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Paper for the 11th EASA conference (W041), Maynooth

Coupé-Décalé Dance in Ivory Coast: Body in time of crisis

Our study focuses on a Western African country, well known for his football team, political crisis and his musical movement: Coupé-Décalé. For the 70' Ivory Coast, mainly the city of Abidjan was a commercial place for the musical industry of Africa. A lot of African charts were recorded in the numerous studios of Abidjan. From Abidjan the artists went to Paris and the song was broadcasted to the rest of the world.

At this period, Ivorian didn't make the fashionable music and dance. During the 80' and 90', all African musicians knew that the best way to be successful pass through the city of Abidjan. Ivorian were living in peaceful state and could dream to build the future, they had not any reason to emigrate in Europe, unless they held a grant from a famous French university. The Ivorian artists were more celebrated as singer than dancer, in various music as reggae (Alpha Blondy), or folklore (Dodo Paul, Antoinette Konan, François Lougha, Aïcha Koné).¹ In the cities, people did move on the song of Congolese Rumba and Soukous.

The beginning of the 90' means the fall, the economic crisis increase it is the end of "the Ivorian miracle".

In the same time, a new musical movement was born: the Zouglou. Play by young boys from poorest borough this conscientious movement talks about the troubles in the country (politics, unemployment and brewery). In despite of the success of Zouglou, only working class children were dancing on the songs.

The end of the 90' announced the struggle for the power between four characters: Henri Konan Bédier, Robert Gueï, Alassane Ouattara, and Laurent Gbagbo, they claimed to be legitimate to hold the presidential armchair (following the death of Felix Houphouët-Boigny in 1993)³ these conflicts led to civil war and divided the population.²

In 1999, the General Robert Gueï did a putsch, for the first time the Ivorian know the problem of curfew (18h-5h).

Young city-dwellers, who usually dance in the clubs and pubs called 'Maquis' didn't change their habits for the curfew. They went to the 'Maquis' at 18 pm and go back home at 5 am. As a lodge, dancing in the Maquis became the best way to forget troubles. Disappointed by the adults, unable to offer them a future, the body dancing and extravagant expressed this revolt. Following the conscientious Zouglou, in 2000 appears the Mapouka Dance, what means opening. From the folklore of the Kru and Akan societies this sexual dance spreads all over the country. In the districts of Koumassi ⁴ and Marcory only few women were dancing Mapouka. According to the eldest, this dance means the end of the times, the ugly side of Abidjan. Practised by women, the Mapouka consist to dance with only part of the body: the bottom, the buttocks. Mapouka was not broadcasted, in the Muslims area and north border countries (how watch women shaking their bottom in public). Finally this dance was just a show for men.

Few women could practise; the most of women dancing Mapouka were professional. Many managers used the Mapouka in order to promote their pornographic tapes.

The Government of General Gueï prohibited the Mapouka.⁵ One year later the civil war divided the country in two areas, north and south. In the working class districts of Abidjan like Yopougon, Marcory or Treichville, the youth create a new movement. Young and jobless, they found the Coupé-Décalé dance. Contrary to the prior songs, the Coupe-Décalé didn't make propaganda the most important was to make people dancing.

The new masters of the song and the dance are the DJ. They base their creativity on the hobbies and hopes of the youth. Because of the war, they didn't want to deal with politics, they felt a common destiny with football players, who like them came from the poorest districts of Abidjan. The dance bases on the movements of this sport.

The Coupé-Décalé is successful all over the French speaking language area. In Paris, Abidjan, Bamako, Lomé, Ouagadougou, Brazzaville or Dakar, people is dancing and reproducing the steps of Coupé-Décalé.

The dance gesture borrows step from football dribble and the famous Congolese dances, mainly the N'Dombolo dance of the 90' (who singers and dancers were Quartier Latin, Koffi Olomide, Extra musica, Wengue, Werrason).

This melting of several styles and skills make the success of Coupé-Décalé, the DJ's become stars as football players.

Like football players, Coupé -Décalé stars represent the hopes, youth may to identify, 'Douk Saga' wears the fashionable marks, people follow the fashion of DJ's, and buying the same clothes they feel good, far from the frustration. Called 'Jet Set', they are compared to the French Jet set members. This phenomenon reminds the Congolese movement: 'la S.A.P.E'.

Into the Maquis 'La Cour Des Grands' dancers wear fashion jeans and small t-shirt, they dance on rhythm making little steps, the only the gesture permitted by jeans.

Contrary to further dances, in the Coupé-Décalé everybody can dance, and not only a gender. Up on then women were dancing and men sitting down were watching them. From now on the Coupé-Decalé more men are dancing than women.

Some women explain that they love watching young men challenging on the song of Drogbacité, Décalé chinois or Konami.

What's more, by the past, women without big bottom and slim girls were ashamed and excluded to dance. Fortunately Coupe-Décalé is a 'static' dance in which the most import is to move the feet.

All the movements are created in the Maquis, but we notice that the children living next to the maquis are the main promoters of the new dance. They watch people dancing en learn to further children the new way of dancing until the DJ knows that is new way of dancing is popular. Few weeks later, the new dance and new song are broadcasted to the Maquis and television. The best advertiser is the show 'Variétéscope' of Yves Zogbo Junior, on the RTI channel.

After 2006 and the death of one of the founders of the movement (Douk Saga) the movement has changed in further dances:

- Fatigué- Fatigué : exhausted dance
- Wolosso ⁷
- Bobaraba.

Classification of Coupé-Décalé Dance

Techniques of Coupé -Décalé Dance 6	Gesture consist to	Borrow to
Drogbacité	Dribble like Didier Drogba, the player of Chelsea	Football
Dindané	Dribble like Haruna Dindane the player of the national team	Football
Zidané	Dribble like Zinedine Zidane, the player of French national team	Football
Aile de pigeon	Realise a kick in a virtual ball	Football
Décalé chinois	Do a 'Kata' like Bruce Lee	Karate
Petit vélo	To pedal	Cycling
La moto	Start and take the handlebars	Bikers 8
Krikata	To gallop with an horse	Western (Cinema)
Grippe aviaire	Bird flu, become crazy like a madman or an animal infected (cock, Hen)	News
Travaillement	To count money as a rich man	Society
Prudencia	To watch your step, be careful	The fear of war, be safety, avoid the danger
Tirer photo or camera-camera	Take a photo	Marriage
Farot-Farot	Be extravagant	S.A.P.E from Congo 9
Petit Malin	Be contemptuous	Chat up
Sentiment Môkô	Make love	Sexual feeling
La comporta	Be pretentious	Make fun of the behaviour of Ivorian immigrants from Paris coming back in Abidjan for the holiday
Vivacité	Speed movements	Sport
Konami	Move like the famous fellow of the video game	Video games
Décalé	Put the left hand high	Ivorian Logobi dance and Congolese
Décollé	Turn left/right	N'Dombolo
Coupé	Put the right hand low	Ivorian Logobi dance and Congolese N'Dombolo
Guantanamo	Dancing with handcuffs.	Imitation of members of Al Quaida imprisoned
Fouka-Fouka	Movement with arms, courage (energetic)	Society
Fatigué – Fatigué	Move like an exhausted man	Daily life, be fed up of war

The successful way of Coupé-Décalé: The bird flu dance.

Maquis, clubs of Abidjan: Marcory Gasoil

DJ Lewis ¹⁰

Founder of the new dance **Children watching the dancers and DJ's**

All the Children of Marcory are dancing the new dance.

Reaction of the DJ founder of the dance
DJ Lewis calls it 'Bird Flu'

Dance and song of 'Bird Flu' play by all the DJ's

TV and radio broadcast 'Bird Flu'

New DJ create a new dance: Fatigué-Fatigué

End of the former dance: Nobody is dancing 'bird flu' any more

1: Different societies, Baule, Akan, Senufo and Mande, Yacouba, Kru

2: Infra

3: Houphouët-Boigny the first president of Ivory Coast, in 1993 and 1995 Henri Konan-Bédié became president, until 1999.

4: District of Abidjan in Ivory Coast, and not the city of Kumasi in Ghana.

5: The football national team was imprisoned because of the players failed in African Cup of nations 2000.

6: The language borrows French, Dyula, Bété, Baule and a sort of Pidgin: Nouchi.

7: Because of the war and without perspective, many girls (Wolosso) of the poorest districts are working in the clubs. It is a kind of prostitution. The songs deal with this problem.

8: In 1985 in Zaïre, the Kwasa-Kwasa dance (already) used the Moto dance.

9: In French, Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes. Fashion movement born in Kinshasa and Brazzaville, during the 80'. Joe Balar, Papa Wemba.

10: The nickname of most famous DJ: Douk Saka (Stéphane Doukouré), Molah Oumar (Morifere Soumahoro), Papa Ministre, DJ Lewis, DJ String, DJ Arafat, Galloudji, DJ Jacob, DJ Eriksonn, DJ Allan .