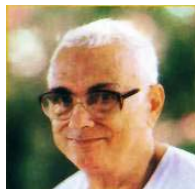


Talking about Capoeira

Mestre Decânio

Translated into English by Shayna McHugh, 2005



Translator's note: The numbered footnotes are in the original text. The footnotes denoted with asterisks (*) are my additions.

**FOR MY FRIEND
PIERRE FATUMBI VERGER**

**Remembering our conversations about the things of our people
Of this Latin-American Africa**

TO ALL THE YOUTHS

In which capoeira will keep my spirit eternalized
After the disappearance of my body
As it keeps alive in me
The memory of all the oldest ones and of tradition
Eternally while I live!

The Past and the Wisdom of Humanity
Inhabit the Spirit and Body of the Old Ones
The Future and Life live in the Body and Spirit of the Youths
What is the Future without the Past?
The Old One without Life?
Life without the Spirit?
The Spirit without the Body?
Youth without Wisdom?

Body and Spirit
Old and Young
Past and Future
Life and Wisdom
Integrate the Being

Capoeira develops
The Way of Being of each BEING!
It manifests
The True BEING of each BEING!

You are your capoeira!
YOU ARE THE ONE WHO SETS THE LIMIT ON YOUR CAPOEIRA

THE ROLE OF THE LUTA REGIONAL BAIANA * IN THE AFRO-BRAZILIAN CULTURAL HYBRIDIZATION

Instead of the “Champion’s Belt”¹...

The title of Doctor²!

During the third decade of this century, that is, when I was around seven years old, I began to notice the difficulties that African cultural activities encountered in Salvador.

Despite my mixed-blood origin (indigenous, African, Portuguese, and Italian), the cultural lineage was clearly white, and I could perceive the oldest generation’s subtle repulsion to the common Afro-Brazilian customs.

The Bahians accepted, to a good degree, the presence of African tidbits in their diet and in the humble work of African descendents; however, they looked down on African cultural manifestations.

The prohibition of African customs and religions was evident in samba – which was considered a practice of bums, unemployed and delinquent people – and above all in the ferocious persecution of candomblé and capoeira.

In the 1930 revolution, I noticed the flight of the feared Pedro Gordilho, who was made fearsome by his removal from the role of Police Chief by the revolutionaries and by the awareness of his unjust and inhuman persecution of the people of Salvador and their cultural manifestations.

The fact was most notable to my eyes because I heard gossip that the Military Command of the Region had entrusted my father³ with the guard, protection, and removal of the frightened executioner from the reach of the just retribution longed for by the victims of his abuses of power.

The victims included Lídio, for being a pandeiro player and samba dancer of Saúde square,⁴ as well as other “bums, troublemakers, and unemployed people,” bohemians.

And the restrictions were extended to the genial Dorival Caymi, whose passion for our peoples’ music and the lack of more convenient transportation drove him to Itapoan on foot in order to sing and play with the fishermen. From this arose his marvelous creations of Yoruban tonality, which were considered inconvenient (a “bad example,” capable of misdirecting the youth...). The restrictions also affected Osvaldo, my neighbor and childhood friend, because of his intimacy with Afro-Brazilian customs.

Even today I hear the seller announcing, “marketing” we used to say, punctually at ten o’clock P.M. through the streets of Saúde and Godinho, his selling cry of “Iê-êê... acarajé...”^{**} with his Yoruban accent...

* Bahian Regional Martial Art, the name Mestre Bimba originally gave to Capoeira Regional

¹ Which he did not receive despite having won the Bahian Capoeira Championship in the Parque Odéon.

² Justly conceded for having been “**the Mestre**” who taught life lessons to so many “doctors with rings on their fingers”!

³ Ex-sergeant instructor of the Firing Squad of the high-level schools of Salvador, promoted to 2nd Medical Lieutenant because of the Revolution and because he finished medical school in 1929.

⁴ One of the oldest members of Filhos de Gandhi

^{**} Acarajé is a typical Bahian food, of African origin, made of beans fried in palm oil, okra, seafood paste, vegetables, and sometimes shrimp and pepper.

This contrast between the acceptance of African culinary manifestations and the rejection of African cultural manifestations was changed after the 1930 revolution thanks to the arrival in Salvador of two men from Ceará. These men were transformed into admirers of African culture thanks to capoeira and the charisma of Manoel dos Reis Machado, Mestre Bimba.

Cisnando Lima, passionate for martial arts, came to Salvador in order to study medicine, bringing with him the desire to learn capoeira, which was sung about in verse and prose in the legends of his birth land. Upon arriving here, he stayed in the neighborhood of the Sergeant Inspector Juracy Montenegro Magalhães, to whom we owe the great social revolution that recognized African culture as legitimate in all its manifestations, especially capoeira and candomblé.

Cisnando, who enjoyed closeness with Inspector Juracy Magalhães as part of his personal guard, set up a private demonstration of the capoeira of Bimba and his students (“whites,”⁵ the academics, and those “from the country”⁶). This demonstration provoked the admiration, respect, and consideration of the highest state authority for our Mestre and for Capoeira, thus opening the path for the later demonstration for President Getúlio Vargas and beginning the final phase of the integration of African culture in our country.

It is thus that Bimba, through Cisnando, arrived at Juracy, who conducted Bimba and his students to Getúlio, who legalized capoeira, recognizing it as the Brazilian national martial art and later making its practice official through the Ministry of Education.

The acceptance of capoeira as a legal practice is therefore due to the work and to the charisma of Manoel dos Reis Machado, Mestre Bimba, the instrument who initiated the downfall of the prejudices and discrimination against black cultural manifestations.

And through the entrance that our Mestre opened with the social tool of capoeira, all the many festive, religious, secular, and sporting Afro-Brazilian practices left the realm of illegality. Initially the liberation, with the permission of the police to conduct festive and religious cultural manifestations, still had scheduling limits. For example, they could not be practiced after certain hours, under the pretext of perturbation of silence.

It was an important step in the implantation of democracy in our country, since true democracy is based in the equality of rights and duties among men united by mutual respect and fraternal love.

In this way, Bimba is a historical figure as important as Zumbi dos Palmares in the social evolution of black culture in Brazilian society and the modernization of Brazilian society that began with the 1930 revolution.

These important facts have recently been spread by the activity of contemporary mestres who brought the liberating and democratizing message of capoeira to all the corners of our country and to the rest of the world.

It is important to emphasize that despite the evolution of the “regional” dynamic, accompanied slowly and progressively by the group of angoleiros, as well as the modification of the literary-philosophical content of the songs because of adaptation to the cultural environments in which the art was implanted, the individual personalities of today’s mestres, and the current historical situation of the country and of the world – despite all this, the toque of the berimbau maintains the axé of capoeira constant, making each capoeirista a unit in the harmonious whole of Capoeira.

⁵ In the lingo of the less privileged class, the dominant, wealthier class is referred to as “the whites,” even those with skin tones that are more or less tanned.

⁶ Who did not belong to the dominant class and frequented the roda of Curuzú and later the roda of Roça do Lobo.

In this way, each capoeira song is a hymn of liberty, equality, and fraternity, as the French revolutionaries would say.

Hail Bimba!
Champion of the black race!
Liberator of African culture!

MESTRE BIMBA AND THE ANGELS

A confession!

I cannot conceive of Mestre Bimba
In the lands of “Heaven”
He would not fit in “Paradise”
Because he was the symbol
Of the Liberty of Man!

His limit is the Universe
Which includes Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell
Where the prejudiced souls live
Who do not recognize the greatness of the God
That inhabits each one of us
Independent of color, culture, or education

Bimba would not give a rasteira to “angels”
On earth or in heaven
Because it is forbidden
For a mestre to give a rasteira to a beginner

Bimba never got “embarrassed”
He always occupied the center of attention
And corresponded
To a true “show-man”

Bimba never took a “head-lock”
From any capoeirista
But he used the tie*
With dignity and elegance
Bimba dressed in jacket and tie
Shaking the hand of Getúlio
The portrait of a black leader
Greeting a state official
As an equal to an equal
Composed, dignified, educated, and solemn
As he always was!

Bimba was more than a popular type
A common capoeirista
He was an educator in the full sense of the word
He taught the “art”
“Of living with courage, dignity, and prudence”
“To doctors with rings on their fingers”
Who gave him the title of **Mestre**
Because they knew him
And recognized his value!

* There is a play on words here that doesn't translate into English: the word *gravata* means both “head-lock” and “tie” and is used in both instances in the original text.

Candomblé, upon recognizing services lent to the community, can grant the honorific title of “ogán” to any publicly notable person, even if that person is foreign to its social grouping, norms, regulations, and conventions – by civility and gratitude!

The University also gives honorary titles to those who serve it, whether they are living or dead, associated with the University or not, because of merit, and not by regulation.

“The honor should correspond to the merit,” good sense recommends...

...and adds, “each one gives what he can”... “what he has.”

WAS BIMBA AN ANGOLEIRO?

Dedicated to Mestre Pelé

Understanding by “Angola” the capoeira game (not the fight), the initial form and the only form of capoeira existing in his youth, Bimba was an angoleiro and all of us in regional continue as angoleiros... The only modification that the Mestre introduced was the establishment of a systemized teaching method in order to facilitate the learning of those students who did not bring in their body the African cultural inheritance of the candomblé rhythm and movements. This method is so successful that it also works with the direct descendents of Africans.

The movements that Bimba introduced are compatible with capoeira’s nature. They are even used by angoleiros themselves in self-defense, but are excluded by ritual in order to protect the participants’ personal safety and to avoid violence. The Iúna game represents the highest point of regional and demonstrates all the ability and choreographic potential of the capoeira game. Bimba respected the capoeira game and considered it the climax of regional so much that he limited the Iuna game to graduated students, who were the only ones worth of the title of ‘capoeirista’ in his style...

The introduction of new movements, the broadening of the self-defense applications, the throws and the special trainings – these are natural growths arising from capoeira’s maturing in a developmental process that will ultimately culminate in sporting regulations.

Thus the final response is... **Bimba was an angoleiro, yes sir!**

And all his true students continue as angoleiros... when they play capoeira... without fights and violence!

**Bimba always respected Pastinha...
And we too honor Mestre Pastinha!**

Unity makes strength and brings peace!

TROUBLEMAKERS

The dominant class' perverse stereotyping of the capoeirista as a noisy bum and troublemaker contrasts the cheerful, festive, pleasure-loving spirit of our humble people. This stereotype is the fruit of the prejudice against African cultural manifestations as "things of the devil," detested because blacks served only as a source of wealth.

The cultural manifestations were repressed because the sweat of the slave labor was transformed during the working day into gold by the slave masters (who believed that they were culturally and spiritually superior), while during the time of samba and capoeira the slaves' sweat was transformed into happiness and not into money. It is a simple step of prejudice to go from the idea of economic damage – wear and tear of the source of income – to the repressive rulings...

Precepts, prejudices, and police...
The three "p"s that persecute the blacks!

In addition, historians praise police documents and newspaper articles that are based in the same sources, without telling about the abuses of power and the natural reactions of the oppressed people...

Given the happiness inherent in capoeiristas, the pejorative use of the police terms came to be used as a medal of fearlessness and bravery. It was the awareness of each one's strength, which the common person does not have but which capoeira lends to its practitioners, that led Noronha⁷ to use as self-praise the terms *troublemaker*, *noisemaker*, *bully* – which sound contrary to the behavior of our companions in the roda.

SAILORS' SCHOOL

To my nephew Marcelo, for his love for the Brazilian Navy.

Pastinha's excellent moral and civic character as well as his notion of discipline and organization certainly result from his education in the "School of Sailor Apprentices," in which he later taught capoeira between 1902 and 1909. Without this education, he might have been just another "street kid" growing up in the turbulent "Center" of this city...

Thanks to the teachings received in his youth, the Old Mestre left us the jewels enclosed in his manuscripts, the magnificent lesson that old age is not sterile, because not even the cold wind of time extinguishes the youthful ideal that inhabits the heart of an old dreamer!

This forge of apprenticeship prepares the Brazilian – a lover of his Country who is aware of his duties and completes his obligations. Our "small great mestre" is an example for us, as we see in the following passage from "The Heritage of Pastinha," which registers this important autobiographical detail.

⁷ O ABC da Capoeira Angola - Os Manuscritos do Mestre Noronha
The ABC of Capoeira Angola – The Manuscripts of Mestre Noronha

1.5.4 -"I learned on Laranjeiro street"...

"And my good mestre, I learned on Laranjeiro street, and I taught on Santa Izabel street from 1910 to 1912, when I abandoned capoeira, and returned in 1941 to organize the first capoeira Center in Bahia. In the School of Sailor Apprentices I was number 110, and I taught my colleagues from 1902 to 1909."

(13b,15-23)

Pastinha taught his colleagues in the School of sailor apprentices in the Largo da Conceição da Praia, in the building that today houses the Eastern Naval Command. He taught from 1902 to 1909 and then continued to teach on Santa Izabel street until 1912. He remained inactive from 1913 to 1941, which explains a statement that I heard from Bimba in the 1940s, that Pastinha's origin as a mestre was unknown, as well as Aberrê's reference as an ex-student of Pastinha, also negated by Bimba.

(pág. 44)

Pastinha's conduct in the field of capoeira was singular because of his awareness of the existence of fundamental moral values in capoeira's practice. This is registered in his manuscripts, which should be spread in their original form for the appreciation of posterity and the notable demonstration that our common people also have wisdom. Pastinha's words contain poetry, beauty, and love inside the limitations that the lack of access to education brings about.

It is fitting here to honor "Major" Cosme de Farias, the almost hundred-year-old Bahian champion of the Literacy Campaign, another example that Dreams do not have age.

My father, illiterate at 18 years old, enlisted voluntarily in military service, together with other youths, with the objective of literacy, because they knew that the Army taught how to read. This was the first step in a long path that conducted him to Medical, Dental, and Pharmacy College, where he graduated as a "dentist" and later as a doctor ("Doctor" by the defense of a thesis, which was obligatory in that era).

Mestre Ezequiel, among many others, also began his career through the military path.

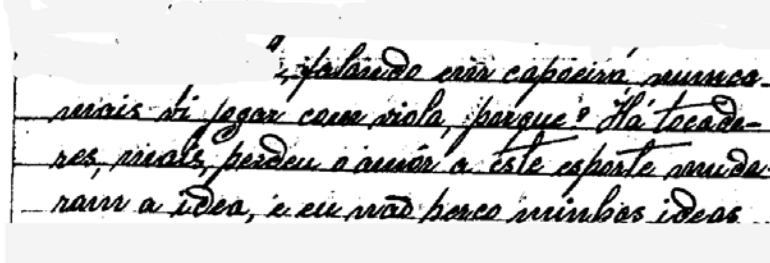
This is also probably the origin of Mestre Senna's "militarism," an attempt to dominate through discipline the bellicose impulses of those who intend to learn capoeira "for toughness," as Pastinha used to say.

The readers of Pastinha's manuscripts, as well as those who had the joy of hearing the enthusiasm of an old man bent over by age, disease, and the extreme poverty in which he lived, have in this passage the origin of his discipline, his moral values, his extraordinary persistence in search of the Dream, and his vision of capoeira as an instrument of education and formation of citizenship.

All capoeiristas should take notice of our debt to our Glorious Navy, besides the traditional link found in the oldest narratives to sailors and things of navigation and the sea.

CAPOEIRA, VIOLA, AND SAMBA DE BARRAVENTO

The written words of Mestre Pastinha

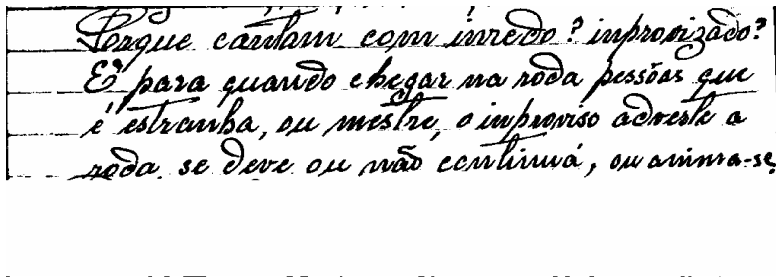


Transliterated as,

..."speaking of capoeira, I no longer saw it played with viola, why? There are players, but they lost the love for the sport, changed the idea, and I don't lose my ideas"...⁸

These words constitute an important historical record, coinciding with the oral statements of Ruben "Rubinho" Sanches and Paulo Nascimento, agreeing with our thesis of the original relation of the capoeira game with the samba santamarense, samba de chula, also known as samba de barravento, and therefore, of capoeira's origin as playful before fight-like.

The presence of the viola is the trace of unity with the Portuguese chula, because it corresponds to the guitar in this latter art form, marking the beat. This correspondence is confirmed in the use of the improvisation, called "chula," an introductory song to capoeira practice, much like the laudatory African "oriki," which Mestre Pastinha also references in another passage of his manuscripts:



"Why do they sing cleverly? Improvising? It's so that when strange people arrive in the roda, or a mestre, the improvisation alerts the roda whether it should continue or not, or whether it should liven up."

Decânio – The Heritage of Pastinha (passage 1.10.4).

In this passage, Pastinha records the mestre's use of the chula in order to communicate to the social group the acceptance or non-acceptance of the stranger. There is also the possibility of codified message transmission regarding factors that may compromise the normality of the process, in a way similar to the "Cavalaria" toque.

⁸ Decânio, The Heritage of Pastinha, passage 1.1.3

CACHAÇA, SAMBA, AND PANDEIRO

Dedicated to Prof. Paulo Coelho de Araújo

*“I saw, comrade...
I saw...
In the market...
I saw...
Cachaça become joy!”
There was cachaça, samba, and pandeiro
Berimbau played
Capoeira arrived
There was cachaça, samba, and pandeiro
Berimbau arrived
Capoeira began!*

I used to take weekly walks through the Mercado Modelo, during the era in which “*Figuerêdo Pau-Medonho*”⁹ was an infallible presence in the rodas that turned to the heat of the energy of the engines of “santo-amaro.”

We left the exhaustive routine of the medical-hospital practice for the cheerful and relaxed vibration of the most African environment of Salvador – the Mercado’s corridors and little bars.

Everything was joy and informality in loud shouts to the rhythm of the matchbox, reco-reco, and pandeiro.

The ritual began by the heating of the joy congealed in the depths of the heart by the “turn of the first,” playing the part “of the saint,” followed by the classic “cuspidinha pro lado”!

The joy, exiled to the coldest corner of the heart during the days of stressful labor in the living roda of the hospital, melted and flowed vibrantly through the capillaries of the body, lending a flush to the face and the whites of the eyes, freeing the tongue and the fraternal feelings for one’s “brothers” in the “holy” market’s roda of liberty and joy!

Later the jokes, sayings, and stories began; the songs and enchantments of the bohemian roda.

The happiness, which was initially manifested by the magic force of the word, from sound and tone, would soon repeat Genesis. The Axé of Logos, materialized by the ritual movements of samba de roda to the growing pandeiro beats arising from God knows where, the umbigadas,* the hits of meeting without misses, and the growth of each person’s internal heating, raised us to the celestial landscapes where happiness and harmony live.

⁹ Dr. Figueiredo, great sportsman, Bohemian, much-missed friend and assistant professor of Pathology in the Medical College...

* Umbigada is derived from umbigo (navel). It refers to a movement in which two dancers touch their bellies together. This is said to transmit the energy of the dance from one person to another, in the same way that a mother transmits nutrients to her unborn baby through the umbilical cord.

The force of Creation continued its natural evolution through the serpentine paths of the samba turns until, on the corner of some street, a berimbau and its player appeared, brought by the “spirit of santo amaro,” attracted by the smell of cachaça and by the rhythm of samba...

And, as in the legend of capoeira, by the magic of the elf that plays the berimbau, the samba roda gives a “turn around the world” and becomes a capoeira roda, where all of us, capoeiristas or not, swing and sway in collective dynamic ecstasy!

Paulo!

You gave a “turn around the world”

And “from that world”

You brought us “the scientific rigor”

“To the capoeira here.”

May Oxalá, the Creator of the World

Bring you “in return to this world”!

EIGHT OR NINE?

Dedicated to the student of Physical Education

When the Africans arrived in Brazil, they were required to receive the fundamental notions of Catholicism, since Christ and Catholicism were foreign concepts to them. They were prepared for baptism by catechism, by means of a “sequence” of fundamental precepts that are indispensable to the practice of the religion. Since a religion is a collection of precepts and ideas, the “basic sequence” of catechism is naturally composed of the precepts and ideas that will be combined by logic, coming to integrate the personality and guide the behavior of the future Christian. In a similar way, because capoeira is a ritualistic choreography foreign to eastern and western culture, catechism and baptism is done before the voluntary, spontaneous entry of the new student. The basic teaching sequence aims to transmit the indispensable basic movements that will be integrated into the global personality of each capoeirista, which will be manifested in his behavior under the toque of the berimbau.

The basic teaching sequence was the brilliant method that our Mestre, Bimba, created to transmit the movements used in the practice of capoeira from the most experienced capoeiristas to the newest capoeiristas. The sequence also instills and facilitates self-confidence, the ability to dodge danger, non-resistance, the notion of partnership and companionship, the prevention of accidents, the constant awareness of one’s partner’s movements, the appropriate reaction speed to one’s partner’s movements, and the development of the dodge and counter-attack.

Once the novice incorporates the fundamental movements¹⁰ that will be used in the practice of capoeira, he can be admitted into the congregation of capoeiristas by the “sacrament” of “baptism,”¹¹ in which the initiate leaves his previous personality behind (death) and begins a new

¹⁰ Gingado, gicá, cocorinha, pedido de arpão de cabeça (giro), negativa, meia-lua de frente, armada-solta, meia-lua de compasso, benção, aú, queixada, cabeçada, rolê.

¹¹ Which in capoeira is done by the first ritual dance under the command of the berimbau and the protection of the “godfather.”

life (rebirth or resurrection). He receives a new name, the *apelido* or *nome de guerra*,¹² and is accepted as a **new** or “**baptized**” student.

From the batizado onwards begins an endless learning, because each game adds to the practitioner’s experience and expands his resources of dodging, defense, and counter-attack by the establishment of new motor-reflex patterns. Because of this reason, the oldest practitioners of capoeira are the wisest, the cleverest, the most distrustful – and therefore, the most dangerous! – while remembering the proportions of physical limitation because of old age.

Since a sequence is just a collection of basic movements and maneuvers designed to teach these things primarily to those of a foreign culture (eastern and western), it makes sense that the indigenous people (Africans) do not need this catechism-like preparation of the basic teaching sequence, in the same way that a person born in a Catholic cultural environment goes to the baptismal bath without learning the catechism; the religious process is ensured by the religious preparation of the parents and godparents.

Besides the fundamental sequence, we have the complementary teaching sequences,¹³ the floreio sequences and the throws, the sequences of self-defense, the specialized sequences of ground training, ad infinitum.

Pastinha used to say that there are only seven basic blows of capoeira angola... but each one of these can generate seven... and each one of the seven generated by the first can generate seven more... and thus seven times seven we can arrive at infinity! Jesus Christ also said that we should not forgive just seven times, but seventy times seven! **He did not complicate things** by saying four hundred and ninety times! For these reasons, **it does not matter whether there are seven or eight sequences!** The important thing is that the novice learns the main movements that allow him to play capoeira (to the rhythm of the berimbau, obeying the ritual of the roda) **without fear and without exposing himself to the danger of accidents.**

“Enough talking... let’s play capoeira!” Bimba would say!
“And the rest is no longer with me...” Pastinha would say!

THE CONTRADICTIONARY STATEMENTS OF BIMBA’S STUDENTS

All are right...
...and all are wrong...

Bimba’s words should always be analyzed inside their context, with their temporal components (the environment at the time), social components (the people involved), and personal components (mood, dislike, dissimulation, bait, etc.) of Bimba.

The concepts, definitions, and nomenclature used by the Mestre varied a lot.

In order to understand Bimba, it is necessary to have lived, studied, and situated the fact in the environment of the moment in order to rationalize and conclude.

¹² Called *djina*, in candomblé.

¹³ Such as the sequence to teach the entrance in vingativa, and the sequence of throws (known erroneously as “desprezada”).

When in a bad mood, or when he did not like the questioner, or simply because he was hurried or distracted, the Mestre sometimes shortened or changed his response. He also often purposely responded incorrectly so as not to reveal what he did not want to or should not reveal to a person who did not deserve it.

Only in this way can we understand the information that the toque of Santa Maria is the hymn of capoeira, as if there was one... or the negation of the use of Cavalaria as a toque of the hard game and restriction of its use to a toque of alert...

The list of blows and the rules of practice affixed to the wall of the “academy” also changed a lot...

Deeply interested in capoeira’s origin like all initiates in its practice, I always heard from Bimba that it was an African warrior fight, specifically from the slaves originating in Angola, given their tradition of bravery.

Ever since my first times in Bimba’s roda, I researched the relationship between candomblé and other African cultural phenomena, because candomblé seemed to me to be the origin of many African manifestations.

The greatness of Nature and Man’s extreme dependence on her natural resources and changes leads to the worship of natural phenomena and of the elements of its landscape, animals, vegetables, and inanimate objects, to which are lent powers, intelligence, and will.

The association of religion with all human activities in primitive societies – above all music, rhythm, and dance, the primary manifestations of Personality – is well-known.

Among the Africans, social unity rests upon rhythm and melody. Percussion and song unite individuals and create the unity of the group, coordinating work, festivals, and the worship of the Invisible Lords that command natural phenomena, such that each man reflects the feelings that Nature instills in him by her manifestations of power.

It is thus that in African cultural systems – which are perhaps the oldest of the current life cycle – candomblé is the fulcrum around which the many human, religious, productive, and sentimental (festive or funerary) manifestations – including capoeira – turn.

Bimba believed and promoted, with Cisnando’s support, the warrior origin of capoeira; this was a result of the bellicosity of both men. However, specific African terminology of capoeira is not known.

During all the years that I enjoyed familial and academic intimacy with the Mestre, I did not observe the approximation of capoeira, a secular activity more associated with alcoholic libations than with religious rituals, with the practice of candomblé.

Until the party in Camilo’s house in November 1946 (?), there was no combined exhibition of candomblé, samba, and capoeira. The profit earned from the demonstration for the neurologists and psychiatrists in congress “filled the eyes”... and the pockets... of the Mestre, who gladly accepted the new source of income.

This is the origin of the association with the customs of candomblé *terreiros* developed later by the Mestre, in the South, to attract tourists...

Since the Mestre intended to use candomblé as an additional source of income, he began to introduce the practice of its rituals in association with capoeira, like the act of cleansing the environment with incense before playing capoeira, or attracting the attention of the passers-by with the divinatory reading of shells...

The *Salve* introduced by Mestre Senna as a greeting¹⁴ was adopted, despite the Mestre having suggested to me the terms “*Xuba*” or “*Axé*,” of African origin, during the studies for the sporting regulation of capoeira.

Jesus informed me that Bimba had told him that his father could do a backflip in the mouth of a box of soap, while I learned that this ability belonged to Mestre Bentinho. Ezequiel states that Bimba named the toque of “Santa Maria” as the “hymn” of regional and that “Cavalaria” was not used for the game, only as a warning...

The examples and citations would be infinite and tiresome... it remains only to appreciate and select carefully those which seem most coherent and constant with logic, history, tradition, and which fit in the current context, abandoning pointless questions and discussions.

WARM-UP FOR CAPOEIRA BY CAPOEIRA

Dedicated to Prof. Hélio J.B.C. de Campos, “Xaréu.”

In the academy’s early days, under the influence of the recently-arrived Cisnando, Bimba allowed obedience to the parameters of an official warm-up.¹⁵ He did this in the interest of giving a certain air of dignity to that legally prohibited activity of African origin, thus facilitating access to the prejudiced dominant class in Salvador, which was an attractive market for the rewarding teaching of capoeira.

Bimba soon perceived that the aerobic warm-up was superfluous and it was progressively abandoned soon after my enrollment in his course, being replaced by the basic sequences and the sequences of throws.¹⁶ Eventually, Bimba acquired the authority to declare, with the support of Cisnando and myself, the prohibition of the aerobic warm-up. This also allows more time for the prolonged practice of capoeira.¹⁷

The “warm-up for capoeira by capoeira” begins with the first chords of the berimbau, which stimulate the autonomous nervous system, producing the reflexive dilation of the veins in the peripheral muscles, thus preparing the body for sporting practice.¹⁸

In the same way that the candomblé ceremony begins with the atabaque rhythms and samba begins with the pandeiro beats, in capoeira the training should begin by the berimbau rhythm,

¹⁴ Itapoan informs us that the “*salve*” was suggested by André Lacé

¹⁵ The French school at the time.

¹⁶ The sequence of throws initially made up part of the strength training and later was added to the basic training. It was developed from escapes from holds in Greco-Roman wrestling.

¹⁷ Some of the more clever students developed personal systems of training with movements originating from capoeira, such as Ruy Gouveia, José Grande, Decânio, and Hélio Noronha, among others.

¹⁸ Thoughts, like dreams and hypnotic states, unleash in the central and peripheral nervous system physical processes that are identical to those produced by exercise visualized in the mind. This makes it possible to attain technical improvement through meditation.

which is the mystical and musical root of the movement in this Bahian game. The sonorous energy of the berimbau creates the energetic environment into which the body and spirit dive to experience the “*capoeira trance*.”

Whenever I arrived late at the academy, exhausted from my work at the hospital, and asked Bimba’s permission to be excused from the training – to just watch – I received a sarcastic tut-tut... he already knew! After a few minutes of hearing the sonorous magic of the berimbau, especially in his musically enchanting hands, my exhaustion gave way to euphoria... soon I would be there in pants and t-shirt, vibrating with enthusiasm in the middle of the roda, happy and pleasant like a child in the festival of Cosme and Damião!

A few minutes of listening to the berimbau toque, with or without the accompaniment by pandeiro and/or song, leads us to the vibratory field of the capoeira universe, where we can transform all our fantasies into movements and disperse our worries and stress through the choreography.

Thus, I firmly believe that we can enrich our reflexes by means of the *ginga* under a slow berimbau rhythm, from which point we can do the basic movements, in individual or partner practice.

Some of the more important movements, like the *cocorinha*, the *pinto*, the *giro de cintura*, the *negativa*, the *discóbolo*, *beijo nos joelhos* with stretching of the Achilles’ tendon, the jumping of the **Tutsi**,¹⁹ the *aú*, the *pedido de arpão de cabeça*, and the *queda de rim*, should be practiced in an isolated and repeated manner in order to develop perfection.

Final Considerations

The advantages of this practice are evident:

- There is no loss of time with exercises that do not have a direct link with the capoeira game; instead, the class dedicates all the time for which the student is paying for the practice of his favorite sport exclusively to his training and pleasure.
- All the movements performed have a direct and fundamental relation to the capoeira game, acting specifically upon the parts of the body used. The movements also encourage companionship and the sense of interdependence, which are characteristic of our art and which impede the growth of aggressiveness.
- The slow rhythm allows the development of self-confidence, which is the only way for the two partners in a capoeira game to get close to each other. It also permits the detailed accompaniment of the movements and maneuvers executed, facilitating their memorization and adding to the training methods all the mental resources inherent to the human being.
- The exercises involve the whole body simultaneously while they concentrate the attention on a certain sector. This promotes the integration of the Being’s movements in a unique way and improves the necessary myoarticular instruments.
- The central and peripheral pathways of the nervous system, the mechanisms for performing the movements, and the respective mental control are improved by the execution of the very movements that we are trying to learn, facilitate, and make more agile.

Summarizing,

We perfect the mind while we warm up the body!

¹⁹ African tribe of Ruanda.

BELL-BOTTOM PANTS

One question in the head of a young capoeirista remained unanswered his whole life, until the day before yesterday... **Why did the old capoeiristas use bell-bottom pants?**

During my youth, I participated in the fashion of using wide-mouthed pants, since it was in style and I thought it looked good. Bimba used to say that the oldest capoeiristas used pants with mouths up to 28 centimeters wide, but he didn't explain the reason.

Time passed... at least fifty years! A few days ago, while I applied Laser rays to Sérgio Barbosa and spoke with Assuero Jesus about the relationships between capoeira, the sea, and the Navy, I heard the question: "Decânio! Do you know why sailors used wide-mouthed pants? The mouths of my father's pants covered his shoes! Do you remember that he was a Navy nurse?"

Before I could say no, Jesus, my colleague in Bimba's academy and a scholar of Afro-Brazilian things – especially of the origins and rituals of capoeira – continued describing what was going through his mind: "My father used 'bell-bottom' pants that were 26 centimeters wide. Since I thought they were ugly (the style of the time was straight-legged pants), I tried unsuccessfully many times to persuade him to reduce the bell bottom. Impressed with the persistence (or stubbornness?) of the old man, I sought to know the cause of such a silly thing."

He continued, "The old sailors used free, wide-mouthed pants because in case of a shipwreck, it was easier to take them off to use them as a life-saver." He added, "They tied a knot in the mouth of each pant leg and another in the waist, trapping air inside the pants, which could then be used as a life-saving buoy."

With the reason behind the pants explained, I concluded that it was another common detail between capoeiristas and sailors, reinforcing the link between them, and therefore also strengthening the thesis of the Bahian port origin of our capoeira. The loose pants of the sailors were more convenient for the capoeira movements than the straight pants of the era. The ability to free oneself of one's pants quickly, in order to use them as a life-saver or in any other manner, could be yet another resource in an emergency situation. There is also the possibility of disguising a weapon under one's clothes, attached to one's leg, which would be yet another surprise for one's opponent. It is fitting to remember that, coincidentally, the practitioners of other martial arts also use very loose clothing, but cut shorter.

DR. JOSÉ SOARES DE AZEVEDO – "MORENO"

He was the first Bahian capoeirista doctor in Paraná and the recipient of the disc of pandeiro and berimbau rhythms recorded by Mestre Bimba.

One rainy night after his graduation from Medical School in 1946, the recently-graduated and recently-married Dr. José Soares de Azevedo, "Moreno" by Bimba's baptism and my contramestre of capoeira, caught "Ita do Norte"²⁰ to go to Paraná. The passion and dream of his

²⁰The little "Itapura" in which my father had traveled around the coast of Brazil as the Onboard Medic

life, the brunette woman with the most beautiful green eyes, began to vomit upon arriving at the port. Everyone thought it was of nervous origin, but in reality the sickness was because of the little Bahian who would be born in Astorgas, Paraná. Soares moved there at my advice, under the invitation and sponsorship of my father, who opened the Santa Cecília coffee plantation within a league of the town headquarters.

Soares was **the first student of Bimba to move to Paraná**. He took with him a disc of recorded pandeiro toques, proof of the consideration he earned from the Mestre because of the second passion of his life: capoeira. The first passion was his wife Isa, the “Iúna” in whose rhythm he lived until death interrupted their game of love. Soares died suddenly in the doctors’ room of the “Casa de Saúde Santo Antônio” that he had constructed in Astorgas.

Another night – this time without rain! – Itapoan told me that in a capoeira meeting in the South of the country, some guy had asked about Decânio, friend of his late father, to whom his mother wanted to give a disc of pandeiro toques. They had marked a meeting for the following day. The place planned for the event changed and the meeting did not occur.

Even today, I hope to see again a great friend, my brother in capoeira and in the medical profession, in the figure of a son in which I hope to reencounter the same friendship that linked me to his father – to be able to embrace, solemn and contrite, he who was the light of his life and gave light to those who prolong his life by the eternity of love!

I believe that Soares, living in the memories of the capoeira games that we played together under the beat of the berimbau played by the Mestre, would have had just one destination for the disc, which Isa kept with honor and affection for half a century – the reliquary of the “Capoeira Memorial” for the adoration of all capoeiristas! I continue earnestly desiring the address in which I can reencounter Soares living and present in the lives in which he remained...

THE COMPLEMENTARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CAPOEIRA STYLES

The white man enters in Mestre Bimba’s regional course in order to learn how to fight using the physical abilities acquired by the capoeira practice, and allows himself to be enchanted by the capoeira game, unconsciously reaching the ludic capoeira of Mestre Pastinha through the “inside game” and Iúna. The black man dances the capoeira game of Pastinha, and develops reflexes, flexibility, strength, balance, and courage, instinctively acquiring a system of very efficient defense, based in the movements and reflexes acquired in the capoeira game.

Capoeira develops a circular, bi-polar process, corresponding to the dialectic system of the Yin-Yang theory, which states that the seed of evilness exists in every game and we find movements carrying the playful germ in every fight. In a similar way, while Mestre Pastinha emphasized the metaphysical, ethical, and even religious aspects of capoeira, concerning himself with the perpetuation of his work, Mestre Bimba dedicated himself above all to the pragmatic components, the legalization of its practice, and the perfection of its technique and its application to self-defense.

The complementation of the somatic foundation by the psychic fundamentals through the two currents generated by the creators of the “regional” and “angola” styles guarantees capoeira’s unity as game and fight. It also becomes the **“Brazilian way of learning to ‘be’ in the world”** to

which César Barbieri refers, opening an array of pedagogic and therapeutic applications whose limits are immeasurable.

IMPORTANCE OF THE COCORINHA IN THE CAPOEIRA GAME

Some practitioners of the *contemporary regional* style of capoeira have been prohibiting the use of the *cocorinha* during the capoeira game. The **voluntary** practice of crouching movements in a defensive reflex to attacks to points above the waist develops the central nervous connections of the defense reflexes. It also increases the velocity of the descent, the agility, the muscular strength of the legs, and the flexibility of the waist, thus preparing the athlete for wider, faster, more powerful movements. In *candomblé*, the mystical and musical root of capoeira, we find numerous movements in a curved and crouched position, combined with turns and leaps, which demonstrate the origin of the crouched position in capoeira.

The classic *cocorinha*, as practiced by Bimba – that is, with the soles of the feet on the ground – leads to the stretching of the muscles of the back of the leg. It also develops the power of the lower limbs, abdomen, back, diaphragm, and abdominal respiration. The repeated practice of the *cocorinha* develops, perfects, and makes more agile the characteristic dodging reflex of the capoeirista. It also allows the application of the *rasteira* and other counter-attacks initiated from a low position.²¹

The rising movements become faster and more powerful when they begin from low positions because the support on the ground and the greater trajectory increase the acceleration and the velocity, with proportional growth of the effective force.²² The spinning movements add centrifugal force, in the same way that David's sling knocked down Goliath by lending to the pebble a great velocity and consequently greater potency. The *rasteira*, the *meia-lua de compasso*, the low *cabeçada*, the crouched false-turn, *queda de rim*, *chapa*, *escorão*, *tesoura de costas*, *negativa*, the dodges richest in counter-attacks, are some of the movements that can be done starting from the *cocorinha*.

One defect that we are observing in the *cocorinha* is doing the movement on the balls of the feet instead of the full soles of the feet on the ground as Bimba recommended. Bimba's way, besides giving better support, produces stretching of the leg muscles, thus improving agility and flexibility of movements.

SPECIAL TRAINING OF CAPOEIRA REGIONAL MOVEMENTS

Dedicated to Cesar Itapoan.

Special training of the *negativa*

The beginning of *negativa* training is often accompanied by stress on the joints of the wrist and hand, given the lack of muscular strength and coordination needed to kill the impact on the ground, given the velocity of the descent. Bimba's chair method offers a method of progressive training of the descent and strengthening of the muscles and joints involved in the process. We

²¹ Like *meia-lua de compasso*, *boca-de-calça*, *baiana*, *tesouras*, *sapinho*, *martelo do chão*, *cabeçada baixa*, *cruzilha*, *quebra-perna*, etc.

²² Proportional to the square of the velocity.

stand next to a chair or bench, supporting one hand on its surface. We then extend the leg on the same side and we turn slightly in the same direction, while we progressively bend the other leg until we reach the ground with the side of the extended leg. We accompany the descent with the free hand in a sweeping movement defending the face. We complete the exercise by rising up on the bent leg, with the help of the support on the bench or chair. One should do this movement to both sides for symmetrical development, repeating it enough times according to the practitioner's physical capacity and the objective in mind.

Special training for backbends

Upon entering Mestre Bimba's academy, the backbend was carried out with the help of two companions. They gave each other their hands in order to form a bridge over which we launched ourselves backwards, planted our hands on the ground, and jumped backwards. The companions can help the maneuver with a light impulse. It is important that the support be done at the level of the sacral-lumbar joint, so that the center of gravity is placed there. The feet will make a circle around this point before landing on the ground.

Another method – a simpler method employed in the beginning of the practice – was to roll over the back of a partner, with one's arms linked in back, in a movement that we called “**ring of the bell.**” While the jumper makes the impulse to carry out the movement, the supporter helps by bending forward.

Another version very similar to this is practiced with the two participants seated on the ground, back to back, legs extended in the African way, arms interlocked in back. One of the athletes bends his torso forward, while the other launches his legs to turn over the back of his partner and land on the ground in front of him.

The Mestre also recommended using a strong branch, held by a person on each end, as support for backbends, an excellent method because it allows the helping impulse indispensable to many beginners. Sometimes it is necessary for someone to hold the beginner's legs as he initiates the turning movement of the body centralized on the sacral-lumbar joint and supported on the palms of the hands.

It is important to remember that it is essential to flex the neck backwards from the beginning of the turn. We should imagine that the neck is the point of support of the turn. Without the firm support of the arms a fall is inevitable... and dangerous!

I introduced the “**backbend bench**” around 1945 in order to supplement the methods used by the Mestre. The bench has the advantage of not requiring two companions for the training, but it does require one companion for the helping impulse. Approximate measurements for the construction of a bench for the training of backbends and backwards leaps: Height = 0.5 m, Length = 0.6 m, Base = 0.6 x 0.6 m, Seat = 0.2 x 0.6 m. The seat should be covered with a fixed cushion for more comfort, and should not offer any sharp or exposed corners.

Another method used in individual training is that of bending backwards with support against a wall, as well as the variation with support on the post of a doorway.

Special training of aú

The Mestre stated that the “aú” was not just a movement of dodging and defense. It was a movement capable of knocking away, a weapon held in the air by the attacker – whether a knife, razor, club, rock, or even a firearm – with one's feet during the turn. Besides this defensive

maneuver, one could also use it to hit the opponent's face. Faithful to this assertion, he recommended practice with the “**boneca**” in movement.

The “**boneca**” was a bag full of dirt, sand, or powder. It was tied up at the mouth, hung from a tree branch, and set swinging, and we had to hit it with our foot during the turn of the *au*. It's not as easy as it seems!

Another variation that we can use during the turn in the air is diverting a low offensive threat (*cabeçada*, *leque*, *espelho*, *rasteira*, etc.), or the bending of the legs over the abdomen and the impulse of the two feet, attempting to hit the opponent with a “**sapinho**” (movement similar to a kick with the two feet).²³

Instead of the **sapinho** we could use other blows of the feet, such as **ponteira** or **sola**. One variation is the **corte do au** (interruption of the movement in the same way) with a single or double **joelhada**, aiming to hit the opponent who is approaching, in attack with a **tesoura de costas**, for example. Defensive movements that could be used include a *rolê* or a turn on one of the arms in a dodging movement.

Special training of the *benção*

The “*Benção*” was practiced against a jack-tree trunk (like those used by butchers). The capoeirista had to train his posture, balance, and strength in order to knock over the trunk and if possible project it. The tendency during this blow, given the weight and stability of the trunk, is for the practitioner to fall backwards. The most efficient position involves having the planted leg lightly bent, the torso lightly leaning forward, the neck slightly bent forward, and the arms open. The attack leg should be bent in the beginning of the movement, enough to allow a violent impact of the heel on the target, which should not be pushed but instead receive the shock generated by the sudden extension of the leg. The pushing of the trunk can unbalance the practitioner backwards by the inertia of the trunk's mass (in the same way as the eventual opponent, if he has great weight or strength) besides minimizing the traumatic effect of the blow. Although it was not required by the Mestre, I believe that the indication of the target by a mark painted on the trunk lends better precision to the training.

Special training of *meia-lua de frente*

One partner extends his arm in front at an appropriate height, with his palm turned to receive the impact. The attacker strongly hits the internal side of his foot against the partner's palm in a *meia-lua de frente* movement, imagining that he is removing an imaginary weapon. According to Bimba, Galba – one of the first of the “**Filhos de Bimba**” class and later Professor of Gynecology in Fortaleza, Ceará – was an expert at this movement. With it, he could quickly remove a razor from the hand of anyone who threatened him with such a weapon, without hurting himself. Another training method is the individual practice with the “**swinging boneca**.”

Special training of the *meia-lua de compasso (rabo de arraia)*

Training with the chair or trunk

Training with the swinging *boneca*.

Training by trying to hit the extended hand of a partner (hitting on the palm of the hand, so as not to hurt as much).

²³ Also known as “*rabo de arraia*”.

Special training for a knife fight

The “**four-pointed cross**” attached by a cord of *timbira* on top and on the bottom in a piece of wood set in the ground.

We also trained it by the “inside game” practiced under the rhythm of Banguela or Banguelinha, with the simulation of a bladed weapon for use during the game by one or both athletes. The preparation of a simulated bladed weapon – whether a knife, dagger, or razor – should be careful, because they should be very blunted on the ends and dull on the edges.

During the specialization course, we used an old method in which one participant took the role of attacker and the other defended himself. The attacker carried a bladed weapon hidden in his jacket, placed somewhere outside the knowledge of the defender. Upon the Mestre’s whistle, the weapon would then be brought out and used in sudden attack. The participants were placed close to each other. The objective of the training was for the defender a) to prevent the drawing of the weapon by “**suffocation**”²⁴ and subsequent counter-attack to reduce the opponent to powerlessness; b) to take the weapon if the previous strategy failed.

Special training of galopante

The “galopante” was trained on trunks of banana trees, posts, stakes, etc.

The attack hand could be used:

- a) With the fingers flexed in claws, like those of a feline;
- b) With the fingers extended and spread, the wrist lightly bent, palm stretched, usando a as regiões tenar e hipotenar no impacto.

Note: Withdraw the arm immediately after hitting the target (without pushing) so as not to diminish the efficiency of the blow and also not to allow the opponent to grab your arm.

Training of the wrists

The training to strengthen the wrists was done by using a heavy ax to hit a mango tree (woven wood, in order to require greater effort to free the ax). The Mestre used to blunt the ax in order to increase the efficiency of the method. This practice was also advised to increase the potency of the galopante. Another method of strengthening the wrists is to jump or fall on the ground, catching oneself with the hands. Alternative method: apply repeated galopantes on a thick banana tree trunk.

Special training of the rasteira

A person who is very heavy, well-supported on the ground with the legs spread and supported by the armpits by another partner standing behind him, must be caught and lifted by the rasteira. This same method can be used for improving the “banda-traçada,” the “dourada,” and the “vingativa de laço” (expertly practiced by Dr. Cisnando). As an alternative, we can use a bar of wood or metal, or even a thick cord with us in order to make the catch easier, and the partner is secured with the hands in order to avoid the fall. In a similar way, we can put a strong sack full of sand on the ground, which must be dislocated by the **rasteira, dourada, vingativa, banda-de costa, or banda traçada.**

²⁴ To grab the attacker, immobilizing his arms against his body and then throwing him violently to the ground.

Special training of aú with rolê

During the turn of the aú, ask a partner to attack your face, and dodge with a rolê. The rolê can also be done during the end of a meia-lua de compasso in order to dodge an attack to the face. It can also be trained by rolling in defense from a vingativa or simply in the final phase of the “**discóbulo**” movement, turning in the air to land on the ground supported on one’s hands, as in the exercise of “**support on the ground**” or in a “**tesoura de costas.**”

Special training of grappling and ground fighting

The special exercises for grappling and ground fighting aim to develop one’s strength and movements for freeing oneself from the immobilizations and locks that could occur during a fight. In the “**vestir casaco**” the attacker lays down on top of the victim who is on his back on the ground and ties the arms of the victim as someone who wears a coat. The exercise consists in the attacker to lift himself up carrying the burden (the victim, who tries to stay on the ground). The victim can also turn to the side and, supporting the hands and knees on the ground, try to stand up with the burden. In the “**saída de colar de força**” the victim, on foot, trapped by a “**colar de força,**” aims to free himself by shaking the attacker side-to-side and up and down. In the “**rolamento de cobra,**” the victim lies on the ground and the attacker, on foot, unleashes blows with his feet or with a club. The victim aims to escape these attacks by rolling around on the ground. In the “**saída de gravata cinturada baixa,**” the victim, crouched and immobilized by a gravata cinturada baixa, jumps into a bridge aiming to twist the attacker’s arm and thus free himself from the “*prison,*” as our Mestre used to say. In the “**ponte de costas,**” the two partners sit back to back, the attacker in normal position and the victim with his head down, with the arms interlocked, and the victim tries to jump in a bridge over the attacker. In the “**saída de presilha de coxa**” one of the participants laying on the ground applies a “**presilha de coxa**” or “**chave de rim**” while the victim tries to escape by squeezing the attacker’s thigh with his elbows, on a very painful point located in the middle third of the internal face of the thigh over the muscle.

THE GAZE OF THECAPOEIRISTA

Dedicated to Esdras “Damião”

“In the act of the fight, all the attention is concentrated on the eyes of the contenders, because an unforeseen blow, a false advance, or a negative retreat could give one of them the victory.”²⁵

Introduction

When I started to practice *regional*, Mestre Bimba advised us to keep the *opponent* under visual control, aiming to avoid directly looking at his eyes or any region in particular. We were supposed to observe always in a disguised manner, *sideways*,²⁶ thus avoiding that the objective of our attack movement be given away by the direction of our gaze. In academic language, it was advised to use peripheral vision, which is the only type of vision capable of seeing the partner as

²⁵ Querino, Manoel - “A Capoeira” in “Costumes Africanos no Brasil”, Biblioteca de Divulgação Científica, vol. xv, pág. 272. Civilização Brasileira, S.A. - Editora. Rio de Janeiro, 1928.

²⁶ Out of the corner of one’s eye, obliquely, laterally, in peripheral vision

a whole as well as the environment. The understanding and application of the principles described above require basic notions about vision and its mechanisms.

Visual field

Visual field is the whole space visible by the eye in a given moment.

We determine the **horizontal limit of the visual field** by a simple method:

1. Look directly forward, focusing on an imaginary point in infinity;
2. Put one finger directly in front of the eye, with the arm extended, and move the finger laterally in the horizontal plane until it disappears in the exterior limit of the visual field;
3. Repeat the maneuver on the other side, and determine the angle encompassed by the two eyes.

Central and peripheral vision

The observer's attention can be focused on the central area of the visual field, or it can aim to embrace the field in its totality. The fixation of the vision on a determined area brings about an increase in the clarity of this area and an evident reduction in one's perception of the rest of the space. By controlling the natural tendency to fix the gaze on a certain object, especially a shiny object,²⁷ it is possible to maintain perception of the whole peripheral visual field. This allows the operation of the **reflexes of accompaniment of moving objects**²⁸ selected subconsciously by an order of the will (the mental posture of the player or fighter), despite the apparent reduction of the clarity of the objects.

This subconscious selection of the objects in movement in the peripheral visual field is a fruit of the mental attitude of the capoeirista, which should be defensive or dodging in order to use the opportunities of counter-attack during the frustrated attacks of the adversary. Peripheral vision is used by spiritualists and parapsychologists in the training in order to visualize the energetic aura that surrounds all beings, living and inanimate. The possibility of foreseeing the intention of the adversary is an additional advantage of the use of peripheral vision, since mental phenomena bring about changes in the aura. These changes can be perceived subconsciously by the capoeirista, instantaneously unleashing the movements of dodging, defense, or counter-attack.

The voluntary concentration of the vision on the central field makes the operation of the **reflexes of accompaniment of moving objects in the peripheral visual field** more difficult. The capoeirista's clever gaze – peripheral, lateral, out of the corner of his eye – which avoids looking directly at the object of interest (**central vision**) is the practical application of **peripheral vision** in capoeira.

Ocular Movements

Of interest for the capoeiristas, we distinguish among the ocular movements those which allow the fixation of the vision, voluntarily or involuntarily, on a certain area of the visual field. Shiny points involuntarily attract the focal (central) vision; this is what makes it difficult to see the street at an intersection at night. Objects in movement in the visual field, especially shiny objects,

²⁷ The use of shiny objects, deceptive movements, sounds, shouts, or other actions that attract the opponent's attention can help to distract him and make the attack easier. This is why floreios are important in capoeira.

²⁸ See the concept of **following movements** in the next section, entitled **ocular movements**.

provoke “**following movements**” – the eyes automatically accompany their trajectories. These subconscious following movements of objects in motion in the peripheral visual field allow the true **gaze of the capoeirista**... distrusting... crafty... suspicious... lateral... but alert, ready for dodging or counter-attack!

The expectation of the dodge, predominant in the behavior of capoeiristas, **helps the installation of defensive reflexes** of dodging or flight in response to movements capable of threatening his stability or physical integrity. These dodges are **complemented by counter-attacks**, appropriate to the opening in the opponent’s defense. Dodging has a fundamental importance in the capoeira game, in contrast to the bellicose predisposition that attributes relevance to the attack movements and blows. In the game in attitude of dodging, the counter-attack is natural, unconscious, and instantaneous,²⁹ and infallible without us having to choose the target.

Technical considerations and final tactics

During the capoeira game we must obey Pantajali’s recommendation to Yoga practitioners: keep the eyes unfocused and directed straight towards the infinite. Runners also adopt a similar vision in order to maintain a wide step, since focusing on the ground at a close point causes a short step. The ideal is to gaze towards the infinite, parallel to the horizon. When driving a vehicle, staring at a point right in front of the hood damages one’s reflexes of adaptation to the road.

The capoeirista must have a notion of the adversary as a whole, since the attacks can arise from any part of his body, in any movement or attitude, and at any moment. Focusing the vision on a certain region, even if it is on the eyes of the opponent, impedes one’s global (peripheral) vision, which is the only form of vision capable of simultaneously perceiving the adversary’s whole body, the movements of his various limbs, and the neighboring space. The concentration of one’s attention on a fixed point brings about an immobilization reflex of the neck in the direction of the object. This is incompatible with the permanent mobility of the capoeirista. It slows the development of the dodging and counter-attack movements, and damages the spontaneity of the subconscious movements and maneuvers that occur and embellish the game of capoeira.

A more experienced capoeirista can deceive his partner by simulating, with his eyes, interest in a certain point (false target) in order to divert the partner’s attention from the true objective (true target) in mind.

The central area of the retina is responsible for “tubular vision,” and if one continually uses it, it blocks the reflexes of following moving objects in the observer’s visual field.³⁰

The daily, continuous, practice of capoeira movements in slow rhythm develops complex reflexive maneuvers of dodging, defense, and counterattack, initiated by the subconscious capturing of the opponent’s movements in the athlete’s visual field. **Maneuvers that form the fundamental structure**, let’s call it the skeleton, **of the capoeirista’s self-defense** only occur in the absence of the permanent and voluntary fixation of his attention on a fixed point. The exercise of capoeira evidently increases the transit of signals through the nerves and logically improves the functions of the brain as a whole. **Since training helps the transmission of information, capoeira obviously improves cerebral functioning.**

²⁹ It occurs in hundredths of a second, because a reflexive act is faster than a voluntary and conscious act.

³⁰ Involuntary fixation accompanying the opponent’s movements.

The observation of training teaches us that the frequent repetition of the gestures makes the execution of the movements easier, turning them agile, light, and elegant, increasing the velocity of the reflexive response and of the execution of the movement itself. It is a continuous phenomenon that often passes unnoticed, since in the beginning progress is quite slow and only later the full effects are realized.

Capoeira is thus transformed into an instrument of perfecting the cerebral functions that make Man God's most beautiful creation in our animal world. "In a world that God wanted to be beautiful!" our Mestre Pastinha would say...

The considerations above indicate the advantages of the use of the capoeira game in the treatment of mentally impaired people.³¹ It could also be extended to the physical preparation of pilots in order to better manage the enormous and complex control panels of modern planes, as advocated by Sergeant Esdra Magalhães, "Mestre Damião," an airman by convenience and capoeirista by vocation...

HUMAN BEHAVIOR, SONOROUS VIBRATION, AND RHYTHM

Dedicated to Prof. Penildon Silva.

In Yoga we perceive the importance of the mantras... the ancient Greeks attributed to Logos the power of organizing Chaos... in Genesis we learn the force of the Word capable of creating the Universe and Life. It was no different in Ancient Africa!

The Africans, upon deifying their ancestors and worshipping them with different rhythms linked to or representative of their behavior, discovered fundamental subconscious categories that were independent of cultures and religions – the human archetypes, which they called orixás.

The "BEING," when exposed to rhythmic sonorous vibrations coming from atabaques, enters into harmony with these vibrations and comes to manifest his consonance in ritual movements. Everything occurs as though the musical content of the candomblé toques was affecting the vibrational level of the central nervous system, especially the brain (held as the center of consciousness) and reaching the corresponding levels or individual archetype. It comes to dull the consciousness and leads to a transitional state in which the "BEING" comes to manifest attributes of the archetype in ritual movements, through circuits genetically recorded in the structure of his central nervous system.

It is essential to have knowledge of the doctrine and ritual of candomblé, as well as of the African genetic component for the synchrony with the rhythm of the corresponding orixá, since we already see the so-called "incorporation" of African entities in Europeans in the first contact with the "exhibition" of candomblé music, even outside the religious context. During the time in which I worked as the "presenter" of Mestre Bimba's "folkloric show," I observed that some of the audience members entered into consonance or harmony with a certain rhythm while not being influenced by others. I attributed this to the organic correspondence of the toque to the archetype of that person, to his way of behavior on a subconscious level.

³¹ Whether congenital or caused by head injuries acquired in life.

In capoeira, the ijexá rhythm, especially played by the berimbau, brings the human being to a vibratory level, capable of manifesting, in a spontaneous and natural way, patterns of behavior representative of the personality of each Being in all his neuro-psycho-cultural fullness, integrating genetic, anatomic, physiologic, and cultural components, as well as the effects of experiences lived in the past and present. All capoeiristas are familiar with the capoeira trance, although not all of them perceive it – a state of extreme euphoria, and of integration with the other personalities of the participants in the same event, leading one to the execution of acts above the capacity considered “normal.”

It can be considered a transition state in which there is not a total loss of consciousness, but there is a liberation of reflex movements, a reaching of potential, and an amplification of each “BEING’S” field of vital influence. It is interesting to note that in other members of the “cultural family of capoeira” (samba de roda, maculelê, afoxé, frevo, among others) we find similar transition states in which people surpass their “normal” limits. There’s no other way to find senior citizens parading in a “samba school” or dancing frevo...

Thus each capoeirista develops a personal style, representative of his “SELF,” manifested in an unpredictable manner in each game and in each instant of each game. Depending on the archetype of each practitioner or mestre, the present historical moment, and the context in which it is occurring, capoeira can assume many aspects – playful, choreographic, sporting, competitive, fight-like, educative, corrective, therapeutic, etc. In the same way and for the same reasons, each berimbau player manifests his personality in the tuning of the instrument, rhythm, musical pace, vocal tone and content of his singing. Similar reasons create the identity of each roda and the multiplicity of styles, and make joy and the liberty of creation fundamentals of capoeira. Since capoeira is the Liberty and Happiness of each “BEING,” capoeira does not fit and cannot be enclosed in static regulations and concepts, nor can it be made a prisoner of interests that are mean, commercial, or of any other nature.

Capoeira offers an infinite range of motor, behavior, and musical representation; therapeutic, pedagogical, martial, and sporting applications; besides physical, mental, and behavioral priming of each practitioner.

Each one of us creates a personal, transitive, and changeable capoeira, evolving, processing, like all the other human values. It can be imitated but never reproduced in clones, like an industrially mass-produced product identical in all its details.

It is interesting to study the symbolism of the constituents of human personality in the Yoruban art that indicates at least the notion of level of consciousness. Among the Yoruban peoples, the consciousness (exterior personality) is represented by the crown of the head (*ile ori*), while the inner personality (*ori inu*) corresponds to the subconscious and unconscious and is symbolized by the *ibori*, a small saliency on the highest point of the crown.

REGARDING BAHIAN CAPOEIRA

To all the Mestres who have been lost in the mists of the Past!
They are humbly anonymous, like the slaves that fertilized our fields with sweat and blood;
however, they remain eternalized in the rituals of capoeira.

Concept and definition

Bahian capoeira is a dynamic, choreographic process, developed by two partners, characterized by the association of ritual movements, executed in synchrony with the **ijexá** rhythm, ruled by the berimbau's toque, simulating intentions of attack, defense, and dodging, at the same time exhibiting ability, strength and self-confidence, in collaboration with the partner of the game, each one aiming to demonstrate his superiority over his companion.

The choreographic complex is developed starting from a basic movement called the **ginga**, from which the rest of the movements arise in an apparently spontaneous and natural way, but with a disguised objective of making the partner admit his inferiority. Among the most important characteristics of capoeira, we distinguish the freedom of creation, the strict obedience to the rituals, the preservation of traditions, the worship of the ancestors, and the respect of the oldest ones as repositories of the community wisdom.

CAPOEIRA, BROAD SENSE AND NARROW SENSE

While I analyzed that which I observed during my whole life, and the historical documents about capoeira, some **unanswered** questions sprung to my mind:

- Why don't the old descriptions of capoeiras in Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco, Alagoas, and Sergipe refer to *capoeira rodas*?
- Why don't the old drawings show the berimbau ruling the practice of capoeira in Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco, Alagoas, and Sergipe?
- Why does the capoeira of Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco, Alagoas, and Sergipe involve the concept of *malta*?³²
- Why is there the frequent association of capoeira with fights and disorder in Rio de Janeiro?
- Why don't we find descriptions of the *ginga*?
- Why don't we find in the past frequent references to capoeira in Minas Gerais and São Paulo?
- Why don't we find capoeira in the residual quilombos found in interior Brazil, especially if we consider capoeira as a form of fight and resistance in the conflict between slaves and the dominant class as some historians and sociologists do?

On the other hand, the capoeira in Bahia presents some special characteristics:

- Practiced under the reign of the berimbau;
- Found on the margins of the Paraguaçu river and not in the interior of the state;
- Intimately linked to candomblé (by the rhythm of Logun-Edé and the Yoruban accent, as well as to its brothers of musical root, *batuque* and the sambas de *chula* and *corrido* – respectively from Santo Amaro da Purificação and Cachoeira);
- Endowed with characteristic ritual;
- Associated with *capoeira rodas*, formed on Sundays, holy days, and days of traditional popular festivals;

Because of this, **we believe that there are two concepts for the term capoeira.**³³

- **Broad sense**

³² Paulo Coêlho Araújo, final thesis conclusions (see the end of this chapter).

³³ Without considering the etymological linkage of the term to birds or to underbrush.

Encompassing the fight-like styles of African roots (*ngolo?*)³⁴ including the styles of *urban* capoeira practiced in the old times in the slums of Rio de Janeiro and in Pernambuco, Alagoas, and Sergipe.

- **Narrow sense**

Referring to the *capoeira game* – Bahian costal or port capoeira, originating in the Bahian Recôncavo; later unfolded in the *regional* and *angola* styles and spread throughout Brazil and the World.

We find a similar opinion in the following passage:

Universidade do Porto, College of Sports and Physical Education Sciences; CAPOEIRA: The transformation of a warrior activity into a playful activity – Dissertation presented for a doctoral degree in the area of Sporting Sciences, especially the Anthropology of Sports – PAULO COELHO DE ARAÚJO

“FINAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Regarding the conclusions of the study in question, I present in the context of chapters 2, 3, and 4, references regarding their most significant topics, therefore considering them partial conclusions. I recognize that there are some things in these partial conclusions that merit highlight, which I will outline:

- 1) The existing theories about the name of Capoeira still do not present consistent enough fundamentals to be established as clarifying this subject;
- 2) It is evident in the existing documentation that there is a certain generalization of the association between the individuals called *capoeiras* and the effective practitioners of the martial art of Capoeira, though this generalization is not pertinent in all the cases;
- 3) The name of the martial art identified by the denomination Capoeira arose, basically, from the association made by the scholars of this subject during the course of history between the martial art and the individuals who received the nickname of *capoeiras* – stubborn evildoers – generating, therefore, a situation that goes from the whole to a part and not from a part to the whole, as was stated in another study;
- 4) The expressions of Capoeira in the nineteenth century effectively bear witness to the dangerous character of this activity. This competes to consider Capoeira a form of martial art, whereas it has historically been considered an expression of playful character;
- 5) The actions, the characteristics, and the weapons attributed to the individuals who practiced the exercises of physical agility and skill, in the course of Brazilian history, were never shown to be exclusive to these

³⁴ In personal conversation with Mestre João Pequeno, he affirmed the existence of this martial art in Angola, but without reference to the term capoeira, which is unknown there.

people, however, it contributed decisively to frame them as effective marginal delinquents of the colonial and imperial periods;

6) The gangs of *capoeiras* did not necessary represent associations that were exclusively of individuals who practiced the art of Capoeira, contrarily to what has been spread in the bibliographies that discuss this subject;

7) The documentary and bibliographic collection known today does not offer concrete evidence of the presence of Capoeira during the eighteenth century, whether as a warrior expression or as an expression of self-defense;

8) Despite the previous statement, the references to Capoeira in the beginning of the nineteenth century, framing it as the *game of capoeiras* and identifying specific blows, can favorably suggest the presence of Capoeira in the eighteenth century – though these references do not indicate the nature of such Capoeira;

9) Despite its identification with the word *game*, there is no evidence whatsoever during the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century of Capoeira having been an expression of playful character;

10) The art of Capoeira was transformed into the playful matrix with the characteristics known today only during the twentieth century, and as a result of linguistic and political-social factors;

11) During the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, there was no presence whatsoever of musical instrumentation obligatory and inseparable, of rhythm-melody patterns (toque) and specific poetry, and of ritual in the scope of Capoeira;

12) Only around the 1930s were the musical, oral, instrumental, and ritualistic elements introduced, inherent and specific to the practice of the Brazilian martial art;

13) Studies of a scientific and even technical nature about the distinct plural expressions that emanate from Capoeira are rare, this being true in any of the scientific areas but particularly in the area of Sporting Sciences.

After the presentation of the items in the partial and final conclusions, I recognize it to be urgent that professionals and scholars of the scientific areas promote studies about the subject of CAPOEIRA, about whatever of its emanations, since it is a cultural expression of great significance for Brazilian society. This will retake the art from the process of adaptation in which it finds itself at the moment because of the

propaganda of folkloric nature widely spread inside and outside the country. This, in my view, competes for the installation of the unconditional acceptance of truths and histories regarding this subject that assume, today, airs of incontestable truths.”

Origin

Capoeira is a complex process arising from the fusion of various factors, of diverse origins:

1 – African

- a) From **candomblé** we inherit the **ijexá** rhythm and the **fundamental ritual movements**;
- b) From the **Yoruban** culture we receive accent and the **tonal rhyme** at each three stanzas;
- c) From the **Bantu** culture, which provided the **berimbau**;³⁵

2 - European (Portuguese)

- a) The use of improvisation (**chula**) and of the **viola**;

3 – Brazilian (Bahians and indigenous people)

- a) The nomenclature of the movements,
- b) The motifs of the songs (common literary-philosophical basis),
- c) The ritual,
- d) The teaching methods,
- e) The modifications of pronunciation and meaning of the terms used in the songs,
- f) Elements of the **batuque of the caboclos**.

Capoeira is African?

The response is obviously positive – YES. Although it was not born in Africa, it could never have existed without the presence of the Africans and the encounter of Africa’s different cultures in Brazil. It’s the true liberation of the Negro, the expressive victory of his culture over the enslaving culture, the proof of equality among men, the path that leads us from the savagery of slavery to the true Christianity of equality and fraternity among men!

The following passages from Mestre Pastinha, selected and commented on by Decânio in “The Heritage of Pastinha,” clarify some of the topics above.

1.10.6 - ..."capoeira does not have blows"...

"Why do they say that capoeira does not have blows? If capoeira does not have blows, then the caboclos did not fight, the Nago people did not improvise in batuque, in the dance of candomblé. Batuque is fight, candomblé is turning the body around. As they say: ginga, my son, to free yourself from the claws of the aggressor. And the rest is no longer with me."

(21b,21-23;22a,1-6)

Pastinha leaves it very clear in these lines, above all between the lines, the cultural root of capoeira. Candomblé taught the ginga, the dodging, the cleverness, the mandinga, the game of the body.

1.5.1 - ... “capoeira is the second fight?”...

³⁵ See the section on musical instruments.

...“Capoeira is the second fight? Because the first is that of the caboclos, and the Africans joined with dance, parts of batuque and parts of candomblé, and sought their style.”
(13b,1-7)

Here is an important historical detail, a direct reference to the roots of capoeira, the dances of candomblé and of batuque. It derived from the movements and the rhythms of candomblé, especially because in batuque – a dance with traumatic, violent tripping movements, considered ambiguously dance and fight – it was expressly prohibited to use the hands! The mestre also cites the dance of the caboclos – a Brazilian element, indicator of the Brazilian origin of capoeira!

1.5.5 - ..."where did capoeira come from"...

"When they ask me where capoeira came from, I respond I don't know, because the mestres of my time don't say. Capoeira has lots of improvisation; there are capoeiristas on all the beaches and in all the parishes."...
(14a,5-9)

The disappointment of not having found capoeira in Angola during his trip **“to show the capoeira of Brazil!”** confirms the fact that the mestres of his time – the beginning of the twentieth century – ignored the art's origin. The fact that capoeira is not known in Africa reinforces the theory of its birth in Santo Amaro da Purificação, Bahia, in the port area, in a way similar to maculelê in the sugarcane fields! Another relevant fact – **“there are capoeiristas on all the beaches”** confirms the coastal presence of capoeira. This contrasts with the lack of oral references to nuclei of capoeiristas outside the maritime and river area – a precious gem for future researchers!

Evolution

The primitive game of capoeira, the **game of capoeira**, playful, prohibited by the dominant class, was modified in the 1930s by Manoel dos Reis Machado, Mestre Bimba, assuming the form of the martial art that received the name of Luta Regional Baiana, aiming to escape the legal framing and serving as a fundamental for a system of self-defense. With the support of the federal government, the Luta Regional Baiana was initially accepted as a national sport, and capoeira is today officially recognized as such by the Olympic committee, and is in the stages of final regulation.

The majority of the mestres stayed, however, faithful to the old rites and, under the leadership of Vicente Ferreira Pastinha (Mestre Pastinha), came together and founded in 1941 the Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola, which is the origin of the current denomination of capoeira angola and of angoleiros.

These two forms, initially limited to Bahia, were spread throughout the country and later throughout the whole world.

The descendents of Mestre Pastinha created the “Associação Brasileira de Capoeira Angola,” a national association with the aim of bringing together the public and private entities of this style.

Capoeira, officially organized under the form of state federations, associations, leagues, clubs, academies, and other gatherings, has come to present cultural and sporting events and be the object of academic studies on the regional, national, and international levels. These institutionalized forms of capoeira, however, are not the only ones found today. The informal

practice of capoeira in public squares and popular festivals is common, under the aspect of folklore or “street capoeira.”

Movements

All the possible movements of the human body are admissible in the capoeira game, as long as they are performed starting from the *ginga*, in concordance with the *toque* of the *berimbau*, framed in the ritual, and do not involve the risk of injuries or moral damage to the partner, to the participants, and/or to the audience.

The capoeira movements are classified in various ways:

- a) Fundamental and derived movements;
- b) Simple movements and maneuvers;
- c) Movements of dodging, fleeing, attack, counter-attack, and throws;
- d) Blows, flourishes, and defenses;
- e) Movements of entry, of exit, of request or *chamadas*;
- f) Basic or teaching sequences, sequences of throws, special sequences (self-defense, acrobatic, etc.)

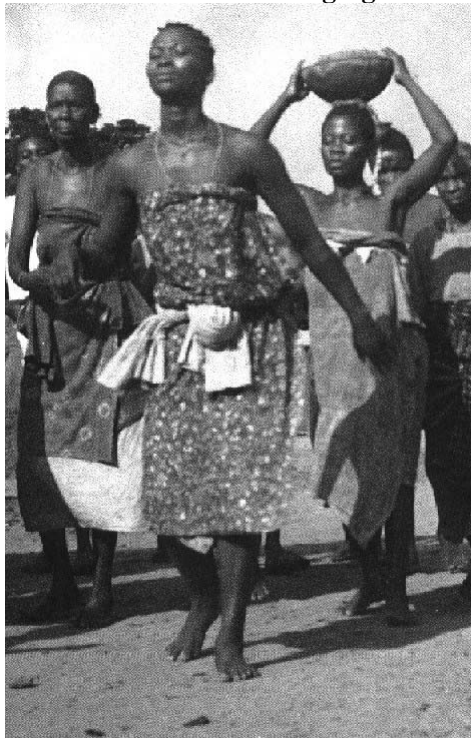
The photographs below are African,³⁶ of movements of *candomblé*. Can't they receive Brazilian, Bahian captions, of the low game in capoeira?



³⁶ From Pierre Verger



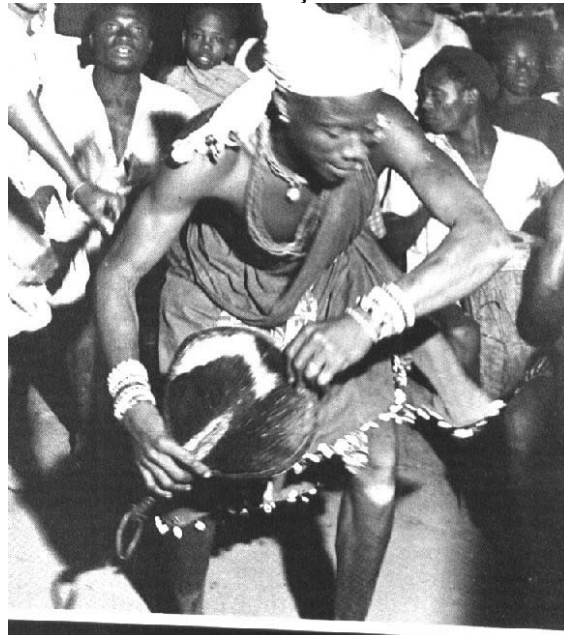
Introduction to the ginga?



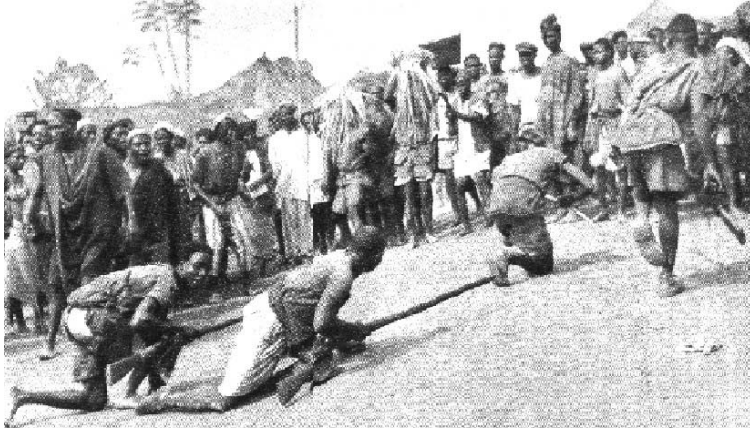
The ginga of Mané Rozendo?



What's coming next – an armada solta, meia-lua de compasso or pedido de arpão de cabeça?



**Course of Specialization?
Ambush in the Chapada do Nordeste de Amaralina?**



Samba de roda?



Beautiful ginga step, isn't it? Evolution of maculelê?



Training the ginga in a group



Ambush?



Step of frevo? Maculelê?



**Beginning of the turn of pedido de arpão de cabeça?
Or of armada solta?**



Godemi?



Game of Iuna?



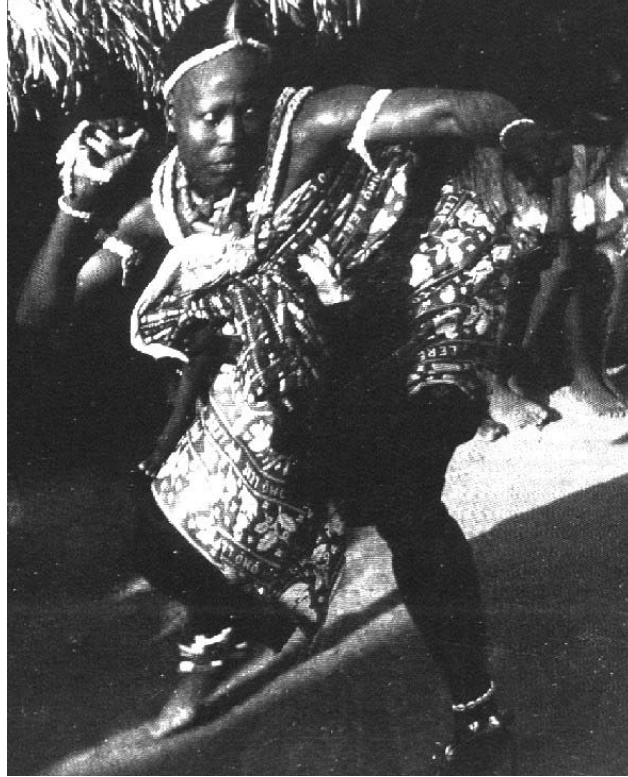
Step of the low game? Iuna?



**Step of frevo? Evolution of maculelê?
Club game in the specialization course?**



**Careful! Is he going to do a martelo?
A flourish preparing a meia-lua de compasso?
A ponteira? A benção? An eye poke?
Or just the beginning of pedido de arpão de cabeça?
Armada solta?**



Machete game? Maculelê?



A turn in frevo?
A jumping and turning meia-lua de frente?



**A galopante of contempt? Cotovelada? Cutila?
Martelo with the left leg? Escorão with the right leg? Benção? Preparation of an armada
solta? Of a meia-lua de compasso?**



The difference is in the context in which the movements are inserted. In the ritual of candomblé, the movements manifest the personality, the attributes, of the Orixá, obeying the toques of the atabaques. During the ritual dance of capoeira, under the command of the berimbau, the capoeirista tries to demonstrate his technical superiority, disguising his true intention or simulating a false intention so that the other player will only perceive the true intention too late, when he can no longer get out of the trap into which he was led by the ritual movements of his partner.

Music

In practice, capoeira is ruled by the rhythm of its orchestra, in a similar way to candomblé. The characteristics of the various toques acquire a fundamental role, complemented by the chorus and the clapping of the group of players and watchers.

The slower, calmer rhythms are preferred by the angoleiros, who are more linked to the African traditions and to the playful aspects of capoeira, which is mainly considered a game of abilities, choreography, and technique. Practitioners of capoeira regional, on the other hand, like the fast toques, which accentuate the bellicosity inherent to the concept of fighting, which is the final objective of this latter style.

The main toques are, according to Bimba's nomenclature: Cavalaria, Santa Maria, São Bento Grande, São Bento Pequeno, Banguela, Amazonas, Banguelinha, and Iuna. It is fitting to mention

that each mestre adopts his own nomenclature and gives his personal hallmark to the toques yet without discharacterizing them. This reflects the influences of the personality of each mestre, as well as his tone of voice and his tuning of the king-instrument (the berimbau).

Instruments and orchestra

The instruments used in the orchestra of capoeira rodas well express the cultural hybridization that produced the art.

The **berimbau** is a single-stringed instrument originating from the Bantu people. The Bantus were culturally and geographically separated from the Yoruban culture, from which we inherited the **ijexá** rhythm, the **accent**, and the **tonal rhyme in the third verse** found in the songs of the mestres.

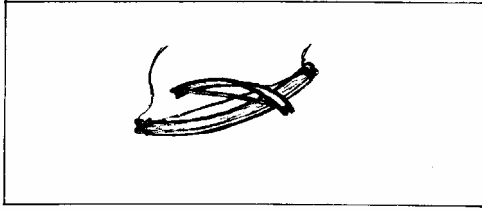
Cesar "Itapoan," an old companion of capoeira, observed that the African photographs of berimbaus don't use the caxixi to mark the beat. This fact is confirmed by Verger's photographs, in which the berimbau player holds only the percussion stick, except for one picture taken in Ruanda in which the stick passes through a small round gourd, in which little rocks form a rattle that marks the rhythm. Assuero "Jesus," another student of Bimba and researcher of capoeira in African lands, found a great variety of this instrument, used without caxixi, among other small differences.

Thus the caxixi appears to be an indication of the Amerindian contribution in the genesis of the capoeira orchestra, given the ability of our indigenous people in the skill of working with straw and baskets. According to the ethnomusicologist Ricardo Panfilio de Souza, the Africans used as a rattle an instrument of woven straw similar to the caxixi but bigger.

According to Verger, the use of a species of bamboo as the verga of the berimbau is common among the Africans, as I saw in some of his photographs. Some contemporary mestres have adopted this practice. Instead of the dobrão (so dear to Mestre Noronha) the Africans used pebbles to modulate the notes of the instrument.

Indigenous Berimbau 1

Ribeiro, Berta G. - Dicionário do artesanato indígena, p.197
1988, Ed. Itatiaia Ltda/Edit. da USP, B. Horizonte.



Arco de boca. Índios Kaiwá, M.N. nº 33.644. Esc. 1:7,5.

ARCO MUSICAL (*Musical bow, i.; arc musical, f.; arco musical, e.*)

Def. Vara flexível curvada em arco, com uma corda amarrada aos dois extremos e uma caixa de ressonância. É tocada com um bastão, percutindo ou friccionando; ou então vibrada com as unhas ou palhetas, ou, ainda, soprada.

T. Gen. Cordofone (02)

T. Rel. Arco de boca

BASTÃO MACIÇO DE RITMO

Def. Vara maciça de madeira leve, com ornato

Ribeiro, Berta G. – Dictionary of Indigenous Artisanry, p. 197. 1988, Ed. Itatiaia Ltda/Edit. Da USP, B. Horizonte.

Mouth bow. Kaiwá Indians, M.N. number 33.6444. Scale: 1:7.5

MUSICAL BOW

Definition: Flexible branch curved into a bow, with a cord fixed to the two ends and a resonance box. It is played with a stick, either hitting or rubbing; or vibrated with the nails or a piece of straw, or even blown.

Indigenous Berimbau 2

Apito de cerâmica. Índios Tukúna, M.N. nº 33.475. Esc. 1:1.

Representa um tracajá.

Ribeiro, Berta G. - Dicionário do artesanato indígena, p.197
1988, Ed. Itatiaia Ltda/Edit. da USP, B. Horizonte.

ARCO DE BOCA (*Arc musical à bouche, f.*)

Def. Arco musical. A caixa de ressonância, que amplia o som, é a boca do executante. Ele segura a vara entre os dentes ou deixa vibrar a corda na abertura da cavidade da boca com a vara voltada para fora. A corda é friccionada por outro arco, de pequenas dimensões (no caso do exemplo abaixo). Embora de difícil aprendizagem, é comum entre os Kaiwá e outros grupos indígenas.

T. Gen. Cordofone (02)

T. Rel. Arco musical

Bastão ma
1:20. A.
Detalhe da

BASTÃO
rythme, f

197
Instrumentos musicais

Ribeiro, Berta G. – Dictionary of Indigenous Artisanry, p. 197. 1988, Ed. Itatiaia Ltda/Edit. Da USP, B. Horizonte.

MOUTH BOW

Definition – Musical bow. The resonance box, which amplifies the sound, is the mouth of the player. He secures the branch in between his teeth or allows the cord to vibrate in the opening of his mouth with the branch turned towards the outside. The cord is rubbed by another bow, of small dimensions (in the case of the example below). Although difficult to learn, it is common among the Kaiwá and other indigenous groups.

The viola, used in the samba de chula, samba de barravento or samba santamarensê, of the same musical family as capoeira, cited by Mestre Pastinha as being used in the old times, is a trace of the Portuguese chula, while the **reco-reco**, **xequerê**, and **agogô** belong to the African lineage. The **pandeiro**, of gypsy origin, is another element that indicates the multicultural origin of the capoeira orchestra. The **agogô** is an excellent marker of the beat, as Mestre Moraes uses it appropriately – without stealing the primacy of the berimbau, as the atabaques tend to do in contemporary orchestras. The **xequerê**, used with discretion, enriches the orchestration and helps in keeping the rhythm. The **reco-reco** is another excellent marker of the beat, and was used a lot by Mestre Pastinha.

Concepts and terminology in capoeira songs

The composition of the stew that gave origin to this complex poly-cultural manifestation is indicated by the presence of a series of elements of diverse origins, such as:

- a) Capoeira's link to the ijexá rhythm;
- b) The clearly Yoruban accent in its lingo;
- c) The Bantu component of the berimbau;
- d) The profile brought by the movements of candomblé (the trace of unity among its different cultures) and the interlaced expressions, of clearly African origins;
- e) The Yoruban style of its songs;
- f) The literary-philosophical content of its stanzas;
- g) The Portuguese participation through the traces of the chula;
- h) Pastinha's reference to the Amerindian component ("the batuque of the caboclos");
- i) The Catholic traces from the association with religious festivals, the presence of allusions to Christian deities, the ladainha as a part of the ritual, etc.;
- j) The reference to facts and occurrences of the port zone of the Bahian Recôncavo, without much approximation to the day-to-day life in Africa;
- k) The presence of the caxixi;
- l) The absolute dominance of the Portuguese language, despite the modifications that we euphemistically call "the capoeira dialect".

Each mestre has his own style of playing and singing, modifying the theme and content of the songs, which then come to identify each roda by its literary-philosophical cultural foundation. The short improvisation or chula, trace of the popular Portuguese dance of the same name, is especially important in this process. Besides this, we find as song categories the corrido, the quadras, and the ladainha.

The content of the songs generally makes up part of the repository of the community to which the roda belongs, or of the repository of the roda itself. The songs are freely chosen during the roda and contain references to facts and historical persons. They can also include commentaries of philosophical character linked to popular wisdom, sayings, and axioms. They may praise the qualities of the leader of the roda, relating his origin or referring to modern or historical facts, people, or occurrences.

The singing style in capoeira emphasizes the tone of the vowels over the correct pronunciation of the consonants, thus acquiring the sound of a mantra in harmony with the tone of the berimbau. In capoeira angola, the song and the sound of the berimbau are based in a monotone tune, in which the presence of the refrain is similar to the ladainha – of a smooth, peaceful, extremely captivating character, allowing slower, more relaxed and controlled movements of great beauty.

In the regional style, the more accelerated martial rhythm gives greater velocity to the movements, turning them more aggressive, of reflexive and instinctive character, and requiring greater distance between the partners.

The ritual of the capoeira roda classically begins with a laudatory introduction in the same way as the oriki: singing the glorious deeds of one's ancestors in capoeira (mestres), of one's birth land or of the current site of the roda itself, and thanking or requesting protection from God and/or from the saints and orixás. This initial song was called **chula** by Mestre Bimba in the 1930s. It is then followed by the **corridos**, **ladainhas**, and **quadras**, giving a sequence to the spectacle. The integration of the audience to the community of the capoeira roda is done by their participation in the song of the "chorus"³⁷ and by their accompaniment with clapping. These components are indispensable to the transformation of the "roda" into an all-encompassing vibrational entity.

According to the style and the temperament of the mestre and, therefore, of the roda, there is a clear preference for the smoothness and slowness of the ladainha (predominant among the angoleiros) or for the heat and velocity of the corrido (more to the taste of the regional practitioners).

Chula*

It is the short "improvisation" of introduction or identification, derived from the Portuguese chula from which it inherited the name, and corresponding to the African **oriki**, sung by the singer in the opening of his composition. It generally includes the identification of the singer, of his mestre, of his birth city or of the current locale. It often praises the singer's mestres, his origin, the city, historical facts, or some other element of the roda's cultural foundation. It may exalt the ancestors or allude to natural beauties. It makes references to typical sayings, axioms, phrases, and expressions of the cultural environment or specific to the roda.

In general the chorus responds when the singer solicits a response, by indication or insinuation, with a refrain particular to the group, established on purpose by tradition, or adopted in the moment. Frequently the singers use the chula as an introduction to the corridos and the ladainhas, during which the refrain to be sung by the chorus is suggested or indicated, as we see clearly in the examples of Paulo dos Anjos and João Pequeno in the respective topics. In general the chorus responds when the leader solicits a response by indication or insinuation, with a refrain particular to the group, established by tradition, or adopted in the moment.

Examples:

Mestre Moraes –

A história é mentirosa...
Diz tudo pelo contrário...
Diz até que abolição...
Aconteceu no mês de maio...

History is deceitful...
It tells everything contrary...
It even says that the abolition of slavery...
Occurred in the month of May...

Mestre Bimba –

Nu dia em qu' amanheçu
Dentu di 'tabaianinha
Homi num monta a cavalu...
Mulhé num deita galinha...
As freira qui 'tão rezandu...
S' isqueci da ladainha!

On the day that I get up
In Itabaianinha
Men do not mount their horses...
Women do not care for the chickens...
The nuns who are praying...
Forget their litany!

³⁷ Refrain.

* Make sure to read the "Translator's Note on Song Format" after reading these sections!

Mestre Paulo dos Anjos –

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Igreja do Bonfim.... | Igreja do Bonfim... |
| Mercadu Modelu... | Mercado Modelo... |
| Ladêra du Pelourinho.... | The slope of the Pelourinho... |
| I Baixa du Sapatêru... | And the Baixa dos Sapateiros... |
| Falá na Cidadi Auta... | I speak of the Cidade Alta... |
| Êu me lembrei du Terreiru... | I remember the Terreiro... |
| | |
| Igreja de São Franciscu... | Igreja de São Fransisco... |
| Ê Praça da Sé... | And the Praça da Sé... |
| Aondi fica as baiana... | Where the Bahian women... |
| Vendendu acarajé | Sell acarajé... |
| Por fala ‘Inhtapuã... | Speaking of Itapuã... |
| Lágôa du Abaité, Camaradin’... | Abaeté Lagoon, Camaradinha... |

Corrido

The corrido is short phrases, inter-cut by refrains without an obligatory link to the singer’s words. Corridos have an accelerated rhythm, stimulating the fast game. They are preferred among the followers of Bimba. The name itself is reminiscent of the acceleration of the rhythm that characterizes it,* together with the nexus between the leader’s verse and the chorus’ refrain, which repeats the verse partially or totally. The leader uses verses of simple, short, frequently repeated sentences, and whose combination is used as a refrain by the chorus of the roda.

The content of the passage sung can be taken from a quadra, from a motto, from a ladainha, from a corrido, or from the communal literary-philosophical foundation of the roda or social group. The differentiation however only appears clearly when listening to the group,³⁸ because the same content can be sung in one or another category according to the voice, rhythm, beat, and acceleration that the singer, orchestra, chorus, and clapping, besides the structure itself, lend to the passage. The concept and definition of corrido are very clear upon hearing João Pequeno sing the short introduction and the verses of the corrido found on his CD...

Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão!

| | |
|--|---|
| E agora vou cantar | Now I will sing |
| Um corrido que fiz para meu netinho... | A corrido that I made for my little grandson... |
| Meu netinho é muito gordinho | My little grandson is very fat |
| Eu apelidei ele de Bujão... | I gave him the nickname of Bujão... ** |
| Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! | |
| Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! | |
| Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! | |
| Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! | |
| Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! | |
| Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! Ô Bujão! | |

* The word “corrido” derives from “correr” – to run.

³⁸ For which it’s essential to repeatedly listen to the discs of Mestres Valdemar da Paixão, Traira, Cobrinha Verde, Pastinha, João Grande, João Pequeno, Moraes, Bimba and Caiçara.

** *Bujão* is a short and squat cylinder of gas.

Ladainha.

The ladainha has a slow, relaxed rhythm, such as in the prayer of the same name in the Catholic Church. The chorus repeats the refrain independently of the passage sung by the leader. This form of singing is preferred by the descendants of Mestre Pastinha. The content of the ladainha corresponds to a long prayer or message, unfolded and related in short stanzas cut by the same refrain.

Examples:

Mestre Paulo dos Anjos –

Um dia eu fui numa roda...
Um mulequi me chamô para jogá...
Eu qui sô disconfiadu...
Mas fiquei bem de parti a reparar...
U qu'istava escrito na camisa...

Er' um tá di Bizôru Mangangá..

Êê... Êáá...

Era uma tá de Bizouro Mangagá...

Er' um tá di Bizôru Mangangá...

Mas...u qui estava escrito na camisa...

Êê... Êáá...

Er' um tá di Bizôro Mangangá...

Êê, Êá...u qu'istava escrito na camisa...

Er' um tá de Bizôru Mangangá..

Êê... Êáá...

Er' um tá de Bizôru Mangangá..

Êê... Êáá...

Mas...u qui estava escrito na camisa...

Er' um tá de Bizôro Mangangá...

Ê...Sai...sai... Catarina...

Ê... Saia de lá e venha vê Idalina...

Sai... sai Catarina!

Catarina minha nêga...

Sai... sai Catarina!

Catarina venha cá...

Sai... sai Catarina!

Mas.. ô... qui sódadi danada

Sai... sai Catarina!

Ai meu Deus...

Si num vié... vou ti buscá...

Sai... sai Catarina!

Custi lá u qui custá...

Sai... sai Catarina!

Ê... Saia de lá e venha vê Idalina...

Sai... sai Catarina!

Ê... Saia de lá e venha vê Idalina...

Sai... sai Catarina!

Ê... Saia de lá e venha vê Idalina...

Sai... sai Catarina!

Ê... Saia de lá e venha vê Idalina...

Sai... sai Catarina!

One day I went to a roda...

A kid called me to play...

I who am distrustful...

I stayed on the side to watch...

What was written on his shirt...

It was a certain Besouro Mangangá

Leave... leave, Catarina

Leave from there and come see Idalina

Leave... leave, Catarina!

Catarina my black woman...

Catarina come here...

What damned nostalgia

Oh my God

If I don't see you, I'll search for you

Whatever it costs

Leave from there and come see Idalina

Ê... Saia de lá e venha vê Idalina...

Sai... sai Catarina!

Quadra

The quadra is a short stanza of four uninterrupted verses, of variable content, sometimes making joking references to a companion or to facts or legends of the roda. They are short verses, whether improvised, traditional, or repeating lightly modified passages of songs already known by the members of the roda. The rhyme is predominantly tonal in the Yoruban manner, with exaggeration of the vocal inflections. Depending on the toque and the flow of ideas, it can be prolonged by a greater number of stanzas. It generally ends with a call or warning to the chorus, of the type: **Camará! Volta do mundo Aruandê! Aruandi!** among many others

Examples:

Mestre Paulo dos Anjos –

Tudo de Deus é grande...

Deus dá com a mão fechada...

u pouco com Deus é muito..

I u muito sem Deus é nada...

Everything from God is great...

God gives with a closed hand...

A little bit with God is a lot...

And much without God is nothing...

Chorus or refrain

The refrain sung by the practitioners is the open door for the participation of the audience and its integration in the field of sonorous vibration in which the trans-personal process of capoeira unfolds, which demonstrates its importance.

Interspersed expressions

The singers frequently mark the closing of a passage (similarly to punctuation) with ritual shouts or elocutions, some with clearly personal characteristics. In candomblé, Ogun is acclaimed as “Owner of the World” – “**Oguniêê**” (from **Ayiê**, which means ‘world,’ by elimination of the initial ‘a’). This is the origin of the shout of the more or less prolonged “**Iiiêêê**” of personal vocal diction – it is a habitual component, whether as introduction or final punctuation. From the fall of the “**Yii**” we arrive at **Eêê!... Eêáá!...** in the voice of Paulo dos Anjos. We also find this in the greeting of Oxalá: “**Ê-ê-ê Babá!**”

From “**Ayiê**” is also derived the expression “**Volta do mundo**” used to authorize the beginning of the turn (or round) in the game of capoeira. It is a phrase that has become an indispensable and characteristic element of capoeira rodas. “**Aruandê!**”, “**Aruandi!**”, “**Camará!**”, “**Camarandin!**”, and “**Anquin-dé-Rei!**” are among other phrases most used by our “classics.”

Final Comments

When I arrived in Bimba’s roda I found the Mestre speaking about the chula as the initiation or opening of the songs. I believe that because of our (the students’) ignorance of the meaning of the term **chula** and of his (the Mestre’s) incapacity to explain its origin, Bimba assumed the use of the generic name **quadra** given the similarity of its structure with this category of verses.

Mestre Bimba generally began with a quadra, which in my opinion occupies the space of the chula, and continued with a corrido, or ladainha in accelerated rhythm (easily confused with the corrido because of the rhythmic acceleration; conserving, however, the structure of the ladainha). Often the Mestre separated the corridos or ladainhas by singing quadras, like chulas.

In order to disguise the origins of his “Luta Regional,” founded in the (prohibited) game of capoeira, from the suspicious eyes of the dominant class, Bimba modified the structure of the musical foundation, excluding the praising of the ancestors, which is so characteristic of African culture, thus escaping the arguments against the creation of the LRB.

On Pastinha’s CD we find a poetic introductory dissertation, laudatory in the manner of the oriki, in which he identifies himself to the listener.³⁹ This is developed into a musical foundation of the type of chula sung by João Pequeno, a resource adopted by those who appeared later in the musical field.

TRANSLATOR’S NOTE

I feel the need to comment on these last few pages in order to avoid confusion, since the current and widely accepted song categories are quite different from those that Decânio describes. His sections on the corrido and quadra are accurate, but the sections on the ladainha and chula are not. I don’t know whether Decânio made a mistake or whether the names have simply evolved in recent decades. Here are the common definitions of ladainha and chula as of today (2005):

Ladainha

A long solo with no chorus response; the ladainha begins the roda. During it, the players do not play; they remain crouched and listening at the foot of the berimbau. The ladainha may even be sung by one of the players who is about to enter the roda. Typically, only the berimbaus (and sometimes also the pandeiros) play during the ladainha; the other instruments join in during the chula/louvação. The ladainha typically recounts history, tells a myth, or transmits some sort of message. They can range from only a couple lines to over 20. Some examples:

Mestre Pastinha

| | |
|--|--|
| Iê, maior é Deus (2x) | Iê, God is great |
| Pequenho sou eu | I am small |
| Tudo que eu tenho, foi Deus que me deu | Everything that I have, God gave to me |
| Na roda de capoeira | In the capoeira roda |
| Grande pequeno sou eu, camaradinha | I am a great small person, comrade |

Mestre Moraes

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Iê | |
| A história nos engana | History deceives us |
| Diz tudo pelo contrario | It tell everything contrary |
| Até diz que abolição | It even says that the abolition of slavery |
| Aconteceu no mês de maio | Occurred in the month of May |
| A prova dessa mentira | The proof of this lie |
| É que a miséria não sai | Is that the misery doesn’t go away |

³⁹ An “improvised cleverness,” according to his manuscripts.

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Viva vinte de novembro | Long live November 20th |
| Momento pra se lembrar | Moment to be remembered |
| Eu não vejo no treze de maio | I see nothing in May 13th |
| Nada pra comemorar | Nothing to commemorate |
| Muitos anos se passaram | Many years passed |
| O negro sempre a lutar | The black man always fighting |
| Zumbi é nosso herói | Zumbi is our hero |
| Em Palmares foi senhor | He was the lord of Palmares |
| Pela causa do homen negro | For the cause of the black man |
| Foi ele que mais lutou | It was he who fought the most |
| Apesar de tanta luta | Despite so many battles |
| O negro não se libertou, camará | The black man was not freed, comrade |

Chula (also known as Louvação)

The chula immediately follows the ladainha and consists of single lines sung by the leader alternated with the chorus response, which repeats the leader's line beginning with "iê" and ending with "camará." It can be as few or as many lines as the leader wants. The lines of the chula vary depending on the message that the leader wants to send, but the chula is usually praise/tribute (this is what louvação means). The object of the honor may be a geographical location, a historical person or saint or orixá, the group's mestre/lineage of capoeira, one or both of the players, etc. Below are examples of how the chula might progress:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Iê menino é bom | Iê, the boy is good |
| Iê, menino é bom, camará | Iê, the boy is good, comrade |
| Iê sabe jogar | Iê, he knows how to play |
| Iê, sabe jogar, camará | |
| Iê faca de ponta | Iê, a pointed knife |
| Iê, faca de ponta, camará | |
| Iê sabe furar | Iê, knows how to pierce |
| Iê, sabe furar, camará | |
| Iê viva meu Deus | Iê long live my God |
| Iê, viva meu Deus, camará | Iê, long live my God, comrade |
| Iê viva meu mestre | Iê long live my mestre |
| Iê, viva meu mestre, camará | |
| Iê quem me ensinou | Iê who taught me |
| Iê, quem me ensinou, camará | |
| Iê a capoeira | Iê capoeira |
| Iê, a capoeira, camará | |
| Iê é de Angola | Iê it's from Angola |
| Iê, é de Angola, camará | |
| Iê volta do mundo | Iê turn of the world |
| Iê, volta do mundo, camará | |
| Iê que o mundo deu | Iê that the world gave |
| Iê, que o mundo deu, camará | |
| Iê que o mundo dá | Iê that the world gives |
| Iê, que o mundo dá, camará | |