

Angola facing chaos: the memory as rescue of angolan tradition

in *Parable of the Old Tortous* /

Angola diante do caos: a memória enquanto resgate da tradição

angolana em *Parábola do Cágado Velho*

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ABSTRACT

In investigating the identity constitution of the African continent, we come across a landscape immersed in territorial disputes and cultural impositions. African countries have positioned themselves in different ways in this reality, intending to resist the appropriation of their space and attempt to erase culture. It is under this scenario that Pepetela in *Parábola do Cágado Velho* (1996) transits in order to narrate the trajectory of the Angolan people from Ulume, protagonist of the novel and representative figure of tradition amid the threat of rupture of this heritage. In this narrative

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we will consider the indispensability of memory as a symbol of resistance and perpetuation of culture, recovering the Angolan legacy based on the revival of inherited and lived stories. In line with this study, we will bring as theoretical contributions the following scholars: Paul Ricoeur (2007), Michael Pollak (1992), Maurice Halbwachs (2003), Jean Chevalier (2018), and others. We will go through memory by rescuing the objects and places that incite the process of remembrance of the protagonist and other characters who will assist in the recount of the civil war in Angola.

KEYWORDS: Angolan; Ulume; tradition; memory.

RESUMO

Ao investigar a constituição identitária do continente africano, deparamo-nos com uma paisagem imersa em disputas territoriais e imposições culturais. Os países africanos se posicionaram de formas diversas quanto a essa realidade, na intenção de resistir à apropriação de seu espaço e tentativa de apagamento da cultura. É sob este cenário que Pepetela em *Parábola do Cágado Velho* (1996) transita a fim de narrar a trajetória do povo angolano a partir de Ulume, protagonista do romance e figura representativa da tradição em meio à ameaça de ruptura dessa herança. Nesta narrativa consideraremos a indispensabilidade da memória enquanto símbolo de resistência e perpetuação da cultura, recuperando o legado angolano com base no reavivamento das histórias herdadas e vividas. Em consonância com este estudo, traremos enquanto aportes teóricos os seguintes estudiosos: Paul Ricoeur (2007), Michael Pollak (1992), Maurice Halbwachs (2003), Jean Chevalier (2018), e outros. Enveredaremos pela memória resgatando os objetos e lugares que incitam o processo de rememoração do protagonista e de outros personagens que auxiliarão na recontagem da guerra civil em Angola.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Angolano; Ulume; tradição; memória.

1 Initial considerations

I still remember ... And nothing else matters to me ... Those days of such a soft light
That always left me with memories,
Some new toy at my door ...
(Mário Quintana, *A rua dos cataventos*, 2005b, own translation).

Being a continent of late independence, Africa is constituted by cultures and values that have repeatedly suffered reprisals. By resisting them, the African peoples promoted their transcendence, allowing the countries of the continent to take advantage of this strength and the story to be told without favorable cutouts, but in an almost impartial way. This impartiality - or what comes closest to it - was narrated, several times, from the literary field, a space that gave the people a role that they had been denied for many years: as narrators.

The continent witnessed a period of political and territorial wars and disputes, where each country lived its own chaos. Very similar to the implementation of European values that we experienced in Brazilian territory, Africa was subjugated and exploited in order to be a mirror of the colonizing people. To this end, one of the colonizing impositions referred to cultural reconfiguration - or deconfiguration - to make Africans more susceptible to acceptance of the new reality. Immersed in this hostile reality, each people embraced themselves with their memory and appropriated the inherited memories, watching over the permanence of tradition.

We realize, in this way, that the story to be narrated is not based on chronology - temporal demarcations -, but on the germ on which everything that exists as a story is based: memory. Oliveira (2012) understands that "remembering is to have a recollection or to seek it through an intellectual effort in the confines of memory". This search for the African people is the means of retelling their history without abrupt erasures.

When addressing memory as a theme, we consider the elements that constitute it as an object of value. Although this theme is based on the events experienced personally, by table, by people, characters and/or places, we need to understand it in its amplitude and importance: without memory, there is no history and, consequently, there are no periods "past, present and future". "[...] the sense of orientation in the overtime is linked to memory; two-way guidance, from the past to the future, backward." (RICOEUR, 2007, p. 108).

It is, therefore, from memory that the stories told and lived are stored, capable of containing an arsenal of human complexity. Memory that is in constant maintenance, since the same event can present different perspectives brought by the community.

A priori, memory seems to be an individual phenomenon, something relatively intimate, proper to the person. But Maurice Halbwachs, in the 20-30s, had already stressed that memory must also be understood, or above all, as a collective and social phenomenon, that is, as a phenomenon constructed collectively and subjected to fluctuations, transformations, constant changes. (POLLAK, 1992, p. 02, emphasis added).

When considering the position of Pollak (1992), memory is not composed individually but carries strong external contributions. An individual collects testimonies, hears reports, inherits traditions; memory is a tradition perpetuator. "It is on these traits gathered by regular experience and common language that the tradition of the inner look was built." (RICOEUR, 2007, p. 108). It is from testimonies that tradition is strengthened, and these testimonies are only possible thanks to memory.

In this way, the act of remembering is also a means of bringing history alive, which is not limited to the demarcations of time. We know that chronology helps us to remember historical episodes that are selected according to the importance of events, often eliminating the details that only rely on the collective memory of those who lived or who inherited the story told. "Everyone knows that even the official dates are heavily structured from a political point of view." (RICOEUR, 2007, p. 111). Therefore, two versions of the facts come to us: written history and living history. Due to these fields, it is necessary to emphasize that there is no superiority between them, but that

both admit functions that are essential in the perpetuation of a people's history. However, when emphasizing living history, we are faced with the opportunity to stick to details hidden by written history, since living history may well fit into the quality of testimonial memory.

Considering the scope of memorial work, we will bring in this study more precisely the perspective of the Angolan tradition amid war. There will be no historical basis, but a narration that will consider memory and feeling. From that point on, the object of value in this research - memory - is an essential field in the Pepetelian novel *Parable of the old tortoise* (1996). In this writing, we are allowed to immerse ourselves in Angolan disputes from an omniscient narrator who is guided by a history of inheritance and the threat of rupture with tradition.

2 The Angolan tradition amidst chaos

The Pepetelian novel tells the story of the Angolan people from Ulume and other characters who are connected to him. The main character, Ulume is married to Muari, and from this union four children are born. However, two daughters of the couple die, remaining only two men: Luzolo and Kanda. Transporting us to a time of war, suffering, and resistance, *Parable of the old tortoise* introduces us to the civil wars in Angola, sending us to the past and, therefore, to memory, being the main revival source of that period. From this, Pepetela (1996) recreates the suffering of the Angolan people who live outside the power struggles.

A hardened people, Angolans are presented as individuals who are constantly forced to start over, dealing with the soldiers' intemperance and their acts of cruelty. "Producing food for others, killing themselves for unfathomable purposes, always waiting for the saving word of Suku-Nzambi, is that really life?" (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 7). This fragment marks the beginning of the narrative supported by Ulume; it is a passage that incites the Angolan as persistence and resistance, no longer satisfied with the chaotic and troubling reality betwixt disputes and still yearning for a savior of the people. The above question is nothing more than a demonstration of boredom and reflection on the people's behavior based on fear and waiting for salvation, without it ever arriving.

Without knowing how to determine an enemy, the people harbor a feeling of fear in the face of null protection, but despite this helplessness, there is resistance. And that resistance and suffering, which go hand in hand, are rescued through memory. "We measure what remains in the soul after the passage of time, the impressions left in the soul by the things that pass are

measured." (OLIVEIRA, 2012, p. 18). In this way, we start from memory to tell Ulume's journey, which is based initially on the testimonies, reaffirming the indispensability of collective memory to compose individual memory. These testimonies, which validate the tradition through the oldest, affirm that war has always been a reality, this is recurrent. Regarding these testimonies, Halbwachs (2003) will say that:

We use testimonials to reinforce or weaken and also to complete what we know of an event about which we already have some information, although many circumstances related to it remain obscure for us. (HALBWACHS, 2003, p. 29).

From the above background, Halbwachs confirms the power contained in the testimonies to complete the oral narratives, as well as the individual memories. At this point, Pollak (1992) will call the process of memory acquired by tradition as "memory by table"; we could understand it as the inheritance obtained by the ancestors. This inheritance is perceived and confirmed from the following fragment of Parable of the old tortoise:

The elders of the kimbo reported, yet Ulume was small. In this land there has always been war [...] It has always been like this, since the grandparents of the grandparents. Later on, the whites came. Armies of blacks from other regions, commanded by whites, came to occupy land and take slaves in war from the kuata-kuata. The villages were almost deserted, only old people and children were left. (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 03 - 13).

Therefore, it is possible to infer that Ulume participates in two groups of memory: individual and collective. Based on this statement, memory is the means to retrieve history without being fixed on established dates and/or periods, since:

[...] historical facts do not play a very different role from the divisions of time marked on a clock or determined by the calendar. (HALBWACHS, 2003, p. 75).¹

History does not carry the emotional charge contained in the memory. For this reason, we need a living history, belonging to the characters who experience the fact and who use this memory to express the feeling. Thus, there is no omission of scenes, nor does it stop when exposing them. Memory is living history that goes beyond the existing time limits in written history.

According to Pollak, memory consists of elements, and it is these elements that justify the aforementioned "memory by table":

¹ [...] os fatos históricos não desempenham um papel muito diferente das divisões do tempo demarcadas num relógio ou determinadas pelo calendário.

What, then, are the constituent elements of memory, individual or collective? First of all, it is the events experienced personally. Second, the events that I would call "lived by table", that is, events experienced by the group or the collectivity to which the person feels belonging. These are events in which the person has not always participated, but which, in the imaginary, have taken on such importance that, in the end, it is almost impossible for him to know whether he participated or not.² (POLLAK, 1992, p. 02).

When emphasizing the place as a memorial stimulus, it is essential to define this environment as extremely important, since it boosts memory. In this perspective, the Pepetelian novel reflects space very precisely as a place of memory. The character who guides the narrator, Ulume, goes through countless environments that stimulate the revival of memory: the attacked kimbos, the resettlement of the village to the interior of Munda, in the Valley of Peace and, later, the lake of the Last Hope, the Calpe - although it is not a Ulume's memory, this place is configured as the testimonies memory of its children - and finally, the hill of the old tortoise.

In addition to the events and the characters, we can finally list the places. There are places of memory, places particularly linked to a remembrance, which can be a personal memory, but it can also be unsupported in chronological time.³ (POLLAK, 1992, p. 02-03).

Among these places, which mostly refer to the Angolan people immersed in war and chaos, the hill and the Calpe appear as ideal places⁴. Yi-Fu Tuan (1980) states that "people dream of ideal places"⁵ (p. 130). These ideal places are projections made by the characters to choose an environment that is equivalent to the ambition of each one. "What happens in these cases, therefore, are transfers, projections."⁶ (POLLAK, 1992, p. 03). The projections made by Ulume are intended to escape reality or, less ambitious to say, to become a distraction that mitigates the impacts of war for this character.

² Quais são, portanto, os elementos constitutivos da memória, individual ou coletiva? Em primeiro lugar, são os acontecimentos vividos pessoalmente. Em segundo lugar, são os acontecimentos que eu chamaria de "vividos por tabela", ou seja, acontecimentos vividos pelo grupo ou pela coletividade à qual a pessoa se sente pertencer. São acontecimentos dos quais a pessoa nem sempre participou, mas que, no imaginário, tomaram tamanho relevo que, no fim das contas, é quase impossível que ela consiga saber se participou ou não.

³ Além dos acontecimentos e das personagens, podemos finalmente arrolar os lugares. Existem lugares da memória, lugares particularmente ligados a uma lembrança, que pode ser uma lembrança pessoal, mas também pode não ter apoio no tempo cronológico.

⁴ This ideal place indicates an environment that awakens well-being and security. By coining the term "locus amoenus", Ernst Robert Curtius consolidates the idea of an ideal landscape from the elements that make up this scenario and add symbolic value to the subject; the ideal place arouses affection. For Reph (1976) "the place is the foundation of our identity as individuals and as members of the community, the place where being lives. [...] it is an irreplaceable center of meanings.

⁵ "as pessoas sonham com lugares ideais"

⁶ "O que ocorre nesses casos são, portanto, transferências, projeções."

Ulume looked at his world, so peaceful in appearance, with the talking of women working in the nakas, one or another movement of a man entering or leaving the village, but that had become a cruel world, full of unpleasant surprises. When I saw from above the order and tranquility of green marrying yellow, I could not believe that suddenly everything could turn into fire and screams. But it was like that now and he could not do anything. Perhaps the tortoise could explain if it ever broke the mutism of its armor.⁷ (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 46).

These projections do not cease with the encounter of this space, the hill, but they expand to the point that Ulume chooses a second safe port: Munakazi. Among the chaos, family losses - daughters to death and sons to Calpe and, consequently, to war - Ulume projects on his second wife the hope of a restart, of rediscovery and, still, of escape from the terrifying memories caused by civil conflicts.

And Ulume forgot the children who were now adversaries, the bad omens, the difficult mid-afternoon. At night, only Munakazi's eyes shone, dull, reflecting flashes in red and orange of the bonfire.⁸ (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 27).

When marrying Munakazi, there is an erasure of conflicting and sad memories, since her presence represents a balm amid chaos. However, that attenuating sensation is replaced by new suffering when Munakazi leaves him for Calpe, the ideal place for all young Angolans. Therefore, we can interpret the second wife, announced through a grenade⁹, as a penance, a warning of bad omen. We can consider this by the abandonment, the non-constitution of a family, and that this wife was unable to give him children.

Munakazi, a character that generates a suspension of reality in Ulume, is still a time divider: "There were times before all that is happening today. The times before Munakazi. There's always time ahead of time, isn't there? Like hunger, always before itself."¹⁰ (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 14). What happens before the second woman is the demarcation of a calming period that ceases to be with the departure of his children, Luzolo and Kanda. After Munakazi, the beginning of a new cycle

⁷ Ulume olhava o seu mundo, tão pacífico na aparência, com as falas das mulheres em trabalho nas nakas, um ou outro movimento dum homem entrando ou saindo da aldeia, mas que se tornara num mundo cruel, cheio de surpresas desagradáveis. Ao ver lá de cima a ordem e a tranquilidade do verde casando-se com o amarelo, não podia crer que de repente tudo podia se transformar em fogo e gritos. Mas era assim agora e ele não podia fazer nada. Talvez o cágado pudesse explicar, se algum dia rompesse o mutismo da sua couraça.

⁸ E Ulume esquecia os filhos agora adversários, os maus presságios, o difícil instante do meio da tarde. Na noite só os olhos de Munakazi brilhavam, mortiços, reflectindo os fulgores laranjas vermelhos da fogueira.

⁹ Ulume, at a certain moment suffers an attack, and, betwixt the omen of death from the explosion of a grenade, he faces the image of Munakazi hovering in his mind and thus decides that this must be his wife, interpreting the episode as a union notice.

¹⁰ "Foram tempos anteriores a tudo isso que se passa hoje. Os tempos anteriores a Munakazi. Há sempre um tempo antes do tempo, não é? Como a fome, sempre anterior a si própria."

is contained. Sometimes demarcating a peace that is constantly threatened, sometimes due to the change of space, from the old to the new kimbo and, subsequently, her abandonment in search of the idealized place: Calpe. This character is the subterfuge of Ulume, a member who becomes part of his family in order to bring about a family reconfiguration and, therefore, the permanence of the tradition, which suffers a rupture due to the departure of his children. Ulume expected that Munakazi would generate new children, individuals who would continue with the Angolan tradition of that people, sowing and planting in the land.

There are still other demarcation points that are not related to Munakazi. The memory in Pepetela also presents itself under different perspectives from each character. Living in the villages builds memories of trauma, loss, and identity crisis in the people. For soldiers, for example, the memory that persists in the dispute can be seen in two ways: glory or defeat, as is seen in the figures of Kanda and Luzolo.

Each memory affects them differently: it is up to the brothers to receive the irremediable hatred and enmity caused by the war, since, being in rival platoons, they assume the posture of enemies that overlap with blood ties. Power prevails. Even before they found themselves on opposite sides, the feeling of rivalry already existed, so that enmity came into being after the war.

If he was worried before, now he was approaching distress, not only because his children talk about things he did not know completely, but because they faced each other clearly. And with unmistakable anger. What terrible conversations were these that could lead the two brothers, who were always friends, brothers of blood, and mukanda, to look at each other in such an angry way?¹¹ (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 23).

Given this, it is valid to consider memory as the modifying mechanism, a determinant one, however, that requires maintenance, as stated by Pollak: “[...] whenever memory is relatively constituted, it carries out a work of maintenance, of coherence, of unity, of continuity, of the organization.”¹² (POLLAK, 1992, p. 07). This maintenance allows other perceptions about the same fact, as Ulume demonstrates when meeting his children. Through one of them, he receives complementary information from memory, considering the version presented by the son about the war.

¹¹ Se antes estava preocupado, agora se aproximava da aflição, não só porque os filhos falam de coisas que ele desconhecia por completo, mas por se enfrentarem nitidamente. E com raiva inequívoca. Que conversas terríveis eram essas que podiam levar os dois irmãos, antes sempre amigos, irmãos de sangue e de mukanda, a se olharem de maneira tão raivosa?

¹² “[...] cada vez que uma memória está relativamente constituída, ela efetua um trabalho de manutenção, de coerência, de unidade, de continuidade, da organização.”

- Do you want me to take a message to your brother?
- Not.

The answer was dry and Ulume was already waiting for it, due to previous conversations by Luzolo. [...].

- It's your brother and the war is over.
- I don't know if the war is over for him. For me yes. He and their colleagues did very badly, they continue to do it. I have no message to give him. Or rather ... You can tell him. If he remembers, right at the beginning of the war, when they burned Ngueve's kimbo, he was in a group going up a narrow path on a hill and suddenly they fell on the ground, because they saw a figure pointing a gun at them. He has to remember that, there are scenes that we never forget. Everyone threw themselves, but the figure they saw protected by a rock and did not fire. [...] To this day, I regret that.¹³ (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 134).

This report adds aspects unknown to Ulume: the reason why his children do not want reconciliation. This memory of Luzolo completes a part of Ulume's memory and can be considered the “memory by table” pointed out by Pollak. The second report, now from Kanda, allows Ulume to get the other side of the war memory.

- Why don't you come over to the kimbo to talk to your brother? So you know what worries you, he tells you what he plans to do.
 - Is the father inviting me to the kimbo? I have a uniform and a gun, have you forgotten?
 - That was then. Now all the soldiers have already found the way to the valley, you can also enter.
- Kanda shook his head. He lit a cigarette, signaled the soldier to take the dishes away.
- No, Dad, I don't want to talk to Luzolo. I don't even want to see his face. What they did, I will not forget that easily. First, they have to show that they are sorry and that will take time.
 - But sorry for what? Asked Ulume. - Luzolo is not sorry, he never told me he was.
 - The problem is exactly that, father, they are not sorry, they even think they did very well, and we are the bandits.

Ulume realized, the words were worthless at that moment and for that case. The ancients said the words were everything, they were strength. It may be in the past. When words were used exactly to say what was thought and not as weapons to confuse others. To create a bridge between Luzolo and Kanda, words were not enough, they really needed beams, strong and wide trunks like those of the mulemba or mafumeira. And tied tightly by strings of mateba or

¹³ - Queres que leve um recado para o teu irmão?

- Não.

A resposta foi seca e Ulume já a esperava, por conversas anteriores de Luzolo. [...].

- É teu irmão e a guerra acabou.

- Não sei se a guerra acabou para ele. Para mim, sim. Ele o os seus fizeram muito mal, continuam a fazer. Não tenho recado para lhe dar. Ou antes... Pode lhe dizer. Se ele lembra, logo no começo da guerra, quando eles queimaram o kimbo do Ngueve, ele ia num grupo a subir num carreiro estreito num morro e de repente se atiraram no chão, porque viram um vulto que lhes apontava uma arma. Ele tem de se lembrar disso, há cenas que nunca esquecem. Todos se atiraram, mas o vulto que eles viam protegido por um rochedo e não disparou. [...] Até hoje me arrependo disso.

lianas. Would all that anger ever pass? In addition to the logs and lianas, it took time, a lot of time.¹⁴ (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 139-140).

From this, the narrative has three perspectives: that of the brothers, who expose divergent perspectives for being on opposite sides in the war, and that of Ulume, who represents the Angolan people among chaos. This variation of what is narrated leads us to a narrative “plurality” and, to memory, since the narrative archiving has a direct connection with the memory: what happened starts to be told, narrated. This perspective resumes Aristotle's point that “Memory is from the past”¹⁵ (ARISTOTELES apud RICOEUR, 2011).

Thus, this plurality appears as the only way to admit the versatility of memory, since different testimonies announce the same event. So “[...] the only way out is to admit the plurality of history, of realities.”¹⁶ (POLLAK, 1992, p. 11).

Despite containing this multiplicity, Pepetela highlights aspects of the novel that emphasize the rescue and resistance of the Angolan tradition. Ulume, as the protagonist, is also a defender of tradition. He, being in the position of a guide, allows us to accompany him in this rescue of the inheritance that appears as a cherish in the face of the threat to the life of the people and the memory of that tradition.

3 The tortoise as a perpetuator being of tradition

Amidst the civil war that plagues Angola, some spaces are highlighted in this narrative, as is the case of Calpe, a city coveted by all young people in the villages. At a certain point, Luzolo and Kanda set off in search of Calpe, breaking with their father's pre-established plans. Even in the

¹⁴ - Porquê não vens lá ao kimbo para falar com o teu irmão? Assim ficas a saber o que te preocupa, ele próprio te diz o que pensa fazer.

- O pai está a me convidar para o kimbo? Eu tenho farda e arma, já esqueceu?

- Isso era então. Agora todos os soldados já descobriram o caminho do vale, também tu podes entrar.

Kanda abanou a cabeça. Acendeu um cigarro, fez sinal ao soldado para levar os pratos embora.

- Não, pai, eu não quero falar com o Luzolo. Nem quero ver a cara dele. O que eles fizeram, não vou esquecer assim tão facilmente. Primeiro têm de mostrar mesmo que estão arrependidos e isso vai demorar.

- Mas arrependido de quê? - Perguntou Ulume. - Luzolo não está arrependido, nunca me disse que estava.

- O problema é exactamente esse, pai, eles não estão arrependidos, até acham que fizeram muito bem e nós é que somos os bandidos.

Ulume percebeu, as palavras não valiam nada naquele momento e para aquele caso. Os antigos diziam as palavras eram tudo, eram força. Pode ser, no passado. Quando se usavam as palavras exactamente para se dizer o que se pensava e não como armas para confundir os outros. Para criar uma ponte entre Luzolo e Kanda não bastavam palavras, tinham mesmo de ser barrotes, troncos fortes e largos como os da mulemba ou mafumeira. E bem amarrados por cordas de mateba ou lianas. Aquela raiva toda ia alguma vez passar? Além dos troncos e das lianas, era preciso tempo, muito tempo.

¹⁵ “A memória é do passado”

¹⁶ “[...] a única saída é admitir a pluralidade da história, das realidades.”

face of the sudden loss of his children and despite constant conflicts, Ulume is attracted to the young Munakazi and take her as a wife, making her his second wife. However, also idealizing Calpe, the young woman leaves home and go to the city so dreamed of, returning years later discredited of the place.

Facing this panorama, we encounter a novel based on perspectives on war, experienced in different ways, and, therefore, sources of collective and individual memory. The novel begins with a short chapter entitled "Invocação", narrating the beginning of earthly existence from the Angolan perspective. This passage highlights the indispensability of tradition to justify or recall its roots, to bring them to the surface so that they do not suffer erasure due to modernity, or the corruption of thoughts.

It is through memory that these oral narratives have been passed down through generations. When affirming that memory perpetuates tradition, we focus on a past based on patriarchy - where men overlap women within a marriage enrolled as a business -, in function divisions, in the valorization of agricultural and livestock activities and in the rural space itself. With the post-colonial period, tradition starts to be at risk, since young people have a view that differs from that proposed by their ancestors. The characters that represent this youth are proof of this attempt to split. This intention is well outlined when Ulume visits Kanda, years later, in a barracks, and the son offers him a European drink preferred by young people:

[...] the soldier deposited a bottle of whiskey and glasses on the table. It was Kanda himself who poured some of the drink into a glass and handed it to his father, try drinking it, it's like our kaporroto, very strong. While the others were helping themselves, Ulume raised the glass to his lips and tasted it. He didn't like the taste. [...] And he started the returning q trip, having accepted a new bottle of that drink that, apparently, the boys preferred to the maluvo and the caxipembe.¹⁷ (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 137-140).

Another position that contradicts customs occurs when Munakazi questions polygamy, denying the post of the second wife:

- You know, I always thought of marrying someone of my age. You have male children; you have a wife. And *I cannot accept being a second woman. There are other times, we learn new ideas.* My father doesn't accept it, but I think you understand. (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 53, emphasis added).

¹⁷ [...] o soldado depositou em cima da mesa uma garrafa de uísque e copos. Foi o próprio Kanda que verteu um bocado da bebida num copo e o entregou ao pai, experimente beber isso, é como o nosso kaporroto, muito forte. Enquanto os outros se serviam, Ulume levou o copo aos lábios e provou. Não gostou do sabor. [...] E encetou a viagem de regresso, tendo aceitado uma garrafa nova daquela bebida que, pelos vistos, os rapazes preferiam ao maluvo e ao caxipembe.

It is clear, therefore, that polygamous marriage is part of Angolan culture, however, Munakazi's stance represents a view of opposition to this practice. This point demonstrates the divergent line of thought presented by the young woman during the court of Ulume. It is courtship not supported by tradition, since when negotiating the marriage with the father and, acquiring his permission, the woman has the duty to passively accept her destiny without questioning. Likewise, the patriarch's children have a position of refusing these roots:

Too bad the lack of children, who did not know about the event or did not want to be present at a ceremony that was probably against their ideas. Munakazi was sure, at least concerning Kanda, because she told Ulume your youngest son is against polygamy, several times we talk about it, and it is also against the wedding, which he calls buying the bride. Customs that according to Kanda had to be abolished, even by force.¹⁸ (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 72).

In addition to resistance to traditional practices, we can find another episode that validates this attempt at rupture: the abandonment of his children in search of Calpe. We can observe that Ulume wants his children to form a family, continuing the lineage and, therefore, the tradition. The visit to Calpe represents the denial of these roots, which are temporarily remedied with the arrival of Munakazi and the hope of continuing the lineage from there.

The moments before and after Munakazi lead us to observe a figure that is shown as a contrast to the second wife: Muari. Amid the threat of rupture with tradition, Muari, Ulume's first wife, is the human representation of this heritage. Ulume's courtship with Munakazi is a point of distinction between the two wives since Muari had not been courted, nor was her requested position on whether or not to marry the suitor:

Ulume respected her disturbed silence. Customs taught how to handle similar cases. And in this story, customs were not followed from the beginning. Everything was going the other way around, like dating a girl, something he had never done with Muari [...] he acted on pure instinct, innovating in the face of gaps in tradition.¹⁹ (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 56).

¹⁸ Pena mesmo a falta dos filhos, que não souberam do acontecimento ou não quiseram estar presentes numa cerimônia que era provavelmente contra suas ideias. Munakazi tinha a certeza, pelo menos em relação a Kanda, pois disse a Ulume o teu filho mais novo é contra a poligamia, várias vezes falamos disso, e é também contra o alembamento, que ele chama de compra da noiva. Costumes que segundo Kanda tinham de ser abolidos, mesmo à força.

¹⁹ Ulume respeitou o silêncio perturbado dela. Os costumes ensinavam como tratar casos semelhantes. E nesta estória não se seguiam os costumes, desde o princípio. Estava tudo a seguir ao contrário, como o namorar uma rapariga, coisa que ele nunca fizera com a Muari [...] agia por puro instinto, inovando perante as lacunas da tradição.

With Muari, the tradition has not changed in any way; from the beginning, the provisions of Angolan culture were fulfilled. The first wife is a figure of strong representativeness, as she demonstrates the female behavior towards tradition. It is also the indispensable security of Ulume, which the protagonist would never give up.

- I will look for my children. So, you can marry her.
 - Ulume did not understand immediately. He outlined a movement, as if to settle better on top of the stone, smooth from use. Then he realized.
 - I will never let you go. What is this story?
 - They didn't come back. I do not even know if they are alive. I am looking for them. And I stay there, wherever someone is. It's better for everyone.
 - You are crazy. No way.²⁰
- (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 60).

The above passage indicates Ulume's position on Muari's decision to leave him to make the marriage with Munakazi viable. Even in the face of the interpretation of the grenade, which supported him in terms of union and his desire to join her, the protagonist does not accept the alternative given by his wife. Muari's importance is not only in her condition as the mother of his children but, in the symbolism that she carries. She symbolizes tradition and provides comfort and security to the husband.

However, Muari does not completely restore him to the inherited culture. Ulume demonstrates the need to be in a space that provides this reconnection. When denied the opportunity to continue the lineage and perpetuate the inheritance, and the first wife being unable to generate other children to ensure this continuity, Ulume can only reconnect to this tradition by going to the old tortoise.

In general, the figure of the reptile has strong symbolism in several western and eastern traditions. According to Chevalier (2018), the turtle, a reptile of the same family as the tortoise, is worshiped by countless cultures for bringing mental and spiritual benefits. The Chinese consider it a balance of the cosmos, while in India there is an overvaluation of the animal due to its divine condition. Based on this lineage, we will find some similar concepts, as presented by Chevalier (2018):

²⁰ - Eu vou procurar os meus filhos. Assim podes te casar com ela.

Ulume não entendeu imediatamente. Esboçou um movimento, como a acomodar-se melhor em cima da pedra, lisa pelo uso. Depois percebeu.

- Nunca que vou te deixar partir. Que estória é essa?

- Não voltaram mais. Nem sei se estão vivos. Vou sim à procura deles. E fico lá, onde algum estiver. É melhor para todos.

- Estás maluca. Nem pensar.

Due to its shell, round as the sky at the top - which makes it similar to a dome - and flat as the earth, at the bottom, the turtle is a representation of the universe: it constitutes itself in a cosmography. [...] Given its omniscient and beneficial ancestral qualities, the turtle is often a companion, a relative of men's house.²¹ (p. 868 - 871).

The tortoise, for Angolan culture, is an esteemed animal that represents wisdom. The turtle's physical structure represents resistance and durability: a reptile composed of a carapace that serves as armor in the face of eventual predators. This physical resistance operates as a representation of tradition that resists war and the discrepant thoughts presented by young people. In addition to the discrepancy in thoughts, the turtle's condition itself differs from the characteristics of youth; an animal that admits patience and longevity, the tortoise provides a state of passivity and protection.

The routine process carried out by the tortoise, which walks towards the water stream also represents the Angolan roots, since it recalls the narratives about the origin of the world and about the Kuanza River, that has always quenched its thirst even in the face of drought.

From this stream, they draw water for the nakas, where vegetables and corn become green with white flags. It also drinks cattle. Even at the time of the worst droughts, the water in the stream never failed. At the top of the hill, there is the grotto from which a huge tortoise leaves every day to go and drink the water from the source. (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 11).

This habit of the tortoise deified by Ulume is the result of ancient cultures, in which the first offer of water and food on the day was made to reptiles like this (CHEVALIER, 2018). From this explanation, we can reach an understanding of the protagonist's behavior in worshipping the first sip of the turtle and then approaching the stream to also refresh. This action that sequences the animal's drinking may indicate an attempt by Ulume himself to acquire wisdom; drink the same water that the symbol of Angolan wisdom drank.

Another point of relevance is the walk of the turtle, which becomes a sacred event for Ulume, who appreciates it impassively, even suspending this moment from the chaotic reality: "In the middle of the afternoon, at the top of the hill, waiting for time to stop [...]"²² (PEPETELA, 1996,

²¹ Pela sua carapaça, redonda como o céu na parte superior – o que a torna semelhante a uma cúpula – e plana como a terra, na parte inferior, a tartaruga é uma representação do universo: constitui-se por si mesma em uma *cosmografia*. [...] Perante suas qualidades ancestrais onisciente e benéfico, tartaruga é frequentemente uma companhia, uma parente da casa dos homens.

²² "A meio da tarde, no cimo do morro, esperando a paragem do tempo [...]"

p. 32). In this way, the place inhabited by the turtle, the hill, is configured as the memory place of the character, as well as the river, which brings back the memory of previous times, the rescue of childhood, of tradition.

Every day he goes up to the nearest hill, sits on the rocks smoking the pipe he carved out of hardwood, and waits. The passage of the old tortoise, older than he was because it was there when he was born, and the moment when time stops.²³ (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 12).

Paul Ricoeur, in his study *Memory, history, forgetting* (2007), considers that “it is on the habitable surface of the earth that we remember traveling and visiting memorable places.”²⁴ (p. 57). This note confirms the perception of the hill as a place of memory, which encourages the recovery of remarkable events, both the life of the protagonist and the Angolan culture. Inherited values are now called into question, heralding new horizons and new threats that transcend civil war. Thus, when taking refuge in this place and resorting to the turtle, Ulume resumes tradition, revives what was always common and acceptable to him.

The routine act of visiting the hill still represents an escape valve for Ulume, who, in the face of the inevitable, war, finds in this almost visceral contact with the turtle, a means of maintaining the hope of a new beginning. Even though he intends to make Munakazi his other haven, Ulume fails, and only on the hill does he really find the desired security. It is in this space that he develops mixed feelings: anguish amid the silence of the tortoise and hope thanks to the opportunity for reflection due to the silence offered.

It is in this hope that the protagonist invigorates himself, finding solace and fortification to continue amidst chaos. It is also through tradition that there is resistance to war since there is a memory revival by the hill of the old tortoise, which reminds him of distant times when the war even present, did not extinguish the people. “The villages were deserted, only the old and children were left over. [...] The people, however stubbornly continued to exist.”²⁵ (PEPETELA, 1996, p. 18). Thus, the unusual habit of interacting with the turtle is, above all, an act of perpetuation of the Angolan heritage. The inheritance finds in this animal a symbol of respect, Ulume sees him as a fortifying being, impelling him to rescue through memory the most important thing among war: tradition. In

²³ Todos os dias sobe ao morro mais próximo, senta nas pedras a fumar o cachimbo que ele próprio talhou em madeira dura, e espera. A passagem do cágado velho, mais velho que ele pois já lá estava quando nasceu, e o momento da passagem do tempo.

²⁴ “é na superfície habitável da terra que nos lembramos de ter viajado e visitado locais memoráveis.”

²⁵ “As aldeias ficavam desertas, só os velhos e crianças sobreviviam. [...] O povo, no entanto teimosamente continuava a existir.”

line with culture, the tortoise becomes a symbol of resistance to the very precipitation of youth, which challenges its legacy and symbolism without immersing itself in reflections about its seriousness.

Final considerations

The history presented by the chronology deals with delimited periods that are concerned with the objectivity of the episodes. The memory, on the other hand, will look for aspects that were not affected in chronological delimitation, considering the narrative of those who witnessed the event or those who narrate the event from the inherited memory. This act of registration is also based on the sensitive effects that prevail in those who are remembered,

[...] there is memory only when time elapses or, more briefly, with time. That to some degree, men share with some animals the simple memory but are distinguished by the *appropriation of sensation*. [...] If we can distinguish two moments as being anterior and posterior, then time and memory recover.²⁶ (OLIVEIRA, 2012, p. 06, emphasis added).

From this, it is noticeable that it is a human condition the act of recording, and this act arouse different feelings. So, there is a clear distinction between history and memory. History is not reversed from sensation, only memory is deep enough to reach feelings. Thus, from memory, we are transported into a time of chaos in Angola, in a way that the people guide the narrator of *Parable of the old tortoise* (1996) to immerse in the oscillations of territory, threats to the inheritance, suffering, and resistance of the people.

Based on what was pointed, we can interpret that the crisis in Pepetela novel is not established only because of the existing war, but due to the memories that these conflicts will leave, generating questions of identity nature: which national identity will be fixed in the postwar period? This leads us to consider that the period immediately after the war produces a memory that is more connected with events than the memory installed years after the episode. This memory converted into written history, manipulates the events that took place, and selects those that are politically relevant.

²⁶ [...] só há memória quando o tempo transcorre ou, mais brevemente, com o tempo. Que em certo grau, os homens compartilham com alguns animais a simples memória, mas distinguem-se destes pela *apropriação da sensação*. [...] Se nós possuímos a capacidade de distinguir dois instantes como sendo um anterior e outro posterior, então, tempo e memória se recobrem.

The memory can be manipulated and there established a history that may not be related to the facts, or that, to meet political alliances, the traumas suffered by those who participated indirectly in the war are omitted. Amid a topophobic²⁷ space, people are the resistance, which reinvents itself in every plunder, every period of hunger and death; stands out to the point of rekindling the Angolan imaginary.

It is important to note that tradition is the basis of people. It is from the tradition that generations will be inspired to continue. This is not to say that the inheritance cannot be reformulated. Curtius (2013) points out that “tradition is an endless fading and renewal”²⁸. Ulume himself demonstrates this reshaping by accepting Munakazi after years of absence, an action that is inconsistent with customs. Therefore, the reformulation is likely to occur, however, what generates cultural, social, political, and artistic instability is the attempt to rupture followed by the abrupt erasure of a legacy. Let us also stress that it is through memory that culture will be sustained. “Memory (Mnemosyne), according to Greek myth, is the mother of Musas. Culture, says Viatcheslav, is the memory of the revelations of the ancestors.”²⁹ (CURTIUS, 2013, p. 482). In this way, it is up to memory to support tradition, it is from there that the inheritance will be perpetuated.

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²⁷ Term coined by the Cultural Humanist Geography that indicates an aversion to places.

²⁸ “a tradição é um interminável fenecimento e renovação”.

²⁹ “A memória (Mnemosine), segundo o mito grego, é a mãe da Musas. A cultura, diz Viatcheslav, é a memória das revelações dos antepassados.”

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