Cabral (1984) has argued, these authors' approaches to the topic include many elements, from the symbolism of several ceremonial elements to the liminality of funerary rituals. In the present article, I want to explore the relation between funerary ceremonies and the (re)production and symbolization of places of belonging, places which include among many others, a local "community",² a space of diaspora, the belonging to

1 Fieldwork was done in Portugal and Guinea Bissau and it included participant observation, in-depth interviews, life stories, and archival and bibliographic research.

2 Besides the vast literature on cemeteries as spaces of building collective memories (Ariés 1989; Vovelle 1983; Vincent-Thomas 1975; 1982) there are also several texts that deal with the role of funerary rituals and graves in the construction of local communities and the relation between the living and the dead, such as the classic *Death in Murelaga* by Douglass (1969).

a nation-state and the circulation between these universes. Additionally, attention will be drawn to the relation between the notions of belonging to a place and the idea of a “good death”.

For many migrants (and certainly for the first-generation migrants) the relation with the original grounds accompanies the individual throughout his or her life (see below). When death occurs, this relation becomes more vivid and part of the social construct of what a “good death” is all about. One of the objectives is often to have the body sent home, enabling it to go through the full traditional death ceremonies. Only someone who goes through all the appropriate ceremonies will have a restful death. The second objective is to have the final disposal of the body (burying, cremating or some other form of final disposal) on home ground. Both these objectives are part of the complex notion of what it means to have a “good death”, implying that both corpse and spirit are well taken care of by the relatives who have the duty to take care of the funerary rituals for the deceased. By doing so, they also assure that the accomplishment of a “good death” will be the warranty of a good relationship between the world of the dead and the world of the living.

This relation between funerary ceremonies, burial place and the notion of a “good death” is, as we shall see, of the utmost relevance in the present case study of the migration of people from Guinea-Bissau to Portugal. Having the body sent home and disposed of there, with full funerary ceremonies, is the ideal situation, which is in fact hardly ever accomplished – it is complicated, expensive and difficult to achieve. Thus, families have to find solutions to perpetuate the links between the home ground and the diaspora community. These solutions deal with the links between funerary rites, places of belonging and the circulation that migration forces upon both the living and dead alike.

Such relations were discussed by Maurice Bloch in one of the most important books on death, *Death and the Regeneration of Life* (Bloch and Parry 1982). In the last text of this collective work, Bloch resumes an argument previously explored in his main ethnographic work – *Placing the Dead* (1971) – in which the author expands on the relation between funerary rituals and the identification with a place, a land. Based on the Merina of Madagascar, Bloch argues that the funerary rituals imply two burials. The first one, in the vicinities of the place of dying, aims at cleansing the body of all impure substances. Two years later, the body is moved and buried again but this time in the grave of one’s ancestors. There is a correspondence between the grave and the group of kin and thus to be buried in this land means the reunion between present, past and future kin. This burial in the ancestral land is the celebration of the union of family networks and the victory over the division and separation that the quotidian life

implies. This second burial repositions the Merina who died far away from the ancestral land, in the society of their ancestors.

The telluric dimensions of death and their importance and role in establishing the connection between the diaspora contexts and the home ground of the migrants have been further developed in the work of several social scientists.³ One of them is Françoise Lestage's (2008) on Mexican migration in the US and the processes of repatriation of bodies. The author analyzes the creation of an industry of repatriation where several funerary agencies and state institutions are the main actors. Such processes reveal, once again, the relation between migrations and place making but this time in relation to nationalism. For the Mexican state the migrants have assumed a role of principal agents of economic development and thus they have access to unprecedented rights and privileges: dual nationality and the right to rest close to their ancestors.

What happens with the people from Guinea-Bissau in the diaspora in relation to death and their connection with the home ground – their “places of belonging” – is connected to these two previous examples, and involves aspects of “circulation” that, although touched upon in the two mentioned cases, allow for further explanation and analysis.

In order to analyze the Guinean case, I will firstly contextualize the migration flows that link Guinea-Bissau to Portugal. Then, I will focus on the discourses and practices regarding death and funerary ceremonies in a transnational setting. This will lead to the analysis of the circulation of the entities involved in the process – the dead bodies, the families, the spirits of the deceased – and how they all relate in a dual scenario, where ceremonies often take place twice, and bodies or their avatars circulate between Portugal and Africa.

Migrants from Guinea-Bissau

In the past decades, the transnational dimensions of the migratory phenomena assumed an increasing theoretical and ethnographic importance, implying the multiple and permanent ties sustained between the sending country and the country of reception, in its economic, political and cultural facets (Glick

3 See, amongst many, Gable (2006) for the Guinean case on how the youngsters use funerals to mark their social position in the home communities; De Boeck's piece (2008) concerning cemeteries in Kinshasa and the role of young people in the funerals; and Ho (2006) for the importance of the Hadrami graves in the case of the Yemeni diaspora in the Indian Ocean.

Schiller et al. 1992; Basch et al. 1997). Such ties and mobilities – real or imagined – are frequently accompanied by the social and symbolic construction of places of belonging. As Karen Fog Olwig (2007) and Clifford Geertz (1996) called to our attention, global mobilities and flows are accompanied by quotidian processes of place making. In transnational migration contexts, these processes are produced through the sending and use of remittances (in capital and goods) and in the performance of certain rituals and ceremonies, to mention a few examples. The case of the death of immigrants proves to be a good example to analyze how such processes occur as well as their multiple social and symbolic implications (Saraiva and Mapril 2012; Saraiva and Mapril 2015; Saraiva 2015).

People from Guinea-Bissau have a long tradition of migration, and there are Guineans scattered throughout Senegal, France and the Netherlands (Machado 2002), but Portugal soon became a preferential destination, due to the ties connecting the two countries. The immigration to Portugal started after the 25th April 1974 revolution and the independence of Guinea-Bissau, but it was mainly after 1984, with the opening of the country to more westernized economic and social models (Machado 2002; Saraiva 2008; Quintino 2004) that it increased. Portugal is seen as a paradise, where one can have a job and send remittances to families back home (Saraiva 2008: 256).

Guinea Bissau is a small country, with ca. 1.2 million inhabitants, but with a large ethnic diversity, counting more than twenty-three ethnic groups (Einarsdottir 2000). Most groups in the interior are Islamized, and the coastal ones are animistic, but religious affiliation does not always follow an ethnic division (Jao 1995), and there are multiple combinations of animistic and Christian religious options.

In Portugal, almost all the groups are represented, and there is a certain union and revindication of a common national origin that surpasses ethnic diversity (Bordonaro and Pussetti 2006:133; Saraiva 2008:257). National identity is recreated in the diaspora though a re-elaboration of references and codes that connect individuals to their families in the original grounds. One of such references is related to death and the funerary rituals, which are in turn directly connected to issues of place and belonging, fabricated through a constant relation with the ritual and *cerimónias di uso* or traditions from home.

Almost all families in Guinea have one or more relatives residing in Portugal, and the constant flow of people and goods back and forth is an important reality, visible in the movement of people at Lisbon airport on days of flights to and from Bissau. The airport becomes a place where people gather to meet relatives or friends and to receive goods *di tera* (from home), or to send things back, and say goodbye to the ones who leave, taking other Western and modern products

with them (Saraiva 2008; see also Abranches 2013). Guineans in Portugal recreate their identity through the re-elaboration of the references and codes from home and by relating them to the ones from the host country; they create new networks and forms of interaction, institutions, symbols and cultural practices which allow for a recreation of the past and a construction of the present, in a permanent negotiating process, within their own community and within the encompassing Portuguese society (Quintino 2004; Saraiva 2007, 2008).

Cutting across not only the different social and economic groups, but also ethnic appurtenance, Quintino (2004:263) explains how the *tchon* (original grounds) is an important territorial and ethnic reference; its symbolic construction is based on language, and a common past, rooted in the social organization of the *tabanka* (village), and the duties one has towards the lineage and members of the *moransa* (extended family living together in a compound). An 'ethnicity package' is thus constructed, comprising several elements that are manipulated in the highly symbolic process of relating to their origins. These elements (territory, language, skin colour, dress codes, commensality, music, dance, religion and healing practices) are manipulated in order to construct one's identity in relation to other Guineans and to the Portuguese. In the midst of all these, religious practices and funerary ceremonies are of utmost importance. In the sacralization of the new dwelling, the relation with the ancestors (forefathers who have died and live in the other world) must be acknowledged through the placement of the *testos* (altars) dedicated to them and the protective *irās* (spirits),⁴ as well as all the magical-religious ceremonies that go along with such emplacements, of which the *darma* (to pour beverages and food for the ancestors) is the most significant, due to its direct symbolism of the connection with the ancestors in the other world (Saraiva 2007).

The *Mala* of the Deceased: The Case of Guinean Death

All this brings us to a notion of trans/identity Quintino (2004:35), constructed around the constant relation between the immigrants and the host community, the original grounds and the desire to one day be able to return home. Death is a situation that allows one to return home and strengthen the real and symbolic ties that connect the individual to the origins (*tchon*), which functions as a territorial and symbolic reference. How does this happen?

4 *Irās* are spirits that live in nature and are known as trickster spirits; one should worship and respect them in order to have them as protective (and not punisher) entities.

People from Guinea Bissau strongly invest in transnational associations and there are over fifty Guinean NGOs operating in Portugal. Most of them act as mutualities, and give support to the immigrants in matters of administration and legalization of their status, but they also promote solidarity actions, as collecting funds for public facilities and improvements back home, cooperation programmes, etc. Beyond these, they are also in charge of the organization of all the aspects concerning rites of passage and cyclic religious or profane feasts, in which historical religious traditions, and Catholic and Muslim practices come together, and which are moments of intense intra-ethnic sociability. In this spirit, one of the primordial functions of these associations is the support for the realization of the shipment of the deceased, or, at least, to allow for the families or the valuable goods to be sent back home to the families who live in Guinea Bissau. The important idea behind these movements of people and goods is the maintenance of the relation with the places of origin, which is a crucial condition to allow for the concretization of the ideal of a good death.

This Guinean case of forming associations is not a single one; on the contrary, it is a phenomenon widely present in Africa, both in earlier times as well as nowadays. In their book *Funerals in Africa*, Michael Jindra and Joel Noret (2011) expand on the historical impact of the development of associations in several parts of colonial Africa, especially from the middle third of the twentieth century onwards. They stress how, amongst such associations, funerary ones became very important, providing mutual help for the organization of funerals as an essential practice within such solidarities. As they state:

In contemporary Africa, membership in associations is still often tightly associated with funerals and support for members facing death-related expenses. In urban contexts, the roles that associations of people from the same region play, notably in bringing corpses back “home” for burial, have been documented in various regions, including West, East and southern Africa.⁵

JINDRA and NORET 2011:21

Let us see how this works in practice. Most of the associations require the payment of a fee that reverts to the common fund. It is with this fund that they

5 Jindra and Noret (2011: 21–24) provide a wide range of cases in which the role of such associations is explained, from early colonial times to contemporary societies, such as trader associations in Ghana, Malawian “home villagers” associations, Cameroonian *mutuelles* in Yaoundé, as well as funerary associations in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and southern Africa, amongst others.

help the families to send back the corpses, in case this is the wish of the family. Nevertheless, in most cases this is still not possible, due to the high costs of transnational funerals, and a symbolic shipment is organized to replace the sending of a real body. Sending the *mala* (suitcase), and the *toka chur* (the secondary funerary rituals) are the two most significant elements of this complex.

To clarify this process I will use the example of one of the associations that helps in such matters and my own field work in Guinea Bissau. This association was founded in 1992 and is particularly active in maintaining the relationship with the place of origin. It is a Manjako-based organization, one of the ethnic groups that has a longer immigration tradition, with large numbers of immigrants in France, where a sister organization exists. One of its major activities is the support of its members in case of illness or death. According to the established rules, in the event of a death in the family the members are entitled to economic support to perform the funerary rituals. Most individuals (90%) are buried in the Lisbon cemeteries, and the association pays the costs of the funeral. If the body is sent back to Guinea Bissau the association gives the same amount of money and the rest of the expense has to be shouldered by the family. In reality, due to the high costs of this process (around 5,000 euros), most families do not have the economic means to send the body back home. Facing such impossibility, considerable effort is being put into the ritualization of the bonds with the place of origin and with the family back in Guinea, in order to attain the ideal of a "good death". This relationship is consolidated through various actions and ritual performances which, through a range of various forms, establish a physical and symbolic bridge with the place of origin.

One of such forms, which surpasses ethnic or religious diversity, since it is used by Catholics, Muslims and those involved in historical religious traditions alike, is the *mala*. After the funeral, the close family organizes the suitcase of the deceased. This suitcase is filled with the person's most important belongings, mainly clothing, jewellery and cloths,⁶ especially *panos penti*, the hand-woven cloths highly valued in Guinea and all over West Africa (Saraiva 2008). Beyond the funeral costs, the association gives 250 euros which may be increased with family donations. This money is placed inside the suitcase and sent back home by a family member.

This act confirms two fundamental ideals. Firstly, the continuity of the family beyond national borders and surpassing its members' mobility. Such obli-

6 By clothing I mean the person's clothing, dresses, shirts, trousers, etc.; by cloths I mean real cloth, pieces of tissue, which are commonly used in many parts of West Africa to wrap the dead bodies during the funerary ceremonies. Such cloths are highly valued and considered a symbol of the person's wealth.

gations are duties of the direct family, who are also the ones that may benefit from the protection of a dead person who becomes a protective ancestor, but can also suffer the revenge of an ancestor who did not have his rituals totally fulfilled. Secondly, it is exactly when one's physical mobility ends, due to death that the belongings symbolizing the person must return home and close the cycle of the connection to the home ground, the *tchon*.

The goods placed in the suitcase either belonged to the individual or were gifts offered during the funeral. No one comes to a funeral without goods to offer. It is believed that the deceased needs such things in his other world life. But all that the living offer to the dead will ultimately revert in their favour, as they are goods that enrich the other world, of which each will become part. Although they may seem contradictory, these two assumptions complement each other. What belonged to the deceased goes to the real family, both in the diaspora and in the place of origin, and all that is offered by the people coming to the ritual is symbolically given to the spirit of the deceased and to the world of the spirits in general.

This means that the generosity of the ones that pay their last homage to the dead reverts to their profit, since when they offer the recently dead a full *mala* they are also pleasing their own ancestors, who live in the other world and can thus receive the goods brought over by the spirit of the newly dead. He/she takes them to the other world and redistributes his *surplus*, as it was explained by the head of the association: "One must offer as much as possible; if the spirit arrives in the other world with a lot of clothes he redistributes them to the other ..."

The organization of the suitcase takes place right after death, in the house of the deceased or of a family member. Songs are sung and drinks are poured (*darmar*) on the ground for the spirit, and, in the case of Muslims, it includes the sacrifice of an animal. *Darmar* has the ultimate meaning of communion between humans and ancestors: the idea is that ancestors surround us, and we need to also share with them what is going to be drunk or eaten. This is especially important in circumstances when the communication between the world of the living and the one of the dead is open due to the new death. It is a time when "the dead takes everything: drinks, food, and certainly, also the spirit of the dead". The ancestors live in a totally mobile world, and thus they are present in the ceremonies in Portugal as in Guinea, as one of my interviewees stated: "you see, they do not need to take a plane ... if there is a ceremony here in Portugal, all the ancestors' spirits come, and we need to nurture them".

The intense circulation between the two spaces and communities that emigration implies as well as the mobility of the spirits that must be present come alive in the reciprocity of duties of "the ones that are here" and "the ones that

are there". In the same way, if someone dies and is buried in Portugal, ceremonies must also take place in Guinea, and the family in Portugal must do the same if someone dies and is buried in Guinea.

Eating, drinking, offering cloths and the sacrifice of animals are offers for the dead which are part of the ceremonies in Portugal as in Guinea. As we saw earlier, all such instances are part of the "ethnic package" (Quintino 2004) of Guineans in Portugal. By "ethnic package" I mean a group of instances which not only show the origin of the individual, but also prove his/her connection to both the physical world of the home ground as well as to the invisible world of the ancestors, which can be here or there. It is part of the (moral and real) expectations of many families back in Guinea-Bissau that emigrants contribute and help the family back home. Besides the fact that being an emigrant means having succeeded in life, the funerals are events of high social value, in which one can exhibit the success achieved in one's migration trajectory, as Eric Gable (2006) explains.

It is also under the same logic that mainly highly successful immigrants have their bodies repatriated, since it implies high costs. The other case when bodies ideally should be sent back home is the case of the elderly, due to their structural position in the community, as individuals who retain important social, political or religious roles: a big man (*omi garandi*) – meaning, someone who must be respected or even feared – has his house back home, has his place of burial already decided and must thus be sent back home. In a certain way, there is a feeling that the elderly remain more attached to home than the younger generations who leave to try to build a successful life abroad.

This gerontocracy and hegemony of elders, discussed by Ramon Sarró (2009) for the case of the Baga of Guinea-Conakry, and analyzed by Harvey Whitehouse, also prevails over the triumph that migration may bring to the younger ones. Since 1992, thirteen youngsters were repatriated by one association; all of them were buried in Portugal and their *malas* were sent home to Guinea-Bissau. In a migratory logic of striving for success, a young person has not yet achieved it (Quintino 2004).

More important than the hegemony of elders over the young in life is the way it continues beyond death. As Kopytoff (1971) explains, an elder is already considered a potential ancestor, and his/her death is a feast, a celebration of his/her entrance into the world of the dead and thus becoming a protective ancestor. An elder is someone with prestige which he/she carries to the other world. The death of an elder must thus be sumptuously celebrated. Therefore, even if any death occurring in Portugal, of youngsters or elders, must also be celebrated back home in Guinea, the responsibility to do so as soon as possible is felt more vividly in the case of elders. It is also the elders that become

ancestral protector spirits, and a *forquidja di alma* – a post that symbolizes the spirit of the dead one – is placed by the house when an elder dies and acts as a protection for the family and the community.

This is the logic for the offers that take place during the funerary rituals of the coastal animists in Guinea-Bissau, by the Pepel, Manjakos, Mancanhas, Bijagós and Balantas, and also by individuals who consider themselves Catholics but also practise *uso* – “tradition” in *Kriol* ceremonies. In these ethnic groups it is believed that there are two worlds, the one of the living and a parallel one, inhabited by the dead. Good relations must be kept between the two worlds, in order for the ancestors to protect the living. The idea behind this is that the living must accomplish all the required rituals (death rituals but also everyday and cyclic ones), in order to keep a good relationship with the dead. The conception of the person and the family incorporates the idea that one is alive but can at any time be dead, and there is a constant flow between the two worlds.

In the Pepel case, the first part of the funerary ceremonies includes the wrapping of the body in cloths for several days. The cloths are offered by the ones attending the funeral. They are offered to the bereaved and to the deceased and symbolically taken to the other world via the deceased, who serves as a courier between the two worlds. A prestigious elderly must take plenty of clothes, which will be redistributed by the ancestors who live in the other world. In the second part of the ceremonies (*toka chur*) it is the blood of the sacrificed animals that is offered to the ancestors (Saraiva 2003, 2004, 2008). The celebration of the *toka chur* is essential for the spirit to reach its place in the other world and thus conclude the process of a “good death” (Saraiva 2008). In the Pepel case, the *toka chur* must take place in *tchon* Pepel; a *toka chur* taking place in Portugal has no value whatsoever.

Often, even individuals belonging to the second generation of Guinean migrants in Portugal respect these predicaments, and feel that they have the duty to respect the wishes of the elderly. This takes us back to the relationship between elders and youngsters, since the younger ones must work and be successful enough to pay for their elders’ funerals: “I am working overtime to make enough money to pay for my uncle’s *toka chur*. It is expensive to pay for the airfare and the animals to be offered ...”. As Eric Gable has shown (2006), death and funerary rites are occasions for the young ones to affirm their success as migrants and strengthen their relationship with the family who stayed behind in Guinea.⁷

7 Although these constitute the most common cases, there are, on the other hand, some younger, second-generation migrants that may not be equally interested in maintaining these

We thus have a transnational network of spirits, individuals, bodies and goods that circulate between two parallel worlds: the physical, concrete worlds of the two national contexts – the original one and the diaspora one – and the two universes that exist beyond any spatial distance or frontier, the world of the living and the world of the dead (Saraiva 2008:267).

Final Notes: The Burial Place and a “Good Death”

Looked upon in their totality, funerary rituals constitute systems of circulation of goods between the living and the dead, and contribute to the reinforcement of the continuum between the two worlds. In the Guinean case, as in many others,⁸ the deceased only become protective ancestors if the rituals are completely and correctly performed (Saraiva 1999:278; 2004, 2008:259).

Bloch (1982: 15) refers to the notion of “good death” as being connected to the human need to control the imprevisibility of biological death. Thus, prototypes of ideal situations are produced in which death is domesticated and transformed into an element in a repetitive cyclic order which will ultimately result in the regeneration and reproduction of life. Focusing on several examples, namely the Merina and the Lugbara, Bloch specifies that without the burial in the communitarian tomb or close to the ancestral house, not only a potential source of regeneration for the group is lost, but the individual death is terminal. The emphasis put on the place of eternal rest so that a “good death” takes place is evident.

The same happens in the above described case, either by means of a physical concretization of such rule – the sending of the body back home – or by a symbolic transformation and an unfolding of actions that aim at surpassing the impossibility of sending the real, material body. This is the meaning of the sharing of the ceremonies divided into two spaces (in Guinea and in Portugal), sending the *mala*, and the *toka chur*, in the case of the Guineans. What is assumed in these ceremonial dynamics is precisely the connection between migration, circulation, reciprocity, redistribution and a “good death”.

Emigration is normally an enterprise through which one seeks prestige and economic success. If this comes true, it must be shared with the other relatives

transnational practices, and start to act differently, depending on the degree of interaction they have with other fellow Guineans that live in Portugal. As it often happens with migrants, the more affinities and interactions one creates in the foster country, the more people tend to disregard the ties with the original grounds.

8 See, for instance, Metcalf 1985; Huntington and Metcalf 1991; Jindra and Noret 2011.

in a logic of reciprocity and moral co-responsibility, which implies a connection with the home land and the family of origin, and has consequences for one's perception of death and dying. Migrants hope that those "who stay behind", in Guinea, care for them and keep the ties that connect them alive, and show it in the reception of the dead bodies and the realization of the ceremonies that will help them to have a "good death". After all, they also once sacrificed themselves, by going abroad, for the sake of a common good. Simultaneously, a successful migrant has the obligation to also care for his/her relatives back home, by organizing and paying for the funerary rituals. This also guarantees him/her a continued connection with a place of origin.

We can thus see how, in a globalized world, the notion of "place" continues to exist and be produced within social life (Olwig 2007). There is a homology between places of belonging and notions of *relatedness* (Carsten 2000), perhaps paradoxically, reflected by death and dying.

Through territorialization of death a union with the places where the relatives are is celebrated. This union is the victory over the division that migration implies; the circulation process is thus closed, upon death, as one returns physically or symbolically home. In fact, in the diaspora, more important than the place of birth, is where one is buried (Ho 2006), and the funerary transits between Portugal and Guinea-Bissau are good examples of such telluric dynamics. In the Guinean case, this territorialization is directly related to circulation: either the body is sent home (which, as we saw, hardly ever happens) or an avatar of the body (the *mala*) is sent. In either case, the proper rituals must take place both in Portugal and back home. What must be stressed here is the resilience of ritual, resisting displacement, marking a symbolic territory and both a symbolic and real circulation of people, bodies and spirits. The visibility of funerals in Africa, where both living, ancestors as well as other spirits and powers are called upon show how the ramifications of funerary rites go well beyond the events themselves (Jindra and Noret 2011:1) and are complex and multifaceted occasions where tensions and conflicts are present: generational, economic, social ones, and, in this case, also conflicts that touch upon the duality of living in the diaspora and still wanting to keep ties with the home ground. This case study also shows how notions of body and personhood are re-defined through the practice of sending the *mala* to replace the dead body. The goods in the *mala* (mainly the cloths) circulate between the world of the living and the world of the dead, just like humans do. The cloths are used to wrap the dead bodies, and they are sent back home to the family to make sure the person, although she/he died in the diaspora, will still contribute to the funerals back home and to the maintenance of the exchanges between the living and the dead.

To get back to Bloch's premise on good death as a potential for group regeneration, what I intended to show is the way in which, in a diaspora situation, the notion of *relatedness* acts. In these transnational networks we have intense relations between the referred parallel worlds – the physical and concrete worlds of the national origin of the migrants, being Guinea-Bissau and the foster country – amongst which these bodies and individuals circulate. This first circulation lies under the responsibility of migrants themselves, who are fulfilling their duties towards the dead, but also towards their families in their home ground. But, beyond these, symbolic goods and spirits also circulate, making it possible to also fulfil the duties of the living towards the spirits of the dead. Such dynamics send us back to the notion of *relatedness*, in the measure that the “community” (of Guineans) exists in the intersection between the world of the living and the world of the dead. That is, such “communities” are constituted of the living and the dead, and it is expected of the living (migrants) that they contribute to their maintenance, even when away from home. This reveals that the death of a person is never terminal, since it functions as a true regeneration source – in these cases, regeneration of life even in the enlarged scenario of migration, since it is death that triggers the continuity of the relationship with the place of origin (Saraiva and Mapril 2012, 2015). The cases analyzed here reaffirm Bloch's notions and take them one step further, showing how the circulation of bodies, their material avatars (the mala and the cloths inside) and spirits act as a true means of regeneration, enforcing and enlarging the ties between the world of the living and the world of the dead across continents and oceans.

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