

## Charolas de Bordeira, Santa Bárbara de Nexe Algarve Popular Culture, and Collective Memory

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### Resumo

O objeto de análise desse artigo é o ritual festivo tradicional de «charolas», que ocorre na época entre o Ano Novo e 6 de Janeiro, como praticado na pequena localidade de Bordeira, que pertence à Freguesia de Santa Bárbara de Nexe, Faro, no Algarve. O objetivo é descrever brevemente as raízes dessa expressão popular, descrever o seu desenvolvimento histórico contemporâneo, os elementos essenciais e os métodos de transmissão e, finalmente, examinar as formas em que a tradição tem sido um veículo de memória coletiva, identidade cultural e integração social através de várias gerações de bordeirenses. A metodologia utilizada se baseia na recolha de história oral, observação *in situ* e documentação audiovisual de charolas no período de janeiro de 2020 em Bordeira e outras localidades nas redondezas de Faro. No processo de análise, o artigo utiliza conceitos como memória coletiva (Joël Candau) e marcos sociais da memória (Maurice Halbwachs).

### Palavras-chave

Acordeão; Algarve; Bordeira; Charola; Memória.

### Abstract

The object of analysis in this article is the popular festive ritual tradition of ‘charolas’, which takes place every year around New Year’s Day and Three Kings Day, as practised in the small locality of Bordeira, which belongs to the parish of Santa Bárbara de Nexe in Faro in the Algarve region of southern Portugal. The aim is to briefly trace the roots of this particular form of expression and also its contemporary historical development, to describe its primary elements and transmission methods, and to explore how it has served as a vehicle of collective memory, cultural identity, and social integration throughout successive generations of *bordeirenses* (people of Bordeira). The methodology employed is based primarily on the collection of oral history and *in situ* observation, as well as audiovisual documentation of *charolas* during a January season in Bordeira and other localities in and around Faro. For the analysis carried out in the article, concepts such as collective memory (Joël Candau) and social frameworks of memory (Maurice Halbwachs) are used.

### Keywords

Accordion; Algarve; Bordeira; Charola; Memory.

**T**HE DATE IS 6 JANUARY 2020 and I am lugging microphones, tripod and video equipment down a gravel village road, lined by age-old stone walls separating rural properties full of trees. The noonday sun is beating down, and in the background are green hillsides dotted with a few discrete houses. I am following a group of men and women carrying an assortment of items, including tambourines strung with colourful ribbons, chromatic button accordions, and home-made banners and flags. We are in the small community of Bordeira in the interior of the dry, southern Portuguese region of the Algarve, and the group of people is 'A Democrata', a *charola*, which is a traditional musical group of the Sotavento Algarvio,<sup>1</sup> active around the period of Christmas, New Year, and Three Kings Day.

Eventually arriving at the front terrace of a family house at the foot of the hillside, we are greeted by the aroma of roast mutton, working-class people eating and drinking around a large table, a few children running around, and the owners of the house—the middle-aged couple Carlos and Carla. The members of 'A Democrata', composed of men and women playing a unique orchestration of castanets, triangle, tambourines, chromatic accordion, guitar and banjolin, arrange themselves to perform for the group gathered and commence with a rousing march which they all sing, with instrumental sections highlighting the accordions, and well-coordinated percussion arrangements. As they sing the lyrics: 'o destino é charoleiro, não só cantar ao Menino, mas para o povo inteiro' [our destiny is charoleiro, not only to sing for the Christ Child but for all the people], I awkwardly set up my camera and microphones to document the proceedings amongst the exuberant group of carousing and singing attendees.

After performing a few more pieces in honour of the homeowners and those in attendance, the members of 'A Democrata' partake of the food and drink offered to them, and another *charola*, 'União Bordeirense', performs.<sup>2</sup> The repertoire of both groups consists of lively marches, pasodobles, corridinhos, and waltzes, as well as some slower sung pieces known as 'estilo'.<sup>3</sup> During the waltzes ('*valsa das vivas*'), after each instrumental phrase, a *charoleiro* or an inspired member of the audience (some with more eloquence than others) improvises a quatrain verse. The improvised verses include greetings to those present paying homage to the *charola* tradition, themes of local importance, and often picaresque verses about those in the audience, which provoke hearty laughter from everyone. Before the two *charolas* depart to perform at another local residence, even I, in the midst of the festivities wrangling cables and microphones, am not spared from being the subject of a few of these well-intentioned improvised verses.

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<sup>1</sup> Eastern part of the Algarve.

<sup>2</sup> In which Rui Vargues and 'Tó' Pinto participate, later interviewed as part of this article.

<sup>3</sup> *Estilo* is the term used by *bordeirenses* to refer to an older, slower style of singing used in *charolas*, harking back to the tradition's popular religious itinerant petitioning character.

## Introduction

As alluded to in the vignette above, the object of analysis in this article is the popular festive ritual tradition of *charolas*—which takes place each year around New Year’s Day and Three Kings Day—as practised in the small locality of Bordeira, belonging to the parish of Santa Bárbara de Nexe in Faro, in the Algarve. According to the *Enciclopédia da música em Portugal no século XX*, *charolas* are a tradition from the Sotavento region of the Algarve, which, in its origins consists of men, women, and children going house to house singing to the Christ Child and asking for offerings during the Christmas period. Currently, *charolas* occur on New Years and Three Kings days, and incorporate instruments such as accordion, tambourine, castanets, mandolin, etc., and contain visual elements such as banners and flags. The sung and instrumental repertoire consists of marches, waltzes, and *canto velho* (an older style). *Charolas* also involve a good amount of improvised verses and poems (CASTELO-BRANCO 2010, 283-4). The aim of this article is to provide a concise ethnographic description of this phenomenon, briefly tracing its contemporary development and historical origins, describing its primary elements and transmission methods, and exploring how it has evolved to serve as a secular vehicle for collective memory, cultural identity, and social integration for successive generations of *bordeirenses*<sup>4</sup> into the second decade of the twenty-first century.

The contemporary forms of *charolas*, as practised in Bordeira since the early decades of the twentieth century, have remained a topic largely unexplored by academic researchers. Although a vast living oral archive exists in the experiences and memories of several generations, as well as in the documentation collected over the decades by the local media and the people of Bordeira themselves, the subject was finally analysed in an institutional academic context as part of the doctoral thesis of researcher António Vitorino Pereira: *‘Bordeira: Espaço simbólico, expressões festivas e processos de construção de identidades’*<sup>5</sup> (PEREIRA 2005) at the Universidad de Sevilla in Spain. In the present article, Pereira’s work is used as a frame of reference and a vehicle for dialogue in the comparison of findings from fieldwork carried out with a time difference of more than two decades.<sup>6</sup>

The methodology employed in this study is based primarily on the collection of oral history and *in situ* observation involving the audiovisual documentation of *charolas* during the month of January in Bordeira and other localities.<sup>7</sup> Fieldwork was carried out in 2020, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>8</sup> The selection of interviewees was based on recommendations from local experts in the subject, such as

<sup>4</sup> A person from Bordeira.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Bordeira: Symbolic space, festive expressions and identity construction processes’.

<sup>6</sup> Pereira conducted his fieldwork in Bordeira from 1997 to 1999, and I conducted mine 2020-2.

<sup>7</sup> The three events documented were: *Encontro de Charolas e Janeiras* (4 January 2020, Loulé), *Centenário das Charolas de Bordeira* (6 January 2020, Bordeira), *Encontro de Charolas Clube de Futebol ‘Os Bonjoanenses’* (12 January 2020, Faro).

<sup>8</sup> It is not within the scope of the present article to examine the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and subsequent Portuguese Government restrictions, on the continuity and resilience of Bordeira’s *charola* tradition. I did, in fact, carry out fieldwork in December 2021 and January 2022 in Bordeira, two years into the pandemic, and the presentation and analysis of that data will be included in future publications. That fieldwork was supported by *EcoMusic* (Universidade de Aveiro, INET-md).

Nelson Conceição (b. 1978), an accordionist and lifelong *charoleiro*<sup>9</sup> born and raised in Bordeira. Priority was given to participants from different generations who had been continuous, active protagonists of *charolas* in Bordeira over the decades.<sup>10</sup> Bibliographical research was carried out at the Faro and Loulé Municipal Libraries and at the Documentation Centre of the Faro Municipal Museum.

### Theoretical Model of Analysis

The analysis carried out in this article is based on different approaches. Firstly, concepts such as collective memory (CANDAU 2012) and social frameworks of memory (HALBWACHS 2004) are employed. Attention is paid to the ways in which participation in festive rituals can lead to the forging and strengthening of social integration and cohesion within a particular human group, fostering cooperation and solidarity among its members (COLLINS 2004). The effects of emigration and diasporic communities on festive rituals also factor into the analysis.

AS CANDAU (2012, 21-3) establishes, there are three types of individual memory: *protomemory* (mechanical, repetitive, procedural memory), memory itself, and *metamemory*, which is an individual's ability to understand and derive meaning from their own memories. Individuals share memory experiences through what Candau calls 'sociotransmitters', which he explains:

I call *sociotransmitters* all the human productions and behaviours that help to establish a social or cultural cognitive causal chain between two minds. Metaphorically, *sociotransmitters* between individuals perform the same function as neurotransmitters perform between two neurons: they promote connections. (CANDAU 2010, 36)

These *sociotransmitters* can take on many forms, such as cultural practices, festive rituals, sensory experiences, collective musicking, monuments, etc. They provide the connection between individuals' memory processes and are thus the conduit through which something approximating to a collective memory of human groups is forged.

Collective memories of human groups, as Maurice HALBWACHS (2004) maintained, are created within 'social frameworks of memory', which are the institutions and social structures within which individuals are formed, develop and interact, such as family, school, etc. Within these social frameworks of memory, each person's memories are shaped by and blended with those of the other members of these social structures, thus fostering what can be described as collective memory. For an individual to be able to recall and make sense of their own personal memories, invariably they

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<sup>9</sup> A person who participates in *charolas*.

<sup>10</sup> Eleven informants with long personal and family histories of participating in *charolas* in varying capacities (accordionists, *começadores/as*, composers, improvisers, percussionists, etc.) were interviewed as part of this research: four male senior citizens, four middle-aged men and one woman, and one teenage girl.

must refer back to the social framework in which the memories were formed. If those social frameworks no longer exist, or if the individual is far away from their original location, it is more difficult for the individual to engage with memories of their past that occurred within those particular social frameworks, memories that are fundamental to forging and maintaining personal identity.

In the same vein, SHELEMAY (2006, 18), in dealing with the memorial role of music in diasporic migrant communities, affirms that the act of remembering is a collective experience, and states that: ‘Music provides a particularly rich and complex case study for students of memory since its encoding process is almost inevitably multiple or elaborative, setting into motion connections that cross many different sensory modalities and enter into other aspects of experience’ (SHELEMAY 2006, 26). Noting that a group’s collective memory of its history is reinforced through its ritual oral transmission (often through collective musical practices), Shelemay asserts that ‘musical experience is sustained in memory as both a sound world and an affect-laden recollection of the past’ (SHELEMAY 2006, 20). Her observations provide an interesting frame of reference for analysing the cathartic, emotive and memorial power of Bordeira’s *charola* tradition later in this article.

Festive ritual traditions can serve as powerful social frameworks of memory. Throughout history, annual cycles of local festive rituals (marking natural cycles, or of mystical/religious significance, etc.) have played a key role in the social cohesion and integration of communities, particularly small communities such as the one examined in this article. Sociologist Randall Collins emphasises the importance of group participation in rituals for community cohesion:

The central mechanism of interaction ritual theory is that occasions that combine a high degree of intersubjectivity, together with a high degree of emotional entrainment—through bodily synchronization, mutual stimulation/arousal of participants’ nervous systems—result in feelings of membership that are attached to cognitive symbols, and result also in the emotional energy of individual participants, giving them feelings of confidence, enthusiasm and desire for action in what they consider a morally proper path. (COLLINS 2004, 42)

Collins’ concept of ritual interaction is applicable to the case of the musical tradition examined in this article: the *charolas* of Bordeira, which become a ‘cognitive symbol’ around which the participants, and their deep-rooted feelings of group belonging and solidarity, revolve (PEREIRA 2005, 11). By way of illustration, Clara Grou (b. 2003), a *charoleira* from Bordeira, explains that ‘as *charolas* end up affirming our identity, our culture [...] we feel that we belong to something.’<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [como as charolas acabam por afirmar a nossa identidade, a nossa cultura [...] sentimos que pertencemos a algo.] (Interview with GROU 2022a).

Similar to Collins' concept of 'cognitive symbols', RICE (2007) describes the 'iconic' power of music within groups and music's role in shaping personal and collective identities:

Musical iconicity consists of its structural similarity to other aspects of culture and shared behaviors, and as such, contributes an emotionally satisfying sense that the identity being constructed through music is 'natural'. In addition, music's ability to index common experiences of a community and one's shared social experience with that community contributes to the emotional power of music. (RICE 2007, 36)

As we will see, Rice's observations will prove insightful when examining the ways in which Bordeira's *charola* tradition is both a product of the community's characteristic cultural values of cooperation, endogamy, and solidarity, and a collective festive ritual 'musical icon' that perennially reinforces these values.

Finally, in its analysis, this article expands the concept of local community by factoring in the dynamic of emigration as a constant force that, to varying degrees, shapes the communities of origin and their respective migratory diasporas spread across the map as one 'imagined community' across a global 'ethnoscape' (ANDERSON 1983; APPADURAI 2003, 32-4). In this sense, RICE (2007, 20), in analysing a collective musical tradition, stresses the importance of considering not only the 'roots' of community members, but also the 'routes' of their individual life paths of diaspora and migration.

PEREIRA's (2005) keen observation—before moving on to describe the phenomenon of *charolas* of Bordeira—is important to bear in mind, reflecting Benedict ANDERSON'S (1983) concept of 'imagined communities': 'A sociedade local não se limita à localidade Bordeira e aos que vivem apenas no seu espaço físico. A sociedade local, ou seja, a comunidade simbólica bordeirense é muito mais vasta e abrange quer os que residem na localidade quer os que residem fora dela, em Portugal ou no estrangeiro'<sup>12</sup> (PEREIRA 2005, 45).

### ***Centenário***

We begin with an ethnographic description of the unique *charola* events that took place in January 2020, which was not a conventional year for the *charolas* of Bordeira. In that particular year, in a collaboration between local civil society and public authorities, a large public celebration was organised to commemorate the 'centenary' of Bordeira's *charola* tradition, as the period of 1918-20 was considered to be the seminal moment of the modern *charola* tradition,<sup>13</sup> and it was in this context

<sup>12</sup> [Local society is not limited to the locality of Bordeira and those who live in its physical space. Local society, or rather, the symbolic community of Bordeira is much vaster and includes those that reside outside of the locality, whether they be in Portugal or abroad.]

<sup>13</sup> A period when local veterans and prisoners of war were returning from the battlefields of the First World War in France, to be described later in this article.

that I conducted my initial fieldwork. It must be emphasised that this *Centenário* celebration was atypical of what Bordeira's *charolas* do on the 1st and 6th of January each year, although it possessed all the traditional elements that are normally included in the celebration of these dates in Bordeira. What follows is a brief description of the chronology of the events that took place on 6 January 2020, which begins to illustrate the traditional elements of *charolas* described later in this article, as well as explores the collective exercise in *metamemory*, in the words of Candau, as expressed in the special civic commemoration of the *Centenário*.<sup>14</sup>

With my clunky audiovisual equipment in tow, the day began for me in the morning with local residents and Bordeira natives residing elsewhere co-mingling in Café Pinto in the *Cocheira*—the epicentre of social interaction (PEREIRA 2005, 56)—and offering each other shots of strong coffee ('*bica*') and local distilled spirits ('*medronho*'),<sup>15</sup> a scenario characteristic of Bordeira's traditional culture of everyday conviviality. Twenty years earlier, PEREIRA (2005) described this characteristic conviviality, which has traditionally been at the heart of the idiosyncrasy of the people of Bordeira:

'O convívio', 'a confraternização', 'a união, a alegria de viver e o prazer de estar juntos', 'a amizade e a diversão', são alguns dos aspectos que mais saltam à vista do visitante que entra pela primeira vez num dos cafés da 'Cocheira' nas horas de lazer, [...] aqui não há uma partilha formal do espaço em função das idades ou dos sexos, registando-se na maior parte das vezes um relacionamento espontâneo, interactivo e harmonioso sem barreiras formais e hierárquicas, além dos tradicionais códigos de boa educação e trato.<sup>16</sup> (PEREIRA 2005, 56)

Afterwards, the various participating *charolas*, as well as other attendees of the festivities, took part in a parade held especially for the *Centenário*—carrying banners and flags representing each *charola* and performing well-known musical pieces—which culminated at another symbolic centre of Bordeira society: the Sociedade Recreativa Bordeirense [Bordeirense Recreational Society] building. A civic ceremony was held there, including the unveiling of a plaque commemorating the *Centenário*, with the participation of key *charoleiro* figures such as Zé Campeão, Joaquim Farias,

<sup>14</sup> A short YouTube video featuring a selection of footage shot by the author of the *Centenário* events on 6 January 2020 described in this article can be found here: <<https://youtu.be/fVzik8HX9Q0>> (accessed 20 March 2022).

<sup>15</sup> According to Pereira, 'É no referido cruzamento verdadeiro centro do espaço simbólico bordeirense, que se encontra a 'Cocheira' designação que lhe ficou do local onde antigamente se situavam as estrebarias que acolhiam carros e animais de transporte que, por não haver mais estrada eram obrigados a parar, seguindo os respectivos passageiros depois a pé até aos seus destinos' [It is at this crossroads of the true centre of Bordeira's symbolic space, where the *Cocheira* is, referred to as such because that was where the stables that received carriages and transport animals were, and as there were no further roads, passengers had to get off and walk to their respective destinations] (PEREIRA 2005, 58).

<sup>16</sup> ['Conviviality', 'fraternisation', 'togetherness, *joie de vivre* and the pleasure of being together', 'friendship and fun', are some of the aspects that stand out most to the visitor who enters one of the 'Cocheira' cafés for the first time during their leisure time, [...] here there is no formal sharing of space according to age or gender, most of the time there is a spontaneous, interactive and harmonious rapport without formal or hierarchical barriers, apart from the traditional codes of good manners and behaviour.]

Nelson Conceição and Rui Vargues, all of whom were interviewed for this article. The poetry recited and speeches given, in memory of those deceased, illustrious Bordeira citizens who had contributed to the well-being of the community, evoked emotional responses from many in the audience, and several tears were shed (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** *Centenário* parade (Bordeira, 6 January 2020) (Photo by José A. Curbelo)

Each *charola* then went its own way to perform at various cafés, bars and private homes, as well as on the stage of the Bordeirense Recreational Society (see Figure 2). At private homes, the traditional practice of ritual commensality was particularly evident, as I described earlier at the home of Carlos and Carla. The homeowners, upon receiving *charolas* of fifteen to twenty people, together with their followers, and friends and neighbours, made gargantuan efforts to prepare and provide abundant food and drink for the itinerant revellers.



**Figure 2.** *Charola* performing at a café (Bordeira, 6 January 2020) (Photo by José A. Curbelo)



**Figure 3.** Final presentation at the *Centenário* celebration at the D. Leonor Outdoor Activities Centre (Bordeira, 6 January 2020) (Photo by José A. Curbelo)

Towards the end of the day, all the participating *charolas* performed together in the large venue of the Centro de Atividades ao Ar Livre D. Leonor [D. Leonor Outdoor Activities Centre]. This grand finale was held specifically to commemorate the centenary, and included the participation of local and regional public figures (see Figure 3). The event culminated with all the members of the participating *charolas* coming together on stage to perform a composition created especially for the *Centenário*: ‘*Marcha do Centenário*’ with music by accordionist Daniel Rato, a native of Bordeira who emigrated to Sweden, and lyrics written collectively by local poets. The lyrics synthesise both the popular understanding shared by the people of Bordeira about the origins and significance of their modern, secular *charola* tradition, and the role that it currently plays in the community’s processes of memory and identity. Below are the lyrics and an English translation by the author.

<p><i>De porta em porta, já antes se fazia</i>  <i>P’la noite dentro, outro cantar soava</i>  <i>Mas não expressava o que o povo sentia</i>  <i>E o que antes se ouvia</i>  <i>Em Bordeira mudava</i></p> <p><i>Em cada ano, o profano emergia</i>  <i>Voltavam filhos, da guerra que findava</i>  <i>Que improvisavam, no dom da poesia</i>  <i>Enquanto a melodia</i>  <i>O acordeão tocava</i></p>	<p>From door to door, as it was done in the past  In the night, another song was heard  But it did not express what the people felt  What was heard in the past  That, in Bordeira, changed</p> <p>Each and every year, the ‘profane’ emerged  Sons returned from the war that was ending  That improvised with the gift of poetry  While the melody  Was played on the accordion</p>
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<i>E cada pedra, tirada da pedreira</i>	And each stone, taken from the quarry
<i>Fez transportar Bordeira</i>	Transported Bordeira
<i>Pra outro lugar</i>	To another place
<i>Foi pela arte do homem emigrante</i>	It was with the art of the emigrant
<i>Que sofrendo distante</i>	That suffering far away
<i>Sonhava voltar</i>	Dreamed of returning
<i>Mais de cem anos de uma tradição</i>	More than one hundred years of tradition
<i>Que cada geração</i>	That in each generation
<i>Insiste em contar</i>	Insists in being told
<i>E no futuro, pelos mesmos trilhos</i>	And in the future, following the same path
<i>Serão nossos filhos</i>	It will be our children
<i>A nos recordar</i>	Who will remember us

**Table 1.** *Marcha do Centenário*,<sup>17</sup> music by Daniel Rato, lyrics by Rui Vargues, Nuno Bexiga, Renato Sousa, Ruben Relvas, source Nelson Conceição.

### ***Charolas in Bordeira***

Bordeira belongs to the parish of Santa Bárbara de Nexe (4116 inhabitants in 2011) in Faro, and is one of the largest population centres in the parish, although it does not exceed 1000 residents.<sup>18</sup> Located roughly fourteen kilometres north of the regional capital and municipal head of Faro, Bordeira is located in a region known as the *barrocal*, an intermediate area—rich in stone resources—between the low-lying coastal region and the dry, mountainous *serra* of the Algarve.<sup>19</sup>

Historically physically isolated from larger, nearby parishes such as Santa Bárbara de Nexe and São Brás de Alportel, Bordeira's geographic location and natural conditions have determined its traditional economic production sectors: dryland agriculture and stone quarrying—a unique and important sector whose existence has been documented since at least the seventeenth century (AFONSO - ZACARIAS 2004). Culturally, the mixture of different civilisations that the region has received over the centuries is reflected in its landscape, the genetic make-up of its population and its tangible and intangible cultural heritage (BERNARDES et. al. 2006).

With specific reference to Bordeira's local festive ritual traditions, although the principal days for its *charolas* are traditionally 1 January 1 and 6 January (as opposed to Christmas Eve or Christmas Day) (PEREIRA 2005, 73), in terms of content and meaning, the modern *charolas* no longer evoke the

<sup>17</sup> The 2020 performance of this march at the celebration of the *Centenário* in the D. Leonor Outdoor Activities Centre can be found in the following local report: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMLkXSqfHe8>> (accessed at 20 March 2022).

<sup>18</sup> INE Censo 2011: <[https://censos.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=CENSOS&xpgid=censos\\_quadros](https://censos.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=CENSOS&xpgid=censos_quadros)> (accessed at 20 March 2022).

<sup>19</sup> The rich sediment of limestone—an economically important stone utilised in construction—found in this region as a result of the region being submerged by ocean during the Jurassic Period, 195–141 million years ago (AFONSO 2004, 2).

Epiphany story of the Three Kings, as they did prior to the early twentieth century (as explained later in this text). *Charolas* in Bordeira have traditionally gone from house to house, an itinerant festive ritual tradition on foot and in motion, an aspect to which we return, along with their older religious roots, later in this text. First, we look at the modern twentieth century origins of Bordeira's unique *charola* tradition.

The principal musical and thematic features of Bordeira's contemporary modern *charolas* are briefly described here (and explained in more detail later) to give a better sense of what this living tradition entails. As mentioned above, Bordeira's modern *charolas* take place on the 1st and 6th of January each year.<sup>20</sup> A *charola* is formed of one or two chromatic accordions, potentially other instruments (*banjolin*, saxophone, etc.), and mixed percussion (castanets, tambourines, triangles—all festively festooned with colourful ribbons), and is generally made up of several men and women, with all the participants singing in chorus. A *começador/a* leads the song and is also adept at improvising witty and poignant verses on the spot according to context and location of the performance, usually in local private homes, community institutions, or small businesses. Each *charola* performs bearing their home-made banner and flag, and the repertoire consists of an introductory march, a slow, traditional 'estilo', a waltz intended for the interjection of improvised verses ('*valsa das vivas*'), and a concluding march.

The compositions and lyrics performed in January are either written during the previous year or are compositions from the vast historical repertoire belonging to this expression, and are rehearsed in the months leading up to January. The themes of the lyrics invariably pay homage to Bordeira, to important people of the community who have passed away, extolling the values of solidarity, cooperation, conviviality and the hard work of the community and its migrant diaspora, wishing a Happy New Year, etc., and are always performed in contexts of festivity, conviviality and commensality, with an abundance of food and drink. During this period, many Bordeira natives who live in other communities or regions of Portugal, or who have emigrated, return to their home town to participate in *charolas*. This is the general form of Bordeira's *charolas* today; next we examine their evolutionary process during the twentieth century.

The interviewees of PEREIRA'S (2005, 77) fieldwork and the *charoleiros* that I interviewed as part of my fieldwork share a view widely held in Bordeira that the foundations of the modern, decidedly secular *charolas*, as currently practised in the area, broke away from the traditional religious content and character originally associated with *charolas* in other communities in the period 1918 to 1920.<sup>21</sup> As well as being the culmination of the historical processes of secularisation,

<sup>20</sup> The only period in over a hundred years when Bordeira's *charolas* did not occur on these dates was 2020-2 during the Covid-19 pandemic, a period researched by the author. Thankfully, in January 2023 *charolas* did occur again in Bordeira.

<sup>21</sup> PEREIRA (2005, 77) writes, "Segundo os mais antigos do local antes de 1918 já existiam charolas em Bordeira, mas "cantavam ao Menino". O canto "religioso" é substituído pelo "civil" (entenda-se profano) e pelo "improvisado", o "estilo

anticlericalism, and the fruition of new political thought during Portugal's First Republic (1910-26) and the decades leading up to it,<sup>22</sup> this was also the period when Portuguese veterans, many of whom had been prisoners of war, were returning from the battlefields of the First World War, and the *charolas* held in their honour in Bordeira, as they were jubilantly welcomed home by their families, friends and neighbours, were of a festive, cheerful, improvised, and secular character (PEREIRA 2005, 77; CATROGA 1988).

According to BEXIGA (2020), the long-awaited return of loved ones from the battlefields and prisoner of war camps elicited an exuberant, festive outpouring of joy and emotion from Bordeiran people of in this formative period of the classic Bordeira-style *charolas*, reflecting the post-war 'euphoria' experienced in Europe at that time (PEREIRA 2005, 77; SINTRA 2016, 47). Bexiga explains: '[...] a alegria que nasceu dos bordeirenses voltarem da Guerra, os que voltaram, alguns morreram. Os que morreram, os familiares não tinham alegria, mas a maioria voltou. Houve uma longa alegria e disso nasceu o desenvolvimento das charolas, do tipo que ainda hoje [...] acontece'.<sup>23</sup>

Emblematic of this historic moment, and later enshrined as an iconic musician of Bordeira and throughout the Algarve, was accordionist José Das Neves Vargues (1895-1967), known as 'José Ferreiro (Pai)'. His biography, although that of a single individual, is a synthesis of the experiences of his generation of Bordeira men, as he was involved in key phenomena that shaped the local community: involvement in the local stone industry, experiencing war and emigration (in his case to Brazil in the 1920s), and being a protagonist of collective festive ritual musical activities such as social dances and *charolas*.

Born in Bordeira, José followed in his father's footsteps as a blacksmith but later developed into a prodigious accordionist<sup>24</sup> (see Figure 4). As a young man, in 1916, José began military service in the *Corpo Expedicionário Português* and was sent to the battlefields of France.<sup>25</sup> Testimonies attest to José being musically active during his service in France, a nation with a strong popular accordion tradition (CONCEIÇÃO - GUERREIRO 2014, 21).

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de Bordeira". [According to the oldest members of the community, before 1918 *charolas* already existed in Bordeira but they 'sang to the Christ Child'. The 'religious' song is substituted by the 'civic' (in other words, 'secular') and by 'improvisation', 'Bordeira style' [...].]

<sup>22</sup> CATROGA (1988, 211 and 214) writes, 'a questão religiosa constituiu um dos pontos nodais em que mais acentuadamente se concentraram as contradições que estiveram na génese da sociedade portuguesa que emergiu da paulatina destruição do Antigo Regime' ['the religious question was one of the nodal points where the contradictions that were at the genesis of the Portuguese society that emerged from the gradual destruction of the Old Regime were most sharply concentrated.']

<sup>23</sup> [It was happiness that came from the people of Bordeira returning from the war. Some died. The families of those who died didn't have happiness, but most people returned. There was a protracted sense of happiness. That gave birth to the development of the *charolas* and the way that they are still today] (Interview with BEXIGA 2020), author's translation.

<sup>24</sup> The blacksmithing profession in Bordeira was intimately linked to the local quarrying and stone-working industries. 'The quarry workers, in the fabrication and maintenance of their tools, would go to the blacksmiths to be furnished with the necessary instruments of their trade' (AFONSO - ZACARIAS 2004, 4).

<sup>25</sup> Largest Portuguese military force that fought in the First World War.



**Figure 4.** José Ferreiro Pai (at left with accordion) with the *charola* ‘Juventude União Bordeirense’ in 1955 (Divisão de Cultura, Museus, Arqueologia e Restauro, 2016, 8)

Lifelong *charoleiro* Joaquim José Gago Contreiras (‘Zé Campeão’) (b. 1936) recalls that José Ferreiro Pai was among the many Portuguese troops taken prisoner by the Germans during the course of the war, as was the singer and *charoleiro* from Bordeira, Sebastião Barra. He describes the impact of the return of the captured locals on the community and the phenomenon of *charolas*, from 1919 onwards, in the aftermath of the conflict:

O mestre Zé Ferreiro foi prisioneiro na Guerra do 14. [...] e se foram chegando (os prisioneiros) e havia mais e foi um motivo de alegria e comemorar aquele ano foi sensacional. O mestre Zé Ferreiro havia sido prisioneiro e era um acordeonista, era mais uma razão para as charolas terem outra força, outra influência. A partir de aí acho que tudo foi sempre aumentando, por exemplo, com mais acordeonistas, mais tocadores.<sup>26</sup>

As many oral histories of Bordeira natives, such as Zé Campeão’s, attest, it was in this post-war period of 1918-20 that *charolas* of a secular nature were formally organised in Bordeira, laying the

<sup>26</sup> [Zé Ferreiro was a prisoner of war in the 1914 war. [...] They (the prisoners) began arriving and it was a moment of happiness and commemoration, it was sensational. [...] Zé Ferreiro had been a prisoner of war and he was an accordionist. It was another reason for the *charolas* to acquire new force and new influences. From that moment on, it grew, for example with more accordionists, more musicians] (Interview with CONTREIRAS 2020), author’s translation.

foundations for the tradition that endures to this day.<sup>27</sup> However, this ‘modern’ tradition was a continuation and development of the region’s earlier festive ritual traditions, albeit with a marked and intentional break with the age-old religious connotations of those earlier traditions. Catroga explains this period of deliberate secularisation of Portuguese culture and society, which contributed to this transformation:

[...] o laicismo pretendeu [...] criar alternativas para os dias santificados através da calendarização de novas festividades de conotação exclusivamente laica e cívica. [...] Perante tradições muito enraizadas, seria mais pragmático lutar pela recuperação, em sentido laico, do calendário vigente do que impor algo excessivamente artificial e radicalmente novo.<sup>28</sup> (CATROGA 1988, 244)

The same author also highlights that in 1910, in its efforts to shape the ‘*representação simbólica do sentido do tempo colectivo*’ [symbolic representation of the collective sense of time], the new government declared New Year’s Day (1 January) to be ‘*consagrado à fraternidade universal*’ [dedicated to universal brotherhood] (CATROGA 1988, 246).

With regard to their local roots prior to this transformational period in the early twentieth century, before 1918-20, *charolas* in Bordeira (as in much of the *Sotavento Algarvio*<sup>29</sup>) were generally associated with door-to-door Christmas carolling (with the corresponding food and drink offered by the homeowners). *Charolas* in the *Sotavento Algarvio* have traditionally sung in honour of the Christ Child, with lyrics alluding to the Christmas story. There are, however, important exceptions. BEXIGA (1984) stresses the continued existence of pre-Christian pagan traditions in the performance of *charolas* in the area of Santa Bárbara de Nexe, most particularly Bordeira. He maintains that the tradition of *janeiras*, as practised in this region, as its origins in the Roman New Year celebrations around the winter equinox, associated with the god Janus, to whom the first month of the calendar is dedicated.

BEXIGA (1984) and DUARTE (2002, 424-5), as well as SOUSA and BARBIERI (2016, 18), write of the practice of *janeiras*, a festive ritual tradition incorporating song and ritual commensality, on and

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that the separation of Church and State, carried out in 1911 by the Portuguese government of the First Republic, included the prohibition of events or commemorations of a religious character in public spaces (such as religious-themed *charolas*, etc.) outside of churches. Catholic *charolas* with Christmas themes only reappeared in the 1920s (DUARTE 1996, 38) (CATROGA 1988, 269).

CATROGA (1988, 232) writes, ‘[...] perante a função ideológica que o catolicismo desempenhava na hegemonização do poder da classe dominante [...] a militância socialista e anarquista incorporou nas suas reivindicações sociais os pontos básicos do programa laico, incluindo, logicamente, a exigência da separação de Igreja do Estado’. [Faced with the ideological function that Catholicism wielded in hegemonising the power of the ruling class [...] the socialist and anarchist militancy incorporated the basic points of a secular programme into their social demands, including, logically, the demand for the separation of Church and State.]

<sup>28</sup> [...] secularism sought [...] to give alternatives to the holy days through the calendarisation of new festivities with exclusively secular and civic connotations [...] Faced with deeply-rooted traditions, it would be more pragmatic to fight for the recuperation, in a secular sense, of the existing calendar rather than impose something excessively artificial or radically new.]

<sup>29</sup> The eastern half of the Algarve.

around New Year in medieval Portugal as an extension of pre-Christian festive traditions. They cite the written historical records of Portuguese royal and ecclesiastical edicts that strictly prohibited the traditional practice of *janeiras* among the populace, referring specifically to their status of being of remnants of pagan beliefs. Cunha Duarte writes:

As Janeiras gentílicas estão dentro do contexto medieval. Era uma ocasião para bem-dizer ou maldizer alguns costumes ou tradições e até pessoas. Ao longo da Idade Média as chacotas viraram em frequentes insultos. A Igreja, através de sínodos, constituições e concílios, sempre proibiu a actuação destes grupos janeireiros, devido aos abusos e ao mal-estar que provocavam. Os reis, que zelavam pela ordem pública, também as proibiram através de Regimentos e Ordenações [...] A autoridade civil e religiosa ordenam a substituição de tradições profanas por outras de índole religiosa<sup>30</sup>. (DUARTE 2002, 424-5)

DUARTE (1996, 39), a Catholic priest, makes a sharp distinction between *janeiras* and traditional *charolas*, maintaining that the former are related to ancient pagan practices and the latter are traditionally associated with groups praising the Christ Child. PEREIRA (2005, 73) also acknowledges the difference, but opts to maintain the specific nomenclature that the people of Bordeira apply to their own unique secular tradition: *charolas* (a term which is also contemporarily applied by other Algarvian communities to their own ensembles of popular religious character). With regard to the secular *charolas* of Bordeira, which he admits exert a great aesthetic and poetic influence on *charolas* of other communities in the *Sotavento Algarvio*, most of which were originally religious in nature, Cunha Duarte is of the opinion that:

São ‘janeireiros’ que recriaram a antiga tradição já proibida em séculos passados. Cantam e declamam quadras com alguma crítica social e política. O seu conteúdo está muito longe do ambiente natalício. [...] Os janeireiros também devem ser respeitados e apoiados. São os únicos que mantêm a tradição ‘gentílica’. Porém, não podemos dizer que são uma mera reminiscência dos cantares ‘pagani’ entre os romanos. O seu cantar é para desejar um Ano Novo cheio de paz e amor, embora apresentem uma crítica social e política.<sup>31</sup> (DUARTE 1996, 39)

<sup>30</sup> [The pagan *janeiras* are within the medieval context. It was an occasion to well-wish or insult customs and traditions as well as people. Throughout the Middle Ages, the improvised verses frequently turned to insults. The Church, through the synods, constitutions and councils, always prohibited the performance of these *janeiras* groups, because of the abuses and unrest they provoked. The kings, who looked after public order, also prohibited them by way of Statutes and Orders. [...] Civil and religious authority ordered the substitution of profane traditions for others of religious character.]

<sup>31</sup> [They (*charolas* of Bordeira) are ‘*janeireiros*’ that recreate the ancient tradition that had been prohibited centuries ago. They sing and recite quatrains with some degree of social and political criticism. Their content is far removed from Christmas themes. [...] The *janeireiros* should also be respected and supported. They are the only ones that maintain the ‘pagan’ tradition. However, we cannot say that they are merely reminiscent of the ‘*pagani*’ songs of the Romans. Their songs are to wish people a New Year full of peace and love, although they do also feature social and political criticism.]

Valério Bexiga (b. 1937), who was born and raised in Bordeira, emphasises the supplicatory nature of many of these early, itinerant *charolas/janeiras* when he was a young child, a feature that he considers to have eventually continued in the form of an alms box and image of the Christ Child, which the religious *charolas* of other communities traditionally use to ask for donations during performances (Figure 5):

Antes de 1920, as charolas – ou melhor – as janeiras, primeiro, faziam na véspera de Ano Novo e na véspera de Reis, não era de dia como é agora com as janeiras. Pedias para comer. Era um canto de pobres, que iam às casas dos menos pobres, cantar à porta para darem qualquer coisa de comida. Este era o fundamento. [...] Eu, quando era pequenino, (comecei participar nas charolas), ainda era a moda anterior a 1920, ainda era para comer alguma coisinha, e era na noite, nas vésperas [...].<sup>32 33</sup>



**Figure 5.** Alms box with figure of the Christ Child at the performance of the *charola* from Estói, ‘Aldeia Branca’, at the Encontro de Charolas Clube de Futebol ‘Os Bonjoanenses’ in Faro (12 January 2020) (Photo by José A. Curbelo)

In contrast to the period previously described by Bexiga, the commensality and offering of food and drink currently present in the modern *charola* phenomenon of Bordeira do not have the characteristics of seasonal almsgiving to the ‘poor’ within the context of traditional Catholic dogma, which at times has tacitly accepted socio-economic class imbalances as inherently natural. Rather, these practices are expressions of material and moral solidarity among equals, harking back to the values of equality and fair distribution of resources espoused by a myriad of reformist and

<sup>32</sup> [Before 1920, the *charolas*—or rather *janeiras*—went out on the nights before New Year and Three Kings Day, not during the day, as *janeiras* are done now. You would ask for food. It was a song tradition of poor people who would go to the houses of the well-off and sing at their doors so that they would give them something to eat. That was the origin. [...] When I was a young boy (I started participating in *charolas*), they were still done in the way they were before 1920: to eat something, and they were done the night before] (Interv. to BEXIGA 2020), author’s translation.

<sup>33</sup> A video fragment from the well-known Portuguese television programme *Povo que Canta* (1971–74) of the ethnomusicologist Michel Giacometti gives an idea of the styles of *janeiras* traditionally sung on New Year’s Eve in the hope of receiving food and drink, in the municipality of Loulé, near Bordeira. The video can be found here: <<https://youtu.be/BvU0IByXifE?t=927>> (accessed at 20 March 2022).

revolutionary social movements. These practices formed part of the emergence of Bordeira's distinct culture of solidarity and cooperation during the twentieth century.

In the blossoming spirit of associativism<sup>34</sup> in the transformative period of the early twentieth century (a period described earlier in this text), the earliest formal *charolas* in Bordeira were 'Mocidade União' and 'União Bordeirense', founded in 1919 and 1920 respectively (PEREIRA 2005, 77) (CONCEIÇÃO - GUERREIRO 2014, 21). During this period, the musical format of Bordeira's *charolas* began to evolve into what is commonplace today. Originally accompanied solely by chromatic accordion and *ferrinhos*,<sup>35</sup> the *charolas* gradually incorporated Andalusian<sup>36</sup> percussion in the form of *pandeiretas* and *castanholas*<sup>37</sup> to further form the percussion section of the *charola*, known as the *pancadaria* (Interview with VARGUES 2020; SINTRA 2016, 46). In total, the number of participants in a *charola* can range from approximately fifteen to thirty (PEREIRA 2005, 76).

The distinguishing musical characteristics of the collective musicking of contemporary Bordeira *charolas* are several. As already mentioned, the principal rhythms performed are *marcha* (march) and *valsa* (waltz), but other lively rhythms are also included, such as *pasodoble*, not varying much in style from other popular Portuguese repertoire traditionally played on the chromatic accordion, the instrument that is the key melodic feature of *charolas* and also emblematic of the Algarve. The 'estilo' consists of a slow sung verse improvised by the *começador/a* (a lead singer) and sung in repetition by the chorus, followed by a brief up-tempo musical interlude and then a return to another verse sung by the *começador/a*. Similarly, the *valsa das vivas* is generally an up-tempo instrumental waltz, with frequent pauses to allow the *charoleiros* and members of the public to improvise quatrain verses. Each of these pieces last several minutes, depending on the poetic inspiration of the participants.

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<sup>34</sup> Recognising that associativism—the practice of organising and cooperating voluntarily among individuals to work towards a common goal that benefits all—is fundamental for human cooperation to survive, BAADE *et. al.* (2019, 28816) summarises: 'Associativism has integrated the development of human societies throughout history and constituted a fundamental element for its growth. It was a way that individuals found to be able to realize their goals when individually it was (in)feasible. In a way, it can be said that associativism develops precisely in spaces where the state does not meet the needs of the subjects.' By way of illustration, Pereira credits the rise in associativism in the context of early twentieth century Bordeira to be due to values of the First Republic, and new ideas brought from returning emigrants and soldiers as well as: 'a necessidade da população fazer face às dificuldades concretas com que sempre se debateu, ausência de qualquer sistema de protecção social por parte dos poderes públicos e do Estado em particular, o isolamento e a dificuldade de transportes e comunicações a que desde Bordeira teve de enfrentar e também a alguma marginalização e esquecimento relativamente à sede da Freguesia' [the necessity for the population to face concrete difficulties that were recurrently faced: the absence of any social protection system on the part of the public authorities or the State in particular, the isolation and difficulty in transportation and communication that Bordeira perennially faced, and also a certain degree of marginalisation and neglect by the parish capital] (PEREIRA 2005, 44).

<sup>35</sup> Metal triangle (idiophone).

<sup>36</sup> The Algarve shares an over 50 km long fluvial border with Andalusia, Spain along the Guadiana River; Bordeira is located roughly 60 km from the border with Spain. The Algarve and Andalusia have had close cultural and socio-economic ties for centuries. RAIMUNDO and VIEIRA (1990, 121) write that *charolas* are 'verdadeiras filarmônicas de influências dispersas e toque andaluz, com as marchas, valsas e cantos novos, adejados de instrumentos de sopro, castanholas e pandeiretas, a imprimem quase um ritmo "flamenco"' [veritable philharmonics of diverse influences and with an Andalusian style of playing, with their marches, waltzes, and *cantos novos*, animated by wind instruments, castanets and tambourines, that perform a quasi-flamenco rhythm].

<sup>37</sup> Tambourine (membranophone) and castanets (idiophone).

Perhaps one of the most striking (no pun intended) features is the elaborate arrangement of the percussive *pancadaria*. The *marchas* and *valsas* are all accompanied by carefully rehearsed percussion arrangements that involve constant counterpoint and call-and-response between the tambourine and castanet sections. The arrangements are executed with precision, with all of the *pancadaria* playing together—there are no percussion soloists. Neither do *charolas* involve any dancing, even though the musical is upbeat and lively.

The choral aspect consists of several singers, many of whom form part of the *pancadaria* as well, and the *começador*, a lead singer, improviser and director. Being a collective practice of the people (not necessarily musically trained), the choral element is not very elaborate, with the *charoleiros* singing in unison, prioritising the participation of all members of the group over individual virtuosity. Pereira describes the role of the *começador*:

Cada charola tem um ‘principiador’ ou ‘começador’ que deverá ter um bom tom de voz, mas no caso de Bordeira seja sobretudo um bom improvisador que conheça a tradição e que saiba traduzir um estado de espírito do momento que se encontre a charola actuar em casa onde foi convidada que se encontre em local de actuação pública como por exemplo na sociedade ou num café.<sup>38</sup> (PEREIRA 2005, 76)

Clara Grou explains, based on her experience:

Eu era uma começadora [...] (o começador) canta versos, normalmente para à casa onde vai tocar [...] Às vezes iam no caminho de uma casa para outra, e (eu) lembrava de outro (verso) e adaptava às vezes dependendo onde íamos a tocar e até era de improviso. [...] muitos versos surgiam dependendo do contexto [...].<sup>39</sup>

Originally, the religious *charolas* around Christmas time employed a traditional slow-tempo music style known as ‘canto velho’ to sing lyrics alluding to the story of the Christ Child. As the characteristic Bordeira style of *charolas* developed from 1918–1920 onwards, the novel incorporation of new instruments and popular social dance rhythms—performed at weekend community dances animated by accordionists—changed the musical aesthetic of *charolas*, creating what is known as ‘canto novo’<sup>40</sup> (DUARTE 1996, 43).

<sup>38</sup> [Each *charola* has a ‘principiador’ or ‘começador’ who should have a good voice tone, but in the case of Bordeira they must be, above all, a good improviser who knows the tradition and understands how to translate the spirit of the moment in which the *charola* is invited to participate, whether it be a private residence or in a public setting, such as in the Society or a café.]

<sup>39</sup> [I was a ‘começadora’ [...] the ‘começador’ sings verses, normally for the household where they are going to perform [...] sometimes they would go walking from one house to another and (I) would remember another (verse) and I adapted it sometimes depending on where we were going to perform, and sometimes it was improvised [...] a lot of verses came about depending on the context] (Interv. GROU 2022a) author’s translation.

<sup>40</sup> Such as *pasodobles* and *mazurcas*, rhythms originating in other European countries that were adopted and adapted by musicians in the Algarve (DUARTE 1996, p.43). Regarding the cultural contact with other nationalities in the Algarve,

In terms of the lyrical and poetic content, its history, development and evolution are rich and dynamic. Like the rest of Portugal, the Algarve has an ancient tradition of oral literature and popular poetry, and Bordeira is no exception. In addition to its *charola* and accordion traditions, Bordeira has garnered fame for being a hotbed of poets.

As an example of this effervescence of local poetic creation, the prolific and influential Algarvian poet António Aleixo (1899-1949), although not from Bordeira, would visit the town when participating in popular events in the region, such as street fairs and *romarias*, with his improvisational poetry. The poet revealed his genius at the age of nine, when he would sing *janeiras*, improvising verses from door-to-door with his siblings in the rural areas of Loulé at Christmas and New Year (DUARTE 1999, 33). Aleixo's irreverent and socially critical style, which stemmed from his varied professions and life of hardship, has exerted a profound influence on other popular poets in Bordeira and elsewhere in Portugal (Interv. VARGUES 2020).<sup>41</sup> Duarte states that:

[Aleixo] acaba por deixar um rasto de rara admiração, hoje já praticamente sem testemunhas vivas, mas sujeito de uma fama que se perpetuou no legado deixado de geração para geração. [...] Aleixo, era, já então, visto como um filósofo popular, profundo barómetro da contida conflictualidade social em que o seu Algarve, e até Portugal, se encontrava mergulhado.<sup>42</sup> (DUARTE 1999, 54 and 76)

Each year, the *Charoleiros* in Bordeira compose new lyrics and music for their repertoire to be performed in January, as well as utilise compositions from the past that have proved to be enduring. The themes presented in the lyrics are diverse, but they generally accentuate themes related to Bordeira and its residents (both living and deceased), social solidarity, and good wishes for the New Year (DUARTE 1999). The improvised rhyming verses that occur at certain moments in a *charola* performance are usually in heptasyllabic quatrain form (Interview with CONCEIÇÃO 2020).

The practice of improvisation in this method is not exclusive to *charolas* in Bordeira; it has also traditionally been used in the poetic duels of *canto ao despique*, accompanied by accordion, in taverns

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SINTRA (2016, p.48) writes, '*As trocas culturais com ingleses, espanhóis, e franceses, na sua maioria fruto dos contactos comerciais com esses países durante o século XIX, transportaram as novidades que o povo acolheu e adaptou ao seu meio, tornando-as suas e únicas*'. [The cultural exchanges with the English, Spanish, and French, mainly as a result of the commercial contacts with those countries during the 19th century, brought (musical) novelties that the people adopted and adapted to their environment, making them unique and their own.]

<sup>41</sup> Growing up in a period of Portuguese history marked by economic difficulties and political instability, Aleixo was born into a family of weavers and possessed little schooling, he served in the military, was a policeman, emigrated to Paris, France to work in civil construction, sold lottery tickets, among a wide list of professional attempts at overcoming poverty. Aleixo had a wife and seven children, and he suffered health problems all his life, which eventually included tuberculosis that ultimately ended his life in 1949. His trials and tribulations are reflected in his poetry (DUARTE 1999).

<sup>42</sup> [(Aleixo) ended up leaving a legacy of great admiration, today with practically no living eyewitnesses, but he had fame that was perpetuated in his legacy that is passed from generation to generation. [...] Aleixo was viewed, even then, as a popular philosopher, a profound barometer of the restrictive social conflict in which his Algarve, and even all of Portugal, was immersed.]

and informal gatherings in the Algarve, a phenomenon found in many other parts of Portugal. Bordeira poet and *charoleiro* Rui Vargues (b. 1970) explains:

Nessa altura nos cafés à noite, não havia luz. O que havia para se divertir era o acordeão, beber uns copos e (cantar ao despique) e se ainda há hoje uma maneira diferente, como quando nós juntamos, e estamos um cadinho bebidos, começamos, a brincadeira vai logo para a rima.<sup>43</sup> (Interv. VARGUES 2020)

It was from this kind of constant musical and poetic fraternisation between artists in and around Bordeira that collaborations were born that have become iconic compositions in the vast repertoire of *charolas*.<sup>44</sup> One of these compositions is the *Marcha de Bordeira*, with music by José Ferreiro Pai and lyrics by António Aleixo, which is shown below with an English translation by the author to illustrate the form and content of the repertoire performed by Bordeira's *charolas*.

<i>Rapaziada amiga</i>	Young friends
<i>De amizade eterna.</i>	Of eternal friendship.
<i>Da Bordeira antiga</i>	From the Old Bordeira
<i>Nasce a moderna.</i>	A new one is born.
<i>A felicidade</i>	Happiness
<i>Já não é quimera</i>	Is no longer a chimera
<i>Com esta amizade</i>	With this friendship
<i>Pura e sincera.</i>	Pure and sincere.
<i>Entre as flores</i>	Among the flowers
<i>Das amendoeiras</i>	Of the almond trees
<i>Nascem amores</i>	Romances are born
<i>Crescem clareiras.</i>	Glades grow.
<i>Somos felizes</i>	We are happy
<i>Num beijo puro</i>	In a pure kiss
<i>Nascem raízes</i>	Roots grow
<i>Para o futuro.</i>	For the future.
<i>Temos p'ras festas</i>	We have, for the festivities,
<i>Lírios e rosas</i>	Lilies and roses

<sup>43</sup> [Back then, at night in the bars there was no electricity. So, the only things there were to do were play accordion, have some drinks, and do ('*canto ao despique*') and still today when we get together and get a bit drunk, we start rhyming.]

<sup>44</sup> The accordionist Nelson Conceição estimates that over the course of one hundred years, from 1920 to 2020, six to seven hundred musical compositions with lyrics were created for Bordeira's *charolas* by various artists (CONCEIÇÃO 2020).

<p><i>E para o trabalho</i> <i>As mãos calosas</i></p> <p><i>Só o trabalho dá vida aos obreiros honrados</i> <i>Como o orvalho refresca a seara nos prados.</i></p> <p><i>Oh Bordeirenses</i> <i>Como é bonito</i> <i>Desta Bordeira,</i> <i>O chão bendito!</i></p> <p><i>Bordeira amada</i> <i>Em que nascemos</i> <i>Se fores atacada</i> <i>Todos te defenderemos.</i></p>	<p>And for labour Calloused hands.</p> <p>Only labour brings life to honourable workers Like the dew refreshes the evening in the fields</p> <p>Oh, people of Bordeira How beautiful it is From Bordeira, Its blessed land.</p> <p>Beloved Bordeira Where we were born Should you be attacked All of us would defend you.</p>
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**Table 2.** Marcha de Bordeira, music by José Ferreiro Pai, lyrics by António Aleixo (CONCEIÇÃO - GUERREIRO 2014, 71)

Over the decades, numerous *charolas* have been formed and taken part in New Year and 6 January festivities in Bordeira. Although many have disbanded and their members have joined other *charolas* over the years, today there is a continuity of *charolas* founded in past generations. Such is the case of the *charola* ‘*A Democrata*’, founded in 1975 after the revolution that brought an end to the Estado Novo, which included professionals such as doctors and lawyers (Interview with PINTO 2020). There is also ‘*Juventude União Bordeirense*’ founded in 1955, which included Zé Campeão among its founders. Normally, there is a core leadership group within a *charola*, but the dynamics of participation and decision-making are much more cooperative. Pereira describes: ‘Apesar da importância funcional ou logística de uma ou outra pessoa na charola é sobretudo uma estrutura extremamente igualitária onde não há um chefe com poder discricionário que lhe adviria de uma qualquer autoridade hierárquica’ (PEREIRA 2005, 79).<sup>45</sup> PEREIRA (2005, 44, 52-3) observes that the *charola* phenomenon in Bordeira is an iconic synthesis of the historically strong cooperative and associative character of this unique, small community. This distinctive character, reinforced by a dense network of endogamous family relationships as well as collective, entrepreneurial industrial relationships stemming from the local quarrying and stone-working sectors, has set Bordeira apart from neighbouring communities, a fact that is widely recognised by outsiders and by Bordeirans

<sup>45</sup> [Despite the functional or logistical importance of one person or another in a *charola*, it is above all an extremely egalitarian structure where there is no boss with the discretionary power that would stem from any hierarchical authority.]

themselves. This dynamic has also been reflected in the civic-political sphere, with Bordeira historically showing strong leftist tendencies in its political sentiments and voting behaviour (PEREIRA 2005, 50-1). The development and characteristics of this identity are further explored in the next section.



## *Marcha de Bordeira, 1966*

(Marcha)

Autor **José Ferreira (Pai)**

Recolha **Nelson Conceição**

Transcrição **Hermenegildo Guerreiro**

The musical score is written in treble clef, 2/4 time, and the key signature of B major (three sharps: F#, C#, G#). The piece begins with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, followed by a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'B'. The score consists of ten staves of music. The first staff has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, followed by a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'B'. The second staff has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, followed by a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'B'. The third staff has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, followed by a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'B'. The fourth staff has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, followed by a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'B'. The fifth staff has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, followed by a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'B'. The sixth staff has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, followed by a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'B'. The seventh staff has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, followed by a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'B'. The eighth staff has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, followed by a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'B'. The ninth staff has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, followed by a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'B'. The tenth staff has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature, followed by a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (f) and a tempo marking of 'B'. The score includes various chords such as B, F#7, G#7, C#m, B, F#7, B, F#7, C#m, B, F#7, Bm, F#7, Em, and F#7. There is a first ending section marked '1. Para continuar' and a second ending section marked '2. B Fim B'. The piece ends with a double bar line and a key signature change to B minor (two sharps: F#, C#).



Figure 6. Sheet music of *Marcha de Bordeira* (CONCEIÇÃO - GUERREIRO 2014, 71-3)

### Construction of *Bordeirense* Identity

The development of Bordeira's perceived characteristics of socio-economic cooperation, collective self-determination, social solidarity, and local civic-cultural pride can be viewed through different lenses. Several point to the domestic and international migratory experiences of Bordeira's people over the past century as a catalysing factor in these social transformations.<sup>46</sup> Pereira insightfully summarises this as follows:

[...] a importância da emigração na vida de Bordeira nunca foi apenas económica, mas constitui fator determinante na construção da sua 'modernidade' que pelas novas técnicas de produção que permitiu introduzir, por exemplo no corte de pedra, através dos emigrantes regressados de Argentina, no início do século, quer por ter sido um dos principais veículos para a introdução de ideias socialmente inovadoras, graças aos bordeirenses que tiveram ensejo de viajar pela Europa ou participar na 1<sup>a</sup>

<sup>46</sup> The emigration of people from the Algarve, including Bordeira, was concentrated in South America in the early twentieth century, mainly to Argentina, but also to Brazil. Later from the mid-twentieth century onwards, this economically and politically motivated emigration shifted to the industrialised nations of Western Europe, most importantly to France (BORGES 2009; PEREIRA 2014; PEREIRA 2005, 31-2).

Guerra Mundial, numa sociedade com poucos ou nenhuns acessos e comunicação para o exterior e para os grandes centros urbanos.<sup>47</sup> (PEREIRA 2005, 32)

This dynamic of socio-economic cooperation and solidarity, inspired in part by the ideals espoused by Portugal's First Republic, found expression in the 1920s and 1930s with the founding of numerous community associations in Bordeira, at the same time as its characteristic *charolas* were gaining strength, as described earlier in this text.

Bexiga also observes:

Essa foi uma geração de heróis, a geração que fundou a Cooperativa e que fundou as charolas [...]. Isto era um ilha, não havia estradas, nós tínhamos que conviver com o que tínhamos aqui, isso foi a razão porque foram criadas essas instituições mesmo para as pessoas se autorrealizarem. [That was a generation of heroes, the generation that founded the Cooperativa, and the charolas [...].<sup>48,49</sup>

The period from the 1920s to the 1940s is popularly known locally as Bordeira's 'Golden Age' (AFONSO - ZACARIAS 2004, 5; PEREIRA 2005, 85). It was a golden age not only in terms of industrial and economic dynamism, and civic-social organisational activity, but also in terms of artistic effervescence and socio-cultural festive traditions, in which the chromatic accordion, iconic artists such as José Ferreira Pai, social dance events (such as those held at the Bordeirense Recreational Society, founded in 1937) and *charolas* played a major part, cementing themselves as important symbols of Bordeira's collective memory and cultural identity for generations to come.

In stark contrast to this 'Golden Age', the period of the Colonial War (1961-74) saw an explosion in emigration from Portugal to Western European countries to avoid the draft and escape poverty, primarily to France, and Bordeira was no exception to this phenomenon. According to Rui Vargues, it was emigrants in France who gave continuity to the Bordeira *charola* tradition during this difficult period (Interv. VARGUES 2020). Bexiga also remembers that when the emigrants were finally able to return from France, they would come to Bordeira at the end of December so that they could participate in *charolas* (Interv. BEXIGA 2020).

António Pinto ('Tó'), proprietor of the iconic Café Pinto located in the social and commercial epicentre of Bordeira, the '*Cocheira*', has been participating in *charolas*, reciting poetic verses, since

<sup>47</sup> [...] the importance of emigration in the life of Bordeira was never solely economic, however it constituted a determining factor in the construction of its 'modernity', whether it be novel production techniques that allowed for the introduction, for example, of new stone-cutting methods by emigrants returning from Argentina at the beginning of the [twentieth] century, or as one of the primary vehicles for the introduction of socially innovative ideas, thanks to the people of Bordeira who had the opportunity to travel in Europe or who took part in the First World War, in a society which possessed little or no access or communication with the exterior or large urban centres.]

<sup>48</sup> [Here was an island, there were no roads, we had to make do with what was here, that's why those institutions were created so that people could self-realise themselves [...]] (Interv. BEXIGA 2020), author's translation.

<sup>49</sup> *Cooperativa de Consumo* (Purchasing Cooperative) (founded in 1921) one of the first consumer cooperatives in Portugal.

1971<sup>50</sup> (Interv. PINTO 2020). In his establishment, aside from local Bordeira residents and occasional travellers, he has served many emigrant patrons from behind his counter. He recalls the seasonal return of Bordeira-native emigrants, who had established professional and family lives in European countries and elsewhere, who would return when they were granted vacation time.

Rui Vargues contextualises this generation of emigrants: ‘Passado o 25 de Abril ainda havia muitos emigrantes e quase todos aqueles que eram charoleiros quando arranjavam uma maneira de ter férias no fim do ano, mesmo para vir às charolas.’<sup>51</sup>

One of the classic and most emblematic marches of this generation of emigrants, still used by *charolas* in Bordeira to this day, is *Marcha dos Emigrantes*, composed by Zé Campeão and based on his real-life experience—and that of many others—as an emigrant in France. According to António Pinto, who fervently and regularly sings and recites this march, it was created in the late 1970s–early 1980s while Zé Campeão was in France (Interv. PINTO 2020). Below are the lyrics with a translation by the author.

<p><i>Nós somos os Emigrantes</i>  <i>Vivendo em terras distantes</i>  <i>Da nossa pátria tão bela</i>  <i>Mas nunca a abandonamos</i>  <i>Porque ao partir deixamos</i>  <i>A nossa alma com ela</i></p> <p><i>E é por isso que ao voltar</i>  <i>Voltamos a encontrar</i>  <i>A nossa própria vida</i>  <i>Tal e qual uma flor</i>  <i>Que regada com amor</i>  <i>Volta a estar florida</i></p> <p><u>Refrão</u></p>	<p>We are the Emigrants          Living in distant lands          Far from our beautiful Motherland          But we never abandon Her          Because upon departing we leave          Our soul with Her</p> <p>It is for that reason that upon returning          We find again          Our own life          Just like a flower          That watered with love          Blooms again</p> <p><u>Refrain</u></p>
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<sup>50</sup> Pereira describes the centrality of Café Pinto to Bordeira’s sociocultural life, as revealed in his doctoral thesis: ‘o café do Tó [...] ocupa um lugar privilegiado no coração dos bordeirenses e constitui o principal nó da rede de sociabilidade informal de Bordeira. É uma verdadeira instituição local por onde se começaram os primeiros passos de iniciação ao presente estudo sobre a comunidade bordeirense e a tradição charoleira [...]’ [Tó’s café [...] occupies a privileged place in the hearts of the people of Bordeira and constitutes the principal nexus in the network of informal sociability in Bordeira. It is a veritable local institution where the first initial steps of this present study about the community of Bordeira and the *charola* tradition were taken [...]] (PEREIRA 2005, 58).

<sup>51</sup> [Even after (the Revolution of) 25th April there were many emigrants (abroad) and almost all those who were *charoleiros*, when they were able to get vacation time, (they tried) to get it at the end of the year, to participate in the *charolas*. Nowadays [...] the ones from that period are all retired, many have passed away, or they are back in Bordeira] (Interv. VARGUES 2020), author’s translation.

<p><i>Cheios de ilusões abalamos</i>  <i>Em busca da aventura</i>  <i>E ao despedir-se choramos</i>  <i>As lágrimas d'amargura</i></p> <p><i>Guiava-nos a luz da esperança</i>  <i>Ao eco dos nossos passos</i>  <i>E só tínhamos confiança</i>  <i>Na força dos nossos braços</i></p> <p><i>Para quem nunca imigrou</i>  <i>E a sua terra deixou</i>  <i>Não compreende afinal</i>  <i>O que é sentir o prazer</i>  <i>De novo voltar a ver</i>  <i>A sua terra natal</i></p> <p><i>Mas há muitos que imigraram</i>  <i>Morreram e não voltaram</i>  <i>Á sua casinha querida</i>  <i>Durou pouco a ilusão</i>  <i>No fundo a imigração</i>  <i>É mais um drama da vida</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Refrão</u></p>	<p>Full of illusions, we were shaken  In search of adventure  And on our departure, we cried  Tears of bitterness</p> <p>The light of hope guided us  In the echo of our steps  And we only trusted  In the strength of our arms</p> <p>Whom never emigrated  And left their homeland  Cannot come to understand  What it is to feel the pleasure  Of seeing once again  The land of your birth</p> <p>But many who emigrated  Died and never returned  To their beloved home  The illusion did not last long  At the end, emigration  Is one more of life's dramas</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Refrain</u></p>
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**Table 3.** *Marcha dos Emigrantes*<sup>52</sup>, Music and Lyrics: Joaquim José Gago Contreiras ('Zé Campeão') (Source: Nelson Conceição)

At present, Bordeira community members are spread across the larger, urban centres of the Algarve, which offer more employment opportunities, in particular Faro and the more developed tourism-centred coastal region, as well as other urban centres in Portugal, with emigrants residing in the USA, Canada, Western European countries, and other nations. However, with regard to the contemporary processes of rural exodus and emigration of young people—traditionally endemic to the interior of the Iberian Peninsula and which have decimated innumerable small communities in Portugal's interior—José Aniceto, a native of Bordeira living in Santa Bárbara de Nexe, observes:

<sup>52</sup> A 1996 performance of this march at the Bordeirense Recreational Society can be found here: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pp27HV3WgP8>> (accessed at 20 March 2022).

Bordeira tem umas características diferentes, em quanto a maior parte dos sítios estão a desertificar, Bordeira, não. [...] Tem aumentado em população, inclusivamente têm-se vindo (mais jovens), vê-se na escola primária, vê-se nas charolas. As pessoas gostam de viver ali naquele lugar, por que tem qualidade de vida, por que tem alegria [...]. Bordeira, nesse campo é um exemplo a seguir por outros, tanto na política de não deixar os filhos saírem de ali, aproveitar o que eles mesmos tinham. Outros venderam, destruíram e desapareceram [...]. Em Bordeira ainda se conhecem as pessoas, ainda se conhecem bem as raízes das pessoas, se conhecem as famílias, e tem-se mantido as tradições. As pessoas têm-se agarrado às tradições, têm dado vida às tradições [...]. Ali como conhecem, e tem havido uma transmissão, a coisa tem-se fortalecido. Hoje praticamente, nesse movimento das charolas [...] há vida naquelas coisas realizadas ali, naquelas festas, naqueles festejos precisamente por isso, por que as pessoas são de ali e (conhecem as suas tradições).<sup>53</sup>

Clara Grou, a young *charoleira* with goals of studying away from her town, also speaks of her generation of Bordeira youth:

Há várias pessoas (jovens) que foram estudar para fora, seja fora do Algarve mesmo, fora do país, mas normalmente têm a tendência de vir nas Férias, no Natal. Apanhamos muitas vezes as charolas e participamos. Há muitas pessoas (jovens) das charolas que [...] andavam a estudar em Lisboa, Coimbra, a trabalhar fora, mas nas charolas estão sempre presentes por que [...] eu posso não voltar a viver em Bordeira, mas sempre vou ter ansiedade de vir cá, e quando vier cá, quero sim, continuar nas charolas.<sup>54</sup>

Continuing on the theme of the connection that young people have with *charolas*, with regard to the customary methods of passing on Bordeira's *charola* tradition from one generation to the next, PEREIRA (2005) emphasises the tradition's inherent egalitarian nature and its non-dependence on formal power structures—be they public institutions or private organisations—to ensure its continuity, an expression, he claims, that is representative of Bordeira's own traditional socio-

<sup>53</sup> [Bordeira has different characteristics, whereas other villages become deserted, not in Bordeira. [...] Bordeira has grown in population and has even more young people. You can see it in the primary school, in the *charolas*. People like living there, there is quality of life, because there is happiness [...] Bordeira is an example to be followed by others, in the policies to prevent young people leaving and incentivise permanence in the village, taking advantage of what is here [...] In other towns people have left, torn down their houses, disappeared [...] Here in Bordeira, people still know each other, peoples' roots, the families and they have been able to maintain the traditions, people have defended their traditions, they have given life to their traditions [...] Because they know the tradition and transmitted it, it has become stronger. In the movement of *charolas* [...] there is life in that locality, in those festivities, because people are from there and know (their traditions) [...]] (Interv. ANICETO 2020), author's translation.

<sup>54</sup> [There are many young people that left (Bordeira) to study elsewhere, outside of the Algarve and abroad, but they have the habit of always coming during the holidays, at Christmas. We are here during *charolas* and we participate. There are many young people in the *charolas* that [...] study in Lisbon or Coimbra or work abroad, but they are always present in the *charolas*. [...] I may not live in Bordeira again, but I will always have the desire to come here, and when I am here, I definitely want to continue in the *charolas*] (Interv. GROU 2022a) author's translation.

economic character, historically based on small landholdings, collective industrial work in quarrying and stone-working, and a tightly woven endogamous community fabric (PEREIRA 2005, 79, 84).

Aside from personally participating in Bordeira's *charolas*, there is no formal, pedagogical institution or method for learning the tradition and participating in its various elements: accordionist, *começador*, *pancadaria*, singer, standard-bearer, improviser, etc. According to Zé CAMPEÃO (2020), being a *charoleiro* 'can't be taught and can't be learned'. The poet Rui Vargues, lead *começador* of 'União Bordeirense' and mentor of young *charoleiros*, concurs: 'in my opinion, *charolas* are the people' (Interv. VARGUES 2020). Several interviewees for this article emphasised this 'organic' intergenerational transmission process, which most often takes place within the family environment (Interv. GROU 2022a; Interv. GROU 2022b).

Although there are no formal institutional education structures to mediate its intergenerational transmission, Bordeira's *charola* tradition possesses certain 'rites of passage' that train and prepare young people for full participation in adult *charolas*. In his fieldwork at the end of the twentieth century, PEREIRA (2005, 78) noted the practice of organising *charolas* in Bordeira composed solely of children or teenagers (see Figure 7). He observed that when the young *charoleiros* of these groups reached the age of eighteen, they were able to join the well-established adult *charolas*. Rui Vargues, who trains *charolas* made up of young people, stresses the importance of this learning process and emphasises the natural advantages that these youth *charolas* have over those composed of adults: 'Nós os mais velhos fazemos a *pancadaria*, e depois eles (os miúdos) começam os ensaios, a fazer o que nós fazemos e eles absorvem aquilo muito mais facilmente do que as nossas *charolas*, mais velhos.'<sup>55</sup>



**Figure 7.** Youth *charola* (F.C. Bonjoanense, Faro, 12 January 2020) (Photo by José A. Curbelo)

Clara Grou describes the crucial importance of participating in youth *charolas*:

<sup>55</sup> [(Us older *charoleiros*) hold rehearsals (with the young people) and we start to teach them, us older *charoleiros* do the percussion ('*pancadaria*') and the young people rehearse and do what we do, and they absorb everything much more easily than the older *charoleiros*] (Interv. BEXIGA 2020), author's translation.

Foi quando ressuscitaram à Juvenil, a charola juvenil [...] a Juvenil parou durante muito tempo, só que um dia, foi no 2015, voltaram a fazer charolas, por que já tinha crianças suficientes e o meu pai disse ‘Vão fazer Juvenil. Queres ir?’, e foi a partir de aí (que continuei participando nas charolas até hoje).<sup>56</sup>

As noted above, another key element embedded in Bordeira’s *charola* tradition is the festive ritual practice of commensality, whereby participants are offered and partake of food and drink together, as described at the beginning of this article and in line with Mauss’s concepts of ritualised gift-giving (MAUSS 1966). Commensality, not solely limited to *charolas*, is also practised in other local popular festive traditions (*Carnaval, Marchas Populares*, etc.), as well as in the year-round daily social life of the community. Social scientist Claude FISCHLER (2011) asserts that commensality among a human group is a fundamental, structuring act that serves various purposes: it distributes necessary resources among group members, helps to define group membership, creates crucial social bonds, provides the context for gathering family and friends together, promotes reciprocity among group members, and assists in the socialisation of young people. FISCHLER (2011, 16) writes that ‘one of the obvious functions of commensality [...] is socializing individuals into specific rules involving cooperation’. He emphasises the traditional ritual significance of commensality in many cultures, and also observes the contemporary trend towards increased ‘individualisation’ of eating, a reflection of modern individualism.

Aside from the cafés and bars in the centre of Bordeira—such as Café Pinto—which are key sites of year-round socio-cultural interaction and community commensality—the other instances of commensality relating to the *charolas* take place in the residences of community members. As in times past, *charolas* will go around Bordeira and perform at the homes of friends and family, and it is customary to offer food and drink to the *charoleiros*, as described above (Figures 8–9). An integral part of *charola* ritual performance, the author observed that many young *charoleiros* also partake of the food and drink offered, together with their parents and extended family who are also present. José Aniceto further describes:

O valor das charolas em Bordeira é um bom momento de convívio, e envolve todos praticamente, todas as famílias ali em Bordeira estão envolvidas na altura das charolas [...] é puxado pelos outros também, porque em princípio é assim, por exemplo, se convido uma charola para ir a minha casa, pois, automaticamente convido a todos os vizinhos também para irem ouvir a charola e também para

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<sup>56</sup> [It was when they brought back the ‘*Juvenil*’, the youth *charolas* [...], because the ‘*Juvenil*’ stopped for a long time, until one day in 2015 they started doing (youth) *charolas* again, because they had enough kids, and my dad said ‘They’re going to do ‘*Juvenil*’, do you want to take part?’ and from then on, I have continued to participate in the *charolas* to this day] (Interv. GROU 2022a) author’s translation.

comer o que lá vou por. É uma maneira da gente receber às pessoas em casa e abrir as portas da casa, a casa está aberta, a casa é para abrir, não é para fechar.<sup>57</sup>



**Figure 8.** *Charolas* ‘*A Democrata*’ and ‘*União Bordeirense*’ performing at a private residence (Bordeira, 6 January 2020) (Photo by José A. Curbelo)



**Figure 9.** Guests partaking of food and drink prepared by a homeowner for the *charolas* ‘*A Democrata*’ and ‘*União Bordeirense*’ (Bordeira, 2020) (Photo by José A. Curbelo)

In considering *charolas* as a ritual musical marker of identity of the people, society, culture and sentiment of Bordeira, distinguishing the locality and its diaspora from other communities and regions, HEMETEK (2018, 158) poses the question as to exactly which factors bring about a group’s identification with a musical expression: ‘the musical content itself, the text, the individual biographical factors or rather the socio-political and historical context?’<sup>58</sup> Given that, in the opinion of various *charoleiros* (Interv. GROU 2022b; Interview with DOMINGOS 2022), ‘true’ *charolas* of Bordeira don’t exist outside of their in-person, seasonal ritual performance in Bordeira,<sup>59</sup> we can

<sup>57</sup> [(The *charolas*) are a good moment of conviviality, and they involve practically everybody, all the families in Bordeira are involved at *charola* time. [...] It is a way to share with others. If I invite a *charola* to perform at my house, automatically I invite all the neighbors to come as well to hear the *charola* and to eat what I offer to them. It’s a way to receive people and open the doors of our houses. The house is open, a house is meant to be opened not closed] (Interview with ANICETO 2020), author’s translation.

<sup>58</sup> Author’s translation.

<sup>59</sup> Both Grou, N. and Ramos Domingos, L. (2022), in the context of the Portuguese government’s public gathering prohibitions during the COVID-19 pandemic, stressed that electronically mediated *charola* performances, whether via digital social media, television, etc., do not constitute ‘true’ *charolas* and are not viable options for maintaining the tradition. They affirm that the physical interaction with the public in attendance is essential.

consider all the above factors listed by Hemetek as elements involved in festive ritual *charolas* as conforming to a distinguishing identity marker of Bordeira.

This unique identity must be perceived both by the people of Bordeira themselves and by outsiders who participate in its traditions, such as *charolas*. PEREIRA (2005, 44) has observed that the characteristics of Bordeira's distinct identity (described throughout this text) are widely acknowledged by both natives and outsiders, however he notes that this identity does not have an 'us versus them' antagonistic nature as other tightly-knit, endogamous groups do, but rather an identity that welcomes outsiders, and is characterised by cooperation, solidarity and conviviality (as I personally experienced during my fieldwork).

As an example, chromatic accordionist and *charoleira* Sílvia Silva from Pechão, born to emigrant parents in France, first participated in religious *charolas* and *ranchos folclóricos* in other communities before taking part in the *charolas* of Bordeira from 2000 onwards. Initially an outsider, she describes how her understanding of Bordeira's *charolas* grew as she took part:

Depois é a questão de perceber o porquê realmente daquilo que não entendi quando estava cá deste lado (de cariz religioso), eles vivem muito, os grupos vivem muito pelos outros, para as pessoas da terra [...]. Nas *charolas* é igual (que tocar nos *ranchos folclóricos*), mas para tocar, nós tocamos com muito mais energia, não tem a questão de velocidade. É questão de conteúdo. Se nós dermos aquela energia que é necessária, aquele sentimento que faz falta sentir, tudo sai muito mais natural e muito melhor, as pessoas acabam por se envolver muito mais.<sup>60</sup>

Similarly, also originally an outsider, *charoleiro* Lino Ramos Domingos (b. 1980), whose father is from nearby Estói and his mother from Santa Bárbara de Nexe, began to accompany his father in *charolas* in Bordeira when he was twelve-thirteen years old, and became interested in that tradition. According to him:

As *charolas* aproximam muito o povo de Bordeira [...] as *charolas* é uma maneira de aproximar o povo e socializar. Comecei a gostar muito dessa terra, e vim cá para morar [...] me sinto um verdadeiro bordeirense, também, graças as *charolas*, (me fizeram) ser um bordeirense genuíno e tudo começou desde aí.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> [There is the question of really understanding what they (*charolas* of Bordeira) are, I didn't understand when I was on the other side (of religious *charolas*), they (*charoleiros* of Bordeira) really live that, they live for each other, for the local people [...] *Charolas* are just like [*ranchos folclóricos*], but we play with much more energy, it's not a question of playing fast. It's a question of content. If we give the energy that is needed, that sentiment that needs to be felt, everything comes out more naturally and better, and people are more engaged] (Interview with SILVA 2020), author's translation.

<sup>61</sup> [*Charolas* bring the people of Bordeira together [...] *charolas* are a way to bring people together and socialise. I began to like this town, and I came here to live [...] I feel that I am a true native of Bordeira, also thanks to *charolas*, (they made me) a genuine *bordeirense* and that's how everything got started] (Interv. DOMINGOS 2020), author's translation.

Clara Grou, a Bordeira native, says that she would explain Bordeira's *charola* tradition to someone from another town or region as follows:

Claramente eu explico para as pessoas que não têm noção que [...] não é com intuito religioso, as charolas de Bordeira não estão conectadas com a religião são mais para a terra [...] são cantos basicamente à tradição. É do Algarve, mas na Bordeira elas (charolas) são diferentes, [...] porque são mais relativas à terra, são coisas muito importantes para aquela terra.<sup>62</sup>

Judging by the commentary of these last informants, beyond its distinguishing musical, aesthetic, organological, poetic, or improvisational characteristics, the identity of Bordeira's *charolas* is defined by their collective, in-person, ritual performance in a multi-generational community, and by the spirit and values that are expressed and transmitted to all participants.

## Conclusion

This article demonstrated how the secular festive ritual of *charolas* plays the role of *sociotransmitter* of the collective memory of traditionally tightly-knit Bordeira society, both at home and in diaspora. It also showed how *charolas* provide an intergenerational social framework for the formation of that memory and the construction of cultural identity. As has been described in the genesis of modern Bordeira *charolas*, secularism—or rather secular humanism—has played a key role in shaping this local tradition into what it is today and distinguishes it markedly from the traditions of neighbouring communities with more popular Catholic fervour. Secularism takes on a variety of meanings and structures in different societies, yet, in general terms, it is an alternative system to traditional organized religious practice, dogma, authority and belief. Among its manifestations, CANNELL (2010, 89) associates it with the ideological modernisation processes of late modern-era Western European nation states, but secular practices can also often take on religious-like qualities (CANNELL 2010, 88). This is a dynamic also observed by BLANKHOLM (2018, 11), noting certain life-cycle ritual practices adopted by self-declared secular groups.

MAHMOOD (2009, 65) views religiosity and secularism as complementary concepts in the creation of modern states, she writes: 'Secularism here is understood not simply as the doctrinal separation of church from state but also as the rearticulation of religion in a manner that is commensurate with modern sensibilities and modes of governance.'

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<sup>62</sup> [Clearly, I would explain to people, who didn't know, that [...] it's not of a religious character, the *charolas* of Bordeira are not connected with religion but with our town [...] they are songs about tradition. It's from the Algarve, but in Bordeira they [*charolas*] are different [...] because they are related to our town, they are very important to that town] (Interv. GROU 2022a), author's translation.

Bordeira's adoption of secularism in its modern popular collective traditions, as a product of the era's new ways of thinking and organising, stemming from the ideas of the First Republic and the new ideas brought back from the Americas and other European countries by emigrants and soldiers, can also be seen (in addition to the community's historically leftist politics) as a form of resistance to pressures of governing authorities. This dynamic could be analogous to what CANNELL (2010, 92) describes in French secularism, which intended that the state 'disentangle itself from reliance on French Catholic institutions.'

Although Bordeira's *charola* tradition takes on ritual characteristics<sup>63</sup> and evokes a collective quasi-spiritual, memorial, emotive, and festive experience among its participants and adherents, it has drawn the criticism of the Catholic priest and historian Cunha Duarte, much cited in this article. Some of my informants have expressed displeasure with Cunha Duarte's conclusions about their local tradition.

As for the perennial role of *charolas* as a unique, central mechanism in the processes of memory and identity of the people of Bordeira, accordionist Nelson Conceição reflects:

Em todos os momentos dessa história do Centenário há essas fases em que essa emoção acontece, porque a Primeira Guerra Mundial que é um marco, se calhar, o primeiro grande marco das charolas [...]. Depois há a Segunda Guerra Mundial, acho que não houve grande história. Mas depois da Guerra Mundial, que alguns vão para guerra, outros fogem do país para não irem para a guerra. [...] Porque ao final e ao cabo é nossa história. E isto está ligando ao passado, relembramos aos nossos pais, as pessoas que fizeram algo pelo mundo, pela comunidade, pela nossa história, e queremos de alguma forma sempre homenageá-las e de trazê-las ao presente, não esquecermos.<sup>64</sup>

As Bordeira's *charolas* were again practised in January 2023 after a two-year long hiatus due to Covid-19, it is most assured that this prolonged tragic and depressing period—acutely felt by the people of Bordeira—will find its place in the collective memory and in the stories told in the lyrics and improvised poetry of the *charolas*, which tell of the various historical challenges faced and overcome by the people of Bordeira together, in cooperation and solidarity with one another.

*Charolas* have traditionally been an organic tradition, passed down orally, allowing for innovation and adaptation by each successive generation, without losing the tradition's core spirit and purpose. There is little written documentation on their genesis in the early twentieth century and earlier, but the stories of its modern pioneers and the protagonists of its Golden Age have been passed

<sup>63</sup> Such as a child's participation in youth *charolas* to eventually perform with adults as a certain 'rite of passage'.

<sup>64</sup> [In all those moments of this history of the Centenary there are moments charged with emotion, because the First World War is a watershed moment, perhaps, the first big event for the *charolas*. [...] After the (Second) World War, that some had to go to the (Colonial) War and others fled the country so as to not go to war. [...] At the end of the day, it is our history, a connection with the past. We remember our parents, people who contributed something to the world, to the community, to our history, and we want to pay homage to them in some way, always honouring them and bringing them to the present, to not forget] (Interv. CONCEIÇÃO 2020), author's translation.

down from generation to generation in the lyrics of *charola* compositions performed year after year, as have the stories of soldiers, emigrants, and other sons and daughters of Bordeira. Each year, new compositions are created that reflect the contemporary struggles and aspirations of the community and its diaspora. Beyond the cultivation of a collective memory, these stories—expressed in the poetry of the lyrics—serve to reinforce, year after year in January, the core values that have sustained Bordeira’s culture and society over the years, and which project and perpetuate the community into the future.

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