

To conclude: a story in the making (the past, literary fiction, ethnography, the other, and photography ...).

Benjamin Maiato is an Angolan Capuchin who was born in 1922 in Malange, a town in Northern Angola, a region where people speak Portuguese and Kimbundu. There, in 1891 the Spiritans founded a mission that in 1927 became a Seminary where part of the postcolonial Angolan political and ecclesiastical elite would be formed during the colonial period. Benjamin Maiato also passed through the Spiritans' Seminary in Malange and then went on to the diocesan Seminary in Luanda. After he completed his Seminary training he was ordained a Capuchin. In contemporary Angola, Benjamin Maiato has the reputation of being "the exorcist of the Diocese", to perform miraculous cures, and to know the ancient languages of Scripture. He is both mocked and feared. But he does not recognise himself in this "aura" around his name.

My research is about what I see as the mystery of how this man born in Malange in 1922 has become a Capuchin in Luanda in 1963. I see his biography as a rare lens through which to reconstruct the social history of the colonial period in this corner of the world.

In the historical record this Angolan Capuchin is barely visible, so that one is first of all confronted with a discrepancy between the oral stories that have been weaved around his name during the post-colonial civil war, his own autobiographical account that shifts from a first person account to a narrative of the history of the church and independence (not a linear narrative and not the story of a monolithic "I"), and the fragmentary nature of the written and photographic record of his existence in a missionary context during the colonial era.

I have not yet searched what the Capuchins' archives in Padova and in Luanda hold. For the moment, I have looked for traces of him in the Spiritans' archive in Paris and Lisbon and I have recorded an interview with him and I have pieced together oral accounts of what others know or remember or have forgotten about him. Linking these oral stories to written and visual traces (a photograph and few lines in a monograph) I have become interested in the fictive nature of the links we create between past and present, between image and text (here "text" is also the audio recording of an interview), between how we look and how we listen (the extent to which we see in terms of what we hear or the other way round), and about the re-presentation of another's past.

This last seminar is thus about presenting this unfinished research in light of two texts: one is Hayden White's reading of Kermode's idea of history as literary fiction and as levels of meaning, and the other is a reflection by Don Handelman on his own approach to ethnography as a text about the different degrees of the relation between the other's presence and the writer's own representation, which I believe touches upon an old conflict in Western Europe.