



AZAGAIA – SHORT BIOGRAPHY



Azagaia (Edson da Luz), was born on May 6, 1984 in the town of Namaacha, Maputo province, to a Cape Verdean father and a Mozambican mother, and died on March 9, 2023. At the age of 10, he moved to the city of Maputo, where he continued his studies until higher education. A rapper and social and human rights activist, he used music to

denounce injustices and social inequalities.

He began his musical career in the hip-hop genre in 1996/97 under the stage name **Azagaia**, a war and fishing instrument made up of a short wooden shaft and a thin animal horn or iron tip. In 2000 he recorded his first song in the studio with his colleague and rapper **MC Escudo**, from the group Dinastia Bantu, and they released their first album in 2005, entitled *Siavuma*.

His contribution to the process of building the Mozambican state came during the multi-party period, when, at the age of 23 (2007), he released his first album entitled "Babalaze" (hangover in Portuguese), using freedom of expression and artistic expression. It was with this project that he established himself as an artist of social intervention, in which the tracks "Eu não paro" (I Don't Stop), "As Mentiras da Verdade" (The Lies of the Truth) and "A Marcha" (The March) raise a series of questions about the model of governance in Mozambique, which he considered to be based on corruption.

In "*The Lies of Truth*", he questioned some facts that were considered to be indisputable (truths), such as the death of Samora Machel, that the revolution and argued that the struggle for independence was not only made up of celebratory songs and cheers - but that there were



betrayals, torture and hidden versions among the revolutionaries - combatants, and that Mozambique is not as poor as it seems, but is rather impoverished.

This set of elements led Azagaia on the song “The March” (Article 51), to call on the common people, the underprivileged layers made up of the unfortunate, in other words, the unemployed, the wronged, the illiterate, peasants, informal vendors, non-partisans, young people, victims of the regime to raise and purge the thieves, the corrupt and the murderers from power. With this album, Azagaia gave a voice to the various segments of society that felt stifled by the Mozambican political system, and in a short time, he began to be addressed by society as "Mano Azagaia", out of respect and admiration for his work, patriotic spirit and citizenship.

On February 5, 2008, due to the rising cost of living, the city and province of Maputo were paralyzed for three days by popular demonstrations, which led to the blocking of the main streets and avenues. Azagaia then released the song "*Povo no Poder*" (People in Power), in which he sang that inefficient policies were the cause of the country's social protests. This earned him a summons from the Attorney General's Office, accused of inciting demonstrations and undermining state security.

In 2009, he began a short tour of politics through the Movimento Democrático de Moçambique (Democratic Movement of Mozambique), where he was a candidate for deputy in the Assembly of the Republic, but the candidacy of his constituency of Maputo (where he was a member) was excluded by the electoral management bodies (CNE and STAE), and so he left politics for good.

In 2013 he released his second album, *Cubaliwa*, which deeply reflects the three phases of state-building in Mozambique, namely the colonial period (*maçonaria* - freemasonry), tribalism and ethnic differences (*cães de raça* – breed dogs) that were instrumentalized for armed conflicts in Africa. Azagaia described African states as countries of fear, where underdevelopment reigns due to corruption and kleptocracy that affect foreign aid and keep the country in dependency,



poverty and neo-colonialism (elite replacement). But he also criticized the peacefulness of the generation that talks about change, but is afraid of it and is always dubious about the nation's problems.

The content expressed in his songs has led him to be invited to seminars, workshops, scientific conferences, cultural soirees and research events in Mozambique and abroad. In 2017, the lyrics of his song "Povo no Poder" were included in the chapter on "Authoritarian responsiveness and the strike in Mozambique" in the book "*Food Riots, Food Rights and the Politics of Provisions*", a research project coordinated by the University of Sussex.

Due to the depth of the message in his songs, he is considered by many to be the most studied Mozambican in universities today, through the publication of scientific articles, books, monographs and dissertations, and his level is on a par with national figures such Eduardo Mondlane and Samora Machel.

He stood out for not putting shackles on his words - speaking the truth. Azagaia exercised his activism by objectively criticizing the elements that hinder the development of Mozambique and African states. It is for this reason that academics, activists, civil society, political and religious leaders, pan-Africanists, students, ordinary citizens, professionals, among others, can all relate to Azagaia's message.

Considered to be the hero of his time (youth), with his writings and songs he brought down the regime of fear that prevailed in the country, inspiring the exercise of the right to protest in Mozambique (and Angola) under the slogan *people in power*, first at his funeral and on March 18 throughout the country, protests which were (again) repressed by the authorities, accusing the young demonstrators of an attempted coup d'état.