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Dancing, fighting, and staging capoeira:
Choreographies of Afro-Brazilian modernity and tradition

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Culture and Performance

by

Ana Paula Höfling

2012

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Dancing, fighting, and staging capoeira:
Choreographies of Afro-Brazilian modernity and tradition

by

Ana Paula Höfling

Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Susan Leigh Foster, Chair

This dissertation analyzes capoeira's choreographies of Afro-Brazilian modernity and tradition throughout the twentieth century: from the "national gymnastics" proposals of the 1920s to the Capoeira Angola/Capoeira Regional split in the 1930s and 40s; from capoeira's participation in Bahia's tourism industry in the 1950s to the adaptations of capoeira for the international stage in the 1960s and 1970s. By using movement analysis to revisit iterations of capoeira previously dismissed as cooptation, de-Africanization, and "loss of character," I identify previously overlooked processes through which capoeira's Afro-diasporic "traditions" were tactically re-articulated through the hegemonic discourses of modernity.

Conversely, by considering Capoeira Angola as more than a static "survival" of a capoeira practiced in an imagined past across the Atlantic, I acknowledge both the modernity and the creativity of those responsible for choreographing "traditional" capoeira. Rather than reproducing the binaries that accompanied the development of twentieth century capoeira—

tradition/modernity, rescue/loss—I historicize these very binaries and propose a mutually constitutive relationship between them.

In this dissertation, I trace the alliances and antipathies between some of the most influential capoeira innovators of the twentieth century—Samuel Querido de Deus, Bimba, Pastinha, and Canjiquinha—and members of Bahia’s artistic, intellectual and administrative elite, such as Édison Carneiro, Jorge Amado, Hildegardes Vianna, and Waldeloir Rego, in refashioning a marginalized and criminalized activity into one of the centerpieces of Bahia’s cultural tourism industry. I extend my analysis to the emergence of folkloric shows for tourists which, in addition to capoeira, included maculelê, samba de roda, and dances from candomblé. Among the dozens of folkloric ensembles that sprung up in Salvador during the late 1950s and early 1960s, I focus on three of the most influential: Mestre Bimba’s Folkloric Ensemble, Mestre Canjiquinha’s shows sponsored by Salvador’s Tourism Department, and Emília Biancardi’s *Viva Bahia*, the folkloric ensemble that introduced capoeira to the world in the mid 1970s.

The Dissertation of Ana Paula Höfling is approved.

Andrew Apter

Sally Ann Ness

Janet O'Shea

Susan Leigh Foster, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing parents Anna Maria and Gilberto, and to
Vinícius, the youngest capoeirista in the family.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my partner Valerie, and to our feline family members
who kept me company throughout the writing process.

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- 2008 Review of *Capoeira and Candomblé: conformity and resistance through Afro-Brazilian experience*, by Floyd Merrell. *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45 (1): 222-223.
- 2007 “Celebrating November 20th: agency and defiance in the construction of memory in capoeira angola.” Proceedings from *Choreographies of Migration: Patterns of Global Mobility, Congress on Research in Dance 40th Anniversary Conference*, Barnard College, New York, 2007: 90-94.
- 2007 “Performing capoeira angola’s tactics of deception in the *chamada*.” Proceedings from *Rethinking Theory and Practice, 30th Annual Society of Dance History Scholars and Congress on Research in Dance Conference*, Centre National de la Danse, Paris, 2007: 358-362.
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Introduction

In 1992, shortly after moving to the United States from Brazil, a bout of homesickness drew me into a capoeira school in my neighborhood in Berkeley, California. The *mestre* (master teacher)¹ at that school, Mestre Acordeon, happened to be none other than a disciple of one of the great capoeira innovators of the twentieth century, Mestre Bimba (1900-1974), the architect of the style known as *Capoeira Regional*, a “modernization” of the practice that paved the way to its decriminalization in 1940. Around the early 1930s,² Bimba began teaching a codified capoeira style known for its efficiency, which allowed students to graduate in as little as six months. By 1937, Bimba’s “improvements” to capoeira had earned him a state-issued certificate recognizing him as director of his Center for Regional Physical Culture, an official recognition considered today to mark the de facto decriminalization of the practice.

After graduating from the University of California at Berkeley, I continued practicing Capoeira Regional intermittently, as a complement to my dance training. In 1998 I was introduced to the “traditional” capoeira style, *Capoeira Angola*, and moved to New York City to study with Mestre João Grande, a disciple of the mestre credited with safeguarding capoeira from the alleged losses brought about by Bimba’s modernization— Mestre Pastinha (1889-1981). In the early 1940s,³ Pastinha vowed to watch over capoeira’s traditions as director of the Capoeira Angola Sports Center, a school that, by the 1960s, renamed Capoeira Angola Academy, attracted not only students, but also tourists, anthropologists, folklorists, and members

¹ All Portuguese-English translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

² Matthias Röhrig Assunção has noted that Bimba himself gave contradictory statements about when he started teaching Capoeira Regional. In 1953 he affirmed beginning in 1933, and in an interview in the 1970s, he stated having begun in 1928. Matthias Röhrig Assunção, *Capoeira: a history of an Afro-Brazilian martial art* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005), 134.

³ According to Pastinha’s manuscripts, this took place on February 23rd, 1941. Vicente Ferreira Pastinha, “Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserêr,” in *Manuscritos do Mestre Pastinha* (Salvador: Raimundo César Alves de Almeida's private collection, c.1952-1957), 5-6.

of the local intellectual and artistic elite, who gathered to watch demonstrations of the “original” capoeira.

After leaving New York in 1999, it wasn’t until I returned to Brazil in 2005 that I resumed my capoeira angola practice, this time studying with Mestre Jogo de Dentro in my hometown, Campinas in the state of São Paulo.⁴ Having decided to immerse myself in the practice, I attended classes and “jams” (*rodas*) five times per week, intent on becoming an *angoleira* (a practitioner of capoeira angola).⁵ I quickly discovered that my hybrid training in both the modern and the traditional capoeira styles, rather than an advantage, was in fact a handicap: if I were to become proficient in capoeira angola, I had to shed my embodied knowledge of capoeira regional.

As I began learning this new movement style—moving with control and fluidity, slowly, close the ground, my knees always bent, my arms aching from supporting the weight of my body as I repeatedly sank to the ground dodging imaginary kicks—I began unlearning my previous capoeira training—fast, whipping circular kicks at the height of my opponent’s chest, quick evasions to the side or to the back, and open, expansive cartwheels. Not only were the two styles seemingly incompatible, it was clear that the capoeira angola community frowned upon any influence from a style considered to have distanced itself from its African roots, a practice that had lost its “character.”

In this dissertation, I use my own embodied capoeira practice, in both the “traditional” and the “modern” styles, as a point of departure in my search for the routes and roots of the

⁴ Mestre Jogo de Dentro (Jorge Egídio dos Santos) is a disciple of Mestre João Pequeno (João Pereira dos Santos), a student of Mestre Pastinha of the same generation as João Grande. Mestre João Pequeno taught capoeira angola in Salvador, Bahia until his death in 2011.

⁵ I have chosen to maintain the capitalization of the terms Capoeira Angola and Capoeira Regional when referring to the styles taught by Pastinha and Bimba, following the convention at the time of these mestres’ activity. I will use lower case letters when referring to capoeira angola and capoeira regional as umbrella terms for these two styles, regardless of lineage.

division of capoeira along the binaries tradition/modernity, Africa/Brazil, “folk”/erudite, and retention/loss. However, my experience as a capoeira practitioner for the past twenty years is neither the object of my analysis nor my methodology. As I began my inquiry into the differences between these two styles, I realized that an ethnographic approach, based on my own participant-observation experiences in the present, was not enough. To get to the roots of the debate over the “roots” of capoeira, it became clear I had to look to the past. Only through archival research would I be able to become better acquainted with the two “great figures” of twentieth century capoeira, Mestre Bimba and Mestre Pastinha, and understand, but also move beyond, the mythology that transformed these two black working-class men from the northeastern state of Bahia into symbols of Brazilian modernity and tradition, respectively.

My initial research questions pertained to the angola/regional split: Exactly when, how, and why capoeira became divided? Was capoeira regional indeed a modernization of capoeira angola, or were both styles twentieth-century “invented traditions”? What were the markers of tradition and modernity at the movement level? When did the capoeira historiography become almost obsessively focused on the contributions of the two “founding fathers” of these two styles, Bimba and Pastinha, and how did they respectively come to symbolize the modernity and tradition of capoeira?

In the following pages, I zoom in on the transformations in capoeira at the movement level, from the late 1920s until the mid 1970s—broadly the period of activity of both Bimba and Pastinha—while zooming out from their personal histories and innovations to include the contributions of other capoeira practitioners (such as Anníbal Burlamaqui, Canjiquinha and Samuel Querido de Deus), as well as the influences of “erudite” capoeira advocates, folklorists, tourism bureaucrats, and directors of folkloric shows featuring capoeira. In my analysis, rather

than reproducing the binaries that guided the development of capoeira, I historicize these very binaries and propose a mutually constitutive relationship between them. I approach capoeira regional's sport-like modernity and its counterpart, capoeira angola's dance-like, non-violent folkloric "tradition" with roots in Africa, as two sides of the same coin—both choreographed through the same positivist narrative of order and progress that undergirded the imagining of a modern Brazil in the first half of the twentieth century.

Theorizing capoeira

Bimba and Pastinha have become synonymous with the opposing capoeira styles they developed in the mid-twentieth century: capoeira regional and capoeira angola, respectively. More than thirty years after their deaths, today their portraits decorate the walls of capoeira schools around the world, marking lineage and affiliation. A framed photograph of an elderly Pastinha, his own hands together in prayer, is often the centerpiece of altars, surrounded by flowers, candles, and incense. Pastinha today is remembered as the guardian of capoeira's "tradition" at a time when this tradition was believed to be threatened by Bimba's innovations and foreign borrowings. While for many years Bimba was blamed for going too far in codifying and sportifying (and therefore "whitening" capoeira),⁶ today several practitioners and scholars have acknowledged Bimba's contributions to capoeira as a "black modernization" of the practice, shifting the blame for capoeira's "*descaracterização*" (loss of character) either towards early twentieth century national gymnastics advocates or late twentieth century capoeira shows

⁶ In his oft-cited comparative analysis between the "traditional" capoeira and Bimba's innovations, Frigerio proposes that "we can interpret the advent of Capoeira Regional as a 'whitening' of traditional Capoeira (Angola), following a pattern similar to the one proposed by Ortiz (1978) for Umbanda." Alejandro Frigerio, "Capoeira: de arte negra a esporte branco," *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* 4, no. 10 (1989): 1.

for tourists.⁷ Throughout this dissertation, I seek to disrupt the tradition/modernity, rescue/loss binaries symbolized by these two capoeira icons by foregrounding the interdependence, rather than opposition, between these two modern “traditions.”

Dean MacCannell, in his analysis of tradition and modernity in relationship to tourism, proposes that “restored remnants of dead traditions are essential components of the modern community and consciousness. They are reminders of our break with the past and with tradition, even our own tradition.”⁸ MacCannell argues that these “remnants” separate modernity from the past, while simultaneously “elevating” it above the past.⁹ I argue that the modernization of capoeira in the first half of the twentieth century was predicated upon a break with a past associated with the violence of nineteenth-century capoeira, when capoeira practice included straight razors and clubs. “Restored remnants” of capoeira’s past were indeed part of its modernization; however, this past was displaced from urban nineteenth-century Brazil to a mythic Africa in the process of inventing a “dying” capoeira “from Angola” that invited its rescue and restoration.

The idea that traditions are invented has become a given, both in Eric Hobsbawm’s sense of “invented traditions”—purposefully fabricated new rituals framed as old and timeless—as well as what he identified as “custom”—the less structured, slow to develop form of

⁷ The first scholar to propose an alternative to the view of capoeira regional as a “whitening” of the practice was Brazilian anthropologist Leticia Reis. Reis’s analysis is groundbreaking in that it questions previous analyses of Bimba’s capoeira regional as simply co-optation and “whitening” by foregrounding the fact that Bimba himself was black. Reis recasts Bimba’s innovations as dynamic Africanist appropriations of hegemonic rituals and symbols, such as formal graduation ceremonies and the conferral of medals. Leticia Vidor de Souza Reis, “Negros e brancos no jogo da capoeira: reinvenção da tradição” (Universidade de São Paulo, 1993).

⁸ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: a new theory of the leisure class* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976; reprint, 1999), 83.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

“tradition.”¹⁰ I argue that twentieth-century capoeira was re-imagined as both national sport and regional folklore through a combination of invented traditions and custom. In addition, I propose yet another version (or an inversion) of “invention of tradition”: one where the old is framed as new, the past recycled in the present as the way of future. In this dissertation, I identify recurring instances in twentieth-century capoeira where embodied “customs,” reconfigured as innovation, are renewed through processes of modernization and legitimization. I propose that it was precisely through this process of “invented modernity”—the old “disguised” as new and improved—that capoeira was able to attain legitimacy after more than half a century of criminalization and persecution.

Disguise, in addition to being a key tactical element in the game of capoeira (in the form of feints and deception), provides the foundation for the widely-circulated myth of origins of capoeira as a “fight disguised as dance.” It also recurs in the writings of Pastinha, who used the idea of disguise to explain the relationship between a “real” capoeira, which he proposed was hidden in “the self” of the practitioner, and a capoeira for the stage. The concept of syncretism, in the way that it has been used by scholars of the African-diaspora in Brazil, also relies on the notions of disguise and deception, as well as equivalences and correspondences, to explain the processes of “acculturation” resulting from contact between two cultures. According to this model, Africans and their descendants in Brazil would “pretend” to adopt the new religion—Catholicism—by disguising their worship of African deities behind the veil of the corresponding Catholic saints. While Arthur Ramos believed that syncretic correspondences eventually resulted in the complete assimilation of the “weaker” religion, for Melville Herskovits, the syncretic process enabled “the persons experiencing the contact to move from one [culture] to

¹⁰ See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition: the Highland Tradition of Scotland,” in *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

the other, and back again, with psychological ease” through the covert identification of African deities with Catholic saints.¹¹

Anthropologist Andrew Apter has proposed reconsidering Melville Herskovits’ syncretic paradigm as a “grand counter-hegemonic strategy.” Apter recasts what Herskovits identified as correspondences that allowed movement back and forth between cultures as “a much more powerful process of discursive appropriation.”¹² He proposes that rather than understanding the adoption of Catholicism as a screen to allow the African deities to continue being worshipped in secret, the concept of syncretism can be redeployed to account for agency: in the classic example, the hegemonic religion is appropriated, and its power and resources are harnessed for the benefit of Africans and Afro-descendants in the diaspora.

Following Apter, I consider several instances of discursive appropriation in the process of legitimization and modernization of capoeira in the twentieth century. In a syncretic relationship, the discourses of modernity (such as improvement, order, and progress) were appropriated to fashion a counterhegemonic modernity choreographed through Afro-diasporic embodied

¹¹ For Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, blacks were intellectually incapable of fully assimilating to Catholicism; their conversion was an “illusion of catechism.” Arthur Ramos, *O negro brasileiro: etnographia, religiosa e psicanalyse*, Bibliotheca de divulgacao scientifica, I (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização brasileira, s.a., 1934), 129.; Melville Herskovits defines syncretism as “the tendency to identify those elements in the new culture with similar elements in the old one, enabling the persons experiencing the contact to move from one to the other, and back again, with psychological ease.” Melville J. Herskovits and Frances S. Herskovits, *The New World Negro: selected papers in Afroamerican studies* (Bloomington,: Indiana University Press, 1966), 57. Arthur Ramos theorized syncretism as a fusion (and confusion) between two religions, where the “weaker” or “inferior” culture was assimilated by the stronger one. Arthur Ramos, *O negro brasileiro: etnographia religiosa* Bibliotheca Pedagógica Brasileira (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1951 [1934]), 131.; Roger Bastide writes “[S]yncretism, which was originally merely a mask, a means of distracting the white man’s attention and evading his watchful eye, is transformed into the system of equivalences, of correspondences between saints and orixás.” However, he emphasizes that saints and orixás are not confused with each other—they are linked, but not merged. Roger Bastide, *The African religions of Brazil: toward a sociology of the interpenetration of civilizations*, Johns Hopkins studies in Atlantic history and culture (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 283.

¹² See Andrew Apter, “Herskovits’s Heritage: Rethinking Syncretism in the African Diaspora,” in *Syncretism in religion: a reader* ed. Anita M. Leopold and Jeppe S. Jensen (New York: Routledge, 2004).

knowledge—one where Africanity is not an obstacle to progress but one of its foundational building blocks. From the “classic” model of syncretism, I have borrowed the concepts of deception and simultaneity as analytic tools in my inquiry of a practice reconfigured simultaneously as folklore and sport, dance and fight, simultaneously African and Brazilian, simultaneously modern and traditional.

I argue that twentieth century capoeira was developed through a doubleness not dissimilar to the double consciousness articulated by W.E.B. Du Bois in 1903 in *The Souls of Black Folk*.¹³ Seen “through the eyes of others”—through published manuals, public matches, demonstrations, and full-fledged folkloric shows for tourists—both capoeira styles, regional and angola, were shaped with and against prevailing notions derived from scientific racism. According to early twentieth-century racial “theories,” *mulatos* possessed superior agility while blacks possessed strength. But in addition to being agile and strong, black and brown bodies were also associated with “degeneration,” violence and criminality, and capoeira practitioners were sharply aware of the need to address the conflation of blackness with violence in the process of staging capoeira.

Dance scholar Jacqueline Shea Murphy has argued that the stage, rather than being a site of containment, disempowerment or loss of authenticity, can be seen as a site of resilience and self-determination.¹⁴ Extending Shea Murphy’s idea of the stage as a space that allows for cultural continuity, I regard mid twentieth-century adaptations of capoeira’s violence for the stage as tactical ways of rehearsing this violence in public. While capoeira angola choreographed

¹³ “It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.” W.E.B. Du Bois, *The souls of black folk*, 1st Vintage Books/Library of America ed. (New York: Vintage Books/Library of America, 1990), 9.

¹⁴ Jacqueline Shea Murphy, *The people have never stopped dancing: Native American modern dance histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 25.

a dance-like, understated, suggested violence, capoeira regional amplified and magnified contact and violence as *capoeiristas* performed increasingly virtuosic and acrobatic choreographed¹⁵ sequences, “acting out” violence without carrying it out.

A magnified, spectacular, “acted out” violence allowed capoeiristas to meet a “destination image” of Brazil on European and North American stages. Jane Desmond has defined destination image as “a set of visuals and ideas associated in the tourist’s mind with a particular locale.”¹⁶ I extend Desmond’s concept of destination image, and suggest that the same “set of visuals and ideas” can also apply to expectations about moving bodies perceived as racially and culturally “other”—a kinesthetic destination image. In touring folkloric shows that included capoeira, while other performers fulfilled various desirable destination images of Afro-Brazilian bodies (happy, convivial, exotic, sensual), capoeiristas in particular fulfilled a destination image of violent, wild and primitive Afro-diasporic bodies, barely contained by the fourth wall of the proscenium stage. While these barely contained “wild” capoeiristas put up an “act” of acrobatic violence, the safety of these choreographed sequences allowed players to engage in creativity and innovation; in Bahia, while Pastinha and his students “danced” a tame capoeira for the cameras of anthropologists and folklorists, they simultaneously rehearsed capoeira’s powerful kicks and headbutts.

¹⁵ Throughout this dissertation, I use the word choreography in two ways: in the way that it is currently used by concert dancers and choreographers to mean pre-established sequences of movement set in space and time, usually for performance in front of an audience, and in a broader sense, in Susan Foster’s expanded use of the term, where choreography refers to “a structuring of deep and enduring cultural values that replicates similar sets of values elaborated in other cultural practices.” Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing empathy: kinesthesia in performance* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2011), 2-6. I came across yet another meaning of the word choreography during my interviews with directors and participants of capoeira shows in the 1970s, one that implied the influence of a ballet aesthetic. I realized that when performers and directors stated that there was no “choreography” in the capoeira sections of the folkloric shows, they did not mean that the movement was not pre-determined in advance, but rather that the movement was not influenced by a ballet aesthetic (e.g. partnered lifts, leaps and pointed feet.)

¹⁶ Jane Desmond, *Staging Tourism: bodies on display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 5.

A genealogy of capoeira research

For the past twenty years, academia has closely reflected the growing interest in capoeira practice worldwide, resulting in dozens of theses, dissertations, articles and books on capoeira, primarily in Portuguese and English. These range from groundbreaking historical research based on nineteenth century police records (Thomas Holloway and Carlos Eugênio Líbano Soares)¹⁷ to books based primarily on ethnographic research (John Lowell Lewis, Barbara Browning, and Greg Downey).¹⁸ While synchronic analyses based on ethnographic field research often offer ample movement description and analysis, diachronic research on capoeira has largely overlooked the embodiment of the practice. My research combines historical research with movement analysis in an effort to trace the roots and routes of both capoeira's "tradition" and its modernity. I am interested in *how* the bodies of capoeira practitioners choreographed both tradition and modernity through movement.

Since the late 1980s, capoeira regional has been largely associated with "loss"—loss of capoeira's rituals, traditions and loss of its very Africanity—while capoeira angola, either implicitly or explicitly, has been understood as a retention of these traditions. In this binary approach to capoeira, upright movement, faster games, and contact between players (correlated with increased violence) characterize a de-Africanized or "whitened" capoeira regional; capoeira angola's slow-paced, close to the ground movement, lack of contact between players and its non-

¹⁷ Thomas H. Holloway, "'A Healthy Terror': Police Repression of Capoeiras in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 69, no. 4 (1989). Carlos Eugênio Líbano Soares, *A negregada instituição: os capoeiras no Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Coleção Biblioteca Carioca, 1994).

¹⁸ Barbara Browning, *Samba: resistance in motion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); John Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: deceptive discourse in Brazilian capoeira* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

violent games have been interpreted as more “traditional,” i.e. more “African.”¹⁹ While these movement analyses do identify some of the same movement elements I struggled to (un)learn during my transition from capoeira regional to capoeira angola, they still operate within the same analytic framework as early twentieth century models of cultural contact based on ideas of loss and retention.

In the early 1990s, academic analyses of capoeira began shifting the debate away from the retention and loss model, focusing instead on the practice as a whole rather than analyzing the two styles separately.²⁰ For these authors, capoeira stood in a symbolic and metaphoric relationship to social and cultural processes. John Lowell Lewis’ influential *Ring of Liberation: deceptive discourse in Brazilian capoeira* presents capoeira as a metaphoric “liberation from slavery, from class domination, from the poverty of ordinary life, and ultimately even from the constraints of the human body.”²¹ Physical inversion, he argues, is “a sign corresponding to the desired inversion of the social hierarchy,” a sign that he sees as acting as a “kind of sympathetic (iconic) magic, like causing like, or as a kind of Freudian wish fulfillment, a play in fantasy for what could never be the case in reality.”²² While symbolic of social change, the embodied actions of capoeiristas, according to this model, are incapable of effecting change in the world. Other publications on capoeira from the 1990s, similarly influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin’s

¹⁹ Frigerio and Merrell, among others, isolate these opposing characteristics of the two styles of capoeira. For Frigerio, capoeira angola is characterized by: (1) malícia (trickery), (2) complementarity, (3) low games, (4) lack of violence (and lack of spectacle), (5) beautiful moves, (6) slow music, (7) importance of ritual, and (8) theatricality. See Frigerio, “Capoeira: de arte negra a esporte branco.”; Floyd Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé: conformity and resistance through Afro-Brazilian experience* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), 11.

²⁰ Throughout his book, Lewis predicts that capoeira angola and capoeira regional would, in fact, transcend their differences and become one capoeira in the future, a prediction that, twenty years later, has not come true.

²¹ For Lewis, the game of capoeira is an escape valve, providing temporary relief from “social obligations and personal worries.” Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: deceptive discourse in Brazilian capoeira*: 2.

²² *Ibid.*, 85.

theories of carnivalesque inversions, analyze capoeira's movement as symbolic of social inversion.²³

Beginning in the mid-late 1990s, academic publications on capoeira followed the growing transnational interest in capoeira angola.²⁴ Greg Downey's phenomenological analysis of capoeira angola focused on the embodied experience of learning capoeira and its ability to re-pattern one's habitus. Downey's work shifts the analytic paradigm, considering the transformative potential of capoeira practice rather than focusing on capoeira as a symbol or metaphor for impossible inversions of social order.²⁵ Since then, several books and dissertations have focused exclusively on capoeira angola—a choice that implicitly dismisses capoeira regional as an unworthy object of study, a style “outside the scope” of such analyses.²⁶ Even

²³ Both Barbara Browning and Leticia Reis have interpreted the overall upside-down-ness of capoeira as symbolic of social inversion. Luis Renato Vieira also proposes that capoeira practiced in public (on “the street”) inverts social order. See Browning, *Samba: resistance in motion*; Reis, “Negros e brancos no jogo da capoeira: reinvenção da tradição.”; Luiz Renato Vieira, “Da Vadição à capoeira regional: uma interpretação da modernização cultural no Brasil” (Universidade de Brasília, 1990).

²⁴ The first of such academic analyses of capoeira angola was Kenneth Dossar's 1994 doctoral dissertation, followed by Greg Downey's dissertation in 1998. Both scholars were influenced by Mestre Moraes (Pedro Moraes Trindade), one of the leaders of the “revival” of capoeira angola in the 1980s. Greg Downey, “Incorporating capoeira: phenomenology of a movement discipline” (University of Chicago, 1998); Kenneth Dossar, “Dancing Between Two Worlds: an aesthetic analysis of capoeira angola” (Temple University, 1994).

²⁵ Downey proposes that capoeira angola is capable of “tearing out the shame” of white, middle class bodies, re-patterning their movement in a way that challenges the “corporeal status quo.” He proposes that capoeira angola's movements may in fact be a way of preserving movements that “may have once felt natural,” but which now have been largely lost in everyday life. Although Downey's work is laudable for its rigorous and extensive field research and his approach to movement as capable of effecting change, his analysis focuses on preservation and restoration of “lost” embodied patterns without historicizing this model of loss and rescue. While Downey does problematize the “traditional”/“whitened” binary, his analysis is still contained within this binary. Greg Downey, *Learning capoeira: lessons in cunning from an Afro-Brazilian art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 200.

²⁶ For recent studies that privilege capoeira angola in their movement analysis, see *ibid*; Cristina F. Rosa, “Choreographing identification: the presence of ginga in samba, capoeira and grupo corpo” (University of California, Los Angeles, 2010); Pedro Abib, *Capoeira angola: cultura popular e o jogo dos saberes na roda* (Salvador: EDUFBA, 2004); Rosângela Costa Araújo, “Iê viva meu mestre: a capoeira angola da ‘escola pastiniana’ como praxis educativa” (Universidade de São Paulo, 2004); Merrell, *Capoeira and Candomblé: conformity and resistance through Afro-Brazilian experience*; Ebony Rose Custis, “Cultural capital, critical theory, and motivation for participation in Capoeira Angola” (Howard University, 2008);

though such texts problematize the term traditional by adding quotation marks when referring to capoeira angola as “more traditional,” they implicitly reinforce the equation tradition = past (and past = Africa) by relying on ethnographic research on the “more traditional” and “more African” capoeira to make assumptions about capoeira’s past. I question the persistent conflation of tradition with “Africa” (an Africa nostalgically located in the past, imagined as modernity’s Other), and raise the possibility of an Afro-diasporic “tradition” capable of being articulated both through and as modernity.

The idea of capoeira as “more” or “less” African harks back to the tenacious notion of Africanisms as measurable, proposed by Melville Herskovits. In his 1945 essay *Problem, Method and Theory in Afroamerican Studies*, Herskovits proposed his methods for mapping, measuring and analyzing “New World Africanisms.” Herskovits established an “African baseline,”²⁷ which allowed him to trace degrees of retention or loss of “Africanisms” in the New World through a “scale of intensity.”²⁸ Although Herskovits’s work was significant for shifting the focus of the discourse on race from biological determinism to cultural contact, his research was “rushed and shoddy”²⁹ and his African baseline “remains a myth of African origins, not a documented or even documentable point of empirical departure.”³⁰

Scott Correll Head, "Danced fight, divided city: Figuring the space between" (University of Texas at Austin, 2004).

²⁷ Herskovits and Herskovits, *The New World Negro: selected papers in Afroamerican studies*: 49.

²⁸ Herskovits’ scale was divided into the following categories: (a) very African, (b) quite African, (c) somewhat African, (d) a little African, (e) trace of African customs, or none, and (?) no report. As Apter has pointed out, the intensities themselves (such as ‘very,’ ‘quite’ and ‘somewhat African’) are highly relative and subjective. See Apter, "Herskovits's Heritage: Rethinking Syncretism in the African Diaspora," 163.

²⁹ Through an analysis of the Herskovitses’ field diaries, the Prices shed light on their research practices and their informants, often their paid interpreters and servants. Richard Price and Sally Price, *The roots of roots: or, how Afro-American Anthropology got its start* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), 80-81.

³⁰ Apter, "Herskovits's Heritage: Rethinking Syncretism in the African Diaspora," 170.

The enduring pursuit of African/Afro-diasporic universals, particularly when it comes to movement analysis, is a testament to Herskovits's foundational and lasting impact on the field of African diaspora studies. Art historian Robert Farris Thompson, in his 1974 book *African Art in Motion*, proposes a pan-Africanist aesthetic through a comparison of dances from selected African regions with exemplars of African art from the Katherine Coryton White collection.³¹ Although his conclusions are implicitly extended to all of Africa, Thompson's data comes from the "West and Central African civilizations" he had visited, "together with Bantu societies for which the literature yields pertinent material on art and dance."³² Islamic North Africa, Ethiopia, and the Horn and most of East and South Africa are lamentably omitted from the scope of this study.³³ Thompson's conclusions are based on reactions of "existential experts" (his term for "native" dance experts) to film viewings of dances from African regions *other than their own*. Thompson's "most exciting finding"—one that proved his hypothesis of the existence of universal traits in African dance—was that "village after village evaluated dance from hundreds of miles away precisely as if the dances stemmed from their own traditions."³⁴ In addition to his unconventional methods of selection and analysis of his dance data—dances from areas he happened to have visited analyzed by "experts" who were nevertheless unfamiliar with the

³¹ The Katherine Coryton White collection was a private collection of African art that, according to Thompson, inspired his book.

³² The dance literature Thompson relied on includes the work of Alan Lomax, a folklorist who devoted his life to collecting and recording "traditional" music and dance. In 1968, Lomax, working with students of movement theorist Rudolf Laban, proposed that dances reflected "the habitual movement patters of each culture and culture area," and went on to map and classify dances from all of the world's regions based on analysis of film recordings from twenty one cultures—needless to say, a very small sample considering the global scale of the project. Like Thompson, Lomax reaches conclusions based on small samples of data that could not possibly accurately represent the proposed areas of study. For a review of Lomax's *Folksong Style and Culture: a staff report*, see Joann Wheeler Keali`inohomoku and Drid Williams, "Caveat on causes and correlations," *CORD News* 6 no. 2 (1975).

³³ Robert Farris Thompson, *African art in motion: icon and act in the Collection of Katherine Coryton White* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

dances they were asked to analyze—Thompson was selective in his choice of objects from the White collection: “Most felicitously, it was agreed, when I undertook to write this book, that I would be free to omit those objects in the collection which were not germane.”³⁵

Although Thompsons’ work has provided the foundation for some groundbreaking work in dance studies,³⁶ and his “aesthetic of the cool” has indeed become canonical, I believe his “canons of fine form” should be approached with caution, taking into account *how* Thompson arrived at his theories on African dance.³⁷ Sifting through his data to find evidence of his own “destination image” of African dance,³⁸ Thompson seems to have selected only the examples that were “germane,” i.e. those which corroborated his theories.³⁹ Furthermore, Thompson reinforces

³⁵ Ibid., 5.

³⁶ In 1996, dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild applied some of Thompson’s theories to her analysis of Afro-diasporic influences (what she calls the Africanist presence) in Euro-American concert dance.³⁶ Gottschild, however, adapts some of Thompson’s ideas to her analysis of the Africanist presence in Euro-American concert dance, making no claim to universal “Africanisms” to be applied to all of the African diaspora. In fact, I believe that Thompson’s theories lend themselves well to Gottschild analysis precisely because both share a North American perspective—Gotschild’s explicitly and Thompson’s implicitly. Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist presence in American performance: dance and other contexts* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996).

³⁷ Thompson identifies ten formal features of African dance: Ephebism: the stronger power that comes from youth; “Afrikanische Aufheben”: simultaneously suspending and preserving the beat; Multiple Meter: Dancing many drums; Looking Smart: playing the patters with nature and with line; Correct entrance and exit: “killing the song,” “cutting the dance,” “Lining the face”; Vividness cast into equilibrium: personal and representational balance; Call and response: the politics of perfection; Ancestorism: ability to incarnate destiny; Coolness: truth and generosity regained. Thompson, *African art in motion: icon and act in the Collection of Katherine Coryton White*.

³⁸ Ethnomusicologist David Ames also noticed Thompsons’ tendency to select fragments of movement that proved his pre-conceived notions of African dance. Ames “found some aspects of the author’s methodology repeatedly irritating. There was a tendency to force facts into preconceived pigeonholes, and since Thompson tends to rely a great deal on poetic statement, not infrequently this gives the reader the impression that facts are being bent by a kind of lexical sleight of hand or that conclusions were unjustifiably being extrapolated from fragmentary evidence. Not infrequently, a few ethnographic examples stand, implicitly at least, for tropical Africa as a whole, a fairly common failing of Africanists. Of course tropical Africa is an enormous area containing hundreds of societies, languages and much cultural variation—not to mention extraordinary variation in art itself. David W. Ames, “Book review of *African Art in Motion*,” *Ethnomusicology* 243(1980): 563.

³⁹ Although some of Thompson’s categories identify movement elements that do seem to apply to an overall “Africanist aesthetic,” such as the idea of the “mask of the cool,” others reinforce preconceived notions that “Africans” are somehow more connected to the earth than non-Africans, exemplified by his principle called “Get-Down Quality: descending direction in melody, sculpture, dance,” (13) and the sub-

not only the fiction of “African” culture as authorless, created and practiced by homogeneous groups as a whole (the Dahomean, the Akan, the Ashanti), but also the fiction of a timeless culture that has changed little “for at least four hundred years.”⁴⁰ Although Thompson is clearly knowledgeable about African textiles and sculpture, his dance theories deny the modernity and the creativity of his informants (interviewed in the 1960s), reinforcing the equation Africa = tradition = past.

In this dissertation, I have approached my own analysis with a sharp awareness of the tenacious conflation of Africa, tradition, and the past in studies of African and Afro-diasporic movement as well as in the capoeira historiography. In an effort to untangle the triangulation of Africa, tradition and the past, I pored over descriptions, drawings, and photographs of capoeira prior to the modern/traditional split of the 1930s (going back to the late 19th century), and found that the movement qualities today considered “more traditional” do not necessarily correspond to a capoeira practiced farther back in the past. Until the mid 1930s, the historical record points to a capoeira marked by jumping, hopping, kicking, ducking and headbutting—suggesting a directness and quickness markedly different from what is considered traditional today.⁴¹

Marked changes in capoeira’s movement vocabulary throughout the twentieth century make it difficult to identify the movement features of capoeira that have “remained” constant

principle of “Stability and Straightness: personal balance,” where he describes the common stance for African dance as “flat footed,” while white Americans associate dancing with going “up on their toes.” (24)

⁴⁰ Thompson’s ninth principle, “Ancestorism: ability to incarnate destiny,” refers to the ability of African ancestors to return through dancing: “We realize that Africans, moving in their ancient dances, in full command of historical destiny, are those noble personages, briefly returned.” According to Thompson, these constantly “returning” ancestors are responsible for “preserving” traits in African performance that “have been in existence for at least four hundred years.” Thompson, *African art in motion: icon and act in the Collection of Katherine Coryton White*: 28-29.

⁴¹ According to descriptions by Johann Moritz Rugendas (1835), Charles Ribeyrolles (1859), Alexandre Mello Moraes Filho (1901 [1893]), Manuel Querino (1916), Henrique Coelho Netto (1922), and Édison Carneiro (1937).

(movement qualities, patterns, pathways, and levels), much less reach conclusions about what kinds of movement may be “more” or “less” African. The historical record points to a practice that has decidedly not remained unchanged for the past four hundred years. These noticeable changes in capoeira’s movement led me to a diachronic approach. Rather than attempting to reconstruct capoeira’s movement over four centuries, however, I decided to focus on the twentieth century, from 1928-1974, a period that offered a surprising amount of previously overlooked descriptions and images, both stills and film, of capoeiristas in action. Through a close analysis of this evidence, contextualized by attitudes towards capoeira during each period, I hoped to locate the notions of tradition and modernity in the movement itself. When did movement patterns change, and why? How did they become associated with tradition and modernity? How did movement become “more” or “less” African? Most importantly, who was responsible these changes?

Only by locating the who, when, why and how of movement trends in capoeira would I be able to avoid statements in the present tense (“capoeira is...”) that mask the rich diversity in capoeira practice, both synchronic and diachronic.⁴² My goal here is not only to historicize the changes and continuities in capoeira practice throughout the twentieth century, but, perhaps most importantly, to restore authorship to those capoeira practitioners who took (and still take) great pride in their innovations.

⁴² Descriptions in the aggregate in a “timeless” present are common in contemporary analyses of capoeira: Cristina Rosa’s analysis of hierarchies of power in the capoeira circle is based on the spatial arrangement of the berimbau (capoeira’s musical bow): “Positioned at the center, the berimbau with the largest gourd and deepest sound, known as *gunga*, denotes the highest position of power.” Rosa, “Choreographing identification: the presence of *ginga* in samba, capoeira and grupo corpo,” 176. Rosa does not acknowledge, however, that this placement, in fact, is an idiosyncratic, recent innovation by Mestre João Grande (for which he proudly takes credit). Analyses such as this conflate a “traditional” present with an authorless past.

I propose innovation and adaptability as capoeira's primary choreographic tactics.⁴³ Of course capoeira innovators do not reinvent the form anew with every modification; innovation not only accompanies continuity, but also renews and authorizes it. In the following chapters, I have identified a few movement tropes that recur throughout the twentieth century, most notably the use of the capoeiristas' arms (as well as legs) for support, and the use of feet and head as preferred "limbs" for striking.⁴⁴ Among these recurring tropes, I have also identified the practice of grabbing and throwing, known as *balões*,⁴⁵ which, until recently, had been considered one of Bimba's modernizations responsible for capoeira's "loss of character." While I believe that these movement tropes *are* indeed Afro-diasporic—since they seem foundational to a practice that is undoubtedly Afro-diasporic—I do not claim connections across the Atlantic. I believe that a preoccupation with capoeira's distant past—its "roots"—has prevented capoeira scholarship from moving beyond a constant search for continuities and "retentions" in capoeira, often overlooking and dismissing innovation as undesirable "loss." Throughout this dissertation, I reject previous analytic models based on loss and retention, proposing instead an embodied practice capable of choreographing the modern Brazilian "citizen of the future" through Afro-diasporic corporeality.

⁴³ I am using the word tactics in Michel de Certeau's sense, which he opposes to strategies. Tactics, which de Certeau identifies as a "weapon of the weak," do not have a proper place or institutional localization; they operate within the stable place of strategies, in "the space of the other," constantly taking advantage of opportunities. Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

⁴⁴ Although using the hands for striking today is forbidden in practically all capoeira practice, early twentieth century descriptions include elbow jabs and hand strikes, as well as manipulation of straight-razors and clubs.

⁴⁵ Grabbing and throwing practices were first documented by Mello Moraes in the late nineteenth century, and later described by Coelho Netto in 1928 and Édison Carneiro in 1937. Edison Carneiro, *Negros Bantus: notas de ethnographia religiosa e folk-lore* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, s.a., 1937); Alexandre José de Mello Moraes Filho, *Festas e tradições populares do Brasil*, 3. ed. (Rio de Janeiro: F. Briguiet, 1946 [1893]); Henrique Coelho Netto, "Nosso Jogo," in *Bazar* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Chardron, de Lello e Irmão, Ltda Editores, 1928).

Chapter overview

In Chapter 1, I compare three capoeira manuals: one published in 1928 by Annibal Burlamaqui, a white, middle-class practitioner who called for the transformation of capoeira into Brazil's national gymnastics, and two manuals published in the 1960s by working-class Afro-Brazilians, Bimba and Pastinha.⁴⁶ Although written more than thirty years before the other two, Burlamaqui's manual reveals more similarities than differences with the ideas put forth in these later manuals. Through a comparative analysis of both the words on the page and the illustrations and photographs that accompany the texts, I challenge previous studies that have framed both Burlamaqui's national gymnastics and Bimba's capoeira regional as loss and cooptation. Instead, I propose that all three authors, including Pastinha, the "father" of tradition, shared the same goals in publishing their manuals: attaining legitimacy and respect for capoeira. All three innovators employed the same nationalist and eugenicist rhetoric in choreographing a "respectable" capoeira that nonetheless embodied Afro-diasporic choreographic tactics and movement tropes.

In Chapter 2, I return to the innovations of Bimba and Pastinha, bringing into my analysis two important "players" in the process of shaping attitudes towards these two styles: folklorist Édison Carneiro and novelist Jorge Amado. I contextualize the emergence of the two capoeira styles in relationship to attitudes toward "folk" and national culture, both during the Vargas dictatorship (1930-1945) and during the redemocratization of Brazil after the end of the Vargas regime (1945-1964). I propose that 1936 marks the beginning of a clear division between

⁴⁶ Annibal Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada* (Rio de Janeiro: n.p., 1928); Mestre Bimba, *Curso de Capoeira Regional*, 1 sound disc : analog, 33 1/3 rpm ; 12 in. + 1 booklet vols. (Salvador, Ba.: JS Discos, c.1960); Vicente Ferreira Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*, 2.ed. ed. (Salvador: Escola Gráfica N.S. de Loreto, 1968 [1964]).

capoeira regional and capoeira angola, spurred by Bimba's much-publicized participation in public matches and Carneiro's publication of an article titled "Capoeira de Angola" in the same year. Although Carneiro did not invent the term Capoeira de Angola (Capoeira *from* Angola), he was instrumental in establishing the binaries pure/impure, traditional/modern, more African/less African and disseminating this "origin" to refer to a distinct capoeira style. Through Carneiro's and Amado's writings on capoeira, from the mid 1930s through the early 1960s, I trace the alliances between intellectuals and practitioners who choreographed capoeira's "tradition." Through detailed analysis of images of capoeira—both stills and film—from the 1940s through the 60s, I identify some of the adaptations implemented by Pastinha, which successfully approximated the practice to Carneiro's definitions of folklore.

Chapter 3 locates the debates over capoeira's tradition within Bahia's growing tourism industry, beginning in the early 1950s. I trace the influences of tourism bureaucrats such as Waldeloir Rego and Hildegardes Vianna, analyzing the strategies used for crafting Bahia as a successful national and international tourist destination throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. I draw attention to the overlooked innovations of Mestre Canjiquinha, the capoeira mestre responsible for the "folk" performances held on the municipal folkloric stage located in the landmark building that housed Salvador's Tourism Department. I investigate Bimba's equally overlooked participation in the tourism industry in the mid 1950s and 1960s, focusing on innovations that I propose transformed the practice of grabbing and throwing into acrobatic assisted flips, which proved well-suited for "folk" performances on proscenium stages.

In the early 1960s, Bahia saw a rapid multiplication of both its capoeira "academies" and its folk ensembles. Among these ensembles, few achieved the distinction of performing in "high art" venues. In the last section of Chapter 3, I analyze the repertory of a "folk" ensemble created

in 1963 by music teacher Emília Biancardi, *Viva Bahia Folkloric Ensemble*, a company that went on to perform on the world's most prestigious opera houses in the early 1970s. I argue that Viva Bahia's touring shows in the early 1970s fulfilled destination images of Brazil and helped establish Brazil as cultural tourism destination. With an acrobatic, virtuosic capoeira as its featured "number," Viva Bahia fulfilled European and North American fantasies of a vigorous, wild, barely under control Afro-diasporic corporeality. I propose that while capoeira's violence was "acted out" for foreign audiences, the lack of actual violence on stage allowed capoeiristas to experiment with capoeira's aesthetics rather than its function, resulting in a wide vocabulary of *floreios* (decorative moves), including headspins, backflips and other acrobatic maneuvers that have since become part of capoeira vocabulary, both on and off-stage.

Thinking about capoeira in its temporal and kinesthetic specificities⁴⁷ rather than considering the practice as a mythic "tradition" borne by equally mythic capoeira practitioners allowed me to consider innovation in capoeira beyond a loss and rescue prism. By reframing the "great figures" of capoeira as living, breathing people contending with practical concerns such as gaining notoriety and respectability for themselves or for a particular style of capoeira, I have been able to acknowledge their modernity without equating this modernity with loss. Untangling the triad tradition/past/Africa has opened up the possibility of a modernity choreographed through Afro-diasporic corporeality.

⁴⁷ I have chosen to use footnotes rather than endnotes so that the sources and further details about these specificities are readily available to readers.

Chapter 1: Choreographing the citizen of the future through capoeira(gem)

Following its independence from Portugal in 1822, the Empire of Brazil largely gave continuity to the monarchic government of colonial Brazil (1500-1822). Ruled by Portuguese prince Dom Pedro I, the first Emperor of Brazil (and later by his Brazilian-born son, Dom Pedro II), independent Brazil not only remained a monarchy, but it also maintained its system of slave labor until the late nineteenth century (1888). During this time, capoeira, also known as *capoeiragem*⁴⁸—practiced primarily by both enslaved and freed blacks and *mulatos*—was only informally persecuted, although punishment could be severe and was left at the discretion of slave owners. Brazil’s first criminal code of 1830 did not explicitly prohibit its practice; often *capoeiras* (practitioners of capoeiragem) were arrested for vaguely defined “crimes” such as idleness, inciting disorder or disrespecting authority.⁴⁹

Nineteenth-century descriptions of capoeira, written by European observers who traveled throughout Brazil and documented its “picturesque” (i.e. indigenous and Afro-diasporic) aspects

⁴⁸ While in the first half of the nineteenth century the words capoeira and capoeiragem seem to have been used interchangeably, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the practice was known as capoeiragem, while the practitioners were referred to as *capoeiras*. The term capoeiragem, brought attention to the practice, the motion, the doing of capoeiras through the addition of the suffix –agem, which lends both action and collectivity to a noun without transforming into a verb. The fact that the term capoeira has replaced capoeiragem today attests to the epistemological shift that resulted from transformations in the practice: capoeiragem as an informal “doing” becomes fixed as capoeira, a “thing” to be learned. Downey has suggested that “[t]he activity, *capoeiragem*, once was seen as symptomatic of a practitioners’ essential character as a *capoeira*, a status punishable under Brazilian law. Later, as variants of the art became palatable to the Brazilian upper and middle classes, the fighting style became an abstractable discipline that was no longer implicitly described as arising from the practitioner’s essential identity.” Greg Downey, “Domesticating an Urban Menace: reforming capoeira angola as a Brazilian national sport,” *International Journal of the history of sport* 19, no. 4 (2002): 28.

⁴⁹ See Holloway, “A Healthy Terror’: Police Repression of Capoeiras in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro.”

through their writing and drawings, often focus on capoeira's violence.⁵⁰ Johann Moritz Rugendas, a German painter who first traveled to Brazil in 1821, included capoeira in his descriptions of Afro-Brazilian dances in *Malerische Reise in Brasilien (Picturesque Travels in Brazil)*, first published in 1835. After briefly mentioning a martial dance that included the manipulation of wooden clubs, he adds:

Blacks have yet another war pastime, much more violent, the 'capoeira': two champions advance against each other, trying to hit with their heads the chest of the adversary they want to knock down. Attacks are avoided with jumps to the side and parrying equally as dexterous; but, throwing themselves against each other like rams, they hit head against head, not infrequently causing the game to degenerate into a fight and knives are brought in making it bloody.⁵¹

Rugendas describes a combative, violent, and potentially bloody “pastime,” very different from the acrobatic, dance-like martial art we have come to know as capoeira. Capoeiragem, associated with violence throughout the nineteenth century, was finally criminalized after the military coup d'état of 1889 deposed the monarchy—somewhat tolerant of capoeiragem—and installed Brazil's republican government. Criminalized alongside vagrancy and idleness in Chapter 13 of the Penal Code of the United States of Brazil (enacted in 1890), capoeiragem was punishable by imprisonment, forced labor, and deportation.⁵² Nineteenth century capoeira

⁵⁰ Charles Ribeyrolles, an exiled French journalist who moved to Brazil in 1858, mentions capoeira in *Brasil Pittoresco: história, descrições, viagens, instituições, colonização (Picturesque Brazil: history, descriptions, travels, institutions, colonization)*, a bilingual French/Portuguese book divided in several tomes, published in 1859. Charles Ribeyrolles, *Brasil pittoresco : história, descrições, viagens, colonização, instituições*, 3 vols., Coleção Reconquista do Brasil (Belo Horizonte e São Paulo: Editora Itatiaia; Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1980 [1859]). The lithographs by French painter Jean-Baptiste Debret published in *Voyage Pittoresque et Historique au Brésil (Picturesque and Historical Voyage to Brazil)* also provide documentation of capoeira practice in the nineteenth century. Jean Baptiste Debret, *Voyage Pittoresque et Historique au Brésil ou Séjour d'un artiste français au Brésil, depuis 1816 jusqu'en 1831 inclusivement, époques de l'avenement et de l'abdication de S.M. don Pedro, premier fondateur de l'Empire brésilien* (Paris: Didot Frère, 1834-1839).

⁵¹ My English translation from Sergio Milliet's Portuguese translation (1954). Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Viagem pitoresca através do Brasil*, 5. ed., Biblioteca histórica brasileira (São Paulo: Livraria Martins Editôra, 1954).

⁵² Soares, *A negregada instituição: os capoeiras no Rio de Janeiro*: 29; 301-02.

practitioners, organized in *maltas*⁵³ (capoeira “gangs” or brotherhoods), were known to carry straight razors, knives and clubs. While Rugendas probably did not witness the bloodshed in his description, a bloody denouement was not uncommon in confrontations involving capoeira in urban nineteenth-century Brazil.

The monarchic government did not openly approve of the practice of capoeiragem,⁵⁴ however, the persecution of capoeiras during the monarchy pales in comparison to the systematic attempts to completely eradicate the practice after the “proclamation” of the Brazilian Republic.⁵⁵ As one late nineteenth-century observer stated, “the repression of capoeiragem [...] was an admirable fact, since in less than one year the work had been consummated, that is, there were no more capoeiras infesting the city and its many neighborhoods.”⁵⁶

According to capoeira historian Carlos Eugênio Líbano Soares, the first targets of republican repression were capoeiras living in the capital, then Rio de Janeiro, especially those involved with the Black Guard (*Guarda Negra*), a monarchist black political militia.⁵⁷ Sampaio

⁵³ For analyses of police repression of capoeiragem and *maltas* nineteenth-century in Rio de Janeiro, see *ibid*; Holloway, “A Healthy Terror: Police Repression of Capoeiras in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro.”; Carlos Eugênio Líbano Soares, *A capoeira escrava e outras tradições rebeldes no Rio de Janeiro (1801-1850)* (Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2001). Desch-Obi proposes that *maltas* are better described as brotherhoods than “gangs.” M. Thomas J. Desch-Obi, *Fighting for honor : the history of African martial art traditions in the Atlantic world* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

⁵⁴ Capoeiras were clearly valued for their skills and were in fact an important part of the Empire’s secret police force. In fact, the presence of capoeiras in the police force was such that Ferraz had to bring in police officers from other states to work in his campaign against of capoeiragem. Soares, *A negregada instituição: os capoeiras no Rio de Janeiro*: 294-97.

⁵⁵ The coup d’état of November 15th, 1889 is known and commemorated as the “proclamation of the republic,” a Brazilian national holiday.

⁵⁶ Gustavo Moncorvo Bandeira de Mello, *História da Polícia Militar do Distrito Federal*. (Rio de Janeiro: Tipografia da Polícia Militar, 1926), 345. Cited in Soares, *A negregada instituição: os capoeiras no Rio de Janeiro*: 294.

⁵⁷ The Black Guard, a tightly regulated association of more than 1,500 black men, many of them capoeiras, was formed by a prominent black abolitionist, José do Patrocínio, shortly after the signing of the Golden Law (*Lei Áurea*) of May 13th, 1888—a long-overdue decree signed by Princess Regent Isabel (daughter of Dom Pedro II) which declared the end of slavery. In the eighteen months between abolition and the coup d’état of November 15th, 1889, the Black Guard supported the monarchy by confronting

Ferraz, the first republican police chief, arrested and sent into exile hundreds of known capoeiras, who, along with other supporters of the monarchy, were shipped to a penal colony on the island of Fernando de Noronha.⁵⁸ These arrests were lauded by the media, who praised Ferraz for ridding the country of “the worst plague” inherited from the monarchy.⁵⁹ Although most arrests were completed even before its enactment, Decree 847, Chapter 13, Article 402 of the Penal Code of the United States of Brazil officially criminalized capoeira on October 11th, 1890:

Art. 402. To practice on the streets and public squares any exercise of agility and corporal dexterity known by the name of *capoeiragem*: to run, with weapons or instruments able to cause bodily harm, to cause tumult or disorder, threatening a person directly or indirectly, or inciting fear of any harm.⁶⁰

Equating capoeiragem with “causing tumult or disorder,” or “threatening a person directly or indirectly,” article 402 provided police with a vague and ample enough definition for the crime of capoeiragem that it could be invoked to arrest practically anyone.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the ideas of psychiatrist Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, based on cranial measurements and social darwinism, dominated the discourse on race in Brazil. For eugenicists, miscegenation was the cause of racial and social “degeneracy,” and progress was predicated on “racial purity.” Through eugenicist and social hygienist arguments,

republican activists, often with violence, and by vowing to protect Princess Isabel at all cost. Robert Daibert, *Isabel, a "redentora" dos escravos: uma história da princesa entre olhares negros e brancos* (Bauru: EDUSC Editora da Universidade do Sagrado Coração, 2001), 153. For more information about connections between the Black Guard and capoeiragem, see Soares, *A negregada instituição: os capoeiras no Rio de Janeiro*.

⁵⁸ ———, *A negregada instituição: os capoeiras no Rio de Janeiro*: 297-300.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Waldeloir Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*, Coleção baiana (Rio de Janeiro: Gráf. Lux, 1968), 292-93.

capoeiragem was deemed a “moral disease” and subsequently criminalized, as Brazil strived towards “progress.”⁶¹

Despite the systematic persecution in Rio de Janeiro, the first known manual of capoeiragem was published less than twenty years after its criminalization,⁶² pointing to a practice that was reconfigured as national culture rather than eradicated. Since the turn of the century, Brazilian intellectuals had voiced their disapproval of the criminalization of capoeiragem, proposing instead that it should be valued as a uniquely Brazilian tradition. In 1893, at the height of republican police persecution, folklorist Alexandre Mello Moraes proposed that “capoeiragem, as an art, as a tool of self-defense, is Brazil’s own fighting style.”⁶³

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, capoeira enthusiasts who were not only literate, but had access to the press—including writer Coelho Netto, who was a member of the Brazilian Academy of letters—published essays, articles and manuals calling for the decriminalization of capoeira. They argued that all the elements for a perfect “physical culture” could be found in this homegrown Brazilian practice, and proposed the adoption of capoeira as Brazil’s national gymnastics. In this chapter, I compare the only surviving illustrated manual from the early twentieth-century national gymnastics movement with similar manuals written by the two iconic mid twentieth-century innovators, Bimba and Pastinha.

Mestre Bimba, born Manuel dos Reis Machado, and Mestre Pastinha, born Vicente Ferreira Pastinha, have become the two most famous capoeira mestres of the twentieth century.

⁶¹ For an analysis of nineteenth-century capoeiragem in relationship to attitudes towards race, see Leticia Vidor de Sousa Reis, *O mundo de pernas para o ar : a capoeira no Brasil*, 2a ed. (São Paulo: Publisher Brasil, 2000).

⁶² Titled *Guide of the Capoeira or Brazilian Gymnastics*. This manual was written by a man believed to be a military officer known only by the letters ODC, possibly his initials. ODC, *Guia do Capoeira ou Gymnastica Brasileira*, Second ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Nacional, 1907). The title of the first edition is unknown.

⁶³ Mello Moraes Filho, *Festas e tradições populares do Brasil*: 455.

Although other capoeira practitioners and mestres might have matched or exceeded their skill, influence and fame at the time, such as Aberrê or Samuel Querido de Deus,⁶⁴ Bimba and Pastinha were the ones who left the most enduring legacies.⁶⁵ By formalizing the teaching of capoeira, bringing the practice from streets and backyards into “academies” and sports centers,⁶⁶ the two mestres transformed *capoeiragem*, the informal “doing” of it, into capoeira, a self-contained practice with well-defined styles and movement repertoires. Bimba’s and Pastinha’s enduring legacies as the founders of capoeira regional and capoeira angola can be attributed not only to the many disciples who gave continuity to these mestres’ ideas, but also to their illustrated manuals, both published in the 1960s, where Bimba and Pastinha left behind written records of their pedagogical approaches, rules of conduct, and movement vocabularies.

In this chapter, I place Bimba’s and Pastinha’s manuals side by side with the manual published in 1928 by national gymnastics proponent Anníbal Burlamaqui. Burlamaqui, framed as a “white intellectual,” has recently become the target for accusations of loss, whitening, and excessive modernization of capoeira—accusations previously directed at Bimba. I believe this view only repositions the binary modernity/tradition and continues to obscure this mutually constitutive, productive relationship. Although Burlamaqui proposed innovations congruent with eugenicist ideas of “improvement,” I hope to show that all three innovators engaged in similar processes of discursive appropriation while choreographing an Afro-diasporic Brazilian modernity.

⁶⁴ Throughout the 1930s and 40s, intellectuals such as Jorge Amado and Édison Carneiro praised Samuel Querido de Deus, “a fisherman of remarkable corporeal agility,” as the best capoeira practitioner of Bahia. Edison Carneiro, *Negros Bantus* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, s.a., 1937), 159.

⁶⁵ Waldeloir Rego goes as far as stating that Pastinha “is not and has never been the best capoeirista of Bahia.” See Chapter 3 for further discussion of Rego’s views on Pastinha. Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 270.

⁶⁶ *Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola* (CECA) (Capoeira Angola Sports Center), founded by Pastinha, and the *Centro de Cultura Física Regional* (CCFR) (Center of Regional Physical Culture), founded by Bimba.

This chapter is divided into three sections, each centered around close readings of the manuals published by each of these innovators: Burlamaqui's *National Gymnastics (Capoeiragem) Methodized and Regulated* (1928), Bimba's *Capoeira Regional Course* (c. 1960), and Pastinha's *Capoeira Angola* (1964). I also bring in the ideas found in Pastinha's unpublished manuscripts, written in the mid-late 1950s, which include drawings, woodcut prints and song lyrics. Although written more than thirty years before the other two, Burlamaqui's book reveals more similarities than differences with the ideas put forth in these later manuals. Through a comparative analysis of both the words on the page and the illustrations and photographs that accompany the texts, I hope to place these three innovators' ideas in conversation in an effort to understand the tactics of legitimization that successfully "elevated" twentieth-century capoeira from criminal activity to "national gymnastics"—from social "carcinoma"⁶⁷ to a form of physical culture capable of "improving the Brazilian race,"⁶⁸ ushering Brazil into the future through Afro-Brazilian modernity.

I. Burlamaqui's *National Gymnastics (Capoeiragem) Methodized and Regulated* (1928)

*There has been debate about a national, Brazilian art, about Brazilian music, etc. [...] But does anyone talk about a national sport? Unfortunately not. And in these circumstances, Zuma's book is equivalent to a shout or Brazilianness.*⁶⁹
--Mario Santos

Illustrated books on capoeira(gem) written by practitioners go as far back as the early twentieth century: the oldest known manual, *Guide of the Capoeira or Brazilian Gymnastics* (1907) was written by a man believed to be a military officer known only as ODC, who

⁶⁷ Dunshee de Abranches cited in Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 308.

⁶⁸ Coelho Netto cited in Reis, *O mundo de pernas para o ar : a capoeira no Brasil*: 66.

⁶⁹ Mario Santos' preface to *Gymnastica Nacional*. Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodizada e Regrada*: 3.

concealed his identity at a time when capoeiragem was still a criminal activity;⁷⁰ Burlamaqui, who was familiar with ODC's manual, went on to write *National Gymnastics (Capoeiragem) Methodized and Regulated* (1928), the only surviving capoeira manual published in the early twentieth century.⁷¹ Burlamaqui attempted to bring legitimacy to capoeiragem through his self-published illustrated manual, which contains rich descriptions of attacks and defenses as well as rules and regulations aimed at “improving” the practice.

Anthropologist Leticia Reis has analyzed Burlamaqui's work as part of what she calls a “white erudite” rethinking of capoeira, while framing the emergence of Mestre Bimba's and Mestre Pastinha's styles as “black working class”⁷² innovations aimed at obtaining legitimacy for the practice of capoeira and symbolically bringing blacks closer to full Brazilian citizenship and social inclusion. Reis's analysis is groundbreaking in that it questions previous analyses of Bimba's capoeira regional as simply co-optation and “whitening” by foregrounding the fact that Bimba himself was black. Reis recasts Bimba's innovations as dynamic Africanist appropriations of hegemonic rituals and symbols, such as formal graduation ceremonies and the conferral of medals—tactical reformulations of capoeira as sport which allowed this marginalized Afrodiasporic practice to play a key role in the construction of Brazilian national identity. Furthermore, Reis positions both capoeira regional and capoeira angola as coeval, albeit distinct, “black working class” re-articulations of capoeira as sport, diametrically opposed

⁷⁰ The date of the first edition of ODC's book is unknown; its second edition (1907) is only available at the time of this writing through photocopies of a re-typed copy of the book, reportedly made by Burlamaqui, which circulates among capoeira researchers and practitioners. Since the original illustrations of this manual are absent in this re-typed version, I was not able to include this manual in the present analysis. ODC, *Guia do Capoeira ou Gymnastica Brasileira*.

⁷¹ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Reagrada*.

⁷² Reis' terms in Portuguese are “branco erudito” and “negro popular.” See Leticia Vidor de Sousa Reis, *O mundo de pernas para o ar: a capoeira no Brasil*, 2a ed. (São Paulo: Publisher Brasil, 2000).

to the “white erudite” nationalist project which sought to “hygienize, that is, to minimize or destitute of its African origins that which was a Brazilian gymnastics par excellence.”⁷³

Other authors have similarly reclaimed and valorized Bimba’s innovations while blaming Burlamaqui for a process of “loss of character” and “whitening” of capoeira. Matthias Röhrig Assunção asserts that Burlamaqui’s “kinesthesics overall seem more inspired by Europe than Africa,” and that the price to pay for his methodization was the complete erasure of “the Afro-Brazilian roots of the art and the cultural context of its practice.”⁷⁴ Tracing an argument similar to Reis’s, Assunção concludes that Bimba’s innovations should be considered a form of “black modernization, which differed in many fundamental aspects from the ‘whitening’ or ‘westernized’ model proposed by Burlamaqui.”⁷⁵ Assunção continues:

Without [Bimba] only a Burlamaqui model of a completely de-Africanized capoeira might have survived, parallel to entirely folklorized show for tourists⁷⁶ without any martial efficiency. [...] Mestre Bimba created an alternative model of black modernization for an African derived combat tradition, which seemed to be the only one capable of avoiding both total Westernization and folklorization for capoeira.⁷⁷

Rather than seeing continuity between Burlamaqui and Bimba’s innovations, Assunção creates a narrative where Bimba breaks with this de-Africanized model and (heroically) rescues capoeira’s Africanity.

Burlamaqui is repeatedly blamed for capoeira’s de-Africanization and “loss of character” in much of the contemporary capoeira literature. Jair Moura blames this loss on Burlamaqui’s borrowings from foreign forms:

⁷³ ———, *O mundo de pernas para o ar : a capoeira no Brasil*: 60.

⁷⁴ Matthias Röhrig Assunção, *Capoeira : a history of an Afro-Brazilian martial art* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005), 131.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁷⁶ It is interesting that Assunção compares Burlamaqui’s “losses” with those blamed on the folklorization of capoeira, a process I explore in Chapter 2.

⁷⁷ Assunção, *Capoeira : a history of an Afro-Brazilian martial art*: 149.

[Burlamaqui] inserted a series of movements and blows from alien fighting techniques, while maintaining others belonging to the mestizo's original and traditional fight. The adoptions of these influences and forms damaged contemporary capoeira, which consequently lost its genuine character.⁷⁸

Moura is unequivocal about the damage and loss of "genuine character" brought about by Burlamaqui's innovations. In his analysis of *National Gymnastics*, Greg Downey concludes that Burlamaqui creates "an amalgamation of distinct violent fighting techniques" which "necessarily reduces capoeira to its most effective attacks and defenses." Downey further claims that Burlamaqui

makes no mention of the *roda*, the capoeira ring with musicians that so dominates and is a hallmark of Bahian forms of the art. His regulations only stipulate a circular area for competitions, without mention of musical instruments, rituals, or stylistic elements of play.⁷⁹

Although Bimba proudly claimed to having engaged freely in borrowing elements from foreign fighting techniques, Moura and Downey link only Burlamaqui's borrowings to an idea of loss or "reduction" of capoeira.

This language of "loss" in reference to capoeira's ritual and ludic elements is strikingly similar to the one deployed by critics of Bimba such as Frigerio, who, writing in the 1980s, concludes that capoeira regional

eliminates or reduces the emphasis on the ceremonial, ritual and ludic elements of Capoeira Angola and incorporates new elements from fighting [techniques], which, up to that time, were foreign to it: grabbing, defenses against [grabbing] and some new movements.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Excerpted from a lengthy interview with Moura printed in Nestor Capoeira, *Capoeira: Roots of the Dance-Fight-Game* [Capoeira, os fundamentos da malícia] (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2002), 204. (The translation of the original interview in Portuguese is Nestor Capoeira's).

⁷⁹ Downey, "Domesticating an Urban Menace: reforming capoeira angola as a Brazilian national sport," 7.

⁸⁰ Frigerio, "Capoeira: de arte negra a esporte branco," 6.

In this chapter, and in fact, throughout this dissertation, I question the assumption that a capoeira prior to the regional/angola split was necessarily more imbued with “ritual”—a term that, unless carefully defined, tells us more about the writer’s nostalgic ideas about “rituals” than about the “ritual” itself. Similarly, I question analyses that have equated innovation and modernization with loss and with a reduction of both the complexity and the Africanity of capoeira. I propose that tropes of loss and rescue of a capoeira perceived to be in decline recur as narrativizing devices not only in academic analyses of capoeira, but also in the development of the practice throughout the twentieth century. I argue that it is in fact through these narratives of loss and recuperation that innovation is legitimized and permitted.

Burlamaqui, Bimba, and Pastinha each engaged in their own processes of rescue: Burlamaqui’s goal was to rescue and reform the “still ill-defined” practice of capoeiragem through methodization and regulation. Bimba claimed a need to rescue capoeira angola from a loss of efficiency, while Pastinha hoped to rescue capoeira from the losses brought about by Bimba’s codifications. All three innovators, however, had a common underlying goal: to remove the stigma associated with the practice and to rescue capoeira(gem) from marginalization. It is no coincidence that all three were born within a few years of the official criminalization of capoeiragem through the criminal code of 1890; they learned and practiced the form clandestinely and knew first hand the importance, indeed the urgency, of decriminalization.

In *National Gymnastics*, Burlamaqui clearly draws on the social prestige ascribed to his own “white” phenotype in early twentieth-century Brazil. However, I question Reis’ portrayal of Burlamaqui as a “white intellectual” who participated in “white erudite” efforts to de-Africanize capoeira. I recast, instead, Burlamaqui as a practitioner⁸¹ —in the language of his time, a

⁸¹ It is difficult to ascertain just how “learned” Burlamaqui was, since very little information is available about him outside the context of this book. This lack of information points to the fact that he did not

“sportsman”—whose embodied knowledge of capoeira, inscribed both in the descriptions of the attacks and defenses and the photos that illustrate the book, often contradicts the eugenicist rhetoric present in his text. While the text socially “improves” capoeira by associating it with foreign sports, Burlamaqui’s movement descriptions and prescriptions assert national superiority through Afro-diasporic corporeality. I propose that we consider his “methodization” instead as a discursive appropriation aimed at “modernizing” and “improving” capoeira similar to Bimba’s and Pastinha’s, bringing Afro-diasporic embodied epistemology from the margins to the center of Brazilian national identity.

Much has been written about Bimba and Pastinha, but less biographical information is available about Burlamaqui, also known as Zuma.⁸² From the photo of a dapper young Zuma,⁸³ printed in *National Gymnastics*—in his late twenties or early thirties—however, it is safe to assume that he was born around the turn of the twentieth century, only a few years apart from his

make a name for himself as a practitioner and teacher of capoeiragem like his contemporaries Bimba and Pastinha in Bahia, or Sinhôzinho in Rio de Janeiro. His rich movement descriptions, however, point to an in-depth knowledge of the practice.

⁸² Capoeira scholar André Luis Lacé Lopes reports Burlamaqui’s birthdate as November 25th, 1898. André Luiz Lacé Lopes, *A capoeiragem no Rio de Janeiro : primeiro ensaio, Sinhozinho e Rudolf Hermann* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Europa, 2002), 88. In a 2004 article, physical education scholar José Luis Cirqueira Falcão states that Burlamaqui was a navy officer, but does not provide a source for this information. José Luis Cirqueira Falcão, "Para além das metodologias prescritivas na educação física: a possibilidade da capoeira como complexo temático no currículo de formação profissional," *Pensar a Prática* 7, no. 2 (2004). Capoeirista and scholar Sergio Luiz de Souza Vieira, in a 2004 article entitled “Da Capoeira: Como Patrimônio Cultural,” acknowledges Burlamaqui’s contributions to “sport capoeira” (*capoeira desportiva*) and states that Burlamaqui was a public functionary, tracing this information to Lamartine Pereira da Costa. In a recent email interview, Vieira confirmed that little is known about his profession and speculates that Burlamaqui might have been a lawyer. Sergio Luiz de Souza Vieira, E-mail communication, February 25th 2011.

⁸³ In the interest of consistency, but also in a move to acknowledge Burlamaqui as a practitioner rather than an outsider “intellectual,” I will refer to him throughout by his capoeira name Zuma. It is not clear whether Zuma had achieved recognition as mestre at the time of publication of his book, since he is introduced, in the preface by Mario Santos, as Zuma rather than Mestre Zuma. Leticia Reis refers to Zuma as a mestre in *O Mundo de Pernas pro Ar: a Capoeira no Brasil*, but does not cite a direct source for this information. The publications by Bimba and Pastinha analyzed here date from the mid 1960s, when both were already firmly established as mestres, but newspaper articles from the 1930s refer to Bimba without this title. Also in the interest of consistency, I have chosen to refer to all three innovators without the title “mestre.”

two better-known capoeira colleagues. Arms crossed, Zuma looks out at the camera dressed in a suit and bow tie, his hair immaculately slicked back with pomade in a photo labeled simply “The author.” In a short introduction titled “Two Words,” Zuma positions himself as a practitioner,⁸⁴ stating that it was not his intention to create “literature”; rather than literary value, the reader should hope to find *utility* in the book. The book’s utility is also emphasized by Dr. Mario Santos in the preface: the work is “modern, it’s practical: it doesn’t meander, it goes straight to the point. [...] In short, it is a useful book.”⁸⁵

Santos, whom Zuma identifies as a “talented lawyer,” lends legitimacy to Zuma’s book not only through his written endorsement and praise in the preface but also, significantly, through the photographic evidence of his own embodied capoeira practice by posing as Zuma’s opponent in the twenty photos that illustrate the attacks and defenses listed in the book.⁸⁶ Santos deploys the social evolutionary rhetoric of his time to predict that the decriminalization and acceptance of capoeira was only a matter of time. After pointing out that English boxing, French *savate* and Japanese *jiu-jitsu* all went through a period of marginalization before reaching social acceptance and national recognition, Santos asks: “Why, if the law of evolution is the same in the entire Universe, would capoeiragem, in Brazil, escape the evolutionary march or its sister forms? [...] Why should we not create rules and regenerate capoeiragem?”⁸⁷

⁸⁴ A. Liberac C. Simões Pires also concludes that Zuma was not an intellectual himself, but rather an athlete and a “sportsman.” Antonio Liberac Cardoso Simões Pires, “Movimentos da Cultura Afro-Brasileira: a formação histórica da caeira contemporânea 1890-1950” (Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2001), 98.

⁸⁵ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 3.

⁸⁶ Zuma deems Santos’s acceptance of his invitation to pose for the photos a “patriotic gesture” aimed at the “destruction of the archaic and silly prejudice that ‘BRAZILIAN GYMNASTICS’—*capoeiragem*—tarnishes those who practice it.” *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

In his book, Zuma does just that. Bringing in elements from boxing and “foot-ball,”⁸⁸ Zuma prescribes the diameter of the circular playing “field,” the starting position of the contenders, the duration for each “round” (three minutes, with a rest of two minutes), and the criteria for establishing a winner for each match: a fighter would win either by incapacitating the opponent, or, if so agreed beforehand, points would be counted by a referee who would proclaim as the winner the fighter causing the most falls.⁸⁹ Creating (new) rules and “regenerating” capoeiragem, “turning it into a weapon, [a form of] self-defense, a sport like any other” is presented, in fact, as Zuma’s patriotic duty.⁹⁰

While many of Zuma’s rules—the presence of a referee, a point system, a match divided into “rounds” of a certain duration of time—clearly constitute borrowings from “legitimate” foreign sports and have been interpreted as changes that entailed loss, I hope to shed light on how Zuma rearticulates Afro-diasporic “customs” in hegemonic terms *through* these very foreign borrowings. For example, Downey has pointed out that Zuma “makes no mention of the *roda*, the capoeira ring with musicians that [...] is a hallmark of Bahian forms of the art” and that he “only stipulate[s] a circular area for competitions.”⁹¹ Indeed Zuma does not mention the *roda*, with its musical instruments and “rituals” as we know it today; instead, he stipulates a *circular* area for matches of capoeiragem. Although inspired by rectangular “foot-ball” fields,⁹² the competition area that Zuma proposes as the ideal “field” (*campo*) is, as Downey notes, circular.

⁸⁸ In English in the original, before the creolization of the word as “futebol,” the contemporary Portuguese word for soccer.

⁸⁹ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 18-19.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹¹ Downey, “Domesticating an Urban Menace: reforming capoeira angola as a Brazilian national sport,” 7.

⁹² “Foot-ball” playing fields “lend themselves extraordinarily well to capoeiragem [because] they break falls and do not contain dust.” Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 20.

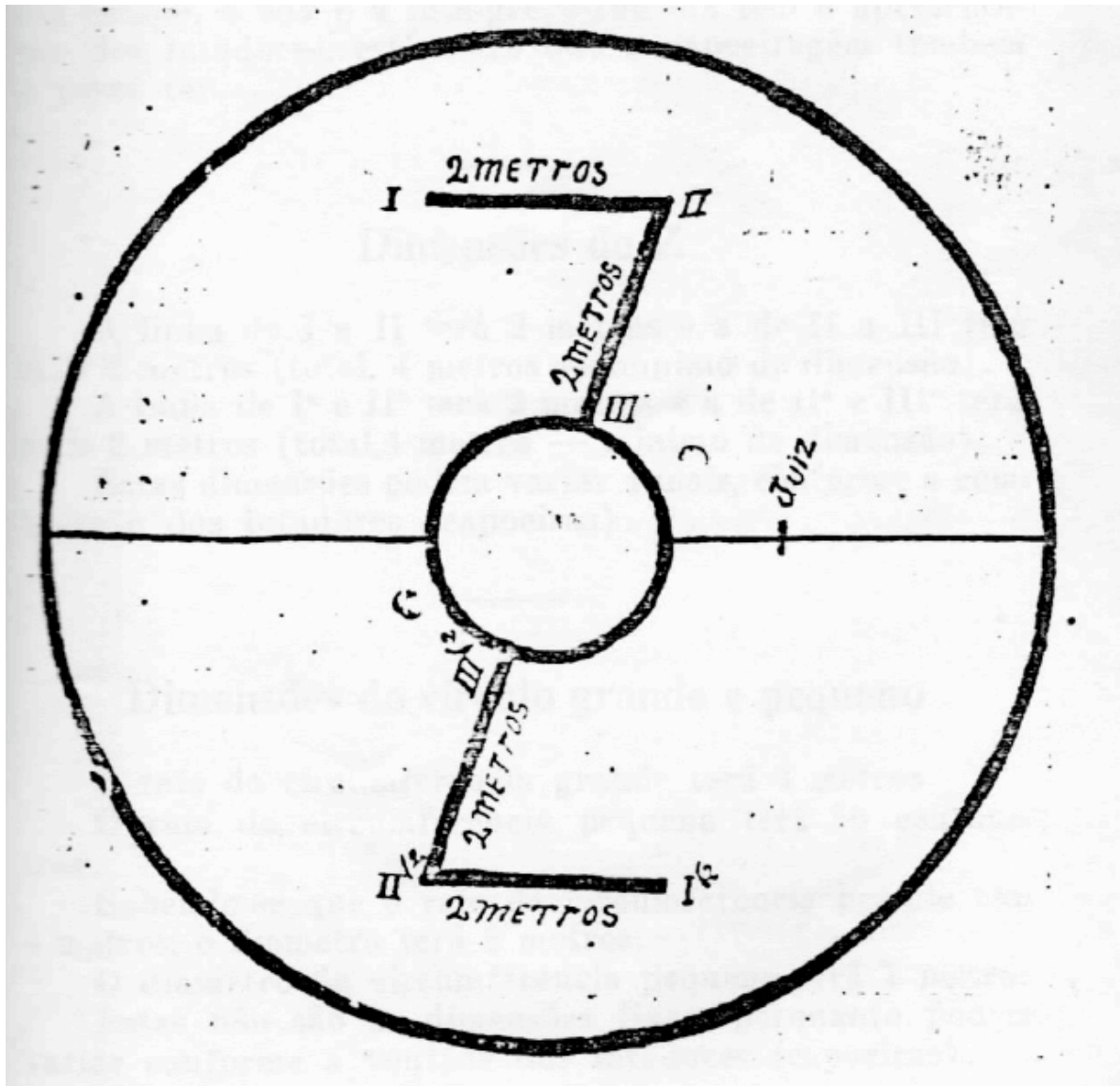


Figure 1.1 Circular “field” for matches of “Brazilian Gymnastics” proposed by Zuma in *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*, 1928.

The circularity of the playing area, however, is not a mere geometrical coincidence with the present-day *roda*—rather, it re-articulates the circular formation intrinsic to so many Afro-diasporic forms within twentieth-century transnational notions of sport.⁹³ By re-visiting both Zuma’s regulations and his movement descriptions, illustrations and photographs, I focus my

⁹³ It is interesting to note that in *National Gymnastics*, the word *sport* appears still in English, signaling its imported status both linguistically and conceptually. Today, the word has been fully adopted and adapted to fit Portuguese phonetic rules (*esporte*).

analysis on the recurring movement tropes and choreographic tactics that I have identified as central to capoeiragem—and thus Afro-diasporic—rearticulated by Zuma as “improvements” to the practice.

Movement descriptions that precede *National Gymnastics* point to continuities rather than discontinuities between Zuma’s “purely Brazilian game”⁹⁴ and nineteenth-century street capoeiragem. In one of the earliest detailed movement descriptions of capoeiragem, included in Brazilian folklorist Mello Moraes Filho’s 1893 collection of Brazilian folk celebrations and traditions entitled *Festas e tradições populares do Brasil*,⁹⁵ we find accounts of several attacks and defenses almost identical to the ones included in Zuma’s *National Gymnastics*. In a vivid description of the movement possibilities of the game⁹⁶ of capoeiragem, the author states that

the capoeira, placing himself in front of his contender, dives in, jumps, stretches out, spins, deceives, lies down, stands up and, in one instant, employs his feet, his head, his hands, the knife, the straight razor.⁹⁷

Making ample use of the present tense, Mello Moraes’s accounts clearly speak of a capoeiragem very much present in his day, still organized in *malts* and persecuted by police. This is likely the same capoeiragem that Zuma learned and later sought to “improve” and legitimize. When Mello Moraes describes the attacks and defenses by name, more than half of the movements he lists are also found in Zuma’s book: the *rabo de arraia* (lit. stingray’s tail, or inverted circular kick), *cabeçada* (headbutt), *rasteira* (leg sweep), *escorão* (straight kick to the adversary’s stomach), *tombo da ladeira* (tripping a jumping adversary, in mid-air).⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 15.

⁹⁵ *Ppopular festivities and traditions of Brazil*. I have found two possible dates for the first edition of this book, 1893 and 1895.

⁹⁶ *Jôgo*, game in Portuguese, is a term used by Mello Moraes himself.

⁹⁷ Mello Moraes Filho, *Festas e tradições populares do Brasil*: 444.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 448.

In a short article in an eclectic collection of essays entitled *Bazar* (1928), Coelho Netto, a journalist, novelist, sports enthusiast, and practitioner of capoeiragem, lists many of the same attacks and defenses listed by both Mello Moraes and Zuma: the headbutt, here called a *cocada*,⁹⁹ the *rabo de arraia*, the *rasteira*, and also the *bahiana*,¹⁰⁰ a move where one player quickly lowers down and, using his hands, pulls the adversary's legs from under him, making him fall—an attack also present in Zuma's *National Gymnastics*. Rather than an idiosyncratic “amalgamation” of foreign martial or pugilistic traditions, as has been claimed, Zuma's techniques, at the movement level, seem closely connected to street capoeiragem.

Headbutting, tripping, jumping, and kicking while bearing weight on the hands, Zuma gives continuity to several movement motifs found in nineteenth century capoeiragem. However, Zuma also engages in the Afro-dasporic inventiveness of the practice: he takes credit for inventing the *queixada* (high kick to the chin), the *passo da cegonha* (lit. stork's step, where the defending player grabs the attacker's raised leg while sweeping his standing leg)¹⁰¹ and the *espada* (lit. sword, a kick aimed at disarming the opponent)¹⁰² by adding the words “of the author” (*do autor*) next to these three attacks.¹⁰³

While much attention has been paid to Zuma's rules and point system, Zuma's manual is invaluable for its detailed movement descriptions. Zuma begins with the starting position, the *guarda*, the “bellicose attitude” from which one begins to learn capoeiragem: “One brings the body upright, in a natural alignment, in a noble and erect attitude, twisting to the right or the

⁹⁹ A *cocada* (a reference to the head as a coconut), could be applied either to the chin or to the stomach of the opponent, “leaving him spread out in the middle of the street”; Coelho Netto, “Nosso Jogo,” 135.

¹⁰⁰ *Bahiana* means “Bahian,” in this case the “Bahian move,” which points to an existing exchange of movement vocabulary between Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 35.

¹⁰² Ibid., 41.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 21.

left.”¹⁰⁴ However, in more than half of the photos that illustrate the attacks and counter-attacks,¹⁰⁵ the author appears bearing either partial or full weight on his hands. Although the practice of national gymnastics should begin with an upright, “noble and erect” stance, the photographs and descriptions in Zuma’s book point to a movement vocabulary that demanded players to constantly move away from this “noble and erect” starting position, crouching down close to the floor both for attacks and counter-attacks and often bearing weight onto their hands.

In preparation for a headbutt, the player or fighter,¹⁰⁶ “approaching the adversary and suddenly crouching low [,] strikes with his head the [adversary’s] lower jaw or chest, belly or even [his] face.”¹⁰⁷ To defend from a *rabo de arraia*, one should “get down as low as possible and take advantage of this defense” by preparing a subsequent attack. Some attacks and defenses should be performed “having fallen over (almost lying down).”¹⁰⁸ These and other examples point to a technique that demanded movement close to the ground, either by ducking under a kick or initiating a kick or headbutt from below. The erect stance that Zuma further describes as “the first position, noble and loyal, of the queen of national gymnastics”¹⁰⁹ remains almost entirely rhetorical, invoking nobility and royalty as part of his effort to remove the stigma that marred the practice of capoeira in the early twentieth century.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ *Golpes and contra-golpes*.

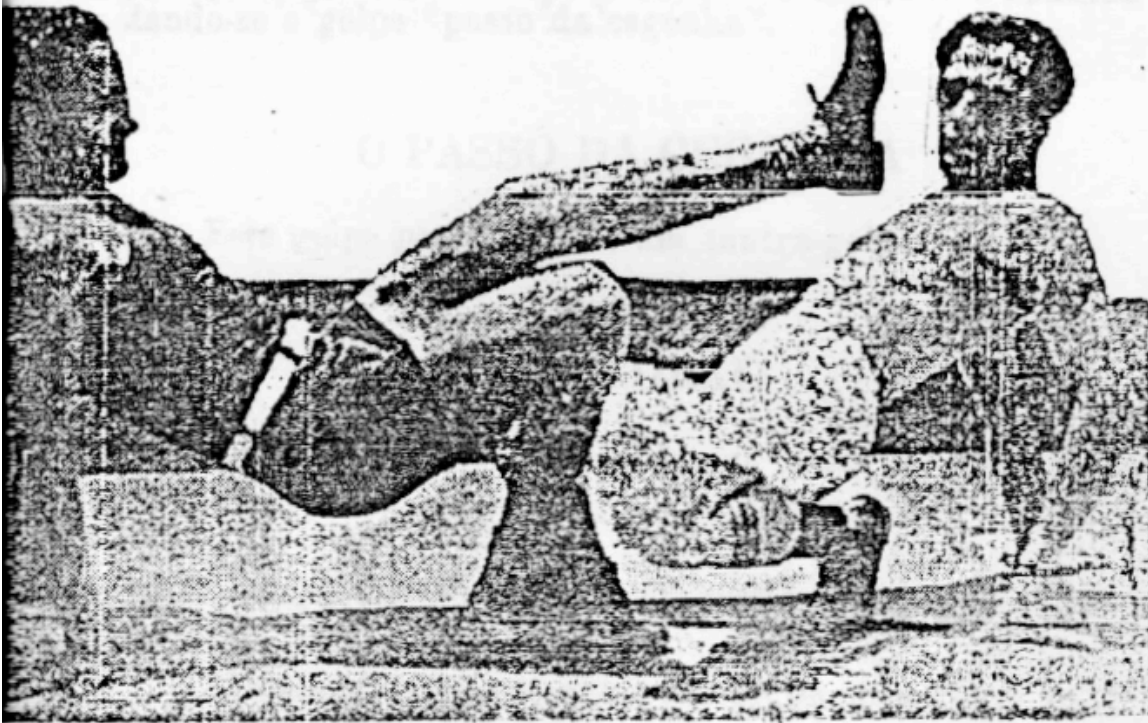
¹⁰⁶ Zuma refers to the capoeira match as a “fight” (*luta*), but to the participants of this fight as “players” (*jogadores*).

¹⁰⁷ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 28.

¹⁰⁸ “[...] descahído (quasi deitado).” Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

A ENCRUZILHADA



A encruzilhada evita-se descahindo o corpo sobre uma perna, quasi sentado e, com a outra alteada (á frente do corpo) faz-se com que esta bata no queixo ou rosto do atacante.

Figure 1.2 Illustration and instructions for defending against the *encruzilhada* (cross-roads), from *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*, 1928.

Other than the three-minute rounds and the presence of a referee, Zuma's national gymnastics seems to have little in common with boxing. The bulk of Zuma's attacks and defenses are based on leg sweeps and kicks rather than punches or strikes with the hands, precisely because the hands are instead used for supporting the weight of the body. In describing a kick he considers one of the most dangerous, Zuma explains:

The capoeira will perform the rabo de arraia by *placing the palms of his hands on the floor* and, appearing to go into a back flip, he will place the soles of his feet on the [adversary's] chest or face [...] and this results always in the adversary falling backwards.¹¹⁰ (emphasis added)

Freeing the feet to attack by placing the palms of hands on the floor,¹¹¹ Zuma's capoeiragem demands that players constantly shift weight from feet to hands and from hands to feet.

Excessive verticality, often equated with loss of Africanity, is only present in Zuma's national gymnastics "in theory."

Zuma's technique has been interpreted as a stiff, upright version of capoeiragem where movements do not flow from one another. Downey claims that Zuma "only hints at how sustained interaction might actually continue throughout the three-minute rounds."¹¹² However, a closer look at Zuma's descriptions and instructions point to players who constantly rise, fall, dive, duck and jump, and who are instructed to take advantage of opportunities by initiating an attack from a defense, providing ample evidence of sustained interaction. A move Zuma calls "to comb or to sift" (*pentear* or *peneirar*) not only gives further evidence of the game's flow, but also embodies the epistemology of deception, central to capoeiragem. Zuma instructs: "One throws the arms and the body in every direction in a swinging motion [*ginga*], in order to disturb the attention of the adversary and better prepare for the decisive attack."¹¹³ Contrary to today's understanding of the *ginga* within capoeira practice as a foundational back-and-forth connecting

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 24-25.

¹¹¹ The upside-down-ness of capoeira, which has been theorized as evidence of capoeira's African origins in relationship to the cosmological system of *kalunga*, where "the ancestors walk with their feet up," is very much present in Zuma's capoeiragem. Desch-Obi explains the *kalunga* as a "cosmological system that understood bodies of water to be bridges connecting the lands of the living and the realm of the dead. In reference to the spiritual realm linked to these bodies of water, *kalunga* invokes an inverted world where the ancestors walk with their feet up. This gave birth to a martial art that relied on supporting one's body with the hands and kicking while upside down. Masters of the art who were forced to endure the Middle Passage spread this aesthetic of inverted kicks throughout the Americas." Desch-Obi, *Fighting for honor : the history of African martial art traditions in the Atlantic world*: 3-4.

¹¹² Downey, "Domesticating an Urban Menace: reforming capoeira angola as a Brazilian national sport," 7.

¹¹³ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 42.

step in the capoeira game, Zuma's "sifting" has the express intention to confuse and deceive, a tactical maneuver in preparation for an attack.

The description of the rabo de arraia above offers another example of capoeiragem's tactics of deception: *appearing* to go into a back flip, the player "places his feet" on the adversary's chest or face. Deception, trickery and unpredictability¹¹⁴ run through Zuma's *National Gymnastics*. However, Zuma downplays trickery in his manual: the description of sifting is found at the end of the list of attacks, without an illustration, almost as an afterthought.¹¹⁵ Trickery, not surprisingly, was not foregrounded in a book that aimed at the legitimization and decriminalization of capoeira. Similarly tucked away at the end of the book, we find Zuma's "trickery moves" (*golpes de tapiaçã*): stepping on the adversary's foot, deceiving him by looking in the direction of one body part but attacking another, pretending to pick up something from the floor, or even pretending to prepare to spit in the adversary's face, prompting him to close his eyes and rendering him vulnerable to an attack.¹¹⁶ These are listed as additional attacks, and Zuma provides no in-depth descriptions or illustrations for these trickery

¹¹⁴ Today, trickery (*mandinga* or *malícia*) is considered a "foundational element" by capoeira practitioners. "*Capoeira é mandinga, é manha, é malícia*" ("capoeira is magic, it's craftiness, it's cunning") is an oft-quoted statement made by Pastinha during a video-recorded interview included in the documentary "Pastinha! Uma vida pela capoeira—1889/1981" directed by Antônio Muricy (1981). See Adriana Albert Dias, *Mandinga, Manha e Malícia: uma história sobre os capoeiras na capital da Bahia (1910-1925)* (Salvador: EDUFBA, 2006).

¹¹⁵ It is significant that in Inezil Penna Marinho's 1945 adaptation of *Gymnastica Nacional, Subsidies for the Study of the Methodology for the Training of Capoeiragem*, the move called "sifting or combing" is listed as the first movement. Rather than its trickery, however, Penna Marinho emphasizes its dance-like qualities and its efficiency: "The sway [ginga] of the body, a swinging motion [bamboleio] in which the arms throw themselves in every direction and the body dances over the semi-bent legs, is called combing or sifting." Penna Marinho clarifies that although the aim of sifting was to distract the opponent, this was necessary for "applying one's blow with greater efficiency and unexpectedly." See Chapter 2 for further discussion of comparisons between capoeira and dance. Inezil Penna Marinho, *Subsídios para o estudo da metodologia do treinamento da capoeiragem* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1945), 89.

¹¹⁶ Interestingly, this section was omitted in Penna Marinho's *Subsidies* (which, otherwise, reprints Zuma's book almost in its entirety). Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 51-52.

moves. However, trickery and deception also permeate Zuma's descriptions of more "legitimate" attacks and counter-attacks: in the forced sweep (*banda forçada*), the player

advances towards his adversary, deceiving him as much as possible (sifting) and pretending to slip, he places his hands on the floor and extends his leg, stiff (right or left) beside the adversary's legs [...] pushing the adversary to one side or backwards, making him fall."¹¹⁷

Deceiving the adversary by pretending to slip or looking in the opposite direction of the attack, by twenty-first-century standards, would not only be considered effective feints, they would certainly provoke laughter and embody the ludic aspect of capoeira—an aspect often interpreted as Afro-diasporic and "traditional."

Despite his hyperbolic claims to the nobility, purity, perfection, and even holiness¹¹⁸ of Brazil's newfound national gymnastics, trickery is still at the core of Zuma's capoeiragem, as are numerous other aspects that have been theorized as Afro-diasporic, such as the circular formation, bearing weight on the hands and kicking with the feet, and using headbutts.¹¹⁹ Analyses that dismiss any possibility of re-articulations of Afro-diasporic values and dismiss Zuma's work as "complete de-Africanization" miss the ample evidence of Zuma's Afro-diasporic embodied knowledge present in *National Gymnastics* by focusing solely on Zuma's text, which undoubtedly reproduced a nationalist rhetoric that nonetheless sought to valorize and legitimize rather than simply coopt capoeiragem.

The valorization of the national over the foreign is a common theme in early twentieth century publications that argued for the adoption of capoeiragem as national sport. In the preface to Zuma's book, Mario Santos writes:

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 40.

¹¹⁸ "With capoeiragem was born the captives' first effort for freedom in Brazil and, for this reason, its origin is, thus, sanctified." Ibid., 13.

¹¹⁹ For a detailed analysis of martial traditions based on headbutting in Africa and the Americas, see Desch-Obi, *Fighting for honor : the history of African martial art traditions in the Atlantic world*.

It's time that we freed ourselves from foreign sports and gave a little [more] attention to what is ours, what is from home. And in the end it's all worth it, because Brazilian Gymnastics is worth more than all foreign sports. It even exceeds them.¹²⁰

Coelho Netto, in his aptly named 1928 essay "Our game," similarly calls for the recognition of the superiority of capoeiragem, which offered "a means of self-defense superior to all those extolled by foreigners and that we, for this reason alone, are ashamed of practicing."¹²¹ Both Mario Santos and Coelho Netto call for an end to the shame associated with all things homegrown, recognizing the value and indeed superiority of capoeiragem. Rather than continuing to get punched by "bulky thugs" (a reference to boxing), Coelho Netto proposes that Brazilians would undoubtedly prevail in the ring by using techniques from capoeiragem, such as bending the body at the waist and attacking from below.¹²² Expressing his frustration with the valorization of the foreign, Coelho Netto ends his essay in a sarcastic tone:

Let's learn to throw punches—[boxing is] an elegant sport, because people practice it with gloves, its profits come in dollars and it's called *box*, an English name.¹²³

Elegance, precisely what boxing lacked, could be found in abundance in capoeiragem, "one of the most agile and elegant [forms of] exercise."¹²⁴

Five years earlier, journalist A. Gomes Cartusc, appealing to the good taste and patriotism of Brazilian youth, had called for the cultivation of "our" elegant and invincible "game of noble dexterity":

Our game, wherever it is placed against another [form][...] has always won, and still this game without equal is always hidden and only with fear is practiced among people of low

¹²⁰ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Reagrada*: 3.

¹²¹ Coelho Netto, "Nosso Jogo," 134.

¹²² "Nós, que possuímos os segredos de um dos exercicios mais ageis e elegantes, vexamo-nos de o exhibir e, o que mais é, deixamos-nos esmurraçar em *rinks* por machacazes balordos que, com uma quebra de corpo e um passe baixo, de um 'ciscador' dos nossos, iriam mais longe das cordas [...]." Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 140.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 134.

social strata as if it were a crime knowing how to headbutt, apply a leg sweep and stretch [into] a rabo de arraia!¹²⁵

The superiority, efficiency, and invincibility of capoeiragem are repeatedly invoked as justification for the form to be brought out of hiding and illegality. Cartusc brings the readers' attention to the absurdity of criminalizing headbutts and leg sweeps—of regarding this “game without equal” as a crime.

Zuma's text similarly foregrounds the superiority and elegance of capoeiragem in order to strengthen the argument for its social acceptance. While Zuma undoubtedly sought to “improve” capoeiragem through codification, he also championed its intrinsic value: capoeiragem “encompasses, albeit still a little confused and ill-defined, all the elements for a perfect physical culture.”¹²⁶ Zuma, in fact, proposed capoeiragem as a tool of self-improvement: young “family” men, he argued, could improve themselves though this “strange game of arms, legs, head and torso, with such agility and such violence, capable of providing stupendous superiority.”¹²⁷ “Cultivating” the body through capoeiragem, Brazilian men would become “strong, feared, brave and daring.”¹²⁸ If all young men learned capoeiragem, Zuma predicted, the Brazilian citizen of the future would be “respected, feared [and] strong.”¹²⁹ Although he proposes to “improve” capoeiragem, Zuma imagines a Brazilian “citizen of the future” improved *through* an Afro-diasporic practice that already encompassed “all the elements for a perfect physical culture.”

¹²⁵ A. Gomes Cartusc, “Cultivemos o jogo de capoeira e tenhamos asco pelo da boxa,” *O Paiz*, October 22 1923. Reprinted in Raimundo César Alves de Almeida, *Negaça: Boletim da Ginga Associação de Capoeira* 1994, 5.

¹²⁶ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 13.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 15. Interestingly, the adjective “beautiful” continues to be used today to describe a good capoeira game.

Appropriating the hegemonic discourses of his time, Zuma invokes the eugenicist proposition that sports and physical fitness should to be used as a means of improvement of the “citizen of the future”:

Today parents should raise their children outdoors, on the beaches, on a sports field, in a center where athleticism is cultivated with love and vanity, so that in the future, [our] youth may shine in sports fields, showing courage and dexterity.¹³⁰

Echoing the emerging belief that physical activity and fresh air were beneficial rather than harmful to one’s health,¹³¹ but at the same time cautioning against foreign sports that caused the body to “atrophy,” Zuma calls for including capoeiragem in the roster of salubrious and edifying sports:

Ah! How beautiful would it be if all true Brazilians took the initiative to learn [capoeiragem], studying the smallest secrets of this purely Brazilian game [...] Ah! If everyone followed this idea, the Brazilians of the future would be respected, feared, strong, and would pride themselves in knowing the secrets of the wisest game known to this day.¹³²

Zuma cleverly frames his appeal—aimed clearly at the upper classes where parents would “quiver, shout, become desperate with sons who have the fortunate idea of learning this amazing game”¹³³—as patriotic dare. Cultivating both body and body politic through an Afro-diasporic game turned eugenicist thought on its head, allowing Africanity to be viewed as a source of “regeneration” rather than degeneration, and as a source of strength and national pride.

¹³⁰ Coelho Netto is said to have lost his first seven children as a result of raising them as “flowers in a greenhouse.” The next seven children, as a consequence, were allowed “complete freedom, [and were] motivated to practice physical exercises in the fields, in gymnasiums and in the sea. Only then were they to know and enjoy the beauty and joys of Nature, running and playing in the sun, without the heavy clothing that was stifling their health, or throwing themselves into the ocean, with quick strokes, not infrequently returning to the sand, daringly, on the crest of a wave.” Paulo Coelho Netto, *Coelho Netto e os esportes. Conferência realizada no Salão Nobre da Escola Nacional de Belas Artes a 25 de fevereiro de 1964* (Rio da Janeiro: Editôra Minerva, 1964), 9.

¹³² Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 15.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

Zuma described capoeiragem as “the most beautiful game, the most intelligent sport.”¹³⁴ Zuma’s emphasis on intelligence and beauty is also significant in his labor toward legitimization through the appropriation of eugenicist discourse; while invoking beauty and intelligence indeed “whitened” capoeira for readers who equated these two attributes with “whiteness,” this choice of words simultaneously allowed intelligence and beauty to describe an Afro-diasporic movement practice. Zuma’s valorization of Afro-diasporic knowledge, lauding its beauty and intelligence is consonant with emerging ideas among social scientists, who, since the mid 1920s had begun reconsidering earlier pessimistic views about Brazil’s future.¹³⁵ Through the prism of scientific racism, the country’s considerable Afro-diasporic population represented an obstacle to progress. African heritage and racial mixing were seen as the cause of “problems as diverse as criminality, sterility and degeneracy.”¹³⁶ Zuma’s rejects this model of “degeneration,” proposing instead the regeneration of the Brazilian citizen through a beautiful and intelligent Afro-diasporic practice.

A close reading of Zuma’s book—comparing its text and its images—in the context of the national gymnastics project of the early twentieth century has allowed me to reconsider Zuma’s proposed innovations. Re-framing Zuma as a practitioner revealed the Afro-diasporic embodied knowledge captured by the photographs included in *National Gymnastics*, which led me to reconsider Zuma’s proposed “improvements” as a labor of Afro-Brazilian inclusion rather

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Zuma’s work was published five years *before* Gilberto Freyre’s *Masters and Slaves* (1933), the work credited with shaking the very foundations of Brazilian early twentieth-century attitudes towards miscegenation and with reversing the valuation of Brazil’s Afro-diasporic culture. Rather than the source of all social evil and racial “degeneration,” Freyre proposes that Afro-Brazilian music, dance, and culinary traditions should be regarded as sources of national pride. See Chapter 2 for further analysis of the valorization of Afro-Brazilian “folk” traditions by Brazilian intellectuals in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

¹³⁶ Anadelia A. Romo, “Rethinking Race and Culture in Brazil’s First Afro-Brazilian Congress of 1934,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 39(2007): 35.

than exclusion. Appropriating the discourses of improvement, utility, and efficiency of an early twentieth century Brazil eager to enter modernity, Zuma created new rules and regulations for capoeiragem, while its repertory of attacks and defenses continued to embody Afro-diasporic epistemologies of survival such as adaptability, inventiveness, and deception. Claiming the superior beauty and intelligence of a “purely Brazilian” game, Zuma and other early twentieth century writers/practitioners such as Mario Santos and Coelho Netto paved the way toward the decriminalization of capoeiragem, achieved a decade later by Bimba,¹³⁷ who himself appropriated these author’s regionalist and nationalist discourses to create his “regional” style of capoeira in Bahia.

II. Bimba’s *Capoeira Regional Course* (c. 1960)

*Bimba’s method is considered, by the experts, as the most practical and perfect, capable of crossing borders and becoming known globally.*¹³⁸
--Wilson Ribeiro

Zuma’s impassioned defense of capoeiragem in *National Gymnastics* had a lasting impact on the development of capoeira(gem). The self-published, small circulation original edition was likely duplicated through available technologies such as the mimeograph or simply by retyping and reprinting. Inezil Penna Marinho, a navy officer and physical education bureaucrat who studied capoeiragem briefly with Mestre Sinhôzinho in Rio de Janeiro,¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Although Bimba’s innovations and public demonstrations were instrumental in the decriminalization of capoeira, he did not achieve this single-handedly. See Chapter 2 for further discussion on the collaboration between capoeira practitioners and elite capoeira advocates that brought about the unofficial decriminalization of capoeira in 1937 and the removal of capoeira from the criminal code in 1940.

¹³⁸ Excerpt from Bimba’s brief biography. Bimba, *Curso de Capoeira Regional*: 19.

¹³⁹ Penna Marinho studied capoeira with Mestre Sinhôzinho around 1937-38. Marinho, *Subsídios para o estudo da metodologia do treinamento da capoeiragem*: 30. It is likely that the Zuma and Penna Marinho knew each other, since Marinho dedicates *Subsídios* to “the capoeiras of Brazil,” making specific mentions of his teacher Sinhôzinho and Zuma, who “have worked so hard so that capoeiragem does not disappear.” *Ibid.*, 9.

reproduced, almost in its entirety, Zuma's *National Gymnastics* in his 1945 *Subsidies for the Study of the Methodology for the Training of Capoeiragem*.¹⁴⁰ *Subsidies* differs from Zuma's text in its insistence on establishing an "ideal racial type" for the practitioner of capoeiragem—neither black nor white, the ideal body for the practice of capoeiragem was found in the *mulato*—an issue I will explore later in this chapter.

Although Marinho might have given *National Gymnastics* a second life through his adaptation/reinterpretation, perhaps giving more readers access to Zuma's proposed regulations, it is clear that *National Gymnastics* had made its impact well before *Subsidies* went to press in 1945. By the mid 1940s, both Bimba and Pastinha had undoubtedly come into contact with Zuma's ideas,¹⁴¹ as well as with the ideas articulated by Gomes Cartusc, Coelho Netto and other early twentieth-century proponents of capoeiragem as national sport.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ *Subsídios para o estudo da metodologia do treinamento da capoeiragem* (1945). The patriotic language employed by Zuma is replaced by a language of efficiency, although the content of the movement descriptions is almost identical to Zuma's. The most significant difference between Zuma's and Marinho's movement descriptions can be found in the paragraph on "sifting" (*peneirar*). Reflecting a new trend in the practice of capoeiragem, Marinho uses the word *ginga* as a synonym for sifting rather than meaning simply "to sway," as does Zuma. Although, like Zuma, he explains that the aim of sifting is to distract the opponent, he justifies this action as necessary "for the application of a blow with more efficiency." *Ibid.*, 89. It is not until the last three pages of the book that Marinho makes his own contribution to the codification of capoeiragem, proposing supplementary exercises aimed at developing "all the physical attributes required for the practice of capoeiragem, such as elasticity, flexibility, speed and acuity." *Ibid.*, 83. Zuma does list additional exercises at the end of *National Gymnastics*, including weight-lifting, fencing, boxing, and jiu-jitsu. Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 52. However, his supplementary training derives primarily from capoeiragem itself and consists primarily of jumping, falling, and standing up from a "fallen" or seated position. Marinho, on the other hand, seeks to improve the body through "modern" exercises from outside capoeiragem (e.g. "analytic exercises," which worked certain body parts in isolation, such as arms and legs, or "synthetic exercises," which trained the body as a whole, such as marching, balancing, and running)—exercises derived from Marinho's training as an athlete and a navy officer.

¹⁴¹ It is widely believed that Cisanando Lima, a medical student and first generation graduate of Bimba's school who "walked with Zuma Burlamaqui's book under his arm," was responsible for introducing Bimba to Zuma's manual. Esdras Magalhães dos Santos quoted in Lopes, *A capoeiragem no Rio de Janeiro : primeiro ensaio, Sinhozinho e Rudolf Hermannny*: 161.

¹⁴² Reis proposes that "Bimba had access to erudite thought about capoeira produced in Rio de Janeiro through those of his disciples who were university students." (Reis uses the phrase "pensamento ilustrado," which I have translated as "erudite thought." I disagree with her binary erudite/working class,

Jair Moura, a former student of Bimba's, proposes a direct link between Zuma's ideas and Bimba's Capoeira Regional project:

In Salvador, in the 1930s, following in the footsteps of Anibal [sic] Burlamaqui[,] Bimba [...] opened a school, where capoeira, disciplined, regulated, methodized, attracted individuals from several segments of the population.¹⁴³

Zuma's manual and his call for "improving" a "still ill-defined" capoeiragem through regulation and methodization clearly provided a foundation, or at least a precedent, for Bimba's own methodization. Capoeira scholar Frede Abreu, discussing the capoeira matches held in the Bahian capital throughout the 1930s that propelled Bimba into the limelight, finds evidence of Zuma's influence in a note published in the newspaper *Diário da Bahia* in 1936: "The police will regulate these capoeira demonstrations according to the work of Annibal Burlamaqui (Zumma) [sic] published in 1928, in Rio de Janeiro."¹⁴⁴

which I believe obscures the numerous intersections between these "two worlds.") Reis, *O mundo de pernas para o ar : a capoeira no Brasil*: 105.

¹⁴³ Moura (1991) quoted in Frederico José de Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue* (Cidade da Bahia: Instituto Jair Moura, 1999), 71.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 67. Despite the attention they have received in the contemporary capoeira scholarship, Zuma's regulations—allegedly responsible for the near loss of capoeira's "tradition"—were not terribly detailed and left much room for individual interpretation. It is likely that the rules followed in these matches pertained to the dimensions of the space where the contest was to take place, the presence of a referee, and the practice of determining the winner through a point system. It is important to note here that Zuma himself only proposes that matches could be decided through a point system *if so agreed* beforehand. He does not, however, devise such a point system, nor does he stipulate that such a point system should be mandatory. Bimba takes Zuma's ideas further and does devise a point system, where he assigns points to certain strikes. Strikes that merely touched the opponent received one point, while strikes that achieved their goal—making the adversary fall to the ground—were worth three points, adding up to a possible total of twenty-five points. See Jair Moura, *Capoeira--a luta regional baiana*, Cadernos de cultura ; (Salvador: Divisão de Folclore, Departamento de Assuntos Culturais, Secretaria Municipal de Educação e Cultura, Prefeitura Municipal do Salvador, 1979), 28. Abreu cites a 1936 interview with Bimba where he describes a similar point system, but according to this account, most successful strikes were worth two points. Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 68. It is likely that different point systems were widely used throughout the 1930s: Ruth Lande's description of a 1938 capoeira game between Samuel Querido de Deus and Onça Preta briefly mentions the practice of scorekeeping: "Impatiently [a newcomer] pushed [Onça Preta] aside, pointing indignantly to the corner where scorekeepers were chalking the points on the ground, points [Onça Preta] had failed to make." Ruth Lande, *The city of women* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 105.

Bimba drew attention to himself and to his new capoeira technique through his participation in public matches against other capoeira players as well as fighters of other martial arts. During the 1930s and 40s, the sports pages of all major Bahian newspapers reported on boxing and jiu-jitsu matches almost as much as they reported on soccer. Bimba cleverly joined this “pugilistic craze,” and, with his typical bravado, issued challenges to other fighters through newspapers:

Here I leave my challenge to those who practice or know capoeiragem as well as to any other fighter (jiu-jitsu, etc). Whatever they want. I will face them with my capoeira.¹⁴⁵

Through his “invincibility” in public matches,¹⁴⁶ many of them against fighters of other combat forms such as boxing or jiu-jitsu, Bimba offered living proof of the superiority of capoeiragem over imported forms of self-defense (a recurring argument used by Zuma as well as other early-twentieth apologists of the practice).

Reminiscing over these matches in an interview in 1973, Bimba boasted: “I, Mestre Bimba, challenged all the tough guys and I won: the match that lasted the longest, lasted one minute and two seconds.”¹⁴⁷ Bimba’s emphasis on efficiency and superiority—defeating the adversary in the shortest possible time—appropriated prevailing nationalist discourses of his time while at the same time disrupting lingering notions of racial hierarchies and Afro-Brazilian

¹⁴⁵ Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 67-68.

¹⁴⁶ It is likely that many of Bimba’s matches were “rigged” and his superiority choreographed—an issue I explore further in Chapter 2. In an article reprinted in Moura (1979), the journalist from *A Tarde* (1946) states that, public matches were the place “where cheating rules” (“onde impera a marmelada”). Moura, *Capoeira--a luta regional baiana*: 22.

¹⁴⁷ Although perhaps Bimba’s memory, four decades later, might have embellished his prowess (being able to win a match in just over one minute), other newspaper articles confirm that Bimba’s games were decided before the end of the first round. Articles from *Estado da Bahia* (1936) and *O Imparcial* (1936) quoted in Frederico José de Abreu and Maurício Barros Castro, *Capoeira* (Rio de Janeiro: Beco do Azougue Editorial, 2009), 33.

inferiority.¹⁴⁸ Bimba, a dark-skinned black man, with his carefully cultivated image of invincibility—the embodiment of Zuma’s idealized “strong, feared, brave and daring” fighter¹⁴⁹—changed the physiognomy of the Brazilian citizen of the future. Bimba, a black man from a poor socio-economic background, nevertheless embodied the elegance, efficiency and superiority of the “noble game” lauded by proponents of capoeiragem as national sport.

Bimba began elaborating and teaching his new capoeira around 1918. In an interview in his later years, Bimba stated that, by 1928, he had already “created [capoeira] Regional in its entirety [.].”¹⁵⁰ Unfortunately, this early twentieth century codification of Capoeira Regional was not recorded through writing or illustrations, and there is little to no record of his pedagogical approach at this time.¹⁵¹

Bimba’s *Capoeira Regional Course*, an LP and a twenty-page illustrated booklet published in the late 1950s or early 1960s,¹⁵² is the culmination of forty years of “improvement” and codification.¹⁵³ In this process, Bimba transformed capoeiragem—the *doing* of it—into capoeira, a rigidly codified system, with attacks and defenses pre-arranged in “sequences” and a

¹⁴⁸ Although the racial hierarchies of the early twentieth century were slowly replaced by cultural hierarchies, the idea that *mulatos* were more “agile” than blacks, seen in Marinho, still lingered.

¹⁴⁹ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 13.

¹⁵⁰ This statement, dating the completion of the creation of his capoeira technique to the same year as the publication of Zuma’s *National Gymnastics* protects Bimba against claims that his technique might be derivative of Zuma’s. Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 34. According to Assunção, Bimba borrowed specific steps from Zuma such as the *queixada* (literally, a kick to the chin), probably from *National Gymnastics*. Assunção, *Capoeira: a history of an Afro-Brazilian martial art*: 133.

¹⁵¹ See Chapter 2 for movement descriptions and analysis of Bimba’s matches and demonstrations in the 1930s, which offers a glimpse into his early Capoeira Regional technique.

¹⁵² No exact publication date is available. Mestre Itapoan remembers that, when he started studying at Bimba’s *Centro de Cultura Física Regional* in 1964, the LP was already available for purchase, and he knew someone who had bought it two years earlier. He places the first edition around 1959 or 1960. Raimundo César Alves de Almeida, interview by the author, May 2011.

¹⁵³ Taking into account the fact that Bimba was semi-literate, it is likely that the actual writing of this booklet was a collaborative effort between Bimba and one or more of his students. According to Waldeloir Rego, Bimba was a very intelligent man despite the fact that he lacked even an elementary school education, and he “transmitted to [his disciples] his course plan, who gave it an excellent structure and wrote it down in block letters.” Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 283.

clear pedagogical method divided into fourteen lessons. Combining the technologies of vinyl audio-recording and print media, this publication offers an easily reproducible way of disseminating Capoeira Regional beyond the master-disciple face-to-face relationship. *Capoeira Regional Course* goes beyond Zuma's unpretentious illustrated list of attacks and defenses and a few proposed rules for competition: it offers a carefully regulated teaching method where knowledge is imparted through set movement sequences.

Bimba's publication is, in fact, intended *as* instruction. The text, almost entirely in the imperative, takes the capoeira student through Bimba's fourteen lessons, aided only by the music supplied by the accompanying LP. The presence of a flesh-and-blood teacher is rendered unnecessary and even redundant. Any anxieties over the integrity of this "teacherless" learning system are allayed in the preface, where the reader is reassured that the "regionalist essence" that characterizes Bimba's capoeira was maintained, and "all the authenticity of the inventions of this famous capoeirista" were transported to paper and vinyl.¹⁵⁴

Capoeira Regional Course expanded the reach of Bimba's system beyond the region, "contributing in an efficient and practical way to the dissemination of this magnificent and original folkloric sport—Capoeira Regional."¹⁵⁵ As an "original folkloric sport," capoeira regional offered the best of both worlds: the modernity of sport authenticated by the "regionalist essence" of folklore.¹⁵⁶ Efficient and practical, capoeira regional was capable of ushering both

¹⁵⁴ Bimba, *Curso de Capoeira Regional*.

¹⁵⁵ In this booklet, the folkloric aspect of capoeira is equated with its music. The page where the song lyrics are listed is titled "Folklore of Capoeira" ("Folclore da Capoeira"), and in the preface a similar labeling is used: "In presenting this work to the public, accompanied by an LP with the folklore of Capoeira [...]" Significantly, just like the LP/printed text distinction, the movement and the "folklore" of capoeira are easily divisible. *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁵⁶ It is likely that Bimba was influenced, perhaps through his academic students, by the ideas put forth by Gilberto Freyre and his Regionalist Movement in the mid-1920s. Freyre and his regionalist cohort proposed an alternative modernism to that of Rio and São Paulo, calling for a valorization of local culture, a regionalism simultaneously traditionalist and modernist. A native of Recife, the capital of the

capoeira and its practitioners, now called capoeiristas,¹⁵⁷ into modernity. Appropriating and the nationalist rhetoric of proponents of national gymnastics but reframing it as “regional,” Bimba cleverly coopts the momentum generated during the previous decade and definitively codifies the still marginalized game of capoeiragem into a respectable form of physical education called “Bahian regional fight” or capoeira regional.¹⁵⁸

In his process of transforming capoeiragem into capoeira, Bimba focuses on shaping the student’s body in and out of exact, reproducible positions rather than on the student’s movement. While Zuma’s “sifting” embodied improvisation and deception—the player should *throw* his arms and his body “in every direction in a swinging motion [*ginga*]”—with the intent of distracting the opponent, Bimba’s *ginga* becomes the “capoeirista’s ‘fundamental’ *position*” (emphasis added). The torso should be slightly inclined forward, and the arms should be placed

northeastern state of Pernambuco, Freyre state in his 1926 Regionalist Manifesto: “The truth is that there isn’t any other region in Brazil that exceeds the Northeast in richness of illustrious traditions and in sharpness of character. Many of its regional values have become national[.]” Gilberto Freyre, *Manifesto Regionalista de 1926*, Os Cadernos de Cultura (Rio de Janeiro: Departamento de Imprensa Nacional, 1955), 19.

¹⁵⁷ -ista (pl.-istas) is a Portuguese suffix that indicates professional activity (e.g. dentista, motorista) similar to the English -ist.

¹⁵⁸ During the process of transition from capoeiragem to capoeira, the word capoeira is downplayed and even eclipsed. Bimba called his new technique *Luta Regional Bahiana* (Bahian Regional Fight [technique]), omitting the word capoeira altogether. Although there is a discrepancy in the literature as to whether the name of Bimba’s capoeira school included the word capoeira, it is clear that Bimba treaded carefully and understood the power of nomenclature. Raimundo C. A. de Almeida (Mestre Itapoan), Muniz Sodré, Hélio Campos and Matthias Rösig Assunção cite the name of Bimba’s school as *Centro de Cultura Física Regional* (Center for Regional Physical Culture); Letícia V.S. Reis, Waldeloir Rego, and Luis Renato Vieira cite it as *Centro de Cultura Física e Capoeira Regional* (Center for Physical Culture and Regional Capoeira). Helio Campos, *Capoeira regional : a escola de Mestre Bimba* (Salvador, BA: EDUFBA, 2009), 67; Assunção, *Capoeira : a history of an Afro-Brazilian martial art*: 140; Reis, *O mundo de pernas para o ar : a capoeira no Brasil*: 101; Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 282; Vieira, "Da Vadição à capoeira regional: uma interpretação da modernização cultural no Brasil," 165; Muniz Sodré, *Mestre Bimba: corpo de mandinga*, Bahia com h (Rio de Janeiro: Manati, 2002), 67; Raimundo César Alves de Almeida, *Bimba, Perfil do Mestre* (Salvador, Bahia: Gráfica Universitária, 1982), 27.

at the height of the forehead.¹⁵⁹ After shaping the body of the student, Bimba maps his path in space:

In order to execute this movement, draw a square with chalk on the floor (fig. 1-D), and place both feet in [positions] A [and] B. Take the right foot behind the left (D) and return to the initial position (A). Next, take the left foot from position D to C and return to B. This is the cycle that will be repeated indefinitely[.] [...] Ask your colleague to take you by the hands, and practice the ginga as many times as you can. Repeat the movements alone.¹⁶⁰

Far from an unpredictable, deceptive “sifting” motion, with limbs thrown in “every direction,” Bimba’s ginga is disciplined as a regulated action of moving in and out of symmetrical, mapped positions, which should be “repeated indefinitely.” Bimba transforms a preparatory, deceptive tactic into a kind of callisthenic exercise, to be repeated as many times as possible: an innovation that has shaped capoeira pedagogy, in both angola and regional styles, to this day.¹⁶¹ Bimba is unequivocal about the importance of the ginga:

Every lesson should be initiated with the ginga motion [*gingado*]. It is important to stress the importance of the “ginga” in all phases of capoeira. It is indispensable for the student to learn the ginga motion [*gingado*] well. Use all the tracks of side A of the LP.¹⁶²

In these instructions, the newness of the ginga as a position or step—a “thing” to be learned and practiced in isolation, “indefinitely” or until the end of side A—is signaled by the quotes around the word ginga and its alternation with the word “gingado,” a noun that insists on the movement of the ginga, which I have translated here as “ginga motion,” still resisting its fixity as a “thing.” In fact, the word ginga appears infrequently throughout *Capoeira Regional Course*, being instead referred to as “gingado,” the gerund “gingando” and the infinitive of the verb, “gingar.”

¹⁵⁹ Bimba, *Curso de Capoeira Regional*: 3.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Many capoeira classes today, regardless of style, begin with the ginga as part of the “warm-up” for the class; its importance is emphasized and it is often referred to as the “foundational” capoeira step.

¹⁶² Bimba, *Curso de Capoeira Regional*: 8.

Nevertheless, Bimba shifts the focus from process to product—a technique that could be learned in as little as six months, transposed to paper and vinyl, and disseminated throughout the nation.

Capoeira regional's efficiency relied on the easy reproducibility of standardized sequences (*seqüências*), described and illustrated in each of the fourteen lessons of *Capoeira Regional Course*. In these sequences, players rehearse attacks and defenses in set numbers of repetitions, symmetrically alternating right and left sides. The illustrations, labeled with letters and numbers, include broken lines with arrows indicating the path of each motion. Zuma's *National Gymnastics* simply lists and illustrates attacks and counter-attacks, without, however, proposing any kind of order for these movements. Using Zuma's trickery moves, assessing the needs of each game, and taking advantage of opportunities, the player/reader, "armed with and defended by perfect and good intelligence,"¹⁶³ was responsible for ordering his own attacks and counter-attacks.

Bimba's pedagogical innovation of teaching attacks and defenses in pre-established sequences did maximize the efficiency of the learning process by eliminating the experimentation necessary to arrive at such sequences through improvisation. However, Bimba did not remove improvisation altogether from his Capoeira Regional: during unstructured games that took place after training sessions, fondly remembered as *esquenta banho* (shower warm-up), students were allowed to engage in improvised games while waiting for their turn in the shower.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, Bimba's own pedagogy at his school was anything but teacherless: several of his disciples report learning the ginga from Bimba through touch, as he famously would take

¹⁶³ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Reagrada*: 28.

¹⁶⁴ The *esquenta-banho* was "a moment eagerly awaited by all the students, a singular moment in the learning of Capoeira Regional." Campos, *Capoeira regional : a escola de Mestre Bimba*: 220.

each beginning student by the hand to teach this movement.¹⁶⁵ While Bimba disseminated his modern, multi-media capoeira technique throughout the nation (disembodied and transposed to paper and vinyl), his own pedagogy at home valued embodied transmission of knowledge and improvisation.

Bimba emphasized not only the efficiency of his new capoeira method—improving his students’ technique in the “shortest possible time”¹⁶⁶—he also championed its efficacy as self-defense. In fact, one of Bimba’s justifications for his need to create capoeira regional was that, in his opinion, capoeira angola had lost its efficacy, “leaving much to be desired.”¹⁶⁷ In his 1968 *Capoeira Angola: Socio-Ethnographic essay*, Waldeloir Rego, reports asking Bimba why he invented capoeira regional, to which Bimba answered that he “found capoeira Angola very weak, as a pastime, physical education [and as a form of] attack and self-defense.”¹⁶⁸ Inefficient and useless as self-defense, according to Bimba, capoeira Angola¹⁶⁹ found itself in need of “improvement.”

A journalist from *A Tarde*, writing in 1946, praised Bimba for improving “capoeira d’angola” and creating the “ ‘Bahian regional fight’ , whose efficacy is known to all who are acquainted with it.” This efficacy, he continues, “has been conclusively demonstrated in the

¹⁶⁵ Bimba attempts to transfer this embodied pedagogical approach to *Capoeira Regional Course*, instructing the reader to “[a]sk your colleague to take you by the hands, and practice the ginga as many times as you can.” Bimba, *Curso de Capoeira Regional*: 3.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁶⁷ In an interview for the *Diário de Notícias* on October 31st 1965, Bimba stated that capoeira angola “left much to be desired” because it “only shows dances and acrobatics.” Reis, *O mundo de pernas para o ar : a capoeira no Brasil*: 101.

¹⁶⁸ Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 32-33.

¹⁶⁹ I have decided to follow the capitalizations in the originals in my subsequent discussion of a quote. Although today the styles *capoeira angola* and *capoeira regional* are not capitalized, throughout the twentieth century these terms are spelled in a variety of ways: capoeira Angola, capoeira d’angola, Capoeira Angola, capoeira Regional and Capoeira Regional.

moments where we are forced to put it in practice, in exchange for saving our skin.”¹⁷⁰ Bimba had demonstrated the superior strength of his new capoeira technique in the ring during the capoeira matches that made him famous in the 1930s. The capoeira technique he consolidated and formalized in the following three decades was organized around principles of self-defense and efficacy in real-life confrontations.¹⁷¹ The modernist ethos of practicality and utility, also present throughout *National Gymnastics*, not only guided, but also justified and authorized Bimba’s innovations.

As reported by Rego, Bimba stated that he employed elements which

he considered strong and capable of fulfilling the needs that capoeira angola does not fulfill. He answered that he used strikes from *batuque*, such as *banda armada*, *banda fechada*, *encruzilhada*, *rapa*, *cruze de carreira* and *baú*, as well as details from *maculelê* choreography, from other folk celebrations and many other things he didn’t remember, as well as strikes from Greco-Roman wrestling, jiu-jitsu, judo and savate, adding up to a total of 52 moves.¹⁷²

Bimba’s pride in his innovations and borrowings is consistent in interviews throughout his life. This list of sources is significant for its breadth as well as for its unapologetic acknowledgement of foreign sources in the creation of this “regional” folkloric sport. Bimba’s borrowings came from the folk as well as the foreign, and from “many other things he didn’t remember.” Comtian ideals of progress, as well as neo-Lamarckian notions of evolution and improvement not only allowed, they invited Bimba’s innovations.¹⁷³ Ironically, Bimba incorporated the foreign to create this regional and national “folkloric sport,” going as far as including the very foreign

¹⁷⁰ Moura, *Capoeira--a luta regional baiana*: 23.

¹⁷¹ As exemplified by his *emboscadas*: held outside of the safe space of the academia, in a wooded area of Salvador known as the Chapada do Rio Vermelho, these “real-life” ambushes tested an advanced student’s ability to defend himself against many attackers.

¹⁷² Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 32-33.

¹⁷³ Zuma also acknowledges his contributions to capoeiragem. Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 21.

punches from boxing¹⁷⁴ criticized by Coelho Netto into a technique where efficiency was the basic organizing principle.

Bimba's claim of having incorporated elements from batuque¹⁷⁵ reflects his desire to portray himself as an innovator, claiming as his own elements which may have already been part of the overlapping practices of batuque and capoeiragem. In *National Gymnastics*, Zuma describes some of the same batuque steps mentioned by Bimba above, such as the *rapa* (a type of leg sweep) and the *baú* (described by Zuma as a strike with the belly),¹⁷⁶ which he himself acknowledges as elements from “smooth batuques and sambas.”¹⁷⁷ The fact that Bimba's father was a known practitioner of batuque allowed Bimba to assert his claims as innovator while simultaneously drawing national “character” from a “folk” tradition practiced within his family—a move that undoubtedly helped in allaying criticism regarding the foreign sources of his other innovations. Despite Bimba's own emphasis on innovation, his capoeira Regional, like Zuma's national gymnastics, included many elements from nineteenth-century street capoeiragem, such as headbutts (*arpão de cabeça*), leg sweeps (*banda* or *rasteira*), and using the arms for support while kicking (e.g. the *rabo de arraia* described by Mello Moraes, and renamed by Bimba *meia-lua-de-compasso*).¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ As illustrated in Bimba's *Capoeira Regional Course*, Lesson 8, figure 8-B (*asfixiante*) and Lesson 13, figure 13-B (*bochecho*). Bimba, *Curso de Capoeira Regional*.

¹⁷⁵ According to Carneiro, batuque is a “variation of capoeira,” so much so that “all the contemporary capoeiristas from Bahia know how to play and [indeed] do play batuque[.]” Carneiro, *Negros Bantus*: 165.

¹⁷⁶ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 29-30; Carneiro, *Negros Bantus*: 164.

¹⁷⁷ “Batuques lisos e sambas.” Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 29.

¹⁷⁸ Bimba, *Curso de Capoeira Regional*. The *arpão de cabeça* can be found in Bimba's fifth lesson; the *meia-lua-de-compasso* is the first strike of the sixth lesson; in the eighth and ninth lessons Bimba introduces the *banda-de-costa*, *banda traçada* and the *rasteira*.

The technique of partnered throws Bimba called “abandoned waist,” also known as *balões*¹⁷⁹—often used as a clear example of his borrowings from foreign sources—provides an example of Bimba’s complex approach to innovation. The tenth lesson in *Capoeira Regional Course* introduces students to Bimba’s abandoned waist technique, where students learn attacks and defenses that involve grabbing and throwing the adversary. In the first sequence, Bimba instructs:

Begin with the *ginga* motion. Deliver a cartwheel [*aiú*]. Your adversary seizes this opportunity and crouches down; placing his shoulder on your waist (fig. 10A), he tries to lift and throw you in the air. As you fall, apply the scissor move [*tesoura*] (fig. 10B).¹⁸⁰

As one of the players begins a cartwheel-like maneuver called the *aiú*, the opponent approaches and lifts him momentarily into the air. The *balões* that follow increase in complexity, danger, and amount of contact between players: gripping the opponent across the chest, by the neck, or by the upper arm, players grab and propel each other into the air and onto the ground. Several of the descriptions of the *balões* in *Capoeira Regional Course* end with a warning: “dangerous move,” or even “lethal move.” The final warning for the *balão-de-lado* (side throw) reads: “This move, after the initial grip, has no defense, resulting in the dangerous fall of the adversary.”¹⁸¹ Bimba’s innovations allegedly increased the effectiveness of capoeira as self-defense, and *balões* were exemplary of the danger and possible lethal consequences of these powerful innovations.

¹⁷⁹ I have translated *cintura desprezada* (widely mistranslated as “despised waist”) as “abandoned waist.” *Desprezar* means to despise or scorn, but it can also mean to toss, throw away, leave or abandon.

¹⁸⁰ Bimba, *Curso de Capoeira Regional*: 13.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

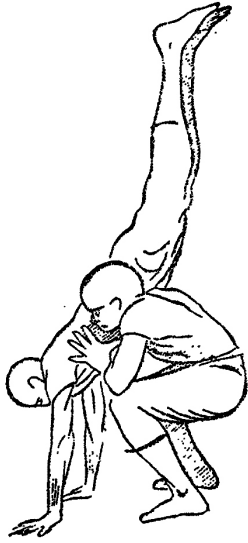


Fig. 10-A



Fig. 10-B

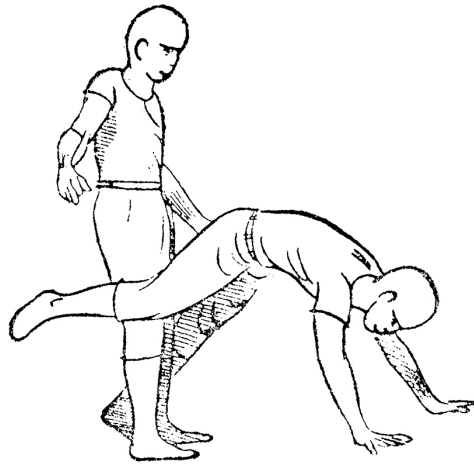


Fig. 10-C

Figure 1.3 Illustrations for the tenth lesson of Bimba's *Capoeira Regional Course*: "Cintura Desprezada, Tesoura, Saída-de-aú" (Abandoned Waist, Scissors, Evasion-by-cartwheel).

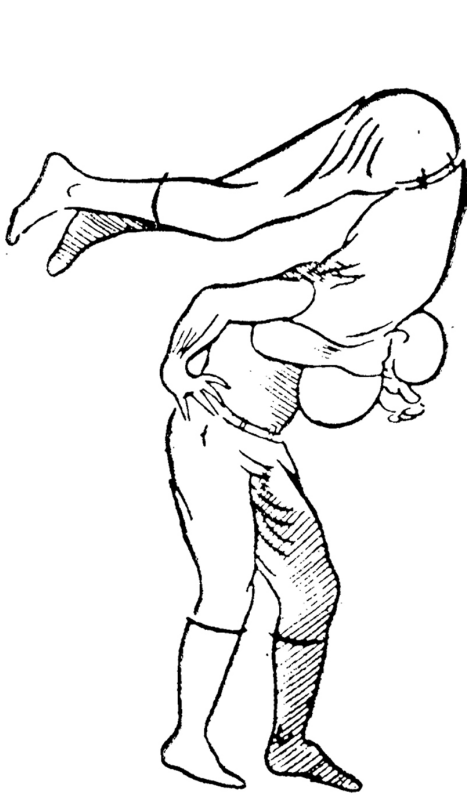


Fig. 12-A



Fig. 12-B

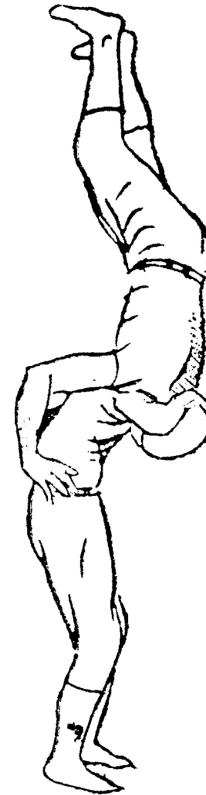


Fig. 12-C

Figure 1.4 Illustrations for the twelfth lesson of Bimba's *Capoeira Regional Course*: "Gravata Cinturada" (Necktie with Abandoned Waist).

Luiz Renato Vieira has argued that balões were one of the “great innovations introduced by Mestre Bimba in the context of capoeira of the 1930s,” and points out that this innovation has been the source of much controversy, due to the fact that it is considered to be the result of borrowings from judo, jiu jitsu, and savate.¹⁸² Despite similarities between Bimba’s balões and judo’s and jiu jitsu’s throws, as well as Bimba’s own admission that he did indeed borrow from every source available to him—regional, national, and foreign—Mello Moraes’ nineteenth century description of a game of capoeiragem points to the possibility, in fact, the likelihood, that aerial throws had been used in capoeira since before Bimba was born:

Let us picture an arena. The contenders approach, their eyes shining, their lips whispering scorns, threats. Undulating in a snake-like motion, their arms swing, maintaining their heads and neck immobile. One of them, wrapping the other’s upper body and thorax with his right arm, with the speed of lightning, with the quickness of thunder, brings him close, flank against flank, and thus caught, he anchors [the contender’s] lower limbs against his leg, [and] tossing him high, [the contender] fall[s] behind him, as cold as a cadaver, as inert as death.¹⁸³

Acknowledging his own melodramatic ending to this description, Mello Moraes clarifies that “this move is not always fatal, since the art offers even in this case admirable resources.”¹⁸⁴

Although this description has been dismissed as the author’s inability to understand or accurately describe what he saw,¹⁸⁵ I believe that Mello Moraes did indeed describe a practice of grabbing and throwing commonly practiced in capoeiragem, which was later claimed and codified by Bimba.

Bimba’s mission of “improving” and modernizing capoeira in fact required innovation, drawn from a variety of sources, including capoeira’s past. Capoeira scholar Muniz Sodré

¹⁸² See Vieira, “Da Vadiação à capoeira regional: uma interpretação da modernização cultural no Brasil,” 180.

¹⁸³ Mello Moraes Filho, *Festas e tradições populares do Brasil*: 449.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ubirajara Guimarães Almeida, *Capoeira: A Brazilian Art Form* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1986), 23.

proposes that balões should be considered Bimba’s “invention” only as a systematized practice, since some of Bimba’s contemporaries who practiced capoeira de Angola, such as Cobrinha Verde, also included balões in their capoeira.¹⁸⁶ Writing in 1937, folklorist Édison Carneiro lists balões as part of the movement repertory of capoeira de Angola:

The hands almost never work in attacks, except in the neck strike [*golpe de pescoço*] and the finger in the eyes [*dêdo nos olhos*], not to mention several *balões*, where the hands support the body of the adversary so as to to throw him, over the head, backwards.¹⁸⁷

Bimba himself acknowledged that balões were also present in capoeira de Angola when he listed its attacks and defenses during an interview in 1936. He adds that, from capoeira de Angola’s thirteen moves, he had removed two and added another fifteen to create his capoeira regional. However, Bimba clarifies that these lists of attacks and defenses should not be considered exclusive; in fact, “with the intent of making these contests of capoeiragem more interesting and more violent all the moves (and tricks) of capoeiragem will be part of the game.”¹⁸⁸ Maximizing the violence and efficiency of his new capoeira indeed required Bimba to deploy all its moves and tricks, including balões. Ironically, the very “innovations” that allowed Bimba to increase the violence and efficiency of capoeira, often assumed to be foreign borrowings, may have been borrowed from capoeira’s not-so-distant past.

Bimba portrayed himself as an innovator while simultaneously grounding his own training in an unbroken African “tradition.” According to Bimba, his early training was in the form “called capoeira de Angola, practiced by my mestre, the African Bentinho.”¹⁸⁹ Establishing capoeira de Angola as his previous training, Bimba creates a narrative of evolution and progress for his capoeira regional. Bimba’s short biography printed on the last page of *Capoeira Regional*

¹⁸⁶ Sodré, *Mestre Bimba: corpo de mandinga*: 69.

¹⁸⁷ Carneiro, *Negros Bantus*: 150.

¹⁸⁸ Interview from *A Tarde*, March 16th, 1936, reprinted in Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 67-68.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Course, confirms that Bimba began studying capoeira with an African mestre who taught him the “capoeira de Angola method.” At the end of his studies, the biographer continues, Bimba taught the same style of capoeira for ten years.¹⁹⁰ Having established a direct connection with Africa through his studies with Mestre Bentinho, Bimba was firmly grounded in the “method” of capoeira de Angola, which he could then proceed to “improve” and “civilize.” As a reporter from *A Tarde* stated in 1946,

Mestre Bimba[,] knowing the “angola”, civilized it, corrected its rustic manners, increased the number of strikes, composed its new physiognomy, which allowed it to enter the salons and to be accepted, with the name “regional.”¹⁹¹

Bimba was praised for civilizing, correcting, and expanding capoeira. Situating capoeira regional firmly within an Afro-Brazilian “tradition”—indeed, in Africa itself—allowed Bimba to innovate while simultaneously allaying criticism (although never completely) over his ample borrowings. Claiming that capoeira angola was “in decay,” Bimba aimed at bringing respectability to capoeira and capoeira practitioners, even if this meant composing a new “physiognomy” for the practice. The reporter quoted above, using the language of racial determinism, lauds Bimba’s improvements to the “physiognomy”—the outward appearance from which one can judge inner character—of capoeira. Capoeira regional’s outward appearance now included increased violence (efficacy) and codification (efficiency), which, combined, earned capoeira regional upward mobility and recognition as national sport.

Although several of Bimba’s students were white and came from privileged socio-economic backgrounds, many of the players embodying capoeira’s new “physiognomy” were

¹⁹⁰ Bimba, *Curso de Capoeira Regional*: 19.

¹⁹¹ Moura, *Capoeira--a luta regional baiana*: 22-23.

black, as was Bimba himself. Countering prevailing notions of “passive,” “brutish” blacks,¹⁹² Bimba’s capoeira embodied strength, agility and at least a mythical if not factual invincibility. Bimba’s capoeira, like Zuma’s, also embodied intelligence. However, the intelligence of capoeira regional differs from that of Zuma’s capoeiragem in that it is not merely a “raw” intelligence in need of regulation, but a highly codified intelligence that resulted from purposeful invention. Whether Bimba invented, remembered, recycled or borrowed the new elements in his capoeira technique, it is clear that he took credit for (and pride in) these innovations.

While Bimba approximated capoeira to hegemonic notions of sport, organizing his training into reproducible sequences, using a point system for matches, and incorporating rituals such as the conferral of medals and formal graduation ceremonies into his training,¹⁹³ I argue that Bimba’s innovations and borrowings were part of a series of discursive appropriations rather than simply a process of cooptation. Bimba’s innovations did “improve” the “physiognomy”—the outward appearance—of capoeira in a syncretic relationship with a “traditional” capoeira(gem) that preceded its codification. Bimba took advantage of opportunities to invent a modernity for capoeira that recycled current and past movement patterns such as sifting (codified as *ginga*), *balões* (codified as abandoned waist), as well as strikes borrowed from *batuque* and others deriving directly from street capoeiragem.

Codified and claimed as his own innovation, “abandoned waist” technique reframed tradition as modernity so successfully that it became the most criticized aspect of capoeira regional, symbolizing a “loss of character” brought about by excessive foreign borrowing; his

¹⁹² Although biological determinism begins to be challenged by scholars in the early 1930s, these racist ideas are still present in Marinho’s capoeira training “method” published in 1945. Marinho, *Subsídios para o estudo da metodologia do treinamento da capoeiragem*.

¹⁹³ Bimba’s graduations are further discussed in Chapter 2. Reis proposes that these graduations transposed academic, religious and military rituals and symbols to the world of capoeira. Reis, *O mundo de pernas para o ar : a capoeira no Brasil*: 108.

transformation of Zuma's deceptive and unpredictable "sifting" into a uniform, "foundational" callisthenic exercise, today known as *ginga*, inflected pre-existing movement patterns in hegemonic terms. Despite the codification and homogenization of certain aspects of the practice, however, Bimba's capoeira, like Zuma's capoeiragem, gave continuity to several core aspects of nineteenth century capoeiragem, such as the use of headbutts and kicking while bearing weight on the hands.

Through his adaptability and inventiveness, as well as his multiple syncretic discursive appropriations, Bimba inflected Brazilian modernity in Afro-diasporic terms. A semi-literate black man born only twelve years after the abolition of slavery, Bimba was undoubtedly aware of his status as a "second class" citizen.¹⁹⁴ Conscious of being "seen through the eyes of others" as "brutish," Bimba appropriated the very discourses of positivism and eugenics used to oppress him to create an efficient, respectable capoeira style located at the "evolved" end of a narrative of progress and improvement.

III. Pastinha's *Capoeira Angola* (1964)

*Mestre Pastinha has kept [...] Capoeira Angola in its original purity, as he received it from the African mestres, not allowing [...] it to be deformed through the introduction of practices from other fighting traditions.*¹⁹⁵

--J.B. Colmenero

At the beginning of Bimba's narrative of progress, capoeira de Angola (*of* Angola, with the preposition, as it was known in the 1930s and 40s) was said to be in a state of decay, leaving "much to be desired." The eugenicist language of "degeneration" continued to be used even by

¹⁹⁴ Although there were no overt racial discrimination laws, racial inequality permeated Brazilian legislation. For example, up until 1985, Brazilians unable to read and write were not allowed to vote—a law which automatically excluded hundreds of thousands of poor black citizens from the voting process in the brief windows of democracy in twentieth-century Brazil. It is likely that Bimba was not considered "literate enough" to vote.

¹⁹⁵ J.B. Colmenero's preface to *Capoeira Angola*. Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*: 8.

mulato writers who sought to dissociate themselves from scientific racism, such as Édison Carneiro. In the chapter entitled “Capoeira de Angola” in his 1937 *Negros Bantus*, Carneiro warns that, despite capoeira’s increasing appeal to the middle class, despite the fact that capoeira matches had begun attracting large audiences, and that, in fact, “capoeira de Angola reveal[ed] an enormous vitality,” the “process of decomposition of capoeira is accelerating...”¹⁹⁶ “Progress,” Carneiro continues, “sooner or later, will deliver the final blow [on capoeira].” With capoeira de Angola so firmly positioned at the “primitive” end of the racial/social evolutionary scale, even ample evidence to the contrary—its growing appeal, popularity and vitality—was not enough to convince Carneiro that capoeira was indeed compatible with progress.¹⁹⁷

One of the goals of Pastinha’s *Capoeira Angola*, first published in 1964, a few years after Bimba’s *Capoeira Regional Course*, was to establish Capoeira Angola as a respectable sport and an efficient form of self-defense and physical culture. Pastinha’s nationalist, even patriotic language echoes Zuma’s “shout of Brazilianness” in *National Gymnastics*. In a section entitled “Capoeira Today,” Pastinha states that

the tendency nowadays is to consider Capoeira Angola as the national fighting style which, honorably, places it in a privileged position, serving as a definitive consecration of this style of sport.¹⁹⁸

Like Zuma, Pastinha also sought respectability for capoeira through the language of nationalism, reflected in his careful word choice: capoeira, as the national sport, would “honorably” achieve a “privileged position.” Rather than being in the final stages of a “process of decomposition,” destined to recede into disappearance, as predicted by Carneiro, Pastinha’s Capoeira Angola was capable not only of defending the nation as its “national fighting style,” it was also as a means of

¹⁹⁶ Carneiro, *Negros Bantus*: 159.

¹⁹⁷ Carneiro believed that capoeira, along with all “elements of black folk-lore” was destined to “recede to small coastal villages.” See Chapter 2 for further discussion of Carneiro’s work. *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁹⁸ Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*: 30.

improving the Brazilian citizen of the future. Instead of “delivering the final blow” on capoeira, progress, in fact, was what fueled its growth and expansion.

In an uncannily accurate prediction, Pastinha stated that

the day is not far when Capoeira Angola academies will be sought by an immense legion of people, not exclusively as a means of self-defense, but, also as a magnificent means of maintaining perfect physical shape and prolonging youth.¹⁹⁹

Drawing on early twentieth century proposals of capoeiragem as the key to a healthy physical development, Pastinha similarly frames his Capoeira Angola as means of shaping youthful and physically fit “citizens of the future” (a recurring theme both in *Capoeira Angola* and in his manuscripts). Pastinha reiterated Zuma’s assertion that capoeiragem offered “all the elements for a perfect physical culture”²⁰⁰ and was “a valuable factor in physical development” and overall health, including “psycho-physical balance.”²⁰¹ This neo-Lamarckian physical “evolution,” however, was to be achieved through, rather than in spite of, Afro-diasporic corporeality. As capoeira regional’s success depended in part on the narrative of decline and imminent demise of Capoeira Angola, it comes as no surprise that Pastinha’s *Capoeira Angola* countered this narrative by proposing a capoeira that fostered health and physical development, as well as a capoeira in a process of expansion, soon to be sought by a “legion of people.”

Although Pastinha’s approach to the dissemination of capoeira shared Bimba’s expansionist goals, Pastinha did not subscribe to expanding capoeira’s movement vocabulary to include what was perceived to be foreign movement material. Rather than taking pride in

¹⁹⁹ Although capoeira regional (in the broad sense of the term, including styles that deviate sharply from Bimba’s pedagogy) may still be the dominant form of capoeira at the time of this writing, found in private clubs, gyms, and schools, both in Brazil and abroad, the late 20th and early 21st centuries have seen a pronounced increase in popularity of capoeira angola. Perhaps not yet sought by “legions” of people, capoeira angola has spread to most major urban centers around the world, and it is not uncommon for practitioners of capoeira regional switch to capoeira angola after a few years of practice. Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 13.

²⁰¹ Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*: 31-32; *ibid.*.

expanding the number of possible kicks, as had done Bimba, Pastinha acknowledges that indeed Capoeira Angola “has a small number of moves in comparison with some fighting techniques such as Judo, Jiu-jitsu, American freestyle fighting, etc.” Condemning borrowing from other fighting techniques, which, he warned, could result in an eclectic form of self-defense, Pastinha called for “improving [capoeira’s] technique without losing its characteristics.”²⁰² In the same way that Bimba built his success in part on capoeira angola’s alleged decline, Pastinha warned against the loss that could result from unrestrained borrowing.

Although Pastinha’s and Bimba’s capoeira styles both certainly derived from the informal street practice of capoeiragem—both conceived in and of modernity—Pastinha drew legitimacy from the very position of anteriority deployed by Bimba to justify the need to improve on an “old” capoeira in decline. Pastinha, along with early Capoeira Angola advocates, appropriated scientific racism’s rhetoric of purity to secure Capoeira Angola’s status as the “original” capoeira. To Carneiro, writing in 1937, capoeira de Angola seemed to be “the purest” form of capoeira.²⁰³ In the preface to *Capoeira Angola*, J.B. Colmenero, a former student of Pastinha’s, declares his admiration for his mestre, who had maintained the teachings of Capoeira Angola in their “original purity, such as he had received it from the African masters, without allowing it to be deformed by the introduction of practices belonging to other fighting methods.”²⁰⁴ Narratives of originality and purity drew legitimacy from an Africa located in the past while simultaneously inserting Capoeira Angola in the current nationalist discourse that shunned foreign imports.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Ibid., 35.

²⁰³ Carneiro, *Negros Bantus*: 149.

²⁰⁴ Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*.

²⁰⁵ Ironically, Carneiro chooses the hybrid, “diluted” Bantu heritage (over Ewe/Yoruba heritage) as the flag-bearer of capoeira’s tradition. See Chapter 2 for further discussion of Bantu “heritage” and its relationship to capoeira de Angola.

Pastinha, like Bimba, began studying capoeira with an “old African” from Angola. The story, repeated by Pastinha in several interviews, can be summarized as follows: Pastinha, a frail and skinny ten-year-old, was often bullied by a larger, stronger boy in his neighborhood. They often got into fights but Pastinha always lost. One day, an old African named Benedito watched the fight and invited Pastinha to come to his home to learn “a very valuable thing.” After some time learning capoeira, Pastinha was able to defeat the bully “with one blow.”²⁰⁶ The fact that both Pastinha and Bimba report having learned directly from Africans²⁰⁷ is important in that it decidedly dissociates both these innovators’ capoeira techniques from the marginal and criminal status of nineteenth-century straight-razor-wielding tough guys.

Pastinha further detached both himself and his Capoeira Angola from a capoeira practiced by rough, dangerous men known as “tough guys” (*valentões*) by creating a mysterious 29-year gap in his personal history of capoeira practice.²⁰⁸ This gap helped establish a direct link between Pastinha’s initial contact with capoeira, learned from “an old African,” with his position as the guardian of the “original” capoeira. According to Pastinha’s manuscripts, on February 23, 1941, at the urging of his former student Aberrê,²⁰⁹ Pastinha went to watch a roda led by a mestre named Amorzinho, who shook his hand and said: “I have been waiting for a long time to hand over this capoeira to you; so you can teach it.” Pastinha then tried to decline the invitation, but another mestre, Antônio Maré insisted: “There is no other way, Pastinha, you’re the one who is

²⁰⁶ Summarized from an interview by Roberto Freire published in the magazine *Realidade* in 1967. Reprinted in Abreu and Castro, *Capoeira*: 25.

²⁰⁷ It is curious that the names of Bimba’s and Pastinha’s first teachers, Bentinho and Benedito, can be both loosely translated as “the blessed one.”

²⁰⁸ Pastinha states that he distanced or removed himself (“me afastei”) from capoeira between 1912 and 1941. Pastinha, “Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserê,” 5; 24.

²⁰⁹ Waldeloir Rego proposes yet another possibility to Pastinha’s capoeira “lineage”: rather than having learned from an African from Angola named Benedito, he speculates that Aberrê might have been Pastinha’s teacher rather than his student. Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 270-71.

going to teach this.”²¹⁰ Reluctantly, and only with the support of these mestres, Pastinha accepted the invitation to “take care”²¹¹ of Capoeira Angola and, in the same year, he founded the *Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola* (Capoeira Angola Sports Center). This narrative provides Pastinha with a clean slate, allowing him to start over as a much-awaited “prodigal son” who returns to protect Capoeira Angola.

Mestre Noronha, listed by Pastinha as one of the co-founders of the Capoeira Angola Sports Center, offers a slightly different account in his own manuscripts.²¹² According to Noronha, the first center of capoeira angola²¹³ was founded by himself and twenty other capoeira players, and it was only after the death its director, Amorzinho, that the group handed over the leadership to Pastinha. Noronha’s writings portray Pastinha not as a trailblazer, single-handedly defending a “dying” tradition, but rather as one capoeira player among many, chosen to be in a position of leadership in a thriving capoeira angola collective of over twenty members.²¹⁴

Pastinha was in many ways the ideal candidate for this leadership role. Having had a solid primary education at the Navy Apprentice School,²¹⁵ not only was he literate and could

²¹⁰ “Há muito que o esperava para lhe entregar esta capoeira; para o senhor ensinar”; “Não há jeito não, Pastinha, é você mesmo quem vai ensinar isto aqui.” Pastinha, “Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserê,” 5-6

²¹¹ “Tomar conta” can also be translated as “to care for” and “to protect.” Ibid.

²¹² The manuscripts were written in the mid 1970s, but many of the entries consist the author’s memories of the capoeira world in Bahia going back to the first decades of the century. Daniel Coutinho, *O ABC da Capoeira de Angola: os manuscritos do Mestre Noronha* (Brasília: CIDOCA, 1993), 17.

²¹³ The name of the group is mentioned elsewhere in the manuscript as *Conjunto de Capoeira Angola Conceição da Praia* (Capoeira Angola Ensemble Conceição da Praia). Ibid., 52-53.

²¹⁴ Elsewhere in the manuscript, Noronha mentions Pastinha’s name in a long list of known early twentieth-century tough guys. Pastinha’s 29-year absence, then, whether total or partial, actual or purposely fabricated, was instrumental in legitimizing his position of leadership: not only did it provide a direct link to capoeira’s African “tradition,” it also allowed Pastinha to distance himself from the image of the tough guy and reinvent himself as a respectable citizen who could continue the ongoing efforts to remove the social stigma against the practice. Ibid., 23.

²¹⁵ In 1840, the Brazilian monarchy created the Navy Apprentice Company, whose purpose was to remedy the lack of navy personnel by training boys and young men (ages 10-17) to become sailors. These young boys were, in theory, to be brought in voluntarily by their parents (who were to be compensated financially for “turning in” their children). In practice, many of these boys were sent to navy apprentice companies by police if found orphaned or abandoned, or for engaging in “disorderly

express himself well through writing, he was also familiar with the positivist thought that undergirded the Brazilian republic. In addition, Pastinha was well connected with the intellectual elite of Bahia, most famously with Brazilian novelist Jorge Amado, sculptor Mario Cravo, visual artist Carybé, and photographer Pierre Verger. Pastinha's profile would allow him to serve as a bridge between the members of the Capoeira Angola Sports Center, many of them semi-literate, and the intellectual, artistic and administrative elites of Bahia, opening doors and providing opportunities for visibility and financial support.²¹⁶

Pastinha success can also be attributed to his opportune physical characteristics: his “frail” frame and light brown skin—the son of a Spanish father and an Afro-Brazilian mother—coincided with the “ideal type” understood as being suited for the practice of capoeira at the time. Capoeira *de Angola*, from or of Angola (as it was called before Pastinha omitted the preposition) was not only a capoeira that might have come from the region of Angola through Pastinha's first teacher, it was the capoeira of the “Angola type”—a racial type, crafty and

conduct.” After the military coup d'état of 1889 these “companies” began to be referred to as “schools,” but continued to function as a kind of reformatory for poor, “deviant” youth, employing severe corporal punishment, such as public floggings. Nonetheless, learning did take place in these schools, where navy apprentices received instruction in arithmetic, calligraphy, Portuguese language, carpentry, as well as in a variety of sports. In the Salvador school, one of the mandatory texts use at the Navy Apprentice School was a collection of Benjamin Franklin's (aka Richard Saunder) maxims translated as “*Bom Homem Ricardo*,” which also served as a way of indoctrinating students in the value of work and the dangers of alcohol consumption and idleness. See Silvia Capanema P. Almeida, “A modernização do material e do pessoal da Marinha nas vésperas da revolta dos marujos de 1910: modelos e contradições,” *Estudos Históricos* 23, no. 45 (2010): 155-66.

²¹⁶ In his manuscripts, Noronha expresses his profound disappointment and regret in their choice of Pastinha as the new leader for their Capoeira Angola Center, claiming that, after officially registering the center and bringing in several students, Pastinha isolated the original founders from the center, “because his good friends were the owners and even his own wife a certain Ms. Nice [was] the origin of our distancing from the center at the Pelourinho n. 19. We the owners didn't have the right to anything.” Coutinho, *O ABC da Capoeira de Angola: os manuscritos do Mestre Noronha*: 61.

imaginative but not suited for heavy labor.²¹⁷ According to historian Braz do Amaral, “the Angolas,” as a racial type, were

taller, slenderer than other Africans, physically weaker [...] [and] were known to be loquacious, imaginative, indolent, insolent, with no persistence for work, fertile in resources and craftiness.²¹⁸

Associations between a “crafty” and “resourceful” racial “type” with “no persistence for work” and the stereotype of the nineteenth-century capoeira practitioner were not far fetched, following the “logic” of racial determinism. This crafty but “physically weaker” Angola “type” is often conflated with “the *mulato*” and “the capoeira,” perceived to lack “blacks’ athletic complexion.”²¹⁹ For Marinho, “the *mulato*” shared many characteristics with “the Angola,” and exhibited the desired physical traits for the practice of capoeiragem:

The *mulato*, generally less bulky than blacks, less burdened by strong muscles developed by heavy labor, more agile, more flexible, more elastic, more nerves and fewer muscles, represented the ideal type of capoeira.²²⁰

“Whitened” through miscegenation, “the *mulato*” becomes the “ideal type” for capoeiragem, blacks being “too muscular.” For Marinho, the brown (not black) body of the mulatto transcends the “burden” of blacks’ “brute” strength and is able to cultivate embodied intelligence in the form of agility and flexibility. *Mulatos*, “more intelligent than blacks and more dexterous than whites²²¹ [...], freed as they were from the spirit of submission rooted in the black race,”²²² offer

²¹⁷ See Chapter 2 for further discussion of the “Angola type” and Edison Carneiro’s valorization of Bantu heritage.

²¹⁸ Braz do Amaral quoted in Marinho, *Subsídios para o estudo da metodologia do treinamento da capoeiragem*: 14.

²¹⁹ Carneiro, *Negros Bantus*: 147.

²²⁰ “Os mulatos, geralmente menos corpulento que os negros, menos sobrecarregados de músculos de força que o trabalho pesado desenvolvia, mais ágeis, mais flexíveis, mais elásticos, mais nervos do que músculos, representavam o tipo ideal do capoeira.” Marinho, *Subsídios para o estudo da metodologia do treinamento da capoeiragem*: 7.

²²¹ Later in the text we learn that whites are also inadequate for capoeiragem, weakened by their sedentary life in the heat of the tropics. “Os negros, dizem, são embrutecidos, e não o podiam ser menos sob certo regime. Os brancos são débeis, fruto do calor e da ociosidade.” Charles Ribeyrolles quoted in *ibid.*, 19.

capoeiragem an ideal mixture of desired black and white “traits.” Both Pastinha’s small frame and hybrid ancestry (African and Spanish) perfectly matched still lingering models of racial types, folding “the *mulato*,” “the Angola” and “the capoeira” into one.

While Bimba countered notions of capoeiras as weak, crafty “types” through the rigid codification of capoeira regional coupled with a personal image of invincibility, Pastinha embraced the intelligence, agility and flexibility ascribed to him though his skin color while simultaneously rejecting the “craftiness” and “no persistence for work” associated with “the *mulato*” stereotype.

Pastinha insisted that his students be model citizens, always appearing in public wearing the school’s uniform.²²³ His Capoeira Angola Sports Center was ruled by a statute and hierarchically organized, with a president, vice-president, three secretaries, two treasurers and one librarian.²²⁴ His advanced disciples were assigned specific functions—field master, song master, percussion master, training master, archivist, supervising master, and *contra-mestre*.²²⁵ In his unpublished manuscripts, written throughout the 1950s and early 60s,²²⁶ Pastinha stated proudly: “we are registered, we have a building [for our school], we have identification, legal

²²² *Ibid.*, 7.

²²³ Photographic evidence shows both Bimba’s and Pastinha’s groups (as well as other capoeira groups, such as Caiçara’s and Samuel Querido de Deus’) wearing soccer jerseys with broad vertical stripes in the 1930s and 40s; later in the 1950s, Pastinha’s disciples can be seen wearing polo shirts with the embroidered emblem of his school, often complemented by white smoking jackets. See chapter 2 for further discussion of uniforms.

²²⁴ Paulo Santos Silva, “Estatuto do Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola,” ed. Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola (Salvador, Bahia 1952), 9.

²²⁵ *Contra-mestre* today is a rank immediately preceding the rank of *mestre*, or master teacher. It is likely that this is also what Pastinha meant here, although the term also means “foreman.” Pastinha, “Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserê,” 4.

²²⁶ Unpublished manuscripts currently held in the private archives of Raimundo César Alves de Almeida, Mestre Itapoan, in Salvador, Bahia, consulted by the author in May 2011. The scanned copy used for reference here was downloaded from the web at the following address:
http://www.4shared.com/file/sIGLMugj/Os_Manuscritos_do_Mestre_Pasti.htm

documents signed by the country's parliamentary leaders[.]”²²⁷ Although Pastinha did not codify capoeira to the same extent as did Bimba, he certainly institutionalized the practice and successfully redeemed the reputation of its practitioners.

Pastinha expressed a preoccupation to “educate,” “civilize,” and “improve”²²⁸ not only the practitioner of capoeira but the form itself. Almost thirty years later, Pastinha’s goal seems remarkably similar to Zuma’s: to legitimize capoeira and usher its acceptance into “society.”

Writing in the early 1960s, aware of a growing interest in capoeira, both in Brazil and abroad, Pastinha asks:

Does it or does it not have a name in history[?] [I]t is well-regarded by hundreds of thousands of Brazilian, and foreigners[...] And capoeira is trying to enter and live in society, the capoeirista of today [and] of the future is respectful and decent.²²⁹

Determined to help capoeira “enter and live in society” and to establish its “name in history,” Pastinha often refers to capoeiristas as respectful and decent citizens. The introduction to the statute of Pastinha’s school, written by Paulo Santos Silva,²³⁰ expresses this recurring preoccupation with improving the image of both capoeira and capoeirista:

My brothers [...] the fundamental base of our center is good behavior. Social behavior, human solidarity and above all doing good, not using the powerful weapon that Capoeira is unless in legitimate self-defense or in the name of the Nation.²³¹

²²⁷ “Somos registrados, temos uma sede, temos carteiras, documentos legalizado, e assinado pelo parlamentares do pais que é nosso Presidente.” Vicente Ferreira Pastinha, “Pensamentos,” in *Manuscritos do Mestre Pastinha* (Salvador: Raimundo César Alves de Almeida's private collection, c.1955-1960), 34-35.

²²⁸ Ibid., 9-15.

²²⁹ ———, “Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserêr,” 52.

²³⁰ Paulo Santos Silva is listed as president of the center while Pastinha is listed as vice president in the statute of the *Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola* of 1952. Silva also claims to be the founder of the center, a fact Pastinha bitterly denies in his manuscripts, claiming back the credit for being the one who conceptualized the *Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola* back in 1941: “Excuse my expression, Mr. Paulo, the legitimate founders are: Amosinho, Aberrêr, Antonio Maré, Zeir, Daniel Noronha, Livino Diogo, Vitor H.U., Olampio, Onça preta, alemão, Pompílio dos Santos, Domingo de Magalhães, Athalydio Caldeira Presidente, Aurelydio Caldeira V. Presidente, and Vicente Ferreira Pastinha the conceptualizer who named the Capoeira Angola Sport Center, I chose the colors of the shirts and [they were] made by me. I’m sorry Mr. Paulo.” Ibid., 30-31.

²³¹ Silva, “Estatuto do Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola,” 2.

A “well-behaved” citizen, the new capoeirista was authorized to use violence only in self-defense or in the “name of the Nation.” His past as a “tough guy” having been replaced by the image of the prodigal son of capoeira who is selected to safeguard its tradition, Pastinha’s main contribution to the legitimization of capoeira was in fact a careful reframing of capoeira’s violence—a “powerful weapon” to be used only in self-defense.

Pastinha tamed capoeira’s violence by emphasizing control in capoeira games. Like Bimba, Pastinha acknowledged that some of capoeira’s blows could be dangerous and even fatal. Such violence, however, could not actually be applied in “sports demonstrations,” and should be controlled:

Capoeira is either “played” for keeps, with serious consequences, exceeding the limits of sport, or in demonstrations where the blows, in more or less slow movements, come close, grazing, or are stopped just before the chosen target.²³²

Stopping a kick “just before the chosen target” or grazing the opponent (still a valued skill in capoeira angola in the early twenty-first century) demonstrates violence without carrying it out. The demonstration of a safe and non-violent capoeira was, in fact, at the core of Pastinha’s project of legitimization (see Chapter 2). He reassures the readers of *Capoeira Angola* that capoeira’s moves can be safely controlled in friendly contests and that, in fact, Capoeira Angola disciples can dedicate themselves to its practice “without any fear.”²³³

The safety and control emphasized by Pastinha re-awakened comparisons between capoeira and dance, which date back to descriptions by nineteenth century travellers and foreign

²³² Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*: 27-28.

²³³ Ibid., 33. In the early twenty-first century, most, if not all, capoeira angola groups continue to advocate safety in the practice, vehemently condemning excessive violence. Mestre João Grande, a disciple of Pastinha, stated that Pastinha habitually removed dangerous elements from capoeira, citing some partnered throws as examples. João Oliveira dos Santos, November 14th 2011.

observers, such as Johann Moritz Rugendas' (1835) and Charles Ribeyrolles' (1859).²³⁴ In the same passage from *Capoeira Angola* cited above, Pastinha continues:

In the latter instance [when movements graze the opponent], no doubt, Capoeira Angola is similar to a gracious dance where the deceptive “ginga” shows the capoeiristas' extraordinary flexibility. But Capoeira Angola is, above all, a fight [technique], and it's a violent one.

Pastinha reconfigures the comparison between Capoeira Angola and dance, the same used in the argument of capoeira's decline and inefficiency,²³⁵ establishing a syncretic relationship between Capoeira Angola's violence and dance. Veiled behind a deceptive façade of dance, Capoeira Angola “retained” its violent potential:

One understands better by watching the fight. It looks like a dance, but it isn't. Capoeira is a fight [technique], and a violent one. It can kill, and it has killed. Beautiful! In its beauty[,] its violence is contained. The boys are only showing [the kicks], [they] graze or are contained before reaching the adversary. And even then it's beautiful.”²³⁶

Capoeira Angola's violence is contained but not lost. Although this “dance” might look harmless, it remains potentially lethal. Pastinha's statement that the “boys” (a new generation of players) “are only showing the kicks” (only *recently* showing) points to the newness of the idea that kicks should be held back and only graze rather than strike the opponent—a practice that

²³⁴ Charles Ribeyrolles, an exiled French journalist who moved to Brazil in 1858, compares capoeira to dance in *Brasil Pittoresco: história, descrições, viagens, instituições, colonização* (*Picturesque Brazil: history, descriptions, travels, institutions, colonization*), a bilingual French/Portuguese book divided in several tomes, published in 1859. In a chapter titled “The Farm,” Ribeyrolles briefly discusses the “Games and Dances of Negros”: on weekends and holy days, he notes, “blacks are allowed one or two hours for dancing” [...] “Here, [we find] capoeira, a kind of pyrrhic dance, of daring and combative maneuvers, to the sound of the drum from the Congo.” Ribeyrolles describes a less violent, dance-like capoeira practiced to “the sound of the drum from the Congo,” probably due to the fact that he witnessed capoeira as part of rural life, practiced at “The Farm,” away from the *malhas* of the cities. Ribeyrolles, *Brasil pittoresco : história, descrições, viagens, colonização, instituições*: 51. It is significant that Rugendas himself does not refer to capoeira as a dance—a label popularized by the French caption of his famous lithograph, “Jogar Capoeira ou Danse de la Guerre”—but as a war game (Kriegsspiel). Moritz Rugendas, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien (Sitten und Gebräuche der Neger)*, herausgegeben von Engelmann & Cie., Paris, 1835, 26 cited in Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 59.

²³⁵ As previously noted, Bimba believed that capoeira angola “left much to be desired” because it was reduced to “dances and acrobatics.” Interview for the *Diário de Notícias* on October 31st 1965 quoted in Reis, *O mundo de pernas para o ar : a capoeira no Brasil*: 101.

²³⁶ Abreu and Castro, *Capoeira*: 21.

Pastinha transformed into a guiding, even defining principle of Capoeira Angola. It is important to note that the idea of containment—“showing” the kicks—is absent in both Bimba’s and Zuma’s methodizations. However, although Pastinha may have “trademarked” a non-violent, dance-like capoeira, he did not innovate in a vacuum: other players, such as Samuel Querido de Deus and Onça Preta, observed by Ruth Landes in the late 1930s, also subscribed to a slow and controlled playing style.²³⁷

Embracing the “fight disguised as dance” story of origins, Pastinha dissociates capoeira from its violent past and brings capoeira into modernity as both sport and dance, where violence is safely controlled, demonstrated and remembered rather than enacted. Pastinha defines Capoeira Angola as an art form, and its practitioners, dancers and artists: “We are dancers, men who live the art of capoeira as sincere artists.”²³⁸ The *ginga*, for Pastinha, embodied deception while simultaneously “lending [the body] the smoothness and grace of a dancer.”²³⁹ Defining capoeira as dance and art, Pastinha reframes capoeira as “high culture” and inserts the practice into hegemonic discourses of legitimacy. The smoothness and grace of the dancer/capoeirista replaced, at least on the surface, the violence of nineteenth and early twentieth century capoeira.

Like Bimba, Pastinha foregrounds the *ginga* in *Capoeira Angola*. Pastinha’s *ginga* is his capoeira’s core principle, its “fundamental characteristic,”²⁴⁰ not unlike Bimba’s *gingado* (capoeira’s “fundamental position”). However, Pastinha emphasizes the *ginga*’s aim to distract, deceive and confuse the opponent rather than its uniform callisthenic repetitions, emphasized by Bimba. In one of the seventeen photos that illustrate Pastinha’s *Capoeira Angola*, two slender young men dressed in the uniform of Pastinha’s school face each other and demonstrate the

²³⁷ See Chapter 2 for further discussion of Samuel Querido de Deus’ controlled and acrobatic movement style. Landes, *The city of women*: 103.

²³⁸ Pastinha, “Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserêr,” 4.

²³⁹ ———, *Capoeira Angola*: 50.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

ginga for the camera, their bodies and faces relaxed, knees bent in wide stances and torsos inclined forward. One player's incomplete weight shift from one leg to another signals that this photo was not posed. Their movement is neither symmetrical nor in unison. Like Zuma's sifting and trickery moves, the objective of Pastinha's ginga was to "distract the attention of the adversary in order to render him vulnerable to the application of your blows."²⁴¹ Pastinha emphasizes the importance of *malícia* (craftiness or cunning) and its connection with the ginga:

Capoeira is not only endowed with increased violent potential, but, it possesses a quality that renders it more dangerous—it is extremely crafty [*maliciosa*]. The capoeirista employs several artifices to fool and distract the adversary. He pretends to leave and comes back quickly. He jumps from side to side. He lies down and stands up. He advances and retreats. He pretends he doesn't see the adversary to lure him. He spins every which way and contorts himself in a deceptive and disconcerting "ginga."²⁴²

The rigid paths and positions delineated by Bimba are clearly of no concern here. Far from uniform repetitions following a path mapped on the floor with chalk, Pastinha's ginga involves pretending, spinning, and contorting. Pastinha's ginga requires the on-the-spot decision-making that could not be achieved through Bimba's pre-determined repetitions. Simultaneously rendering capoeira more dangerous and dance-like, the ginga embodied the syncretic relationship between violence and dance galvanized by Pastinha.

Malícia or *maldade*²⁴³—the same craftiness ascribed to "the *mulato*," "the Angola" and "the capoeira" racial "types"—is employed by Pastinha as one of the core principles of his capoeira philosophy. In the illustrations that accompany his manuscripts—some drawn with pencil and blue ball-point pen, some made using a kind of woodcut print technique—Pastinha

²⁴¹ Ibid. This is almost identical to Zuma's stated aim for his move called sifting: "to disturb the attention of the adversary and better prepare the decisive blow." Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodisada e Regrada*: 42.

²⁴² Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*: 34.

²⁴³ *Maldade* is used by Pastinha as a synonym for *malícia*, but the word can also mean meanness or evil deed. Drawings of the *chamada* (call), a challenge issued during the game that has become iconic of capoeira angola, are labeled in Pastinha's manuscripts as "maldade." See Chapter 2 for further analysis of the *chamada*.

labels attacks and defenses by number (1 for attacks and 2 for defenses), and adds a few notes on the margins that are more like tips on execution than descriptions of these paired movements. *Maldade*, as well as the word “*dibre*,”²⁴⁴ label both attacks and defenses, indicating moments of premeditated, deceptive attacks or skillful evasions. Perhaps influenced by Bimba’s sequences, these drawings constitute Pastinha’s recommendations for effective attack and defense sequences, providing a glimpse into his teaching methodology.



Figure 1.5 Two illustrations from Pastinha’s manuscripts. The drawing in pen and pencil on the left is labeled “The first exercises for an excellent development”; by the drawings of the players, Pastinha poses the questions: “Who is the attacker?” and “Who is defending?” He continues: “In the body, the legs and the hands, the head, the gaze, active in all directions, will have good results: with resolve, breathe always through the nose.” In the print to the right Pastinha writes: “the headbutt done sideways after a turn is dangerous” and “excellent defense/ dodge (*dibre*) of the body.” Note the numbers 1 and 2 labeling the players in this image.

²⁴⁴ Pastinha’s spelling of *drible*, from the English “dribble,” a term that migrated from basketball to soccer to capoeira meaning to dodge, evade or deceive.

However, the material published in *Capoeira Angola* a few years later differs remarkably from the manuscripts: rather than tips on paired uses of trickery to knowledgeable players, the overall tone of the book is that of a general introduction to capoeira angola—including its origins, its health benefits, its music, and finally, an illustrated list of eleven “moves.”²⁴⁵ Despite being featured prominently among these moves as capoeira’s “fundamental characteristic,” the *ginga* is curiously absent from Pastinha’s earlier drawings, suggesting that perhaps the concept of *ginga* as a “step,” separable from the rest of capoeira practice, was likely introduced by Bimba’s *Capoeira Regional Course*, published about four years before Pastinha’s book.

Not always labeled as such, Pastinha’s idea of *maldade* nevertheless weaves its way through *Capoeira Angola*. Several attacks and defenses rely on deception: in the *chapa de costas* (back kick), “the victim is hit, violently, when he thinks that the attacker is leaving”; the *cabeçada* (head butt) “is a deceptive move, which could be applied against the thoracic region or the face, in a quick twist of the torso when the victim thinks that the attacker is leaving.” Pretending to leave and coming back with an attack is a recurring tactic in Pastinha’s capoeira technique. However, Pastinha continues, “the capoeirista is suspicious and doesn’t let himself be fooled by this apparent retreat.”²⁴⁶ Rather than eliminating trickery in *Capoeira Angola*, Pastinha socially “improves” it through the dance-like beauty of the *ginga*, while simultaneously emphasizing its utility as self-defense. In an interview in his later years, Pastinha stated that capoeiristas should be “really deceptive, sly and crafty [*malicioso*]. Against strength, only this

²⁴⁵ Although the photos illustrate eleven different moves, Pastinha lists seven attacks as the “main moves of Capoeira Angola”: *cabeçada* (headbutt), *rasteira* (leg sweep), *rabo de arraia* (stingray’s tail), *chapa de frente* (front kick), *chapa de costas* (back kick), *meia lua* (half moon, a circular kick) and *cutilada de mão* (a strike with the hands). Several of these moves are the same as the ones described by early twentieth-century observers. It is interesting to note that the hand strike listed by Pastinha has been omitted from capoeira angola practice today.

²⁴⁶ Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*: 68-71.

[can be effective].”²⁴⁷ By dissociating *maldade* from the “lamentable” days when “troublemaker” capoeiristas were responsible for shameful incidents of public disorder,²⁴⁸ Pastinha revalues trickery as a powerful resource in Capoeira Angola, now practiced by sportsmen²⁴⁹ who knew to employ it only in self-defense.

Appropriating the hegemonic discourses of his time (even echoing fascist and national socialist rhetoric) Pastinha called for a capoeira “perfect and free of errors, of a healthy and strong race.”²⁵⁰ However, Pastinha’s “improvements” in search of perfection did not deny or seek to eradicate capoeira’s Afro-diasporic embodied epistemologies of survival, such as deception, inventiveness, adaptability, and the on-the-spot creativity required of a movement form based on improvisation; on the contrary, it was precisely *through* its Afro-diasporic corporeality that capoeira was to evolve into the “perfect” capoeira of the future:

Friends[,] the body is a great system of reason. Behind our thoughts there is a powerful lord, a wise stranger. I correct the realities, through the natural inversion of the logical order transforming the past into future.²⁵¹

Embodied knowledge, as an alternative epistemology that lies “behind our thoughts,” is linked here (albeit tenuously, as adjacent thoughts) with Pastinha’s goal of ushering capoeira into the future as an “art form” practiced by respectable (and respected) citizens.

Like the idea of capoeira as a “fight disguised as dance,” embodied knowledge that lies “behind our thoughts” establishes yet another syncretic relationship in the development of Pastinha’s Capoeira Angola. Appropriating the ideas of doubleness and simultaneity inherent in

²⁴⁷ Abreu and Castro, *Capoeira*: 23.

²⁴⁸ Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*: 24.

²⁴⁹ “The capoeirista is not seen anymore as a troublemaker—he is a sportsman, similar to others who practice boxing, American freestyle fighting, judo, etc.” *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁵⁰ ———, “Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserêr,” 12.

²⁵¹ “Amigos o corpo é um grande sistema de razão. Por detraz de nossos pensamentos acha-se um Sr. poderoso, um sabio desconhecido. Corrijo-me as realidades, pela inversão natural da ordem logica transformando o passado em futuro.” *Ibid.*, 1.

the concept of syncretism—a widely disseminated model for understanding Afro-diasporic cultural continuities and “survivals” at the time—Pastinha constructs a capoeira capable of being simultaneously safe and violent, dance-like and potentially lethal, sport and high art, deceptive and well-behaved. Through embodied knowledge, Pastinha imagined a capoeira able to dance/fight with and through these apparent contradictions, inverting and subverting a “logical order,” and transforming a capoeira “doomed” by progress (as predicted by Carneiro) into the capoeira of the future.

Conclusion

Pastinha’s own syncretic understanding of capoeira practice led me to reconsider syncretism as a productive analytic model not only for Pastinha’s Capoeira Angola, but also for Bimba’s Capoeira Regional and Zuma’s National Gymnastics. Rejecting previous analyses that rely on a framework of “loss” and subsequent “rescue” of tradition, I have shown how these three innovators appropriated the dominant discourses of their time—chiefly the notion of progress from Comte’s positivism and the related idea(l)s of racial, physical, and national “improvement”—in order to “invent” Afro-Brazilian modernity and legitimize the marginalized practice of capoeiragem/capoeira. The framework of syncretism as counterhegemonic strategy has allowed me to see past the grandiose positivist language that permeates Zuma’s, Bimba’s and Pastinha’s writings. When compared with the movement descriptions and photographs that illustrate them, these texts advocating personal and national improvement through capoeira, itself improved as “national sport,” revealed numerous productive contradictions and dissonances.

Zuma’s intent to “cultivate” the “ill defined” game of capoeiragem articulated notions of eugenic “improvement”; however, his use of headbutts and strikes with the feet while bearing weight on the hands, as well as the re-articulation of the Africanist circle as a “ring” for matches

of capoeiragem, point to a process of “cultivation” that did not deny, but rather, reconfigured Afro-diasporic motifs in hegemonic terms. Zuma insistence on using terms such as nobility, elegance, beauty and intelligence to describe capoeiragem—“the most beautiful game, the most intelligent sport”²⁵²—when juxtaposed with his Afro-diasporic movement, re-assigns these adjectives (reserved at the time as European attributes) to describe an Afro-diasporic movement practice.

Bimba’s codification of capoeira into sequences, his innovations allegedly borrowed from foreign martial traditions, and his multi-media, teacherless training method embodied progress and modernity. Bimba countered racist notions of “brutish” blacks through an intelligent, highly codified “sport.” Bimba’s “improvements” to capoeira, readily embraced by the media, government officials and even the military, “improved” Brazilian citizens, but did so *through* Afro-diasporic corporeality. Although Bimba’s codification did indeed approximate capoeira practice to definitions of sport, as exemplified by his redefinition of the *ginga* as a callisthenic exercise, Bimba’s systematized and codified “sport” recycled elements from nineteenth-century capoeiragem, such as *balões*, framed as his own innovation. Despite the fact that improvised individual input was curtailed (albeit not eliminated) in capoeira regional, Bimba’s emphasis on his own creative contributions—inventing, re-naming, and borrowing “new” moves—exemplifies an Afro-diasporic approach to innovation that conveniently overlapped with a national valorization of “invention” and progress. Developing a capoeira “for the weak to defend against the strong,”²⁵³ Bimba presented his no-nonsense, streetwise powerful fighting style as efficiency, thus rearticulating in hegemonic terms the violence that was at the

²⁵² Burlamaqui, *Gymnastica Nacional (Capoeiragem) Methodizada e Regrada*: 15.

²⁵³ Reis, *O mundo de pernas para o ar : a capoeira no Brasil*: 101.

core of street capoeiragem practiced by “tough guys,” the same violence used as justification the criminalization of capoeira.

While Pastinha’s “capoeira of the future” was institutionalized, it was never codified: he never fixed the teaching of Capoeira Angola into reproducible sequences. Although Pastinha demanded obedience and “good behavior” from his students, Capoeira Angola continued to rely on improvisation and embody *malícia*, an element downplayed by both Bimba and Zuma in their efforts to legitimize capoeira(gem). Even though he choreographed a capoeira based on non-violence, where players “showed” strikes rather than fully delivering them, Pastinha continued to insist on capoeira angola’s violent, even lethal potential. Pastinha embraced these contradictions through a syncretic simultaneity that allowed him to appropriate positivist discourse while at the same time redefining progress, modernity, and the future—when capoeira would be sought by legions of people—through Afro-diasporic corporeality.

Although these three innovators have been analyzed as having engaged in diametrically opposing projects, a comparative analysis of their respective approaches to the modernization and legitimization of capoeira has yielded more similarities than differences. These three practitioners of capoeira(gem) struggled with similar social stigmas against the practice and deployed similar tactics of legitimization. Through a series of discursive appropriations, these advocates of capoeira(gem) choreographed Afro-Brazilian modernity.

Chapter 2: Dancing between tradition and modernity (1930-1964)

In Chapter 1, I reconsidered the processes of codification and modernization of capoeira in the 20th century, reimagining these processes outside the loss and rescue prism through which it had been previously analyzed. Zuma's intelligent and beautiful capoeiragem, which he aspired to transform into the "national gymnastics," Bimba's efficient and highly codified "national sport," and Pastinha's less codified but equally as institutionalized dance/fight/art/sport, all shared a common goal and a common strategy. Seeking legitimization for this marginalized Afro-diasporic game, these three innovators appropriated the hegemonic discourses of their time in order to articulate embodied Africanity in terms acceptable, and indeed desirable, to Brazilian "society." Although Zuma's manual was written almost three decades before the other two, by placing them side by side, I showed that the preoccupation with the legitimization of capoeira(agem) remained a driving force behind codification efforts between the 1920s and the 1960s. Building an image of discipline, efficiency, and respectability, these three innovators distanced themselves from the stigma of a nineteenth-century capoeiragem, practiced by straight razor-wielding "tough guys." Through a reformed and "improved" capoeira, these innovators actively participated in choreographing Brazilian modernity not in spite of, but through Afro-diasporic corporeality.

While in Chapter 1 my analysis focused primarily on capoeira manuals, this chapter focuses on the return of capoeira to public spaces as staged spectacle and the subsequent changes brought about by this new visibility. I argue that Bimba's much-publicized participation in public capoeira matches in 1936 marks the beginning of the consolidation of capoeira regional and capoeira angola as two separate capoeira styles. These matches provide ample evidence of a

vibrant capoeira scene in Salvador and provide a point of departure for my analysis of the processes of invention of a “dying” capoeira in need of “rescuing” in the 1940s and 50s.

I draw attention to the influence of two prominent Bahian intellectuals—folklorist Édison Carneiro (1912-1972) and novelist Jorge Amado (1912-2001)—in choreographing capoeira’s “tradition” in opposition to its recent modernization. I map the alliances between Bahia’s artistic and intellectual elite and capoeira practitioners throughout the 1940s and 50s, alliances that resulted in a “regenerated” capoeira that shed its violence to become a harmless game and dance-like folklore. I trace Carneiro’s influential role in perpetuating the notion of a vanishing, endangered *Capoeira de Angola*, which required protection and preservation. I argue that although Carneiro did not invent the term Capoeira de Angola (capoeira *from* Angola), he was instrumental in establishing the binaries pure/impure, traditional/modern, more African/less African and assigning a (vanishing) Bantu “origin” to a distinct capoeira style.

I propose that Carneiro’s preoccupation with protection and preservation in the late 1940s and 50s was a reaction to previous nationalist approaches to cultural production, where the “folk” was to be mapped, collected, improved, and transformed into modern “national culture.” Throughout the 1930s and early 40s, under Getúlio Vargas’ dictatorship (1930-1945), national culture was crafted through a process of improving and civilizing “the folk”.²⁵⁴ Gustavo Capanema, Vargas’ minister of Education and Public Health, appointed in 1934, built a vast network of institutions of cultural management controlled by this ministry. The Vargas dictatorship centralized cultural production and attempted to suppress regional identities, an

²⁵⁴ Vargas was “chief of the provisional government” following the military coup of 1930, strategically referred to as the Revolution of 1930. In 1934, Vargas was “elected” president through “indirect elections” to serve a four-year term. With democratic, “direct” elections scheduled for the following year, his military backers kept Vargas in power by declaring a state of siege on November 10th, 1937, suspending congress, cancelling the 1938 elections, and replacing the constitution of 1934 with a corporatist constitution. See Daryle Williams, *Culture wars in Brazil: the first Vargas regime, 1930-1945* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001).

effort symbolized most dramatically by a ceremonial burning of all Brazilian state flags staged in 1937, the year when Vargas definitively established his autocratic power and declared a “New State” based on fascist doctrine.²⁵⁵ Brazil’s regional, “primitive” cultures from the “interior” of the country were not seen as having intrinsic value; rather, they were to be “improved” and subsumed into Brazil’s national culture. In this chapter, I locate the increased interest and support for Capoeira de Angola in the 1940s and 50s (and antipathy for Bimba’s modernized capoeira) in the context of a post-Vargas redemocratization of Brazil, when leftist intellectuals such as Carneiro and Amado attempted to rescue and restore the importance of regional culture.

This chapter is divided into three parts: in the first part, I analyze the pugilistic series of matches of 1936, where Bimba and his students introduced Bahian sports fans to the efficiency of their new capoeira style. These matches, many against players of the “old” style of capoeira, established both the modernity of Capoeira Regional and the “antiquity” of the capoeira style that was beginning to be referred to as capoeira *de Angola*. Safely contained by the pugilistic ring or rehearsed in the privacy of a “physical culture” center, Capoeira Regional was able to foreground its efficiency and violence; Capoeira de Angola—at the time still practiced in informal, public spaces—downplayed efficiency and violence and highlighted its ludic, acrobatic, and dance-like aspects. Pastinha played a leading role in transforming Capoeira de Angola into a respected sport practiced in a private sports center similar to Bimba’s academy; however, Pastinha’s Capoeira Angola (his capoeira *style*, without the preposition) was the result of a collaboration with key figures of Bahia’s intellectual and artistic elite. In parts two and three of this chapter, I trace the ideology that undergirded this collaboration. Through an analysis of both photography and film of capoeira from the 1940s, 50s and 60s, I identify some of Pastinha’s

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 9-10.

tactical decisions in reshaping Capoeira Angola as folklore, such as eliminating the practice of *balões*, deemed excessively violent, and foregrounding capoeira's "ritual" and dance-like aspects, such as its musical accompaniment and the practice known as *chamadas* ("calls"), a "break" in the game that has become iconic of Capoeira Angola today.

I. Redefining capoeira in public spaces: Capoeira Regional, capoeiragem and capoeira de Angola

*"If I got up on the ring eleven years ago it was only so that the difference between capoeiragem per se and the fighting technique that I teach would be established."*²⁵⁶
--Mestre Bimba

At the same time that capoeiragem was being codified as capoeira, taught through pre-established sequences and institutionalized in formal, private learning spaces known as *academias*, capoeira in public spaces, on streets and public squares—the very places where the practice of capoeira(gem) was explicitly prohibited by law²⁵⁷—was being re-framed as spectacle and folklore. Although the criminal code of 1890 officially prohibited the practice of capoeira "on the streets and public squares," capoeira continued to be tolerated as long as it was supervised by police. Testimony from capoeira practitioners active in the early 1920s attest to a capoeira in public spaces restricted and supervised through a kind of permit system. Bimba remembers that "there were rodas of capoeira on the street corners, in front of dry goods stores, in the woods. The police prohibited [capoeira], and I, on one occasion, even paid 100 *contos* to

²⁵⁶ Interview for the newspaper *A Tarde*. "A 'luta regional' não é meio de 'cavação'," *A Tarde*, February 7th 1946.

²⁵⁷ Article 402 of the Penal Code of the United States of Brazil of October 11th, 1890 prohibited the practice of "any exercise of agility and corporal dexterity known by the name of *capoeiragem*" "on the streets and public squares." Quoted in Waldeloir Rego, *Capoeira Angola; Ensaio Sócio-Etnográfico*. (Rio de Janeiro: Gráf. Lux, 1968), 292-293. To my knowledge, this law was not formally revoked until the passage of the following (and current) Brazilian criminal code of December 7th, 1940, where I have found no mention of capoeira.

play for two hours.”²⁵⁸ In his manuscripts, Noronha mentions several instances of capoeira gatherings without permits in the 1920s that were broken up by police, often violently.²⁵⁹

It is in this context of violent repression of capoeira in public spaces that Bimba began teaching capoeira in private spaces in 1918.²⁶⁰ By the mid 1920s, Bimba’s capoeira lessons had already attracted the attention of young white men from Bahia’s elite: medical and law students, including the sons of influential political families, who went on to become the first formal graduates of capoeira regional. The social prestige of his new students allowed Bimba to circumvent police repression. In 1924, through the influence of one of its members, Joaquim de Araújo Lima, Bimba’s group was able to stage a public exhibition of capoeira without police interference.²⁶¹ By 1927, Bimba and his students began receiving invitations to perform the “regional” Bahian fighting style for state officials, and by the early 1930s his group was performing in Salvador’s soccer stadiums.²⁶² Bimba’s narrative of progress, regeneration and improvement of an Afro-diasporic practice otherwise classified as “public disorder,” as well as the display of disciplined (white, male, middle/upper class) bodies engaging in wholesome physical culture no doubt played an important role in removing capoeira from under the “claws

²⁵⁸ These were likely permits established by local police chiefs. To my knowledge, there were no amendments to article 402 and the prohibition of capoeira in public spaces remained until 1940. *Contos de Réis*, or 1,000 *Mil-Réis*, the Brazilian currency until 1942. Interview with Bimba cited in Reis, *O mundo de pernas para o ar: a capoeira no Brasil*: 103.

²⁵⁹ Noronha’s “memories” of these conflicts—many ending in gun or knife violence—may have been derived from stories he heard growing up. Written down more than 50 years later (in the 1970s), these memories often refer to the period between 1917 and 1922, when Noronha, born in 1909, was between 8 and 13 years old. Coutinho, *O ABC da Capoeira de Angola: os manuscritos do Mestre Noronha*: 30-31.

²⁶⁰ Bimba’s first “school” was conceptualized as a club, the *Club União em Apuros*, located in the Salvador neighborhood of Engenho Velho de Brotas.

²⁶¹ Reis, “Negros e brancos no jogo da capoeira: reinvenção da tradição,” 87.

²⁶² In 1927, Bimba and his students participated in “an exhibition in honor of former Congressman Simões Filho, founder of the newspaper *A Tarde*.” *A Tarde*, March 23, 1968, quoted in Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 30. In 1934, Bimba and his group performed at the Brotas Stadium in Salvador during a benefit for the city’s homeless shelter. Raimundo César Alves de Almeida, *A Saga do Mestre Bimba* (Salvador, Bahia: Ginga Associação de Capoeira, 1994), 23.

of police.”²⁶³ It is significant that Bimba’s unsupervised instances of capoeira in a public spaces were *exhibitions* rather than informal gatherings like the ones described by Noronha, where players from different capoeira groups tested their skills, more or less amicably, against each other. In fact, Bimba’s students were forbidden to attend informal capoeira *rodas*.²⁶⁴

In 1936, Bimba’s group was invited to participate in the July 2nd Independence Day festivities in Salvador.²⁶⁵ However, the struggle towards legitimization was not over, and capoeira in public spaces was still met with skepticism. A short note accompanied by a photograph published in the newspaper *A Tarde* on July 1st exposes the lingering prejudices against the practice: the caption, printed below a photograph of Bimba in mid-handstand evading a headbutt, claims that capoeira had been “ill-placed” among the commemorations, and “regrettably” would be part of the civic program of the following day.²⁶⁶ Despite being criticized by the mainstream media, the invitation to take part in the official program of the July 2nd commemoration reflects a changing public image of capoeira and foreshadows the *de facto* decriminalization of capoeira in the following year, 1937, marked by Bimba’s successful attempt to register his school with the Department of Education, Health and Public Assistance.²⁶⁷

Although Bimba has been credited with single-handedly bringing capoeira out of illegality, a closer look at the increased interest in capoeira in the late 1930s suggests that, although Bimba was an astute, intelligent man capable of recognizing opportunities and building

²⁶³ In an interview for the *Diário de Goiânia* in 1973, Bimba stated: “The person who took the Capoeira of Brazil from under the claws of police, I think[,] aside from God[,] that it was me.” Abreu and Castro, *Capoeira*: 33.

²⁶⁴ For first person accounts by several of Bimba’s early disciples, see Almeida, *A Saga do Mestre Bimba*: 17-21.

²⁶⁵ Known as Bahia’s “independence day”, July 2nd marks the day when Brazilian military forces took back the province of Bahia from Portuguese control (July 2nd, 1823)—almost one year after all other Brazilian provinces had been independent from Portugal (September 7th, 1822).

²⁶⁶ *A Tarde*, July 1st, 1936, quoted in Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 31.

²⁶⁷ This document also recognizes Bimba as “director of the physical education course” at his now registered school. Almeida, *Bimba, Perfil do Mestre*: 17.

valuable alliances, he must share the credit for the decriminalization of capoeira not only with the rest of the capoeira community—including those who were by then beginning to identify as practitioners of capoeira de Angola—but also with folklorists and Afro-Brazilian studies scholars who advocated for the elimination of Bahia’s permit system and police supervision not only for the public practice of capoeira, but also for the temples of Afro-Brazilian religion (*candomblé*).²⁶⁸

The second half of the 1930s saw an increased presence of capoeira in public spaces, in part as a result of an easing in police persecution. This period is rich with media reports of capoeira matches as well as descriptions of capoeira games by anthropologists and folklorists. Capoeira practitioners willingly displayed their skills, while scholars and journalists eagerly observed and recorded these performances. By the mid 1930s, Bimba had cleverly begun taking advantage of the national infatuation with boxing matches in order to propel capoeira into the limelight: Bimba and his students began participating in public matches not only against other capoeira practitioners, but occasionally also against boxers and jiu-jitsu fighters.

The 1936 pugilistic season at the stadium at Odeon Park in Salvador (February-July, 1936)²⁶⁹—where Bimba participated as both fighter and referee—offered capoeira unprecedented media visibility.²⁷⁰ I argue that these capoeira matches mark both the beginning of a clear division between capoeira angola and capoeira regional and the return of a capoeira practiced openly in public spaces—former public “disorder” now reframed as staged spectacle.

²⁶⁸ “Bahia’s policy at the time forced *terreiros* [candomblé houses] to apply to the police for permits to celebrate each religious festival. The police charged a fee for this permission, which could apparently vary in scale.” Anadelia A. Romo, *Brazil’s living museum: race, reform, and tradition in Bahia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 81.

²⁶⁹ Abreu states that the season lasted until December 12, 1936, but from July until December matches were held at another location, at the Campo da Graça, due to the closure of the Stadium at Parque Odeon in July. Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 43-44.

²⁷⁰ For a thorough discussion of the 1936 capoeira matches held at the Odeon Stadium in Salvador (and reproductions of primary source documentation about these matches), see *ibid.*

The controlled visibility of the ring/stage provided practitioners with the opportunity to choreograph a “reformed” capoeira, transforming “tough guys” into respectable athletes and later into dancers, entertainers, and artists.

Although no photos of the stadium are available, it is likely that this was a rustic, temporary structure: a raised boxing ring (referred to as *tablado*,²⁷¹ which can also mean stage) surrounded by wooden bleacher-type seating on four sides. Although centrally located, Odeon Park, where the stadium was erected, was not exactly prime real estate. Jorge Amado’s colorful description is worth quoting in its entirety:

Next to the [Sé] church there was a kind of Park used for everything. For meetings of suspicious couples, for scandalous fornications, for beggars to rest after a hard day at work, a strategic spot where cheap whores invited sailors for love, for poor variety theater, fairs, various celebrations. Sometimes a ring would be set up in the center of the park for boxing fights [...] There were public toilets at the park and their regrettable odor permeated almost the entire Square.²⁷²

The stadium, described as a “modern center for entertainment and sports matches,”²⁷³ was likely part of an effort to improve the conditions of the area. Despite being a modest structure, with a capacity for at most 200 patrons, the stadium held the grandiose title of Odeon Center and Stadium for Physical Culture, sharing the term “physical culture” with the name of Bimba’s school, the Center for Regional Physical Culture.²⁷⁴

Newspaper reports describe sold-out matches attended by enthusiastic audiences who favored games marked by agility, violence and efficiency.²⁷⁵ Bimba and his students were

²⁷¹ Ibid., 62.

²⁷² Jorge Amado, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador*, Tenth ed. (São Paulo: Livraria Martins Editôra, 1964), 56-57.

²⁷³ Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 43.

²⁷⁴ The fact that the stadium was dismantled less than six months after it was built suggests a modest, temporary building, much smaller than the soccer stadium where Bimba and his students had recently staged matches.

²⁷⁵ “Capoeira is a kind of backwards Jiu-Jitsu, its goal is to eliminate the adversary, with moves that are agile, violent and in their majority decisive.” Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 64.

prominently featured in this season: while his students always confronted each other in “preliminary matches” and were listed as “amateurs,” Bimba was paired with other established practitioners of capoeiragem, and his matches listed under the “professional” category.

Reporters praised players’ “agility and feline contortions,” and audiences enthusiastically cheered decisive kicks that projected the loser to the ground “in great style.”²⁷⁶ In the inaugural fight between Bimba and Henrique Bahia, Bimba wins after applying a “decisive kick to the chest,” causing Bahia to fall. “Projections” seemed to be a crowd pleaser: news reports highlight violent kicks that “projected” the opponent to the ground; also of note was the use of throws (*balões*), the practice of grabbing and throwing discussed in Chapter 1.²⁷⁷

With his new, efficient capoeira style, Bimba was declared the winner of all matches in which he participated. However, his invincibility was not without controversy. Reporters challenged the point system used in the fight between Bimba and Zey,²⁷⁸ suggesting that the referee favored Bimba unfairly. In the fight between Bimba and Victor H.U., Bimba’s use of a hand blow to H.U.’s ear (*galopante*)—a strike H.U. claimed to be forbidden in capoeira—prompted an indignant H.U. to storm out of the ring in mid-contest. Samuel de Souza (possibly the same capoeirista known as Samuel Querido de Deus, discussed later in this chapter) wrote a letter to a local newspaper protesting the results of Bimba versus Zey, adding that “the capoeira introduced by Bimba at Odeon Park is not the legitimate from Angola,” adding that he would gladly accept a challenge if one was issued.²⁷⁹ These veterans of capoeiragem did not take Bimba’s glorification lying down.

²⁷⁶ *O Imparcial*, February 7th, 1936, quoted in *ibid.*, 54.

²⁷⁷ *Diário de Notícias*, March 9th, 1936, quoted in *ibid.*, 63.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 64-65. Zey (spelled Zehyr) is mentioned by Pastinha in 1964 as one of the greatest living capoeiristas. Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*: 25.

²⁷⁹ *O Imparcial*, March 12th, 1936, quoted in Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 65. At least two other similar challenges were printed by local newspapers, one by Américo Pequeno and another by

Throughout this controversy, it is telling that there are no reported objections to kicks and throws, no matter how forceful, effective, or violent. The protests, instead, address unfair practices such as referee favoritism or use of prohibited strikes. Although it is clear from Samuel's letter that practitioners of capoeiragem were beginning to embrace ideas of authenticity, the range of movement accepted both "camps" during these matches indicates that the dance-like Capoeira Angola taught by Pastinha, where violence is shunned and kicks are suggested, barely grazing the opponent, had not yet developed as a separate style.

Indeed, Bimba's agenda seemed to be to distinguish his new capoeira from capoeiragem. During this season, Bimba issued challenges to specific players through local newspapers, a practice common at the time in boxing and jiu-jitsu.²⁸⁰ Significantly, these were players of the "old style" of capoeira,²⁸¹ through these challenges, Bimba sought to publicly question the efficiency of the "old" capoeira style and assert his own "improved" and modern capoeira training technique as the solution. His undefeated status, achieved fairly or otherwise, was proof of the superiority of his "Bahian regional fighting style" (*luta regional Bahiana*).

Despite the controversy over legitimacy and fairness, however, both the public and the press seemed enamored with Bimba's "modern" fighting style. A contest between two players of the style "from Angola," Henrique Bahia and Américo Ciência, was loudly jeered by a packed stadium. Bimba, not coincidentally the referee of this match, did not miss the

Aberrê. See *Diário de Notícias*, March 13th, 1936, quoted in *ibid. Diário da Bahia*, March 25th, 1936, quoted in *ibid.*, 77.

²⁸⁰ Bimba challenged Samuel Pescador (probably the same person as the player known as Samuel Querido de Deus, cited by Jorge Amado, Edison Carneiro, and Ruth Landes as the greatest player of the Angola style at the time) as well as the capoeiristas Eugênio and Henrique Bahia. *Diário da Bahia*, January 6th, 1936, quoted in *ibid.*, 50.

²⁸¹ Victor H.U. and Aberrê are listed as co-founders with Pastinha, of the Capoeira Angola Sports Center in 1941. Pastinha, "Pensamentos," 30-31.

opportunity to declare the players' style "too antiquated."²⁸² To repair the damage done by this fiasco and show the public that capoeira was indeed a "real" fighting technique, Bimba and Aberrê (a player of the "antiquated" capoeira style)²⁸³ immediately stepped in and delighted the audience with an "excellent demonstration not in the program, being enthusiastically applauded."²⁸⁴ As noted by Abreu, these two fighters "turned the ring into a stage."²⁸⁵ Ironically, Bimba chose Aberrê rather than one of his own students to stage a demonstration of capoeira's efficiency.

Aberrê, immortalized through Pastinha's accounts as the catalyst for the founding of the first Capoeira Angola center, and consecrated as part of the "old guard" of capoeiragem, understood what the audience wanted just as much as the politically-savvy innovator Bimba. The fact that the two players knew each other's styles well enough for a successful impromptu demonstration of capoeira provides further evidence of more similarities than differences between Bimba's new Regional style and the "antiquated" style from which Bimba hoped to distance himself. It is likely that Aberrê and Bimba shared the same movement vocabulary of attacks and defenses, including knowledge of the partnered throws Bimba went on to codify as

²⁸² The press condemned the unsuccessful fight as a "joke," pointing to its lack of polish and professionalism by derisively comparing it to an informal soccer match among friends (*um baba*). *O Imparcial*, February 19th, 1936, quoted in Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 58.

²⁸³ According to Pastinha, Aberrê—also spelled ABR, born (Antônio) Raymundo Argolo in 1895—had been his student in the early 1910s. Other sources, such as Mestres Waldemar da Paixão and Cobrinha Verde (Rafael Alves França) state that Aberrê was Pastinha's teacher, not his student. See Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 270-71; Paulo Andrade Magalhães Filho, "Jogo de Discursos: a disputa por hegemonia na tradição da capoeira angola bahiana" (Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2011).

²⁸⁴ In a *demonstration* rather than a fight, Bimba and Aberrê engaged in a process of selection in order to show the public only the most spectacular aspects of the practice. This collaborative demonstration suggests the existence of established "conventions" for semi-choreographed capoeira demonstrations. *O Estado da Bahia* and *O Imparcial*, February 19th, 1936, quoted in Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 58.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

“abandoned waist”;²⁸⁶ a few well-performed “projections” and “feline contortions” may have offered the crowd the thrill they sought, drawing enthusiastic applause.

The compatibility of Bimba’s and Aberrê’s styles signals a capoeira not yet fully divided into the angola/regional binary, despite Bimba’s claims to the contrary. However, I propose that the capoeira matches at Odeon Park mark the beginning of this division. In addition to pairing Bimba with “Angola” players, the season included an evening of two separate intra-style games intended to answer the question: which capoeira “will be more accepted by our audiences—Capoeira Angola or Bahian Regional?”²⁸⁷ Although there are no subsequent reports of a “winning” style, as both games were “enthusiastically applauded,” this question guided the development of the two styles throughout the twentieth century.

By the mid 1940s, after jiu-jitsu star George Gracie exposed the practice of rigged matches as commonplace,²⁸⁸ Bimba issued a lengthy declaration trying to distance Capoeira Regional from the ring:

Regional is not a fighting style for the “ring.” It doesn’t obey the conventional rules for pugilistic encounters, it is a fight for decisive situations [where] anything goes. This is why its public exhibition in this way would be a barbaric act that would cause a [negative] reaction in the spectators and the intervention of police. [...] Recognizing that Regional is not a fighting style for the “ring” I never presented it as such. If I got up on the ring eleven years ago it was only so that the difference between capoeiragem per se and the fighting technique that I teach would be established.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ According to Aberrê’s former student Mestre Caiçara (Antônio Conceição Moraes), Bimba and Aberrê were good friends and often practiced capoeira together. Magalhães Filho, “Jogo de Discursos: a disputa por hegemonia na tradição da capoeira angola bahiana,” 63.

²⁸⁷ One capoeira de Angola fight between Juvenal Nascimento and Francisco Salles and another between Bimba’s disciples Manoel Rosendo and Delfino Telles. Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 79-80.

²⁸⁸ In 1940, George Gracie, of the Gracie family responsible for developing the Brazilian style of jiu-jitsu, confessed that he had participated in rigged matches, and went on to state that such matches were commonplace. He stated: “I realized, indignant, that sports fans like spectacle and decided to accept the [rigged] matches, since only in a simulated fight can you achieve spectacle.” “Porque, cada vez mais, se desmoraliza o profissionalismo...”, *A Tarde* July 30th, 1940.

²⁸⁹ “A 'luta regional' não é meio de 'cavação'.”

Here, Bimba clarifies his purpose in having participated in public matches: to distinguish his Capoeira Regional from capoeiragem/capoeira de Angola, i.e. street capoeira associated with “tough guys” and criminality. As Bimba continues,

To go to a “ring” to fight as one would on the street[,] that’s something I could not do as a registered physical education teacher[,] and even if I did the Department of Public Safety would not allow it.²⁹⁰

Tactically choreographing Capoeira Regional’s violence according to the rules of the ring (based on Zuma’s proposed regulations, such as the presence of a referee and the tallying of points, discussed in Chapter 1), Bimba not only established distinction over capoeiragem, he also honored his new title of Physical Education Teacher and avoided problems with the Department of Public Safety.

II. “Rescuing” Bantu heritage/ “Bearing” national folklore

*The [capoeira] fight is a demonstration of the prodigious agility of the angola [type], who executes the most difficult corporeal movements without any effort, smiling.*²⁹¹
--Édison Carneiro

The 1936 matches at Odeon Park, as Bimba had hoped, indeed established the difference between his new and “improved” capoeira and street capoeiragem. However, this season also marks the beginning of the transformation of capoeiragem into another emerging capoeira style: capoeira de Angola, legitimized through claims of authenticity and purity.²⁹²

Some of the first mentions of “Angola” as a style of capoeira date from 1936: in addition to the use of the term in the newspaper reportage of the games at Odeon Park, Édison Carneiro

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Carneiro, *Negros Bantus: notas de ethnographia religiosa e folk-lore*: 150.

²⁹² A decade later, capoeira de Angola is replaced by Pastinha’s Capoeira Angola, “improved” through a rhetoric of discipline and progress (discussed in chapter 1).

publishes an article, in June of the same year, entitled “Capoeira de Angola.”²⁹³ In it, he briefly mentions Bimba’s recent success in the ring, but declares capoeira de Angola “the purest” capoeira, and therefore best suited for his analysis. While it is unclear whether or not Carneiro actually coined the denomination “capoeira de Angola,” his endorsement of both term and style greatly influenced the dissemination of the term and consolidation of this new “old” style of capoeira.²⁹⁴ I argue that Carneiro, who went on to become one of the leaders of Brazil’s folkloric movement and one of the most influential scholars of Afro-Brazilian culture of his generation, collaborated with leading capoeira practitioners in the process of “rescue” and “re-Africanization” of capoeira, and its reformulation as the “Angola” style.

In 1936, Carneiro was a twenty-four year old recent law school graduate, described by anthropologist Ruth Landes as “a mulatto, of the tan-skinned color called ‘pardo’ in Brazil” from a poor but respected “Negro” family.²⁹⁵ The son of Antônio Joaquim de Souza Carneiro, a local expert in Afro-Brazilian folklore, Carneiro learned early on to valorize Afro-diasporic popular culture, and such values went on to shape his research, his writings, and his political activism. Carneiro began his career as a journalist. Writing for the Salvador newspaper *O Estado da Bahia*, he published a series of articles aimed at changing the public opinion about candomblé, hoping to end the police repression of Afro-Brazilian houses of worship in Bahia.²⁹⁶ For Carneiro, his scholarship was inseparable from the lived experiences in the black community.

Throughout the first half of 1936, Carneiro was no doubt a regular audience member at the capoeira matches at Odeon Park. In “Capoeira de Angola,” he notes that “lately, at the space

²⁹³ First published in the *O Estado da Bahia*, June 9th, 1936, and reprinted the following year in Carneiro, *Negros Bantus*: 149.

²⁹⁴ See Simone Pondé Vassallo, “Capoeiras e intelectuais: a construção coletiva da capoeira “autêntica,”” *Estudos Históricos* 32(2003): 111.

²⁹⁵ Landes, *The city of women*: 13-14.

²⁹⁶ Romo, *Brazil's living museum: race, reform, and tradition in Bahia*: 65.

at Odeon Park at the Sé Square, some capoeiristas have measured forces, attaining great box office success.”²⁹⁷ Carneiro refers to Bimba’s appeal to middle class students, and that

[t]his black man, of rare agility, reassured me that his capoeira was no longer the one from Angola, but an extension of it, since it uses many blows from other fighting styles, from Roman wrestling to boxing and jiu-jitsu. So much so that Bimba has nicknamed his special capoeira Bahian regional fight [technique].²⁹⁸

As I have shown, despite the possible incorporation of foreign borrowings,²⁹⁹ Bimba’s style, at this time, shared more similarities than differences with capoeiragem and the emerging style “from Angola.” However, Bimba insisted on having invented a new style of capoeira, reassuring Carneiro that “his capoeira was no longer the one from Angola.” Bimba’s “new” capoeira, perhaps more in theory than in practice, reflected the ideology of regeneration, progress, and modernity of the Vargas era. Self-consciously presented as “modern,” Capoeira Regional did not interest Carneiro: neither as an object of study nor as a political symbol of resistance to a regime interested in creating a homogeneous and unified national identity. In his 1936 article, after mentioning Bimba’s success among the middle class, Carneiro goes on to praise the “real” representatives of capoeira in Bahia:

The blacks tell me that the greatest capoeirista of Bahia is Samuel ‘Querido de Deus,’ a fisherman of noteworthy quickness of the body. Much talked about are the capoeiristas Maré (stevedore), Siri do Mangue, from Santo Amaro, and a man named Oséas, who opened a school in Rio.³⁰⁰

Significantly, these were black capoeiristas elected by “blacks” themselves as among the greatest, listed here as authentic representatives of the Angola style. The fact that Bimba was

²⁹⁷ Carneiro, *Negros Bantus*: 159.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Both movements framed as foreign borrowings, such as *balões*, and those likely to be indeed borrowings from boxing, such as the blow to the ear that prompted Victor H.U. to storm out of the ring in protest earlier that year.

³⁰⁰ Carneiro, *Negros Bantus: notas de ethnographia religiosa e folk-lore*: 159. All capoeiristas listed here were likely Afro-Brazilian. I have not been able to find other references to Oséas (or any photographic records), but I believe he too must have been of Afro-Brazilian descent.

also black seems to be overshadowed by the fact that his acclaim came from white middle-class university students and the mainstream media rather than from the black community.

Carneiro further Africanizes the “Angola” style by connecting it with the Angola “racial” type: “The [capoeira] fight is a demonstration of the prodigious agility of the angola [type], who executes the most difficult corporeal movements without any effort, smiling.”³⁰¹ Even though in this passage Carneiro revisits previous theories of racial types, his research diverged markedly from the biological determinism of his predecessors by focusing on cultural rather than biological “traits.” Carneiro’s ideas also differed from those of his contemporaries writing on Afro-Brazilian culture: while the superiority, purity and complexity of Yoruba culture³⁰² are taken for granted by Arthur Ramos and Gilberto Freyre, Carneiro draws attention to the Bantu legacy in Brazil, considered to be impoverished and almost lost.³⁰³ In *The Brazilian Negro*, published in 1934, Ramos explains that the Bantu legacy was, at that time,

an unpublished page in our religious ethnography. And this is due to many reasons. First is the bantu mythic poverty, in relationship to the Sudanese, a fact recognized by all ethnographers, which resulted in its almost complete absorption, in Brazil, by gegê-nagô fetishism.³⁰⁴

Inherently “poor”, Bantu cultures barely survived contact with their “stronger” Ewe-Yoruba counterparts (gegê-nagô, widely accepted as the most significant “Sudanese” cultural strain in Brazil); what was left of them was now disfigured, transformed, almost unrecognizable.³⁰⁵

³⁰¹ ———, *Negros Bantus*: 150. The physical characteristics of the “Angola type” are discussed in Chapter 1.

³⁰² Ramos refers to the superiority of the “Sudanese” cultural influence in Brazil, which he subdivides into “‘yorubas’, ‘gêges’, ‘haussás’, ‘minas’.” Ramos, *O negro brasileiro: etnographia religiosa* 21.

³⁰³ Among Bantu cultures, Ramos lists “angolas,” “cabindas,” “congos,” “benguelas” and other “provinces of the vast southern African territory.” ———, *O negro brasileiro*, 3a edição. ed., Bibliotheca pedagógica brasileira (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1951), 22.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁰⁵ Bantu myths were “deturpados e transformados, [...] quase irreconhecíveis pela obra rápida da simbiose das espécies míticas.” *Ibid.*, 89.

These allegedly impure, vanishing Bantu cultures—the “Angola” heritage in particular—intrigued Carneiro, leading him to write *Negros Bantus* in 1937.³⁰⁶ In this book, Carneiro proposes that some of Bahia’s most significant embodied cultural practices—samba and capoeira—were in fact of Bantu origins. In the chapter devoted to capoeira de Angola (first published in *O Estado da Bahia* in 1936), Carneiro inverts the Yoruba purity and superiority paradigm by declaring capoeira de Angola “the purest” form of capoeira.³⁰⁷ Carneiro, however, does not explain how capoeira de Angola relates to an overall “Bantu legacy”—he only mentions that some capoeira de Angola songs use the word *Aloanguê*, which he interprets as a variation of Luanda, the capital of Angola and a major port during the slave trade. Carneiro does, however, offer a detailed list of capoeira attacks and defenses, including references to forbidden strikes and the use of a point system (discussed later in this chapter). Carneiro’s interest in embodied culture—which went on to become the focus of Brazilian folklore studies under Carneiro’s leadership—distinguished his work from the work of his contemporaries.

Carneiro was the main organizer of the Second Afro-Brazilian Congress. Held in Salvador in January 1937, this congress marked a turning point in the way scholars from various disciplines converged to discuss the Afro-diasporic presence in Brazil. With the support of his friend Aydano do Couto Ferraz and the guidance of Arthur Ramos, Carneiro organized a congress that sought to distance itself even further from biological and racial determinism than

³⁰⁶ Although the capoeira designation “from Angola” precedes the publication of Carneiro’s book by at least one year, already present in the news reports of the 1936 matches at Odeon Stadium, it is entirely absent from the capoeira record prior to the mid 1930s, suggesting a direct relationship between Carneiro’s interest in Brazil’s Bantu heritage and the capoeira style that became known as capoeira de Angola.

³⁰⁷ Carneiro’s classification of capoeira betray his limited knowledge of the practice; in his list of nine “species” of capoeira, he includes names that likely referred to musical rhythms (São Bento Grande, São Bento Pequeno) as well as names of neighborhoods where capoeira was practiced in Salvador (Conceição da Praia). From this list, he declares “de Angola” the purest form. Carneiro, *Negros Bantus: notas de etnographia religiosa e folk-lore*: 149.

the First Afro-Brazilian Congress, held in the city of Recife in 1934. Carneiro was openly criticized by U.S.-trained sociologist Gilberto Freyre, the organizer of the First Congress, who claimed that Carneiro's conference would not only be "too political," it would also lack academic rigor:

The organizers of the present congress are only interested in the most picturesque and most artistic side of the topic: the 'rodas' of capoeira and samba, the drum beats of 'Candomblé,' etc. This side is very interesting, and in Bahia it will have a unique color. But the program followed by the first congress was a more extensive program, including the elements of scientific research and work—dry elements, but equally important to social studies.³⁰⁸

Indeed, Carneiro's work was "too political": one of the overt aims of the congress was to end police interference in both capoeira and candomblé gatherings. Freyre sought to discredit the Second Congress for its interest in the "picturesque" and the "artistic," his euphemisms for embodied practices (capoeira, samba, and candomblé), which he deemed suitable for adding "local color" to the congress, but not appropriate as the main focus of a "scientific" congress.

In a bold move, Carneiro invited Afro-Brazilian practitioners of candomblé, samba, batuque, and capoeira to participate in the congress, not as objects of study, but as experts on Afro-Brazilian culture, participating in debates on equal standing with their "academic" counterparts. Although demonstrations were included in the program, where practitioners performed their "traditions" to scholars, Carneiro took the scholars to the "original" environment of each practice rather than staging the performances at the conference site. Despite, Bimba's popularity at the time, or indeed because of it, Carneiro invited Samuel Querido de Deus,

³⁰⁸ Romo, *Brazil's living museum: race, reform, and tradition in Bahia*: 67; Waldir Freitas Oliveira and Vivaldo da Costa Lima, *Cartas de Édison Carneiro a Artur Ramos: de 4 de janeiro de 1936 a 6 de dezembro de 1938*, Baianada (São Paulo: Editora Corrupio, 1987), 128.

considered “the greatest capoeirista of Bahia,” to lead the capoeira demonstration at the Second Congress.³⁰⁹

While the First Congress made modest advances towards breaking away from racial determinism, it still included papers based on cranial measurements and color indices that equated blackness with social degeneration. By placing Afro-Brazilian candomblé, capoeira, and samba practitioners side by side with scholars writing about them, the Second Congress invited scholars to rethink previous “scientific” approaches that associated blackness with “degeneration,” while simultaneously questioning the binary categorization of knowledge as “folk” and “erudite.” By focusing on embodied knowledge, Carneiro gave voice and authority to Afro-Brazilian scholar-practitioners, acknowledging them as experts in their fields. Lending his prestige as an intellectual, Carneiro collaborated with candomblé leaders in drafting a petition demanding religious freedom, arguing the unconstitutionality of subjecting black religions to police control while leaving other religious gatherings undisturbed.³¹⁰

Carneiro’s activism and his valorization of Afro-diasporic practices differed markedly from the nationalist approach to culture under Vargas and Capanema, which regarded “folk culture” as an ingredient for crafting a unified national identity. Folk “traditions” were to be collected, improved, and transformed into a modern “national culture.” Musicologist and ethnographer Mario de Andrade (1893-1945) and composer Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) played leading roles in fashioning national culture during the Vargas regime: Andrade as advocate for the continued collection and mapping of music and dance traditions from “the

³⁰⁹ This performance, which featured many of the same players who had recently participated the matches at Odeon Park, was held at the tennis courts of the Itapagipe Regatta Club. Assunção, *Capoeira: a history of an Afro-Brazilian martial art*: 151; Romo, *Brazil's living museum: race, reform, and tradition in Bahia*: 74.

³¹⁰ For a detailed analysis of both the first and the second Afro-Brazilian Congresses, see ———, *Brazil's living museum: race, reform, and tradition in Bahia*.

interior,” and Villa-Lobos as the promoter of mass choir spectacles and leader of the national choir and musical education program known as *Canto Orfeônico* (Orpheonic Song).

Andrade served as director of the Municipal Department of Culture of São Paulo (1935-1938), authored the preliminary study for the formation of a government agency responsible for overseeing the classification and preservation of “national patrimony” (*Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional*) in 1936,³¹¹ and founded the Society of Ethnography and Folklore in the same year. Andrade was influential in the process of imagining Brazilian modernity—to be found in the urban centers of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo—in contrast to Brazil’s “primitive roots,” preserved in the “interior” of the country.³¹²

Villa-Lobos was appointed director of the Superintendence of Musical and Artistic Education of schools in the capital, then Rio de Janeiro, making *Canto Orfeônico* an obligatory part of the school curriculum. Although Villa-Lobos did not coin this term or invented this choir style—which had already been in use in “Normal schools” in the state of São Paulo during the early twentieth century—he turned this practice into a national musical education program.³¹³ *Canto Orfeônico* instilled discipline and collectivity in school children through a repertory of songs drawn primarily from “national folklore.”³¹⁴ Villa Lobos also “improved” the folk through his compositions, which drew from folk melodies in creating a uniquely Brazilian “erudite” culture.³¹⁵

³¹¹ Williams, *Culture wars in Brazil: the first Vargas regime, 1930-1945*: 98-100.

³¹² The “interior” was an imagined collective of geographic spaces that included small coastal towns as well as rural areas located inland.

³¹³ Ricardo Goldenberg, “Educação Musical: a experiência do canto orfeônico no Brasil,” *Pro-posições* 6, no. 3[18] (1995): 105. See chapter 3 for an analysis of the relationships between the *Canto Orfeônico* program and the folkloric spectacles of the 1970s.

³¹⁴ Teachers of *Canto Orfeônico* were trained in music theory, music history and aesthetics as well as ethnography and folklore. See *ibid.*

³¹⁵ One of Villa Lobos’ most famous works, *Bachianas Brasileiras* constitutes a series of nine suites written between 1930 and 1945, precisely the Vargas years.

The “folk” material collected in the 1930s and 40s was “improved” through a European “erudite” music aesthetic and deployed to fashion national cohesion. Although Carneiro did not align himself with Vargas’ nationalism, his theories of cultural production were guided by notions of decline and loss—the flip side of the New State’s rhetoric of regeneration and progress. In *Negros Bantus*, Carneiro himself reproduced this narrative when he stated that,

[d]espite everything,—despite the Negro’s better adaptation to Brazil’s social milieu, despite the police reaction, despite the advanced process of decomposition and symbiosis of capoeira against other fighting styles—capoeira, especially capoeira de Angola, reveals an enormous vitality. Progress, however, sooner or later, will deliver the final blow [on capoeira]. And capoeira, along with other elements of black folk-lore, will recede to small coastal villages.³¹⁶

Despite its “enormous vitality,” capoeira, along with all of “black folklore” was doomed to recede to small coastal villages. The model of folklore as always already endangered was so powerful that Carneiro failed to consider the possibility that capoeira de Angola’s “enormous vitality” would, in fact, lead to its expansion rather than its decline. Consonant with his activist agenda, Carneiro saw it as his mission to protect and preserve the folklore of a community in which he was both personally and professionally invested.

Carneiro was an active member of the National Folklore Commission (*Comissão Nacional de Folclore*), a committee organized in 1947 by the Brazilian Institute of Education, Science and Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Relations to represent Brazil at the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). The goals of the Commission, according to its first director, Renato de Almeida, were to research and collect data,

³¹⁶ Carneiro, *Negros Bantus*: 159-60.

protect folklore from “regression,” and assure folklore’s continuity through its dissemination through national school curriculum.³¹⁷

The Commission’s mission of collection, preservation, and protection was still mired in the ideology of progress and decline. By 1950, however, Carneiro had begun questioning the notion of folklore as always already endangered. In his essay titled “Folklore’s Dynamics” (“Dinâmica do Folclore”), Carneiro begins with a quote by folklorist Richard Dorson that summarizes his revised approach: “The idea that folklore is dying out is itself a kind of folklore.”³¹⁸ Carneiro posited that folklore was not made up of static survivals from the past, but was rather a result of creative, dynamic processes that reflected not only the present, but also the future of the population. He rejected the idea that cultures were divided into “primitive,” “folk,” and “erudite” stages of evolution, and insisted that folklore should not be understood as produced only by the “folk,” but was a result of a dialectic process “where the whole society participates, either actively or passively.”³¹⁹

The idea that folklore was produced by everyone (rather than just “the folk”) questioned the very hierarchies upon which Brazilian folklore studies were based. Proposing folklore as dynamic and dialectic, Carneiro struggled with the issues of collection, protection and preservation. He nonetheless justified folklore studies’ mandate to collect, map, and record, arguing that records of “folk” traditions could be used for a possible reinstatement and reconstructions of lost folk traditions in the future. However, Carneiro cautioned that such

³¹⁷ Renato de Almeida quoted in Luís Rodolfo Vilhena, *Projeto e missão: o movimento folclórico brasileiro, 1947-1964* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas Editora : Ministério da Cultura, FUNARTE, 1997), 186.

³¹⁸ Edison Carneiro, *Dinâmica do Folclore* (Salvador: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1965), 3.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

collecting and archiving should be carried out without “denying or removing [folklore’s] spontaneity or its prospects of progress.”³²⁰

In 1958, the National Folklore Commission was transformed into a full-fledged government agency, the Campaign for the Defense of Brazilian Folklore (*Campanha de Defesa do Folclore Brasileiro*). Under Carneiro’s leadership, the mission of the Campaign was summarized as follows:

- (a) to promote the recording, research and assessment, training and specialization courses, exhibits, publications, and festivals;
- (b) to protect folkloric patrimony, the arts and popular celebrations;
- (c) to organize museums and libraries, film and audio archives and centers for documentation;
- (d) to maintain an exchange with similar organizations;
- (e) to disseminate Brazilian folklore.³²¹

A mission based on recording, assessing, exhibiting, and protecting, raises questions about folklore’s “spontaneity.” If change was inevitable and even welcomed, why was it so important to select, record, and build folklore archives? Most importantly, what was the Campaign for the *Defense of Brazilian Folklore* defending folklore against?

Carneiro answers this question in his essay “Protection and Restoration of Popular Festivities”³²²: a folklorist’s duty was to protect folk festivities in decline or in danger of disappearing. Although he considered loss as inevitable in the dynamics of folklore, Carneiro insisted on protection even while acknowledging the contradiction in this proposition. Although the act of protection constituted an “erudite intromission,” Carneiro, citing a UNESCO recommendation, clarifies that this intromission, if carried out with the utmost care and “extreme

³²⁰ ———, *Folgedos Tradicionais* (Salvador: Conquista, 1974), 195.

³²¹ Text from the back cover of the Campaign for the Defense of Brazilian Folklore’s journal. “Campanha de Defesa do Folclore Brasileiro,” *Revista Brasileira de Folclore* Maio-Agosto(1963).

³²² ———, *Dinâmica do Folclore*: 99-111.

discretion,” allowing the people “freedom—a lot of freedom,”³²³ was justified as an invaluable service to the Brazilian nation:

To protect means to intervene, and usually it would be paradoxical that intervention would be advised or carried out by folklorists, but, if we are able to act with “extreme discretion,” allowing the folkloric festivities “a lot of freedom,” the intervention—for the imminent national interest it will acquire, returning to the people, without violating its character, its customary moments of pleasure—can be forgiven. We would be providing Brazil a service that nobody else can provide.³²⁴

Carneiro indeed believed that the folklorists’ discrete intervention in defense of folk traditions was a matter of national interest, and thus justified, despite the paradox it presented. This essay was the basis for a list of recommendations made by the National Folklore Commission in 1957, a year before it was to become the Campaign for the Defense of Brazilian Folklore. Among these recommendations were the inclusion of folklore in school curricula, the organization of festivals and competitions with the intent of providing performance opportunities for folk ensembles, and the restoration of “lost” folk festivities in collaboration with former practitioners.³²⁵ Framed as part of Brazil’s vanishing Bantu heritage, capoeira de Angola fit into this paradigm of restoration. Furthermore, by valorizing a capoeira of Bantu origins—“poorer” and more easily hybridized than the Yoruba or “Sudanese” cultural material—Carneiro positions this Afro-diasporic heritage as national heritage, born out of a process of *mestiçagem* on Brazilian soil.

The Brazilian folkloric movement—focusing on advocacy and policy-making at the expense of critical reflection on the complexities and paradoxes of “defending” folklore—profoundly influenced the division of capoeira, fueling the “rescue” of capoeira de Angola and redefining capoeira as folklore in the 1950s. Brazilian folklore studies’ mission of defending,

³²³ Ibid., 99.

³²⁴ Ibid., 111.

³²⁵ Ibid., 112-13. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of how the mandate to provide performance opportunities for folk ensembles overlapped with the interests of Salvador’s tourism industry.

protecting, and restoring culture was based on the notion of folklore as always endangered, threatened by progress and modernity; even with the awareness that “the idea that folklore is dying out is itself a kind of folklore,” the mission of preservation endured.

Innovation that was perceived as individual creativity or deriving from foreign borrowing, e.g. Capoeira Regional, fell outside the definition of folklore as “anonymous” and “collectively accepted.” Although “artists” were allowed and even expected to innovate, “folklore bearers” (“*portadores de folclore*”) were not. Bearing folklore, “folklore bearers” were vessels of culture, carrying it in their bodies and transmitting it to folklorist who would protect this “patrimony” in their archives and museums. Through this model, individual acts of innovation and invention were occluded, and individuals from the “folk” were reduced to “bearers” of culture—a model that echoed, perhaps inadvertently, Adolph Hitler’s model of cultural production, bearing and destruction.³²⁶ Invention and artistry by “non-erudite” individuals was permitted as long as it remained anonymous and fell within “traditional” parameters; this authorless cultural product was valued as long as it could be recorded, protected, archived and coopted, quite literally, as patri-mony—property of the *patria* (nation).

However, as I have shown in Chapter 1, the development of capoeira is marked by innovators who have openly claimed credit for their contributions. Zuma invented new kicks and proposed new rules for capoeiragem; Bimba renamed the form itself as “Bahian Regional Fight” and claimed as his innovation moves from the past as well as borrowings from foreign

³²⁶ In an article printed in *A Tarde* on July 4th, 1940, titled “Hitler’s opinions on the races,” the journalist quotes extensively from *Mein Kampf*: “If we divide humanity in three categories—founders of culture, bearers of culture, destroyers of culture,—only the Aryan German race can be considered to represent the first.” It is possible that the author’s intention by quoting Hitler extensively in this article was to expose the dangers of his ideology. However, perhaps because of censorship, the author never states his position or his reason for quoting extensively from *Mein Kampf* in an apparently “neutral” way. Although Carneiro was decidedly against Vargas’ nationalist ideology and was, in fact, arrested by the Vargas regime for “being a communist,” Carneiro echoed some of this same nationalist ideology, which lingered even after the Vargas dictatorship came to an end in 1945.

martial arts; Pastinha, the guardian of “tradition,” took pride in his innovations in the process of institutionalization (which he called “organization”) of Capoeira Angola. A movement form based on improvisation—in-the-moment decision-making based on a malleable vocabulary of attacks and defenses—in fact demands constant innovation; however, this individual innovation—a core aspect of capoeira—came in direct conflict with folklore’s concept of anonymous cultural production. By framing innovations as “rescued traditions,” however, capoeira de Angola practitioners syncretically appropriated folklore studies’ mandate of restoration of dead or dying folk forms to legitimize innovation.

As I will discuss below, the recommendations to protect and restore made by Carneiro and his cohort indeed influenced the development of capoeira de Angola in the late 1930s and Capoeira Angola in the 1940s, a form perceived to be threatened by the modernity and the popularity of Capoeira Regional.

III. Dancing capoeira

*More than sixty years old. For sure. However, still, there is no better capoeira player [...] than Querido de Deus. Let Juvenal come, a twenty-year-old young man, let the most celebrated of all come, the most daring, the most agile, the most technically proficient, let anyone come, and Samuel, the Beloved of God [Querido de Deus] shows that he is still the king of capoeira in the Bay of All Saints.*³²⁷

--Jorge Amado (*Bahia de Todos os Santos*, first edition)

*Mestre Vicente Pastinha is older than seventy years old. He is a small mulatto, of astounding agility, of uncommon endurance. The adversaries follow one another, one young man, another and another young man, disciples or colleagues of Pastinha, and he defeats them all and never gets tired, never runs out of breath[.]*³²⁸

--Jorge Amado (*Bahia de Todos os Santos*, tenth edition)

³²⁷ Jorge Amado, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador* (São Paulo: Livraria Martins Editôra, 1945), 211.

³²⁸ ———, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador*: 209.

*Ten of the most respected capoeiristas told me, in an open and democratic debate we engaged in about mestre Bimba's new school, that the "regional" is not to be trusted and it's a disfigurement of the old capoeira "angola", the only true [capoeira].*³²⁹
--Jorge Amado (*Bahia de Todos os Santos*, first and tenth editions)

Bimba's innovations, by his own accounts drawn from several sources to modernize capoeira, fell outside the permitted limits of folklore's dynamics—despite the “spontaneity” and “prospects of progress” purportedly welcomed in Carneiro's model. Rather than “bearing” capoeira's tradition, Bimba caused great controversy by borrowing, innovating, and thus “disfiguring” capoeira.

Bahia's intellectual elite—folklorists, artists, and culture bureaucrats—openly and unambiguously disapproved of the modernity of Capoeira Regional. Writing in the late 1960s, Carneiro stressed that “the popular, folkloric capoeira, a legacy of Angola, has little [or] nothing to do with Bimba's school.”³³⁰ According to Carneiro, Bimba had distanced himself from his roots, from the “legacy of Angola.” Guilherme Simões, a columnist for the newspaper *A Tarde*, a folklore enthusiast and employee of Salvador's Tourism Department,³³¹ when asked about the great capoeiristas of the past, categorically stated: “I don't [even] consider Bimba, because he wasn't an *angoleiro*.”³³² One of Bimba's harshest critics was Bahian novelist Jorge Amado—the

³²⁹ ———, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade de Salvador* (São Paulo: Livraria Martins Editôra, 1945), 183.

³³⁰ I estimate that this text was written in the late 1960s, since it is absent from the collected essays published in 1965 in *Dinâmica do Folclore*. It was published posthumously in the early 1970s in two sources, with minor modifications. The phrase “legacy of Angola” is written “*de Angola*” (from Angola) in *Cadernos de Folclore* and “*do Angola*” (of the Angola type) in *Folgedos Tradicionais*. Edison Carneiro, *Capoeira*, *Cadernos de folclore* (Rio de Janeiro: Campanha de Defesa do Folclore Brasileiro, 1975), 14; ———, *Folgedos Tradicionais*: 140.

³³¹ Simões was an employee of the Superintendência de Turismo da Cidade de Salvador (City of Salvador Tourism Superintendence), SUTURSA, created in 1964. See chapter 3 for further discussion of the role of SUTURSA personnel on the development of capoeira.

³³² The term *angoleiro(a)* (literally the one who does or makes “Angola”) today to refers to practitioners of capoeira angola. The term was widely disseminated during the second renaissance of capoeira angola in the 1980s. Simões added that Bimba had indeed been an *angoleiro*, but too long ago, “when the dead

prolific modernist writer who “brought to life” Freyre’s romantic notions of a Bahia made harmonious and hospitable through mestiçagem.³³³ In *Bahia de Todos os Santos*, first published in 1945 and aptly subtitled *A guide to the streets and the mysteries of the city of Salvador* (one of his few works of non-fiction) Amado’s addresses the “problem” of Capoeira Regional:

A great debate takes place nowadays in the capoeira community in Bahia. It happens that mestre Bimba went to Rio de Janeiro to show the people in the Lapa [neighborhood] how capoeira is played. And there he learned moves from catch-as-catch-can, jiu-jitsu, and boxing. He mixed all this with capoeira Angola, the one born out of a black dance, and returned to his city speaking of a new capoeira, “capoeira regional”. Ten of the most respected capoeiristas told me, in an open and democratic debate we engaged in about mestre Bimba’s new school, that the “regional” is not to be trusted and it’s a disfigurement of the old capoeira “angola”, the only true [capoeira].³³⁴

This text exemplifies the alliances forged throughout the 1940s and 50s between Bahia’s “traditional” capoeira community—threatened by Bimba’s success—and an intellectual elite intent on Africanizing Bahia. Here, Amado distances Bimba’s innovations from Bahia, relocating them to Rio de Janeiro, where Bimba was allegedly introduced to foreign fighting techniques. The capital of Brazil at the time, Rio de Janeiro came to symbolize modernity while Bahia was refashioned as its counterpart: the cradle of Brazilian tradition. Folklorists, anthropologists, novelists, and visual artists interested in the “preservation” and “restoration” of Bahia’s African heritage collaborated with “traditional” capoeira practitioners to promote Capoeira de Angola, re-imagining it as one of the staples of Bahia’s cultural tourism experience. And, even though Bimba was certainly as much of a capoeira veteran as the capoeiristas

sea was still in the ICU.” Guilherme Simões, audio-recorded interview by author, Salvador, June 1st, 2011.

³³³ For an analysis of the connections between Amado and Freyre, see Patricia de Santana Pinho, *Gilberto Freyre e a Baianidade*, ed. Joshua Lund and Malcolm McNee, Série Críticas (Pittsburgh: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, 2006).

³³⁴ Amado, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade de Salvador*: 183.

interviewed by Amado, Bimba himself was excluded from the debate and his innovations dismissed as a “disfigurement.”³³⁵

In the first edition of *Bahia de Todos os Santos* (1945), Amado acknowledges, albeit reluctantly, both Bimba’s acclaimed skills as a capoeirista and the success of his Capoeira Regional. He does, however, assure the reader that Bimba’s skills could be matched or surpassed by those of Samuel Querido de Deus, the same player repeatedly praised by Carneiro in the late 1930s. Amado concludes his chapter on capoeira with the image of a capoeira contest between Bahia’s best capoeiristas:

You can see [capoeiristas] playing gracefully in popular festivals to entertain the people, showing their skills, singing their songs, the orchestra playing. It’s the world’s most beautiful fight[ing form] and you should consider yourself lucky if one day you’re able to see mestre Bimba and Samuel Querido de Deus in a capoeira contest.³³⁶

While in 1945 Bimba and Querido de Deus were featured in Amado’s text, in the eighth edition of *Bahia de Todos os Santos*, revised in 1960, this same passage is modified, and the names of Pastinha and Traíra (another Angola player) replace Bimba and Querido de Deus.

In the last section of this chapter, I trace Pastinha’s rise to the iconic status of sole “guardian” of Capoeira Angola, and the transformation of capoeira *de Angola*, an origin, into Capoeira Angola, a style able to compete with Capoeira Regional. As I have shown in chapter 1, Pastinha was the ideal candidate for the role of guardian of capoeira’s “tradition”: divorced from capoeira’s violent past through an alleged 29-year hiatus, Pastinha physically matched the “Angola type,” an agile mulatto unencumbered by black’s “brute strength.” With the support of Bahia’s intellectual and artistic elite, Pastinha achieved in ten years the same level of recognition and acclaim that took Bimba thirty years to attain. Pastinha found himself in the right place at

³³⁵ I am translating the word “deturpação” as “disfigurement.” In a more general sense, it can also mean purposeful misrepresentation.

³³⁶ Amado, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador*: 185-86.

the right time, and was chosen as Querido de Deus' successor after his death sometime in the late 1940s.³³⁷ Rather than a mere pawn of Bahia's "traditional" capoeira advocates, however, I analyze how Pastinha cleverly innovated within the "permitted" range of folklore's dynamics to create a "traditional" capoeira style that was nevertheless as modern as Bimba's. By framing his innovations *as* tradition, removing danger, and emphasizing ritual, Pastinha successfully transformed Capoeira Angola into the "true" capoeira.

Both Carneiro and Amado had been enamored by Querido de Deus. In *Bahia de Todos os Santos*, in a chapter titled "Characters" ("Personagens"), Amado profiled Querido de Deus, describing him as man in his sixties, with graying hair and brown, tanned skin of "indefinite" color who could, despite his age, beat any 20-year-old capoeirista. Even "the most famous, the most daring, the most agile, the most technical" capoeirista was no match for Querido de Deus.³³⁸ Not much is known about Querido de Deus other than the laudatory mentions and brief descriptions found in Amado and Carneiro.³³⁹ In one of her research trips to Brazil in the late 1930s, Columbia University anthropologist Ruth Landes (a student of Ruth Benedict and Franz Boas), whose local guide was Carneiro himself, wrote a detailed description of a capoeira game involving Querido de Deus—the only trace of the style that earned the approval of two of Bahia's most influential intellectuals. Landes described the game she attended, translating the names of the players as Beloved of God (Querido de Deus) and Black Leopard (Onça Preta):

³³⁷ In *O Jogo da Capoeira*, published in 1951, Carybé lists Querido de Deus as a capoeirista of the past, indicating he was no longer alive by then. Since Querido de Deus was alive in 1945, when *Bahia de Todos os Santos* was published, he must have died sometime between 1945 and 1950. Carybé, *O Jogo da Capoeira*, Coleção Recôncavo (Salvador: Tipografia Beneditina Ltda., 1951); Amado, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador*.

³³⁸ ———, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador*: 234-35.

³³⁹ According to Amado, Querido de Deus was a Bahian fisherman who was in mid his sixties in 1945 (which would place his birthdate around 1880). If he is indeed the same Samuel who wrote a letter to the newspaper *O Imparcial* during the 1936 pugilistic season challenging the media's labeling of Bimba as Bahia's capoeira champion, his family name would be de Souza. See Abreu, *Bimba é Bamba: a capoeira no ringue*: 65.

Watchers were crowded four deep around a wide circle [...]. Edison and the others helped me push front, and we were glad of the diversion. Two capoeiristas were squatting there facing the musicians. One was the champion Beloved of God, with the Christian name of Samuel. He was tall, black, middle-aged and muscular, a fisherman by trade. His challenger was The Black Leopard, a younger man, shorter and fatter. They were barefooted, wearing striped cotton jersey shirts, one with white trousers, the other with dark, one with a felt hat, the other with a cap which he later changed into a hard straw hat. [...] The orchestra opened the events by strumming an invocation, and this monotonous accompaniment too was essential to the occasion. It was a sort of whining nasal-toned framework within which the men executed acrobatic marvels, always to the correct beat, while the musicians chanted mocking verses [...]. Beloved of God swayed on his haunches while he faced his opponent with a grin and gauged his chances. The fight involved all parts of the body except the hands, a precaution demanded by the police to obviate harm. As the movements followed the musical accompaniment, they flowed into a slow-motion, dream-like sequence that was more a dancing than a wrestling. As the law stipulated that capoeirists must not hurt each other, blows become acrobatic stances whose balancing scored in the final check-up, and were named and classified.³⁴⁰

The game witnessed by Landes was marked by “acrobatic marvels,” and a slow-motion, dream-like quality she recognized as belonging to the category of dance. The “precaution demanded by police” forbidding the use of the hands, and the law that “stipulated that capoeirists must not hurt each other” mentioned here are not discussed anywhere else in the literature of the time.

Although this was likely not an official “law,” it may have been an informal agreement between local police and capoeira practitioners. During Landes’ visits in the late 1930s, capoeira was, in fact, still written into the criminal code, even though police persecution had been eased (in part as a result of Carneiro’s advocacy, who undoubtedly informed Landes of capoeira’s blurry legal status).³⁴¹ In *Negros Bantus*, Carneiro also mentions that “the hands never work in attacks,” but lists *balões* as one of the exceptions to this rule.³⁴² While using the hands for grabbing and

³⁴⁰ Landes, *The city of women*: 102-03.

³⁴¹ Landes and Carneiro were romantically involved, a fact that was later used to discredit Landes’ work and tarnish her reputation as a scholar. Romo, *Brazil's living museum: race, reform, and tradition in Bahia*: 119-29.

³⁴² Carneiro, *Negros Bantus*: 151.

throwing was acceptable, using the hands for striking or handling straight-razors or knives, a resource not uncommon in nineteenth-century capoeiragem, had been largely discarded.³⁴³

Landes was concerned by the “manner of the performance” she observed, which, she concluded, “robbed capoeira of its original sting.” Landes continued:

The police had removed the sting, and the blacks had converted the remains into a weird poignant dance. Did the songs carry meaning to the people now? Did they recall the struggles that inspired them, or did they merely dramatize black men, as *candomblé* dramatized black women?³⁴⁴

Here Landes expresses her concern that capoeira had lost its “sting”—its efficiency as a form of combat—due to police interference and legal prohibitions. Landes’ conclusion that what “remained” of capoeira had been converted into a “weird poignant dance” echoes Herskovits’ model of survivals. However, it simultaneously acknowledges dynamism and a creative ability to adapt—a model “ahead of her time,” for which she was openly and viciously criticized.³⁴⁵

Carneiro shared Landes’ assessment of capoeira as a combat tradition that shed its violence to be transformed into a dance:

The name capoeira is given to a game of dexterity that has its remote origins in Angola. It was a fighting tradition before, very precious in the defense of freedom or the rights of freed blacks, but both police repression and new social conditions, about fifty years ago, transformed it finally into a game, a kind of lazing around among friends. With this innocent character capoeira remains in Bahia[.]³⁴⁶

Writing in the late 1960s, Carneiro dates the transformation of capoeira into an “innocent” game to the 1910s and 1920s, during the height of police persecution of capoeira in Bahia. The

³⁴³ Mestre Waldemar da Paixão reported being specifically asked by police (probably sometime in the 1940s) not to teach his students to use “knife, machete, straight-razor and sword.” Quoted in Magalhães Filho, “Jogo de Discursos: a disputa por hegemonia na tradição da capoeira angola bahiana.”

³⁴⁴ Landes, *The city of women*: 106.

³⁴⁵ For a discussion of the vicious and often personal attacks on scholars who, in the 1940s, dared to propose that Bahia was not an unaltered product of the past, but instead a site of dynamic change, see Romo, *Brazil's living museum: race, reform, and tradition in Bahia*: chapter 4.

³⁴⁶ This text was written sometime in the late 1960s and published posthumously in both Carneiro, *Folguedos Tradicionais*: 141; ———, *Capoeira*: 3.

narrative of a fighting tradition that fulfilled its destiny and *finally* “evolved” into an “innocent” game was based on an idea of progress achieved through conformity and loss. The attribution of innocence to capoeira and comparisons to dance feminized capoeira, further distancing it from the violence ascribed to male bodies, particularly black male bodies. Not surprisingly, given his advocacy to end police persecution of both candomblé and capoeira gatherings, Carneiro expressed no desire in protecting or restoring the use of weapons or the violence of capoeira.

Reimagining capoeira de Angola as an innocent, dance-like game that had shed its violence was instrumental in dissociating capoeira from violence and criminal activity. Performances by gray-haired “old” men like Querido de Deus and Pastinha further tamed this former combat form into a harmless passtime. Pastinha was 52 years old when he returned to capoeira—hardly a young man. In the same way that Amado highlighted Querido de Deus’ physical vigor in spite of his age in the first edition of *Bahia de Todos os Santos* (1945), in the revised tenth edition (1964), Amado extends the same praise to Pastinha:

Mestre Vicente Pastinha is over seventy years old. He is a small mulatto, of astounding agility, of uncommon endurance. When he starts to “play,” the impression in the audience is that this poor old man, with gray hair, will fall in two minutes, taken down by the young adversary or even for being out of breath. But, oh! Big mistake!, none of this happens. The adversaries follow one another, a young one, another, and another young disciple or colleague of Pastinha, and he defeats them all and never gets tired, never runs out of breath[.]³⁴⁷

Not only did Pastinha’s skin color match Querido de Deus’ brown, *mestiço* skin, Pastinha was similarly an “old man” whose vigor was atypical for his age. Pastinha’s image as an old man—quite literally embodying the past—was instrumental in establishing Capoeira Angola as the “traditional” capoeira. Pastinha’s age lent Capoeira Angola legitimacy through a connection with the past, a connection seen as lacking in Bimba’s capoeira style. Through his “old” Afro-

³⁴⁷ Amado, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador*: 209.

diasporic body, Pastinha further conflated Africa with the past.³⁴⁸ Through his tireless and youthful performance, Pastinha restored vigor to a “dying” tradition.

After teaching at various temporary locations for the previous decade, with the support of Bahia’s artistic and intellectual elite, Pastinha relocated his school to the historic center of Salvador in 1955. This permanent site for Pastinha’s Capoeira Angola Sports Center not only assured a steady flow of students, it also provided a strategically located stage for ongoing capoeira demonstrations, attended by tourists and scholars who followed Amado’s advice: “Those who go to Bahia should not miss the extraordinary spectacle of mestre Pastinha playing capoeira in the middle of the room, to the sound of the berimbau.”³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ In his manuscripts Pastinha often refers to himself “the old man” (*o velho*). In this passage, using the third person, he speaks of the success of his performances: “people see him and applaud. [...] [H]is behavior adds respect to his age[;] see it to believe it.” Pastinha, “Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserêr.”

³⁴⁹ Amado, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador*: 209.



Figure 2.1 Prior to establishing his school at the historic Pelourinho Square, Pastinha's *Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola* (CECA) operated in open-air, temporary locations such as the one captured by Verger in the late 1940s, a lot behind a soap factory in the area then known as Bigode in the Brotas neighborhood of Salvador, where Pastinha worked as a security guard. Note the flag bearing the school's logo in the upper right corner of the photograph. Photo by Pierre Verger, c. 1947. Courtesy of the Fundação Pierre Verger.



Figure 2.2 The school at Pelourinho 19 provided Pastinha with a “proper place” for instruction and demonstrations. By the mid 1960s, Pastinha’s school was renamed *Academia de Capoeira Angola*. Note the academia’s initials, ACA, at the top of the backdrop, as well as its motto, *Academia de Capoeira, só Angola!*, which can be loosely translated as “For your capoeira academy, choose only Angola!” Photo by Helinä Rautavaara, c.1964. Courtesy of the Helinä Rautavaara Museum photographic collection.

Amado's endorsement was crucial to Pastinha's success, in the same way that Carneiro's and Amado's endorsement had been for Querido de Deus.³⁵⁰ Carneiro invited Querido de Deus rather than Bimba to demonstrate capoeira de Angola at the Second Afro-Brazilian Congress in 1937. When Ruth Landes asked Carneiro to see a capoeira demonstration, took her to watch Querido de Deus.³⁵¹ When a film crew interested in filming a capoeira game came to Amado for a recommendation, he led them to Querido de Deus.³⁵² Now these same recommendations were directed to an address that quickly became synonymous with capoeira's tradition: Pelourinho Square, n. 19, the home of Pastinha's *Capoeira Angola Sports Center*, renamed *Academia de Capoeira Angola* in the 1960s.

Writing in the late 1960s, Carneiro uses the new term "academia" to refer to Pastinha's new school, a "proper place" for capoeira practice.³⁵³ Having a "proper," fixed place for instruction and demonstrations was crucial if Capoeira Angola was to compete with Capoeira Regional, taught in not one, but two "proper places" since the mid 1950s (Bimba's "academias" are discussed in Chapter 3). The difference between Pastinha and Querido de Deus was precisely the fact that Pastinha, following in Bimba's footsteps, "academicized" and formalized his capoeira instruction. Like Bimba, Pastinha held formal graduation ceremonies and awarded diplomas to his students. His school was so successful that Pastinha hired other accomplished capoeiristas at the time to teach at his school under the title of *contra-mestres*.³⁵⁴ Like Bimba,

³⁵⁰ Curiously, Carneiro does not mention Pastinha at all in his 1950 description and analysis of capoeira in *Dinâmica do Folclore*. He does mention Samuel Querido de Deus, Maré, Aberrê, Juvenal, Polu, and Onça Preta. For Carneiro, Querido de Deus was not as easily replaced as he was for Amado. Carneiro, *Dinâmica do Folclore*: 53.

³⁵¹ Landes, *The city of women*: 102.

³⁵² Amado, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador*: 235.

³⁵³ Carneiro, *Folgedos Tradicionais*: 140.

³⁵⁴ By several accounts, Pastinha "outsourced" much of the teaching in his academy. Cobrinha Verde (Rafael Alves França), who is already mentioned by Amado in the first edition of *Bahia de Todos os*

Pastinha was referred to as a “mestre” (teacher), while Querido de Deus is always mentioned without this title, even by his ardent admirers.³⁵⁵ Through teaching, Pastinha formalized and disseminated the same non-violent, dance-like capoeira style practiced by his predecessor Querido de Deus, transforming the informal practice of capoeira de Angola into the “traditional” style known as Capoeira Angola.

Pastinha was the ideal candidate for succeeding Querido de Deus not only because of his age and skin color, but because of his ability to give continuity to Querido de Deus’ non-violent style of capoeira, conforming to the new classification of capoeira as folk tradition. Pastinha, however, struggled with the losses that might ensue from this re-framing of capoeira as a “weird poignant dance.” Its “sting” gone, would the new capoeira would “merely dramatize black men,” as Landes had wondered? In his manuscripts, Pastinha theorized a capoeira that could simultaneously retain its efficiency as self-defense and serve as entertainment:

capoeira is divided into three parts, the first is the common, the one that we see, for the public, the second and third part, it is reserved in the I of those who learned and is reserved in secret, and it takes time to learn.³⁵⁶

For Pastinha, the “common” capoeira, the one for the public, was distinct from the other two layers of the practice, kept in the “I” or the “self” of the practitioners. The second and third layers were reached only through an embodied understanding of capoeira, the result of long-term

Santos, is known to have taught at Pastinha’s school. See Marcelino dos Santos, *Capoeira e Mandingas: Cobrinha Verde* (Salvador: Gráfica Santa Bárbara, 1990).

³⁵⁵ Visual artist Carybé does list Querido de Deus among Bahia’s *mestres* of the past, not in reference to them as teachers but as a way of showing his respect. Carybé, *O Jogo da Capoeira*.

³⁵⁶ “A capoeira está dividida em trez partes, a primeira é a comum, é esta que vê, ao o publico, a segunda e a terceira parte, é rezervada no eu de quem aprendeu e é reservada com segredo, e depende de tempo para aprender.” It is interesting that Pastinha does not divide capoeira evenly in two parts but rather in three parts: one third of this division is available for the outside “eye,” for demonstrations, and the other two thirds are only accessible through the practitioners’ “I,” through embodied practice. This three-part division, perhaps influenced by Comte’s three-part models (his three “states”—theological, metaphysical and positive—and the three principles of his religion of humanity—love, order and progress) is also expressed by Pastinha in his division of capoeira into “past, present and future.” Pastinha, “Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserêr,” 26.

commitment and apprenticeship. This uneven doubling of capoeira—one third available to the outside gaze and the other two thirds available only through practice (hidden in the “self”)—allowed for a capoeira capable of pleasing audiences as a non-violent, feminized, dance-like acrobatic spectacle while simultaneously rehearsing its efficiency as a combat form.³⁵⁷

Having set up this simultaneity between capoeira for the “self” and capoeira as spectacle, Pastinha successfully embraced the practice of staging capoeira for tourists, filmmakers and anthropologists, and cleverly reimagined capoeira for the stage. Rather than performing for spare change, as had done his predecessor Querido de Deus, however, Pastinha professionalized capoeira demonstrations, and, like Bimba, began performing by invitation at clubs, hotels, and for the cameras of paying filmmakers.

The 1950s marked a time of rapid expansion for the tourism industry in Salvador (see Chapter 3 for an analysis of the emergence of the tourism industry in Bahia). Pastinha seized this opportunity for visibility and financial gain and, with a select group of students, began exhibiting his Capoeira Angola in both formal and informal settings, both public and private functions. Sometime in the mid 1950s, Pastinha composed the following press release:

The Capoeira Angola Sports Center has the pleasure of inviting the Bahian society, the authorities, the press and the general public to watch the first Official Public Demonstration of Genuine Capoeira Angola, to take place on the 24 of this month, at 8:30 pm at the Brazilian Sport Club at the Oceania-Barra building. Tickets Cr\$ 20,00.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁷ Thomas DeFrantz, extending the notion of double consciousness, and drawing from Roger Abrahams and Robert Hinton’s ideas of black performance as capable of addressing insiders (dances of celebration) and outsiders (dances of performance) simultaneously, has proposed that black social dance is resistive to interpretation from an exterior perspective, from which one is able to “access only a portion of its communicative ability: its visual effects.” In Pastinha’s “common” capoeira, what DeFrantz calls actionable assertions—movement as performative utterance—of cooperation, cunning, embodied intelligence—would be lost to non-expert audiences, who would only be able to see the aesthetically pleasing acrobatics and thrilling near-misses. Thomas DeFrantz, “The Black beat made visible: hip hop dance and body power,” in *Of the presence of the body: essays on dance and performance theory*, ed. André Lepecki (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 64-65.

³⁵⁸ Pastinha, “Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserêr,” 54.

Pastinha new full well the importance of reaching out to the press, the authorities, and to “society” in order to choreograph a new image for capoeira angola. By announcing the “first” official public demonstration of “genuine” Capoeira Angola, Pastinha implicitly dismisses previous demonstrations of capoeira de Angola as unofficial and inauthentic. Pastinha re-invents Capoeira Angola as his own, devaluing prior informal capoeira demonstrations in public spaces, such as the famous games documented by photographer Pierre Verger at the unloading dock of the old public market in Salvador, *Mercado Modelo* (Model Market), and also erasing previous formal demonstrations, such as the one by Querido de Deus and his group at the Second Afro-Brazilian Congress organized by Carneiro in 1937.

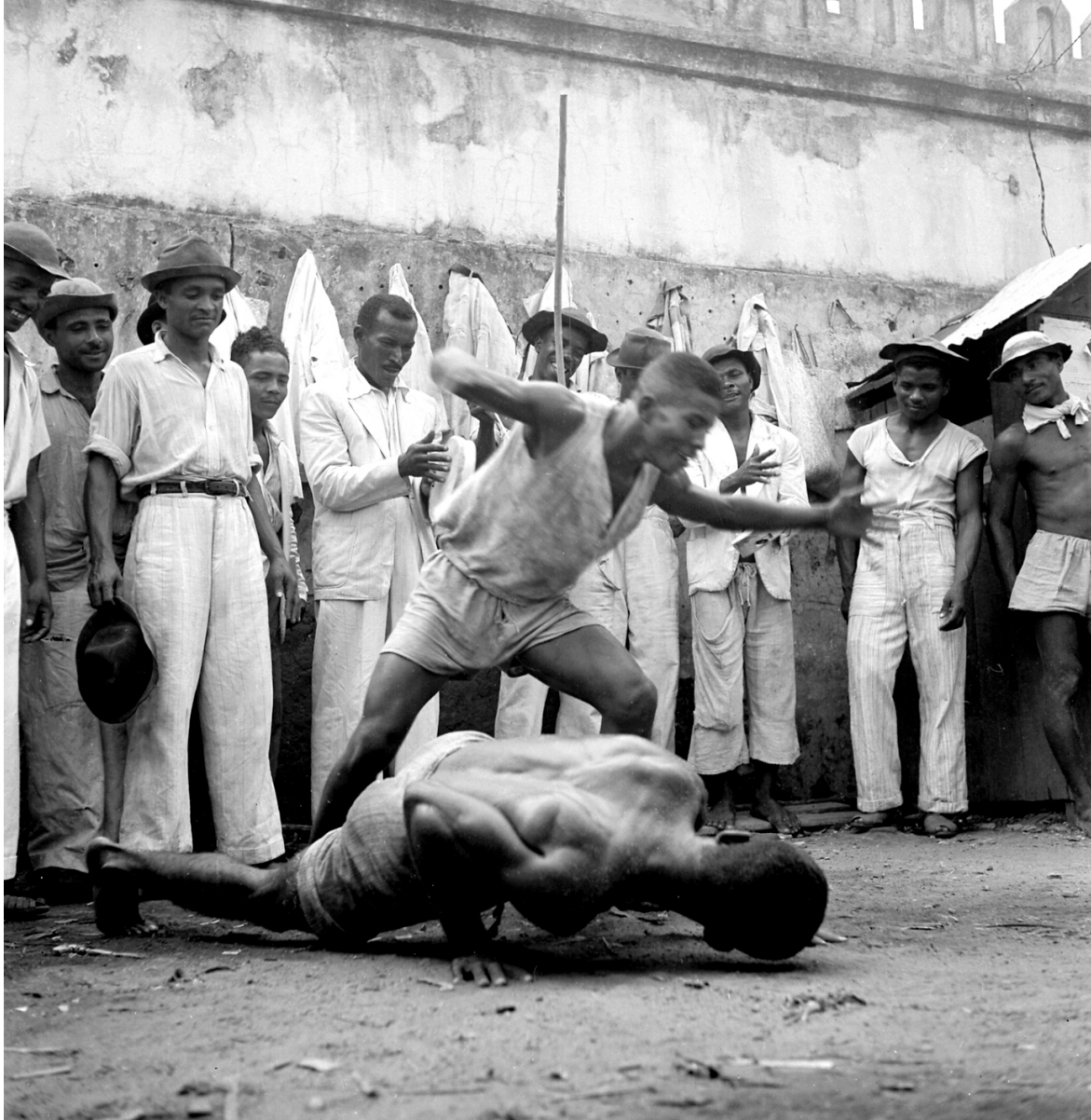


Figure 2.3 French photographer Pierre Verger documented informal capoeira matches at the unloading dock of Salvador's municipal *Mercado Modelo* (where produce, meat, fish and other products were unloaded to be sold at the market, and where several capoeiristas worked as stevedores or shoe shiners). In these matches, often points were tallied and the winner would take home the money collected from the crowd. This was not, however, the players' main source of income, although the extra money was undoubtedly a welcome addition to the small sums earned as day laborers.³⁵⁹ Photo by Pierre Verger, c. 1947. Courtesy of the Fundação Pierre Verger.

³⁵⁹ Many capoeiristas worked as stevedores and dockworkers, and also with shoe-shining and repair (*engraxates* and *sapateiros*). In his manuscripts, Noronha lists 44 important capoeiristas, who were already deceased at the time of Noronha's writing in the mid 1970s, accompanied by their profession and often their place of employment. Coutinho, *O ABC da Capoeira de Angola: os manuscritos do Mestre Noronha*: 65.



Figure 2.4 Two capoeiristas play for Verger's camera at the unloading dock of the *Mercado Modelo*. Photo by Pierre Verger, c. 1947. Courtesy of the Fundação Pierre Verger.

Between 1955 and 1956, Pastinha and his students engaged in at least eight formal demonstrations, listed as follows in his manuscripts:

The first was for the Bishop of France, at the Belvedere, the second was for some tourists at the Sé square on a stage, the third for a Medical conference from São Paulo at [blank space] in Salvador [...], the fourth [for] the Bahian Company of Navigation and Tourism [...] the fifth at the Naval Base in Salvador, the sixth at the Abaeté Lagoon³⁶⁰ [...] the seventh on the grounds of the Vitória [club], the eighth at the ramp of the Model Market for a film recording, and more exhibitions on tour.”³⁶¹

The last performance on this list, “at the ramp of the Model Market for a film recording,” was, ironically, a re-enactment for the camera of the kind of capoeira from which both Bimba and Pastinha tried to dissociate themselves: the informal performances for tourists at the unloading ramp of the public market. One year before this demonstration, both Bimba and Pastinha’s students were hired to participate in Alexandre Robato’s 1954 film *Vadiação*, a film shot on a set (at the Cine Guarany) that attempted to reproduce a dock ambiance such as the one at the unloading ramp of the Model Market. Both *Vadiação* and the film recording mentioned by Pastinha suggest a nostalgic valorization of the informal capoeira performances such as the ones at the ramp of the market, perhaps by then a thing of the past.

Performing Afro-Brazilian “tradition” to foreign dignitaries (the bishop of France), navy officers, doctors from São Paulo (in Bahia for a medical conference) and common tourists alike, required Pastinha and his students to be on their “best behavior,” showing control and composure. Pastinha’s “shown,” held back kicks, which barely grazed the opponent or stopped “just before the chosen target,” reassured the public that capoeira had been redeemed of its

³⁶⁰ The performance at the Abaeté Lagoon may have been a joint invitation of Bimba and Pastinha. In his manuscripts, Pastinha cites a 1957 performance at the “Bahiete,” which according to Angelo Decânio, is Pastinha’s spelling of Abaeté. Angelo Decânio, *A Herança de Pastinha*, Coleção São Salomão (Salvador: Self-published, 1997), 52.

³⁶¹ I was unable to ascertain the director or filmmaker responsible for this film recording. Pastinha, “Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserêr,” 54.

violent past of straight razors and tough guys, having been transformed into a dance-like performance.

One of the key elements that rendered capoeira dance-like was music. Although music seems to have accompanied capoeira prior to tourist demonstrations, it is likely that the musical ensemble as we know it today—a set grouping of percussion instruments (*bateria*), mandatory in any capoeira *roda*—only became an intrinsic part of capoeira practice through its staging as a folklore. In 1964, Pastinha explained that

the musical or rhythmic ensemble is not indispensable for the practice of Capoeira, but, it is evident that the ‘game of Capoeira Angola’ to the rhythm of the typical ensemble that accompanies the melodies and improvisations of the singers acquires grace, tenderness, charm and a mysticism that stirs the souls of the capoeira players.³⁶²

“Danced” to music, capoeira acquired “grace, tenderness, charm, and mysticism.”³⁶³ These dance-like qualities reinforced by the musical ensemble, although *not indispensable*, stirred not only the practitioners’ souls, but undoubtedly the souls of audience members as well. In addition, grace, tenderness, and charm feminized Capoeira Angola, distancing it even further from the masculine violence with which it had been associated.

In the 1940s, before Pastinha codified the musical ensemble, informal capoeira gatherings often include a few musicians playing one or two *berimbaus* (the musical bow iconic of capoeira), one or two *pandeiros* (tambourines), and not infrequently a guitar. Pastinha’s ensemble consisted of a larger group of six or seven men, impeccably clad in the school’s uniform,³⁶⁴ playing up to four *berimbaus*, two or three *pandeiros*, a *reco-reco* (bamboo or gourd

³⁶² It is significant that Pastinha states that the music is important not for rendering capoeira more appealing to outside audiences, but for “stirring the souls” of the players themselves. ———, *Capoeira Angola*: 27-28.

³⁶³ These feminizing qualities were criticized by Canjiquinha, who stated to a reporter: “My God, they want to make a man’s fight [technique] effeminate.” *Ibid.*, 35. Abreu and Castro, *Capoeira*: 40.

³⁶⁴ Formal exhibitions required uniforms that established group affiliation, displaying the discipline and cohesion of its members. In the 1940s, capoeira groups that engaged in public demonstrations wore

scraper), and an *agogô* (double bell).³⁶⁵ Pastinha in fact turns an informal and optional approach to musical accompaniment into a mandatory, “typical” musical ensemble that has become equated with capoeira’s ritual and tradition.

soccer jerseys with broad vertical stripes: Pastinha’s colors were yellow and black and Bimba’s were blue and white. The modernity of these uniforms, however, was deemed excessive and in “poor taste” by traditionalists such as Waldeloir Rego, who criticized the new trend of wearing bright-colored, matching capoeira uniforms. Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 45. By the 1950s, both Bimba and Pastinha had their own emblems embroidered on their students’ uniforms, marking their respective affiliations, while the striped jersey became reserved for the mestres, distinguishing them from the rest of the group. By the early 1960s, Pastinha’s ensemble can be seen wearing smoking jackets.

³⁶⁵ The *agogô* seems to have been added to the ensemble only in the 1960s. A gourd shaker (*ganzá*), and a small drum can be seen in earlier versions of the ensemble, e.g. Alceu Maynard’s early 1950s recording. Pastinha is also known for having experimented with other musical instruments, such as the guitar, castanets, and wood blocks. Clapping, today a grave faux pas in any capoeira angola roda, was part of the percussion accompaniment in Pastinha’s group at least through the 1960s.



Figure 2.5 Photographer Voltaire Fraga captures an informal street roda accompanied by a guitar and two berimbaus, sometime in the early 1940s. Courtesy of the Fundação Gregório de Mattos and the Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Salvador.



Figure 2.6 Pastinha (facing the camera) plays with a student in the foreground, accompanied by the three-berimbau musical ensemble, today the standard in capoeira angola. The musical ensemble, only partially depicted in this photograph, is seen here wearing the academia's polo shirts and smoking jackets. Photo by Helinä Rautavaara, c. 1964. Courtesy of the Helinä Rautavaara Museum photographic collection.

Aside from displaying of capoeira's grace and charm, these demonstrations also included a didactic element. Pastinha created set patterns for demonstrations, which often included isolated kicks and short movement sequences performed by "the old man" himself, displaying his atypical endurance and virtuosity while simultaneously introducing the "lay" public to Capoeira Angola. Mestre João Grande, who began studying with Pastinha in 1950 and participated in many demonstrations, remembers that Pastinha would show a movement and state its name, introducing audiences to the movement lexicon and techniques of Capoeira Angola.³⁶⁶ Displaying the strength, endurance, and agility of a much younger man, Pastinha would perform thirty to forty repetitions of the same movement, followed by a demonstration of attacks and defenses paired with his students.³⁶⁷ Gildo Alfinete, a disciple throughout the 1950s and 60s, remembers: "once I counted: he did 25 consecutive *rabos de arraia*."³⁶⁸

A recording made by folklorists Alceu Maynard Araújo³⁶⁹ circa 1950, as part of a collection of scenes of Brazilian folklore entitled *See Brazil (Veja o Brasil)*,³⁷⁰ gives us a glimpse into Pastinha's demonstrations. Maynard set up each shot and later edited the footage, thus creating a narrative and framing the recording according to his own research interests. Although

³⁶⁶ Mestre João Grande (João Oliveira dos Santos), audio-recorded interview by author, November 14th, 2011.

³⁶⁷ Interview with Mestre João Grande, quoted in Assunção, *Capoeira: a history of an Afro-Brazilian martial art*: 166.

³⁶⁸ Interview with Gildo Alfinete (Gildo Lemos Couto), quoted in José de Jesus Barreto and Otto Freitas, *Pastinha: o grande mestre da capoeira angola*, Coleção Gente da Bahia (Salvador: Assembléia Legislativa do Estado da Bahia, 2009), 141.

³⁶⁹ Maynard was a member of the National Folklore Commission. Maynard was a capoeira enthusiast and had been a student of a capoeira player from Rio de Janeiro called Menê who, during the Republican persecution of the late 1890s, had been "deported" to Maynard's hometown of Botucatu, São Paulo, at the end of the rail line known as Sorocabana. Alceu Maynard Araújo, *Folclore nacional*, 3 vols., Serie Cultura e ciência (São Paulo: Edições Melhoramentos, 1964), 314.

³⁷⁰ It is unclear if or how this film was originally exhibited or broadcast. The footage, initially found by capoeira researcher Pedro Abib, surfaced around 2009 on the video-sharing site Youtube.

Maynard may have requested specific spatial arrangements or movement sequences, it is likely that this film is representative of Pastinha's demonstrations in the early 1950s.³⁷¹

Maynard's camera begins by zooming in on the emblem of the *Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola* (CECA), clearly identifying the capoeira group in the film. Edited footage of each percussion instrument in action catalogs these artifacts up close, even though the available recording technology does not capture their sound. This segmented, close-up gaze also introduces the movement footage: a pair of legs, wearing black dress pants and leather shoes, steps from side to side in a bouncy step-hop pattern—the *ginga*. A wider shot reveals these legs as Pastinha's, wearing the group's uniform. Shedding its removed collector's stance, now the camera assumes the point of view of Pastinha's contender: after repeating the *ginga* a few times, Pastinha "attacks" the camera with a circular front kick (*meia lua de frente*), repeating this pattern with a head butt (*cabeçada*), a straight front kick (*chapa de frente*), and a straight back kick (*chapa de costas*).

In the next scene, Maynard captures a wider view, perhaps from a second story window or a ladder. The editing alternates between two games (one between Pastinha and a student, and another between two students) from two points of view. In both games, the players exchange slow, controlled circular kicks that purposefully miss or barely graze the opponent, in a dance-like performance not unlike the one observed by Landes in the late 1930s. Two players are

³⁷¹ The sounds of this demonstration were not captured along with the images. There are two versions of this film circulating among capoeira enthusiasts and researchers: one without sound, and another with narration (probably by Maynard himself) recorded over a highly orchestrated version of Ary Barroso's *Na Baixa do Sapateiro*, also known as *Bahia*—a song whose lyrics express a longing for a Bahia that "will not leave my thoughts." A mistake made by the narrator attests to Bimba's fame at the time, despite Pastinha's rising popularity. As the camera zooms in on Pastinha's face, the narrator identifies him: "Mestre Bimba, who today has a famous school in Salvador, Bahia, transformed the old capoeira into the Bahian regional fight [technique]" 0:49. He later confirms his mistake, stating that Mestre Bimba was "the sexagenarian who performed in this capoeira exhibition." Alceu Maynard Araújo, "Veja o Brasil," (Brazil: <http://www.rodamagazine.com/Capoeira/News/Mestre-Pastinha-Playing-Capoeira-in-1950-Now-With-Sound-.html>, c.1950), 2:45.

shown briefly engaging in a *chamada*, or call.³⁷² The *chamada* today is considered to be capoeira angola's most significant "ritual" aspect.³⁷³ In a movement pattern that has been compared to ballroom dance, the player's hands meet in a momentary truce, followed by a few measured steps back and forth before resuming the game.³⁷⁴ Fluidly shifting their weight from feet to hands, the players suggest rather than deliver strikes. These kicks and headbutts, now performed with grace and safety to musical accompaniment, displace capoeira's violence to the past while simultaneously rehearsing this same violence.

In two moments that have stirred much controversy since this film has been posted on the video-sharing site Youtube, Pastinha and his students perform partnered throws (*balões*) for the camera. Turning his back on his student, Pastinha squats, grabs him by the arms and flips him, safely, over his own body. In the next game, one of Pastinha's disciples, João Pequeno, steps back from the other player and raises his hands in preparation for a handstand. His contender meets João Pequeno in mid handstand, grabs him by the waist and, momentarily anchoring his weight on his shoulder, flips him into the air.³⁷⁵ The recent re-discovery and dissemination of this film destabilized the assumption, held at least since the early 1960s, that *balões* were Bimba's innovation: "connected moves from the waist deriving from foreign fighting techniques,

³⁷² This may or may not be the same movement referred to as *passo a dois* (two-person step) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: "Passo a dois is a quick foot shuffle that precedes the head butt and the leg sweep." Mello Moraes Filho, *Festas e tradições populares do Brasil*: 448.

³⁷³ Writing in 2005, Greg Downey states: "One of the most dramatic, 'traditional' sequences in the *roda* is the *chamada* or 'call,' a formalized challenge enacted through gesture." Downey, *Learning capoeira: lessons in cunning from an Afro-Brazilian art*: 105.

³⁷⁴ "When spectators ask about the *chamada*, veteran players sometimes offer historical explanations of its origin. One instructor, for instance, suggested that it was a parody of European ballroom dancing. He explained that slaveholders sometimes danced with enslaved women, but also beat them. [...] Players who cannot offer any historical explanation, however implausible, for the *chamada*—probably the majority—still assert that it is 'traditional.'" *ibid.*, 107.

³⁷⁵ Emília Biancardi has suggested that Maynard may have specifically requested a performance of *balões*. She reports never having seen Pastinha teaching or performing such throws at his school during her visits in the 1960s. (See Chapter 3 for more information on Biancardi). Emília Biancardi, personal communication, 2011.

something not seen in traditional games, where capoeira players don't grab [each other] and they barely touch."³⁷⁶

As I have shown in Chapter 1, balões were likely an intrinsic part of capoeira(gem) since the late nineteenth century, as described by Mello Morais. Writing in the late 1930s, Carneiro also mentions balões as part of the movement vocabulary of capoeira de Angola,³⁷⁷ and Maynard's film confirms the presence of balões in Pastinha's capoeira in the late 1940s and early 1950s. However, by the time Bimba published his multi-media booklet/LP *Capoeira Regional Course* in the early 1960s, balões were no longer considered part of capoeira's "tradition."

³⁷⁶ Maria Isabel, "Folclore: o dengo do povo está perdendo a pureza original," *Diário de Notícias* Aug. 23, 1976. Waldeloir Rêgo also affirms that "connected moves" (*golpes ligados*) were inexistent in Capoeira Angola. Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 269.

³⁷⁷ "The hands almost never work in attacks, except in the several throws [balões], where the hands support the body of the adversary so as to throw him, over [one's] head, backwards." Carneiro, *Negros Bantus*: 150.



Figure 2.7 Two players prepare for a balão during a street roda. Photo by Voltaire Fraga, c.1940. Courtesy of the Fundação Gregório de Mattos and the Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Salvador.

While Bimba claimed and reimagined partnered throws as his own innovation—one that allegedly increased capoeira’s efficiency as self-defense—Pastinha discarded balões for being too dangerous. Mestre João Grande, who began his apprenticeship in 1950, remembers that Pastinha removed several strikes he considered dangerous, such as *dedo nos olhos* (poking the eyes), *cotovelada* (elbow strike) as well as several balões.³⁷⁸ In his manuscripts, written throughout the 1950s, Pastinha lists several movements that should be avoided in demonstrations, and balões were among them; however, a few balões are still present in the manuscripts’ illustrations. In the process of shedding (or concealing) capoeira’s violence, Pastinha omitted balões and foregrounded the chamada, which has since become the “trademark” of capoeira angola.

As shown in Maynard’s film, the chamada is the moment in the game where the player’s hands meet in a momentary truce. One player challenges or “calls” the other by breaking the flow of the game, standing and either raising one arm or extending both arms up or out to the sides. The other player answers this call by placing his palms against the caller’s palms or by placing his head on the caller’s belly, indicating a headbutt. Connected, the players take a few steps back and forth until the player who initiated the call indicates an attack, prompting the responding player to resume the game. While partnered throws require contact, grabbing, and weight-bearing, chamadas *suggest* contact much in the same way that kicks are suggested in Pastinha’s capoeira, coming close but “barely grazing” their target.

While Maynard’s film included both chamadas and balões, a film shot thirteen years later featuring Pastinha’s group includes two chamadas, but this time balões are absent altogether.

³⁷⁸ Mestre João Grande (João Oliveira dos Santos), audio-recorded interview by author, November 14th, 2011.

Simply titled *La Capoeira*, this film by Bernard Taquet and Serge Ehrler,³⁷⁹ sponsored by the airline Panair, places capoeira as the centerpiece of a traveller's experience in Bahia. Like *See Brazil*, *La Capoeira* is a moving postcard of Brazil, and more specifically, an invitation to visit Bahia. Using the ocean as a backdrop, the camera focuses on Pastinha's group playing a game on a beach. Like Maynard, Taquet and Ehrler zoom in on each musical instrument before showing the entire ensemble. Unlike *See Brazil*, however, this film does not include the didactic portion of the presentation where Pastinha shows each movement in isolation. Rather than overtly collecting and preserving, this short documentary assumes a voyeuristic gaze, creating the illusion of inconspicuously witnessing an unstaged, unmediated capoeira game on a deserted beach. The footage, edited from several camera angles and probably several takes, gives the viewer the impression of watching a game in its entirety. In only three minutes of edited footage, we see two chamadas: in one instance, one player opens his arms and invites the other to gesture a headbutt against his belly; in the next chamada, one player raises his right arm, palm facing out, inviting the other to meet him in a mirrored gesture. This film indicates that, by the early 1960s, Pastinha had renounced balões in favor of the subtle contact of the chamadas.

Today, chamadas are considered to be a marker of tradition, believed to have been lost in capoeira regional.³⁸⁰ While Bimba likely discarded chamadas in his process of imagining a modern, efficient capoeira, Pastinha discarded balões in his efforts to present Capoeira Angola as a non-violent, ritualized, dance-like "folk" tradition. Although Pastinha presented himself as the guardian of "tradition," it is clear that he selected movement material, innovated and "improved"

³⁷⁹ Broadcast as part of the French television series *Les coulisses de l'exploit* (Behind the scenes of exploits) on May 15th, 1963. Produced by Henri Carrier, images by Bernard Taquet and Serge Ehrler, commentary by Georges de Caunes. For more information on this film, see http://www.capoeira-palmares.fr/histor/rtf63_fr.htm

³⁸⁰ Downey explains that "[o]ne of the most dramatic, 'traditional' sequences in the roda is the chamada or 'call,' a formalized challenge enacted through gesture." Greg Downey, *Learning capoeira: lessons in cunning from an Afro-Brazilian art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 105.

capoeira as much as his “modern” counterpart Bimba. In the same way as Bimba invented modernity by claiming existing movement practices as his own “improvements,” Pastinha invented capoeira’s tradition. Choreographing non-violence, gentility, and respectability, Pastinha did away with the grabbing and throwing of *balões*, favoring instead the more delicate, subtle, and gentle suggestion of contact, where open hands barely touch and never grip,³⁸¹ and a head indicates a headbutt without applying force or inflicting harm.

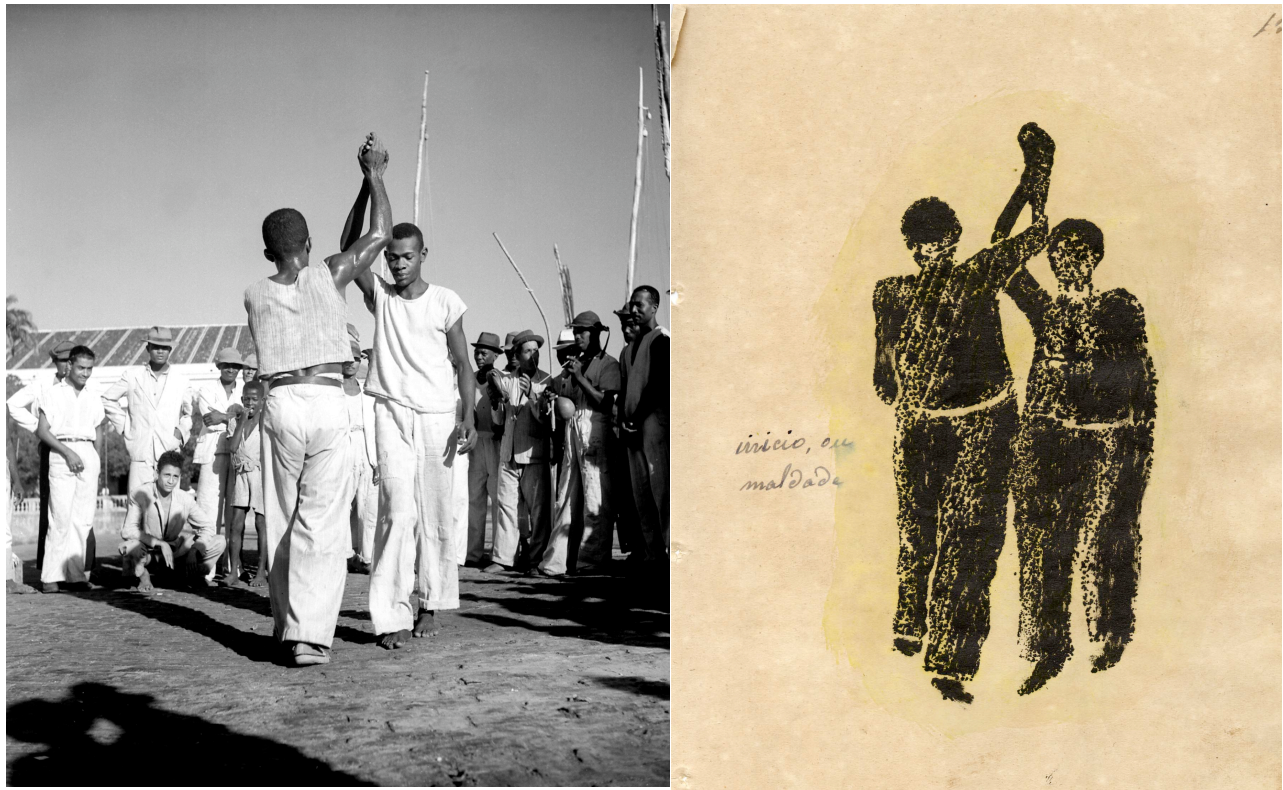


Figure 2.8 Drawings and woodcut prints of *chamadas* from Pastinha’s manuscripts (written throughout the 1950s) are strikingly similar to photos of *chamadas* by French photographer Pierre Verger from the late 1940s. This suggests a dialogue between Pastinha and Verger in selecting the *chamada* as iconic of Capoeira Angola. Photo by Pierre Verger, c. 1947. Courtesy of Fundação Pierre Verger. Print by Vicente Ferreira Pastinha, c. 1955.

³⁸¹ Today, practically any student of capoeira angola around the world learns that an *angoleiro*’s hands are meant for weight bearing and should never touch the opponent.



Figure 2.9 Photo by Pierre Verger, c. 1947. Courtesy of Fundação Pierre Verger. Print by Vicente Ferreira Pastinha, c. 1955.

By “taming” capoeira and approximating the practice to definitions of folklore—by turning it into a dance—Pastinha gained the respect and admiration of folklorists, intellectuals, artists, and bureaucrats who helped Pastinha gain recognition both for himself and for his capoeira style. Pastinha’s Capoeira Angola was consistent with Carneiro’s definition of a harmless capoeira:

The capoeira [players] of Bahia call their game *lazing around*—and capoeira is no more than that, in the way that it is done in public festivals in the city. The players have fun, pretending to fight[.]³⁸²

Carneiro defines capoeira as “no more than” a leisure activity, a playful “lazing around” (he uses the term *vadiação*, which was indeed used by capoeiristas at the time to refer to capoeira

³⁸² Carneiro, *Capoeira*: 9.

practice.) By stating that capoeira consisted of “pretend” fighting when it was performed at *public festivals*, Carneiro echoes the syncretic model articulated by Pastinha, where a capoeira available to the public—gentle and dance-like—differs from other more violent layers of the practice, hidden from public view and accessible only to insiders of the practice. Although he does list *balões* as part of capoeira de Angola in the 1930s, writing in the late 1960s, when Pastinha’s influence had been well-established, Carneiro describes a capoeira where

the contenders don’t grab each other, but, keeping their distance, free, [they] come in contact only in the precise moments of attack and defense. In particular, capoeira strikes make exclusive use of the feet, while the hands serve as support for the movements of the entire body. [...] The *ginga* of the capoeira [player], underscored by the songs to the sound of the berimbau and tambourines [pandeiros], lends the game an appearance of dance.³⁸³

With the help of musical ensemble, the *ginga*, selected and codified as capoeira’s “basic step” by Bimba, is deployed in Capoeira Angola as a way of lending the game an *appearance* of dance. Furthermore, in this new capoeira “disguised as dance,” players not only kept their distance and refrained from grabbing each other, they refrained from using their hands at all for striking, using them instead as support.

In collaboration with Carneiro, Amado, Verger, and others, Pastinha established a dance-like capoeira that went on to be accepted the original capoeira “from Angola,” part of Brazil’s Bantu legacy that should be protected and preserved. Pastinha’s Capoeira Angola also embodied the gentility, cordiality, and civility ascribed to the Bahian people. In *Bahia de Todos os Santos*, Amado paints a portrait of “the Bahian:”

[The Bahian] worships the past and dreams of the future. The Bahian who makes amiability into a true art, who is astute to the extreme, who is cordial and comprehensive, relaxed and trusting. [...] Nobody knows how to carry on a conversation like a Bahian.

³⁸³ ———, *Folgedos Tradicionais*: 143.

Slow talking, with round phrases, long clarifying pauses, with precise, careful gestures, with tame smiles and big laughs.³⁸⁴

In this 300-page “guide to the streets and to the mysteries of the city of Salvador,” Amado echoes the language of racial determinism when he defines the essential (and essentialized) traits of “the Bahian.” Here, Amado reinforces the stereotype of the unhurried (i.e. lazy), slow-talking, happy and content (in spite of disadvantaged socio-economic conditions) *mestiço* citizen of the tropics. With slow, rounded-out cartwheels and precise, careful kicks that barely graze the opponent, Pastinha, following on the footsteps of Querido de Deus, invented a capoeira that embodied Amado’s “destination image” of both Bahia and “the Bahian.”

Cordiality and amiability, indispensable traits in the hospitality industry, were foundational building blocks of the construction of both “Bahian culture” and “traditional capoeira” in the mid twentieth century. According to Amado, writing on the flap of the cover of Pastinha’s 1964 *Capoeira Angola*, Pastinha was both

master of capoeira de Angola and of Bahian cordiality[.] [...] The first in his art; master of agility and courage, of loyalty and fraternal coexistence. In his School, at the Pelourinho, Mestre Pastinha constructs Brazilian culture, of the best and most real.³⁸⁵

Pastinha, along with other capoeira mestres who actively participated in Bahia’s tourism industry, constructed “real” Brazilian culture for tourist consumption—one marked by the gentility and conviviality of “the Bahian.”

At his school, the *Academia de Capoeira Angola*, located in the Pelourinho historic district, Pastinha and his students held regular demonstrations for tourists:

The capoeira Angola academy—of Mestre Pastinha—located in the traditional Pelourinho hill, in order to cater to the numerous tourists who visit Salvador, offers

³⁸⁴ Amado, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador*: 22.

³⁸⁵ Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*.

special performances on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays starting at 7pm. On Sundays, at 3pm.³⁸⁶

Mestre João Grande remembers that, during tourist season, the school was often packed with tourists watching these demonstrations.³⁸⁷ In the revised tenth edition of *Bahia de Todos os Santos* (1964), Amado refers to these demonstrations:

On Sundays well-known capoeiristas come and the celebration starts in the afternoon. Those who visit Bahia should not miss the extraordinary spectacle of Mestre Pastinha playing capoeira in the middle of the room, to the sound of the berimbau.³⁸⁸

By the mid 1960s, Capoeira Angola, along with samba and candomblé, had become a staple of the Afro-Bahian tourist experience. Pastinha's school, now a tourist destination, provided both tourists and scholars with ritualized spectacles of Afro-diasporic agility:

The string berimbaus play the ritual music, calling the players. Mestre Pastinha fills the room with his presence, his agility, his dizzying ballet. Capoeira de Angola, a Brazilian fighting form par excellence.³⁸⁹

Pastinha's and Amado's emphasis on capoeira's music (and its conflation with ritual) further approximated the practice to fantasies of a "primitive" but controlled Africa, bound by ritual and tradition. Capoeira Angola, now tamed and feminized as dance, gained distinction through comparisons with European ballet, while also retaining capoeira's status as national fighting form "par excellence."

³⁸⁶ "A academia de capoeira Angola—de Mestre Pastinha—localizada na tradicional ladeira do Pelourinho, para atender aos numerosos turistas que visitam Salvador, apresenta exibições especiais às terças, quintas e sextas-feiras a partir das 19 horas. Aos domingos, às 15 horas." Text from back cover flap of *ibid.*

³⁸⁷ Mestre João Grande (João Oliveira dos Santos), audio-recorded interview by author, November 14th, 2011.

³⁸⁸ Amado, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador*: 209.

³⁸⁹ Jorge Amado, "Conversa com Buanga Fêlê, também conhecido como Mário de Andrade, chefe da luta de Angola," *Tempo Brasileiro*, 1:1, September 1962, quoted in Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 275.

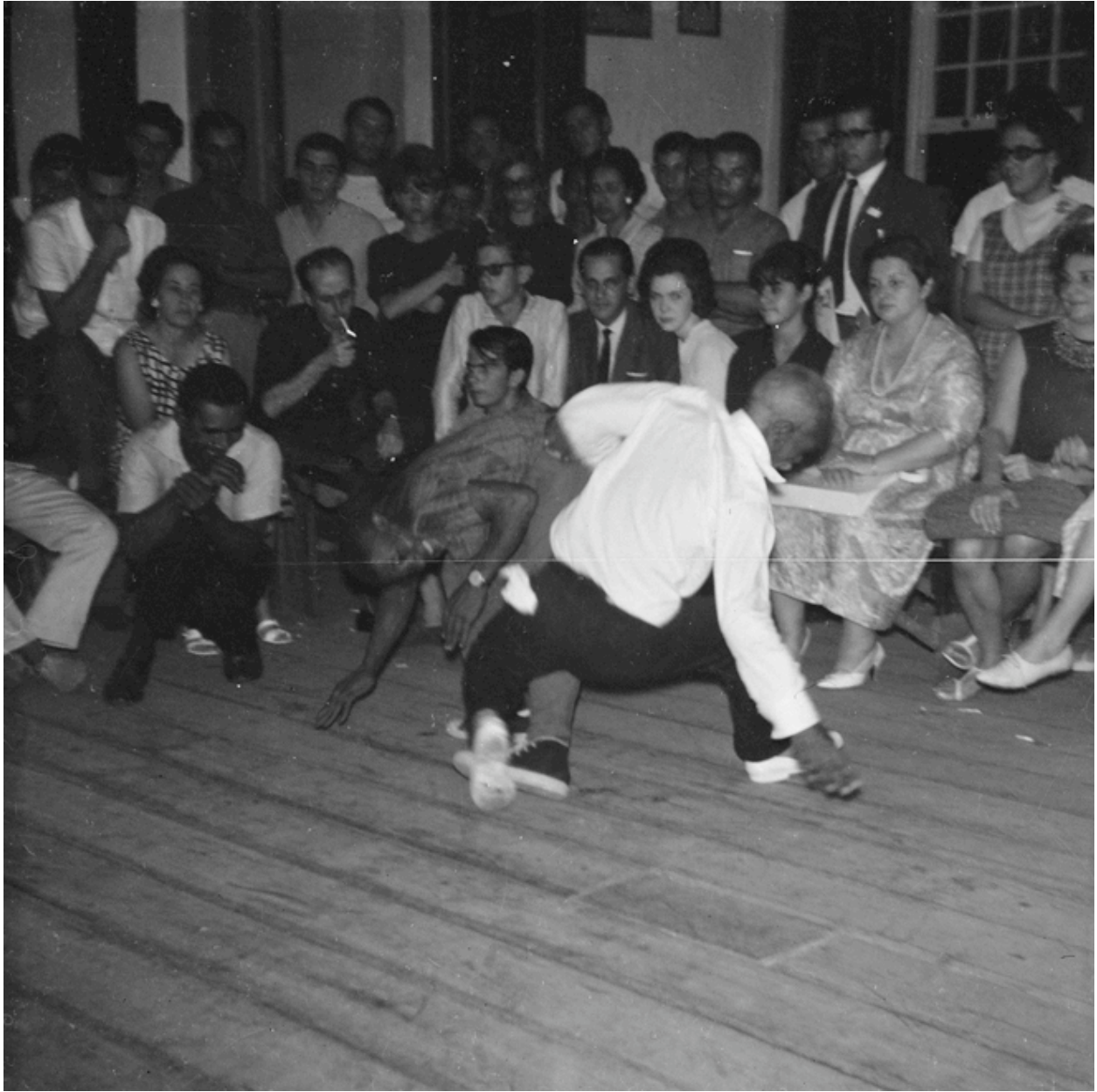


Figure 2.10 Pastinha and a student entertaining a packed house during a demonstration at his *Academia de Capoeira Angola* at the Pelourinho Square. Photo by Helinä Rautavaara, c. 1964. Courtesy of the Helinä Rautavaara Museum photographic collection.

Conclusion

Bimba, regarded by Bahia's intellectual elite as the pariah of "traditional" capoeira, was nevertheless extremely successful in spite of relentless criticism. Bimba's success was such that his demonstrations often filled sports arenas, gymnasiums and even soccer stadiums. Bimba cleverly coopted the New State's discourse of improvement to legitimize and promote his new capoeira style. Like Andrade and Villa Lobos, Bimba began with "the folk"—capoeira de Angola—which he went on to improve (allegedly) through foreign material from other fighting traditions. Although Bimba most likely did borrow from foreign martial arts (e.g. the hand strike to the ear, *galopante*, to which Victor H.U. protested in the 1936 matches at Odeon Stadium), he also "disguised" capoeira's tradition as improved modernity by appropriating and codifying *balões* as his "abandoned waist" techniques. (Bimba's participation in the tourism industry, including his adaptation of *balões* as dance-like acrobatics, is discussed in Chapter 3).

Pastinha embraced capoeira's "destiny" (of finally "evolving" and turning into a harmless dance-like game) and downplayed capoeira's violence in public demonstrations. Embodying the gentility and cordiality through which "the Bahian" was reimagined, Pastinha removed several strikes he considered dangerous, such as *dedo nos olhos* (poking the eyes), *cotovelada* (elbow strike), and *golpe de pescoço* (strike to the neck), in addition to removing *balões* from Capoeira Angola in the 1960s. Even though Pastinha brought as many if not more innovations to capoeira as did Bimba, his changes were congruent with the construction of tourist-friendly Afro-Brazilian "traditions" in mid twentieth century Bahia.

Although Pastinha insisted that the "real" capoeira (i.e. its efficiency and violence) was kept safe from the demands imposed by the tourism industry, many of his adaptations for the stage bled through to the "real" practice of his students. For example, his removal of *balões*

from Capoeira Angola was in fact not restricted to public demonstrations, and “Pastinian” Capoeira Angola was passed down to a new generation of disciples without *balões*. Since the release of Maynard’s film on Youtube, however, several capoeira mestres, both first and second generation disciples of Pastinha, began including *balões* in their Capoeira Angola classes, claiming to have known them all along, having learned them in secrecy.

Pastinha was one of several capoeira *mestres* whose work was deeply influenced by the tourism industry.³⁹⁰ He was, however, possibly one of the mestres who profited the least from the economic opportunities generated by Bahia’s tourist boom. With the help of Amado, Pastinha was awarded a small retirement pension by the city of Salvador for “services rendered to the tourism industry.”³⁹¹ However, this was “a meager, paltry sum for someone who gave [...] so much to Bahia.”³⁹²

Although late in Pastinha’s life a few of his students began offering “shows” for tourists—which included samba, *maculelê*, as well as a scripted retelling of capoeira’s history of violence—as a way of collecting money for their aging mestre,³⁹³ Pastinha never joined the trend of presenting fully produced, staged folkloric shows, complete with samba, dances from *candomblé*, and *maculelê*—the staples that went on to become the Brazilian “folkloric suite” of the 1970s and 80s.

³⁹⁰ The emergence of the tourism industry in Bahia is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

³⁹¹ Barreto and Freitas, *Pastinha: o grande mestre da capoeira angola*: 146.

³⁹² Jota Bamberg quoted in “Mestre Pastinha Doente: 'Agora eu quero morrer',” *Tribuna da Bahia*, November 19th 1979.

³⁹³ Luis Vitor Castro Jr., “Campos de visibilidade da Capoeira Baiana: as festas populares, as escolas de capoeira, o cinema e a arte (1955-1985)” (PUC/SP, 2008), 104.



Figure 2.10 João Grande and João Pequeno, Pastinha's most famous disciples, playing capoeira during a fundraiser for the aging mestre directed by Emília Biancardi at the Mosteiro de São Bento in 1968. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Emília Biancardi.

Chapter 3: Capoeira on stage (1952-1974)

Having deployed the narrative of decline and loss to justify his “improvements” on capoeira de Angola, Bimba was himself criticized throughout the 1940s and 50s for causing capoeira to lose its “character.” As I have discussed in Chapter 1, the recent capoeira scholarship has acknowledged Bimba’s contributions, valuing his innovations and recognizing them as Afro-diasporic rather than dismissing them as part of a process of co-optation and “whitening.” While narratives of the decline and loss of early twentieth century capoeira have been redirected towards Zuma and other proponents of capoeira as “national gymnastics,” capoeira’s “loss of character” (*descaracterização*) in late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has been blamed on folkloric shows and the tourism industry.

However, the recent capoeira historiography does not adequately address the process of staging capoeira or its relationship with the tourism industry; folkloric shows, in particular those that toured internationally, are only mentioned briefly as footnotes explaining the globalization of the practice in the late 1970s. The literature that does address the relationship between capoeira and the tourism industry often regards tourism as both a recent influence and a negative one, responsible for eroding capoeira’s traditions.³⁹⁴ Such texts identify an increased emphasis on “acrobatics”—often assumed to be a foreign borrowing from gymnastics—as the clearest sign of capoeira’s “loss of character.” In his book *“Capoeira” for the entertainment industry: body, acrobatics and spectacle for “tourists to watch”* (2004), physical education professor Acúrsio

³⁹⁴ See Barreto and Freitas, *Pastinha: o grande mestre da capoeira angola*; Acúrsio Pereira Esteves, *A 'capoeira' da indústria do entretenimento: corpo, acrobacia e espetáculo para 'turista ver'* (Salvador: Bureau Gráfica e Editora, 2004); Castro Jr., “Campos de visibilidade da Capoeira Baiana: as festas populares, as escolas de capoeira, o cinema e a arte (1955-1985).” Castro concurs with Esteves’ assessment of a tourism industry that necessarily incurs “loss” to capoeira.

Esteves identifies some of the “foreign” elements added to capoeira with the intent of pleasing tourist audiences:

bright colored clothing, acrobatics, pre-arranged movement sequences, “rigged games”, back flips, balances (spectacular positions for photos), [...] among other ruses to add variety to the show and guarantee the “vile metal.”³⁹⁵

Esteves assumes acrobatics, back flips, balances and pre-established movement sequences to be late twentieth century innovations—“alien elements” incorporated with the intention of pleasing tourists in overtly commercial settings. However, Esteves fails to historicize these “alien” elements individually, and anachronistically attributes them to the proliferation of professional folkloric ensembles in the late twentieth century.³⁹⁶

In this chapter, I question both the foreignness and the newness of capoeira’s acrobatics, and propose a direct connection between capoeira’s spectacular flips and balances—typical of capoeira performances for the stage—and Bimba’s abandoned waist technique (discussed in Chapter 1). I return to Bimba’s influential participation in shaping modern capoeira, this time focusing on his extensive participation in the tourism industry—an aspect of Bimba’s legacy largely ignored in much of the scholarship on capoeira.

Bimba’s increased success in the 1950s parallels the growth of the tourism industry in Bahia’s capital, Salvador. In 1952 the city published the first *Roteiro Turístico da Cidade de Salvador* (*Tour Guide of the City of Salvador*), followed by a bilingual English/Portuguese guide in 1953 titled *Bahia de Ontem de Hoje* (*Bahia of Yesterday and Today*). In 1953, the city created the first official department in charge of overseeing the development of the tourism industry, the

³⁹⁵ Esteves, *A 'capoeira' da indústria do entretenimento: corpo, acrobacia e espetáculo para 'turista ver'*: 128.

³⁹⁶ As I have shown in chapter 2, rigged games and pre-arranged movement sequences date back at least to the mid 1930s. Also in the 1930s, Landes described a “traditional” Capoeira Angola game marked by dance-like acrobatic balances. See Landes, *The city of women*. As I will show in this chapter, professional folkloric ensembles began in the early 1960s rather than in the 1970s, as Esteves claims.

Diretoria Municipal de Turismo (Municipal Tourism Directorate), renamed Departamento de Turismo e Diversões Públicas (Department of Tourism and Public Recreation) in 1959 and Superintendência de Turismo de Salvador (Tourism Superintendence of Salvador), SUTURSA in 1964. By the late 1950s, tourism had become a national priority, and Bahia—one of the first Brazilian states to develop strategies for transforming tourism into an industry—had become one of Brazil’s main cultural tourism destinations, featuring Afro-Brazilian culture (primarily capoeira and candomblé) as a major tourist attraction.³⁹⁷

In this chapter, I locate the debates over capoeira’s tradition and modernity in the context of Bahia’s expanding tourism industry, from the early 1950s until the mid 1970s. The chapter is divided into four parts, each focusing on a specific facet of a capoeira choreographed in relationship to tourism. In the first part, I trace the “origins” of capoeira’s staged acrobatics to choreographed sequences known as *escrètes*, developed by Bimba and his students for tourist shows and graduation ceremonies. I argue that while Pastinha removed contact from capoeira by creating a capoeira free of grabbing and throwing, where kicks “barely grazed” the opponent (a process discussed in Chapter 2), Bimba and his students amplified and theatricalized this contact, creating spectacular choreographed fight sequences, complete with flying kicks and machetes. Rather than downplaying violence, I suggest that Bimba’s students “acted out” this violence within the safety of choreographed sequences.

In the second part, I historicize the shift in blame in the discourse of “descaracterização” (where tourism becomes the new culprit) tracing this shift to the influential writings of culture

³⁹⁷ In partnership with the United States government, Brazil formed a commission to develop strategies for the promotion of tourism to Brazil—the Tourism Project for Brazil. For a detailed account of the development of the tourism industry in Bahia, see Lucia Maria Aquino de Queiroz, *Turismo na Bahia: estratégias para o desenvolvimento* (Salvador: Secretaria da Cultura e Turismo, 2002), 30-69.

policymaker Waldeloir Rego (1930-2001),³⁹⁸ the self-appointed spokesperson for Afro-Brazilian culture in the 1960s and 70s. In his influential *Capoeira Angola: socio-ethnographic essay* (1968), a book as prescriptive as it is descriptive, Rego redirects the blame for capoeira’s “loss of character” from Bimba’s innovations to Salvador’s ubiquitous folkloric shows for tourists. Although Rego’s 400-page “socio-ethnographic essay” is still one of the most quoted sources in the capoeira literature, Rego’s role as a public functionary and long-time employee of Salvador’s Tourism Department is rarely acknowledged. In this chapter, I reframe Rego as a tourism bureaucrat rather than as an objective “ethnographer,” a distinction I hope will give new meaning to his writings and shed light on his influence in shaping notions of capoeira’s “character” and defining the boundaries of its tradition.

In the third part, I draw attention to Rego’s efforts to delimit the “appropriate” boundaries for the creativity and innovation of capoeiristas who held regular folkloric shows for tourists, focusing specifically on the innovations of Washington Bruno da Silva, known as Mestre Canjiquinha—a capoeirista and employee of Salvador’s Tourism Department who was the target of both Rego’s praise and criticism. Unlike Bimba and Pastinha, Canjiquinha made a name for himself as a performer—both through his folkloric shows and his participation in numerous films—rather than through founding a particular style or school of capoeira. In fact, Canjiquinha openly and vehemently denied the existence of separate styles of capoeira, and insisted that “*capoeira é uma só*” (there is only one capoeira), exposing both styles as marketing strategies.

³⁹⁸ Although Rego is often referred as an ethnographer, I question that designation. In his *Capoeira Angola: socio-ethnographic essay*, Rego does provide a thorough listing of capoeira schools in Bahia at the time, and perhaps this is his greatest ethnographic contribution. However, more than half of the book is devoted to a collection of capoeira songs (the bulk of which were collected from one informant), along with a glossary where Rego lists the “correct” spelling and the etymology for words that had been “corrupted” in their casual, working-class pronunciation in capoeira songs. See Rego, *Capoeira Angola; ensaio sócio-etnográfico*.

While some capoeiristas staged capoeira for tourists at nightclubs, folkloric centers, and hotels (such as Pastinha, Bimba, and Canjiquinha) others began performing at more prestigious, “high-art” venues, such as Salvador’s Teatro Castro Alves. In the fourth and last section of this chapter, I analyze how such groups attempted to solve the conundrum of presenting “authorless” folklore in a context that valued individual “artistic” creativity. I have selected the repertory of the *Grupo Folclórico Viva Bahia* (1962-1985) as an example of the dilemma between artistic innovation and preservation of “tradition.” I trace the changes in this ensemble’s repertory from 1963 until 1974, focusing on the controversies surrounding the ensemble’s “pop” innovations at home as well as on the enthusiastic reception of Viva Bahia as authentic, never-before-seen Afro-Brazilian “tradition” abroad.

Dance scholar Jane Desmond has proposed that, in live performances for tourists, dancing bodies become both signs and signifiers of themselves, or rather, “the performers become signs of what the tourist audience believes them to be.”³⁹⁹ Here, I return to the concept of the “folklore bearer” introduced in Chapter 2, examining how folkloric shows sought authenticity through the “unmediated” display of performers “from the people” on stage, as well as instances of choreography that challenged the conflation between the “folk” performer and his/her performance.

I argue that the attribution of authenticity to “folk” performers—and the conflation between Afro-diasporic bodies and the “folk”—was central to the success of Viva Bahia’s folkloric shows abroad. I examine the narratives that reinforced the audience’s “unmediated” experience, disseminated through newspapers articles, reviews and program notes, while drawing attention to the modernity of the performers, who participated in choreographing their

³⁹⁹ Desmond, *Staging Tourism: bodies on display from Waikiki to Sea World*: xx.

own “primitivism” in order to meet a European and North American “destination image” of Brazil constructed largely in Hollywood’s movie studios. I suggest that Viva Bahia successfully fulfilled a destination image of Latin exuberance and sensuality—disseminated through Carmen Miranda’s portrayal of “herself” in several Hollywood films throughout the 1940s and 50s—combined with a “savage” “African” primitivism—portrayed by Josephine Baker in films such as *Princesse Tam Tam* (1935).

I argue that, while folkloric show performers fulfilled various desirable destination images of Afro-Brazilian bodies (happy, convivial, exotic, sensual, and youthful), capoeiristas in particular also fulfilled a kinesthetic destination image of (thrillingly) violent and primitive Afro-diasporic bodies. Capoeira performers amplified and choreographed capoeira’s violence for the stage, “acting it out” as heart-stopping choreographed sequences. “Acting out” violence brought increased speed and daredevil acrobatics (as well as occasional use of machetes) to what became known as “show capoeira,” a capoeira style marked by its athleticism and virtuosity. Although this kinesthetic destination image reinforced racist associations of male black bodies with violence and heightened physicality, it was also influential in generating the global fascination with capoeira that resulted in career opportunities, both as performers and teachers, for several capoeiristas who toured with folkloric shows in the 1970s.

I. *Grupo Folclórico do Mestre Bimba*: “acting out” violence and choreographing acrobatic capoeira

“The demonstration games at the graduation ceremony[,] I thought they were incredible.”⁴⁰⁰

--Gato Branco

While Pastinha erased balões from Capoeira Angola (and indeed banned contact between players except during the chamada) in the process of embodying the gentle, hospitable Afro-Brazilianness imagined through the writings of Amado, Bimba claimed balões as his “signature” move. In the 1960s, Bimba warns readers of his manual, *Curso de Capoeira Regional*, about the dangers of these partnered throws (see Chapter 1). Around the same time as he wrote about their danger, however, Bimba and his students began to choreograph balões for staged capoeira shows as safe, cooperative, pre-established sequences, where danger and violence were reconfigured as a thrilling aerial acrobatic spectacle. Grabbing and throwing gave way to assisted flips that allowed players to gracefully fly through the air. As I will discuss here, violence was “acted out” rather than enacted through Bimba’s staged throws.

The longevity of Bimba’s success was due to his ability to constantly reinvent Capoeira Regional and seize opportunities for visibility and commercial success. While in the 1930s and 40s Bimba and his students demonstrated capoeira in sports arenas and rings, in the 1950s Bimba’s demonstrations were reconfigured as folkloric performances for tourists. By the early 1950s, Bimba’s success was such that the activities of his *Centro de Cultura Física Regional* (Center for Regional Physical Culture), or CCFR were divided between two locations in Salvador: one school in the historic district of the city, the Pelourinho,⁴⁰¹ and another in a

⁴⁰⁰ Gato Branco, a disciple of Bimba in the 1960s, quoted in Helio Campos, *Capoeira regional: a escola de Mestre Bimba* (Salvador, BA: EDUFBA, 2009), 55-56.

⁴⁰¹ The revitalization of the historic center of Salvador did not take place until the 1980s; in the 1950s and 60s this area was far from a prime location or one with easy access to tourists or residents of more affluent neighborhoods.

working-class residential neighborhood, ten kilometers to the east, called Nordeste de Amaralina. This second school, also known as Sítio Caruano,⁴⁰² was reserved for graduation ceremonies and performances for tourists, as well as Sunday *rodas*, while the school located in the Pelourinho remained the place where daily instruction took place.⁴⁰³ Bimba's choice of physically and geographically separating everyday capoeira instruction from a capoeira shown to outsiders reflects the same double consciousness expressed through Pastinha's division of capoeira: the "common" capoeira, available to outsiders and a "hidden" capoeira, accessible only through practice.⁴⁰⁴

The Sítio Caruano location was where the *Grupo Folclórico do Mestre Bimba* (Mestre Bimba's Folkloric Ensemble) both rehearsed and performed. Bimba's ensemble, a group composed of selected capoeira regional students, Bimba himself, and Mãe Alice, one of his wives,⁴⁰⁵ also performed at nightclubs and hotels.⁴⁰⁶ Because of the removed location of the

⁴⁰² Mestre Itapoan remembers that in the early 1950s, Carlos Senna and a few other disciples pooled the money to buy the house at the Nordeste de Amaralina, which they gave to Mestre Bimba. Raimundo César Alves de Almeida, email communication, September 7th, 2011.

⁴⁰³ Classes were offered three times a day: early morning classes (6-7 am) were attended by workers whose jobs started at 8am; in the afternoon classes were attended mostly by students; evening classes were when Bimba's capoeira "elite," his most advanced students, attended the school. Campos, *Capoeira regional: a escola de Mestre Bimba*: 158.

⁴⁰⁴ The Pelourinho location was also open to spectators, who could watch classes for a fee. Bimba charged spectators the price of a single lesson, which was also the price of tuition for a whole month of classes. This clever pricing system kept instruction away from the eyes of casual observers, and, in some instances, transformed would-be spectators into practitioners, who, for the same price as watching, chose to give practice a try. Cafuné, a disciple of Bimba, initially intended only to watch a class, but, after being informed of the price system, decided to stay and learn Capoeira Regional. When he asked if he could watch a class, Bimba simply pointed to a sign posted on the door that read "class: 2,000; monthly rate: 2,000; visits: 2,000." Ibid., 210. Since an exact date of this visit is not available, it is not possible to determine the contemporary monetary equivalent of 2,000. The currency was likely the *Cruzeiro* (Cr\$) before its devaluation and renaming as *Cruzeiro Novo* (NCr\$) in 1967.

⁴⁰⁵ Bimba is known to have had several "wives" (although he was not legally married to multiple women simultaneously, these were nonetheless simultaneous common law marriages). Mãe Alice was a candomblé priestess who brought in other women from her *candomblé* house for singing and dancing in the show.

⁴⁰⁶ The group performed regularly at the *Boite de Ondina*. Almeida, *A Saga do Mestre Bimba*: 47; Campos, *Capoeira regional: a escola de Mestre Bimba*: 128.

Sítio Caruano, tourists were bused in by one of Bahia's largest travel agencies, Kontik Tourism and Travel Agency, which held an ongoing contract with Bimba.⁴⁰⁷ In the early 1960s, Bimba and his students remodeled the Sítio Caruano, adding bleacher-type seating to accommodate the growing audiences of tourists brought in three times per week to watch the *Grupo Folclórico do Mestre Bimba*.⁴⁰⁸

Eyewitness accounts describe Bimba as an engaging “showman” with outstanding command of the audience, who would tell jokes and entertain Brazilian and foreign visitors alike with his charisma.⁴⁰⁹ Aside from capoeira, the shows included dances from *candomblé* (staged by Mãe Alice), *samba de roda* (“circle samba,” performed by women), *samba duro* (a tripping samba performed by men, usually reserved for the finale of the show), and *maculelê*, a mock combat dance of much-debated origins where dancers “fight” hitting a pair of wooden clubs (*grimas*), rhythmically and often acrobatically, against the other dancer's *grimas* (sometimes replaced by machetes).

Unfortunately there is little visual record of these performances, and descriptions of the activities at the Sítio Caruano focus instead on Bimba's graduation ceremonies (*formaturas*), a ritual likely borrowed from the academic institutions where many of Bimba's students were preparing to become doctors, dentists, and lawyers.⁴¹⁰ These ceremonies culminated in the

⁴⁰⁷ Agência Kontik de Viagens e Turismo was founded in the early 1950s as a travel agency named Cliper (pronounced “clipper”). The airline PanAmerican, who owned airplanes named Clipper, sued Cliper in 1958 demanding a name change. In 1958 the agency was renamed Kontik, and became one of the largest travel agencies in Bahia, still in existence today. Queiroz, *Turismo na Bahia: estratégias para o desenvolvimento*: 50.

⁴⁰⁸ Raimundo César Alves de Almeida, audio-recorded interview, May 10th, 2011.

⁴⁰⁹ Campos compares Bimba's command of the audience to that of legendary Brazilian variety show host Silvio Santos. Castro Jr., “Campos de visibilidade da Capoeira Baiana: as festas populares, as escolas de capoeira, o cinema e a arte (1955-1985),” 95.

⁴¹⁰ At these ceremonies, “godmothers” (*madrinhas*) would present their respective graduating disciple with a medal and, beginning in the 1960s, tie a silk scarf (*esguião de seda*) around the neck of their graduating student. Letícia Reis has interpreted these formal graduations, complete with medals and

performance of choreographed games known as *esquetes* or *escretas* (which I have translated as “demonstration games”), a movement practice also featured in the performances of the *Grupo Folclórico do Mestre Bimba*.⁴¹¹

Mestre Xaréu (Hélio Campos) explains that these demonstration games provided students with the opportunity to put in practice the abandoned waist techniques learned in class, “modifying them according to the creativity, courage and skills of the players[,] individually and as a pair.”⁴¹² Mestre Itapoan (Raimundo César Alves de Almeida) remembers that each student had his own set partner for demonstration games—his own partner was Gia (Gil dos Prazeres Souza). To create each demonstration game, two advanced students would select several partnered throws learned in class and insert them into choreographed games that would be performed both on stage and at graduations ceremonies. These games

were rehearsed because it was just for performance,[...] we performed during shows. Also at graduation ceremonies there were demonstration games, which was how we would show these throws that Mestre Bimba had introduced to capoeira.⁴¹³

godmothers, as transpositions of hegemonic (academic, religious, and military) symbols to the world of capoeira. Reis, *O mundo de pernas para o ar : a capoeira no Brasil*: 108.

⁴¹¹ These choreographed games are referred to alternately as *esquete* and *escrete*, and also spelled “schath” by Waldeloir Rego in his 1968 description of Bimba’s graduation ceremonies. Rego, *Capoeira Angola; ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 287. In an interview, Itapoan explained to me that today, “learned” people think this practice should be referred to as *esquete*, the Portuguese spelling for the borrowed English term “sketch,” which refers to a set scene in theater. However, he reminded me that they didn’t have “this kind of vocabulary” at that time, and that the correct term is *escrete*. Raimundo César Alves de Almeida, audio-recorded interview, May 10th, 2011. Hélio Campos, however, also a disciple of Bimba’s, uses the term *esquete*. Campos, *Capoeira regional: a escola de Mestre Bimba*: 56. Waldeloir Rego’s attempt at an English spelling of the term led me to the boxing term “scratch” (phonetically adapted and spelled “escrete” in Portuguese), which designates the starting position of the two contestants in a match. I believe that this idea of deciding where the two players would begin was borrowed by Bimba and extended to describe the decision-making involved in pre-selecting the throws and acrobatic movements used in demonstration games.

⁴¹² Campos also quotes Gato Branco (José Luiz Pinto Filho) on his experience with demonstration games: “the demonstration games at the graduation ceremony[,] I thought they were incredible, because it taught you how to fall, with all those throws, you had a sense of balance it gave you a great sense of balance.” ———, *Capoeira regional: a escola de Mestre Bimba*: 55-56.

⁴¹³ Raimundo César Alves de Almeida, audio-recorded interview, May 10th, 2011.

These choreographed sequences affirmed and displayed “abandoned waist” as Bimba’s invention and “trademark.” Itapoan stresses that these sequences were rehearsed specifically for performances in front of an audience. A photo from 1968 offers a glimpse into one of these demonstration games between Itapoan and Gia.

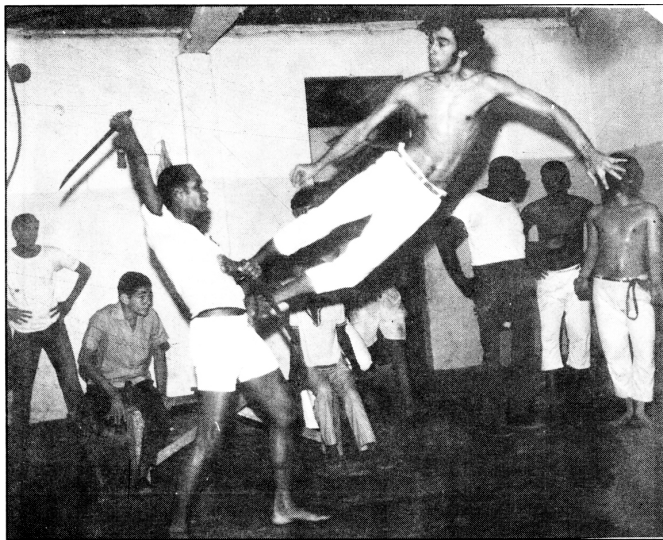


Figure 3.1 From left to right: Gia (holding the machetes), Itapoan (in mid air) and Bimba (in a white t-shirt talking to two students in the background). Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Raimundo César Alves de Almeida.⁴¹⁴

Gia, one machete in each hand, leans back as Itapoan hits his target, landing with both feet on Gia’s chest—a blow called the “bat’s flight” (*vôo de morcego*). Although a few spectators gaze on in amazement, the casual, even distracted demeanor of others present, including Bimba himself, points to the fairly unremarkable nature of this seemingly astonishing feat. Whether this photo captured a rehearsal or a performance, it was clear that Bimba had seen this before and was in no way alarmed or surprised. Had this been a real confrontation, it is unlikely that Itapoan would have been allowed to deliver his “bat’s flight,” since Gia could have easily wounded or killed Itapoan with one or both of his machetes. In fact, the thrill of this

⁴¹⁴ This photo is dated July 9th, 1968 in Almeida (1994) and 1971 in Almeida (2005). Almeida, *A Saga do Mestre Bimba*: 180; ———, *Capoeira: retalhos da roda* (Salvador: Ginga Associação de Capoeira, 2005), 17.

moment is only possible through the rehearsed cooperation between these two players, who re-create and magnify violence, “acting out” confrontation without its danger.

Flying kicks into machete-wielding opponents and acrobatic partnered throws, when not performed cooperatively in a pre-arranged demonstration game, had the potential of being dangerous or even deadly; in fact, the only way to execute them safely was to decide when, how, and in what order these throws were to be performed. These choreographed partnered sequences exhibited capoeira regional’s potential violence and efficiency through choreographed cooperation—“acting out” rather than enacting violence. Bimba’s demonstration games, then, performed the same labor as Pastinha’s “shown,” held back kicks, which barely grazed the opponent or stopped “just before the chosen target”: reassuring the public that capoeira had been redeemed of its violent past of straight razors and tough guys, having been transformed into a dance-like performance.⁴¹⁵ Bimba’s staged capoeira, however, was marked by dare-devil flying kicks and flips that amplified and theatricalized rather than downplayed danger—a staging practice undoubtedly inherited from the *marmeladas* (rigged games) from the late 1930s and 40s.

These demonstration games followed typical patterns of folkloricization: curtailed improvisation coupled with a tendency toward the virtuosic, athletic, dramatic, and spectacular.⁴¹⁶ And Bimba, having embraced folkloric shows, was acutely aware of the possible consequences of folkloricization: the loss of capoeira’s efficiency as self-defense. According to Mestre Acordeon (Ubirajara Guimarães Almeida), Bimba cautioned his advanced students against getting lost in the aesthetics of these demonstration games and transforming capoeira into

⁴¹⁵ Pastinha, *Capoeira Angola*: 27-28.

⁴¹⁶ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: tourism, museums and heritage* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University and California Press, 1998), 64-65.

a “mere exhibition of acrobatic elements ‘for tourists to watch’.”⁴¹⁷ Like Pastinha, Bimba expressed a preoccupation in separating a capoeira for the stage from a capoeira practiced in “real life” situations.

However, even at its most spectacular and virtuosic, this acrobatic capoeira for tourists still embodied the violence of 19th century capoeiragem: the balões described by Mello Moraes. “Acting out” capoeira’s violence for tourists, in fact, re-contextualized and foregrounded the grabbing and throwing techniques of capoeiragem. In an effort to adjust Bimba’s contributions to current parameters of tradition, many contemporary analyses blame “loss of character” on outside influences and fail to consider the possibility that capoeira’s acrobatics may, in fact, have firm “roots” in the tradition of grabbing and throwing, magnified and choreographed for the stage by Bimba and his students as the assisted flips and flying kicks of demonstration games.

II. Waldeloir Rego and SUTURSA: dictating the limits of “Bahia’s History and Tradition”

“The fact of the matter is, the more a [capoeira] academy clowns around, [the more] it becomes the favorite of the [Tourism Department].”⁴¹⁸
--Waldeloir Rego

One of the harshest critics of folkloric stagings of capoeira was also one of Bimba’s greatest admirers: Waldeloir Rego. Like his predecessor Édison Carneiro, Rego had a university education in Law but became a self-taught scholar of Afro-Brazilian culture. Rego’s interest in Afro-Brazilian culture, like Carneiro’s, was intimately connected to his own Afro-Brazilian

⁴¹⁷Ubirajara Guimarães Almeida, *Água de Beber, Camará: um bate-papo de capoeira* (Berkeley: United Capoeira Association, 1999), 52.

⁴¹⁸Rego, *Capoeira Angola; ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 362.

background.⁴¹⁹ Also like Carneiro, Rego worked as a cultural policymaker, occupying several administrative posts in municipal and state government from the early 1950s until his retirement in the 1990s.⁴²⁰

Unlike Carneiro, however, Rego respected and admired Bimba's capoeira. Rego disagrees with Carneiro's assertion that Bimba's capoeira had nothing to do with the "legacy of Angola".⁴²¹

This is a rushed statement by Édison Carneiro and proof that he never watched or studied Mestre Bimba's capoeira. Even stylized capoeira, performed on theatrical stages, on television and danced in the samba groups of Bahia and [Rio de Janeiro], still has a lot of this legacy of Angola, that Édison Carneiro speaks of, and even more so with Mestre Bimba's capoeira, which, as I have said before is the very same as Capoeira Angola, only with the adoption of new Oriental and European elements, resulting in the so-called connected moves [*golpes ligados*], inexistent in Capoeira Angola.⁴²²

In his 400-page volume entitled *Capoeira Angola: socio-ethnographic essay*, published in 1968, Rego expresses much greater tolerance for innovation than his predecessors; he even acknowledges the presence of the "legacy of Angola" in "stylized" capoeira performed on stages, television and even in carnival parades. However, like Carneiro, Rego condones certain kinds of innovation (such as Bimba's alleged borrowings of "Oriental and European elements") while

⁴¹⁹ In an interview, Emília Biancardi corrected my own U.S.-centered and historically inaccurate description of both Rego and Carneiro as *negros* (blacks): "they were *mulatos*," she said, emphasizing the last word. Biancardi, who knew both Carneiro and Rego personally, continues to explain how, even though they were *mulatos*, they were light enough to pass for white: "Back then, *mulatos* did not admit they were *mulatos*. Today they do because the world has changed." Emília Biancardi, Audio-recorded interview by author, April 2011.

⁴²⁰ Rego began his career as a tourism bureaucrat in the early 1950s, at the very beginning of the formal organization of Bahia's tourism industry. Rego's tenure saw the creation of the *Diretoria Municipal de Turismo* (Municipal Tourism Directorate, DMT) in 1953 and its replacement by the *Departamento de Turismo e Diversões Públicas* (Department of Tourism and Public Recreation, DTDP) in 1959, directed by Carlos Vasconcelos Maia. He remained with the department after its reorganization as the *Superintendência de Turismo de Salvador* (Superintendence of Tourism of Salvador, SUTURSA) in 1964. See Lucia Maria Aquino de Queiroz, "A gestão pública e a competitividade de cidades turísticas: a experiência da cidade do Salvador" (Universitat de Barcelona, 2005); ———, *Turismo na Bahia: estratégias para o desenvolvimento*.

⁴²¹ See Chapter 2 for further discussion of this statement. Carneiro, *Capoeira*; ———, *Folgedos Tradicionais*.

⁴²² Rego, *Capoeira Angola: ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 269.

denouncing others (such as the adoption of “colorful” uniforms by capoeira groups, discussed below). Like the folklorists of the previous generation, Rego could not help but attempt to dictate the “acceptable” limits of innovation in an effort to protect capoeira against “loss of character.”

Rego reproduces the same model of decline and the subsequent need for protection and preservation that undergirded the folklore movement, as well as the nostalgia that guided much of the intellectual production in Bahia. By the time Rego wrote *Capoeira Angola*, he had worked side by side with Bahia’s leading folklorists, historians, and journalists such as Hildegardes Vianna, Cid Teixeira, and Guilherme Simões. Between 1959 and 1964, Rego was a key staff member of the Department of Tourism and Public Recreation (DTDP) under the directorship of Carlos Vasconcelos Maia, whose administration worked closely with Bahia’s intellectual and artistic elite in shaping the development of Bahia’s tourism industry. Maia often consulted with novelist Jorge Amado and visual artist Carybé, in addition to being well connected in the local press. He believed in the importance of history and culture as fundamental elements in the development of tourist activity in Salvador.⁴²³ Consequently, Bahian tourism emerged as cultural tourism in the early 1960s—foregrounding folk festivities, *candomblé* and capoeira, as well as Bahia’s African-influenced culinary traditions.

In 1964, a U.S.-backed military coup d’état deposed democratically elected president João Goulart, replacing him with General Castelo Branco, the first of a series of four-star generals appointed to the presidency by a military junta, a period known as the *ditadura militar* (1964-1985). The first of seventeen executive orders called “Institutional Acts,”⁴²⁴ the AI-1,

⁴²³ Queiroz, *Turismo na Bahia: estratégias para o desenvolvimento*: 60.

⁴²⁴ *Atos Institucionais* were known by their numbers (AI-1, AI-2, etc.). These decrees gradually gave the military unlimited executive powers and voided the democratic political process. The AI-1 gave the president the power to easily pass constitutional amendments, suspend the job security of civil servants

among other measures, suspended the job security of public employees—mayors were replaced, and subsequently, directors of several municipal agencies were replaced with legislators loyal to the military government. The effects of these Institutional Acts were immediately felt throughout Brazil. Shortly after the military coup, the DTDP was reorganized and replaced by the Superintendence of Tourism of Salvador (SUTURSA); Rego saw many colleagues reassigned or fired, including Maia himself.

For Rego, the tourism department's role should not be restricted to the promotion of tourism; it also held the responsibility of preserving Bahia's traditions. The new administration, composed of politicians appointed for their loyalty to the military government rather than for their specialized knowledge or administrative skills,⁴²⁵ not only did not protect Bahia's traditions, it encouraged a kind of innovation Rego saw as detrimental. Rego voices his disapproval of the new administration, which he blames for capoeira's recent decline:

The negative agent of capoeira's process of decline, sociologically and ethnographically speaking, was the municipal tourism administration. Holding the financial resources, material and promotional, it corrupted as much as possible. Although the above-mentioned division has the preservation of our traditions as its goal, its recent administrators, out of pure ignorance and incompetence, do just the opposite, directly or indirectly.⁴²⁶

for six months, and "suspend for 10 years the political rights of any citizen and to cancel the mandates of federal, state, and municipal legislators." The AI-2 abolished all political parties and instituted the practice of "indirect elections" for president, amplified by the AI-3, which extended "indirect elections" to state governors and mayors. Thomas E. Skidmore, *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 20;46. These Institutional acts paved the way to the most repressive of all executive orders, the AI-5, the decree that intensified the torture, assassinations and "disappearances" aimed at annihilating the opposition to the military regime.

⁴²⁵ The new administration was harshly criticized in the Bahian press. The newspaper *A Tarde* accused the new director of SUTURSA of doing nothing but travelling back and forth between Bahia and Rio all year, ridiculing him as "the tourist of the year." A journalist by the name of Menezes, writing in *A Tarde* in 1965, stated that SUTURSA was only concerned with "dreaming up plans impossible to implement, forgetting the basics of the development of our tourism." Quoted in Queiroz, *Turismo na Bahia: estratégias para o desenvolvimento*: 81.

⁴²⁶ Rego, *Capoeira Angola; ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 361.

As evidence of capoeira's decline, Rego discusses the new uniforms worn in public demonstrations of capoeira. He dwells at length on the choices of attire sponsored by SUTURSA as examples of the failure of the tourism division to protect capoeira against "loss of character." He claims that these uniforms, consisting of soccer-type jerseys of different colors, were chosen with the intent of pleasing tourists:

With a primarily touristic concern, they choose shirts of various loud colors, of terribly poor taste, with the aim of attracting attention to the group, which looks more like a carnival group than a group of master and disciples of capoeira.⁴²⁷

Rego goes on to explain that what made matters worse was that these uniforms chosen by SUTURSA, which he described as "over the top,"⁴²⁸ were "passively accepted" by the directors of the capoeira groups. As an extreme example of these "over the top," "untraditional" attire choices, Rego mentions an instance when a capoeira mestre consulted one of the SUTURSA directors about the possibility of wearing soccer jerseys with a number on the back, like a soccer team, but in a flash of "common sense," the director "categorically prohibited" this choice.⁴²⁹

Rego seems to ignore the fact that Bimba began the soccer jersey trend in the 1940s, followed closely by Pastinha, well before SUTURSA began meddling in capoeira demonstrations. Rego's examples, rather than confirming the passivity of capoeira performers, show their ability to negotiate with the new tourism directors and adapt past practices, such as the soccer jersey trend, to current circumstances. Rego romanticized capoeiristas from "the past"

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 45.

⁴²⁸ What I am translating as "over the top" is Rego's use of the adjective *amacacado(a)* in his phrase "*camisas amacacadas*." *Amacacado(a)* is an adjective deriving from the word *macaco*, Portuguese for monkey; to compare someone to a monkey usually refers to their inability to think for themselves, someone who is only able to imitate, "like a monkey." Rego's comparison could also refer to a monkey's supposed clownish behavior.

⁴²⁹ Rego, *Capoeira Angola; ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 361-62.

as always wearing white suits, which Rego claimed to have been blacks' "preferred attire."⁴³⁰

Although Bimba and his students had worn blue and white striped soccer jerseys in the 1940s, by the 1960s Bimba's students had adopted white cotton uniforms, which may in part explain Rego's sympathy for Bimba and tolerance for his innovations.⁴³¹

Rego's opinions diverged dramatically from those expressed by Carneiro and Amado, who praised and supported Capoeira Angola while dismissing Capoeira Regional. Writing in the late 1960s, Rego recognized the (by then) established "tradition" of Capoeira Regional. Rather than fretting over Bimba's gradual innovations, Rego worried about the rapid changes he witnessed in the late 1960s: the proliferation of capoeira schools and folkloric shows in response to an expanding tourism industry. With the publication of Rego's *Capoeira Angola*, heated debates about the authenticity of Bimba's Capoeira Regional gave way to debates surrounding the authenticity of folkloric shows directed by capoeira practitioners. Interestingly, Bimba's own folkloric shows steered clear of Rego's criticism. The *Grupo Folclórico do Mestre Bimba* operated largely without municipal subsidies, holding staged performances at Bimba's own private venue, the Sítio Caruano, and at private nightclubs such as the Boite de Ondina. Rego's respect for Bimba was undoubtedly related to the fact that Bimba's shows were independent from the tourism department.

Although Bimba held shows for tourists several times per week⁴³² by the time *Capoeira Angola* was published, Rego chose to omit these shows from his book, describing instead a

⁴³⁰ The reach of Rego's book was such that, forty years later, purists like Esteves continue to denounce any attempt to wear "bright colored clothing."

⁴³¹ In the mid to late 1940s, because of the inconvenience of having to buy soccer jerseys in lots of eleven (the number of players in a soccer team) and the lack of choice in sizes, Bimba decided to switch to plain white shirts with the emblem of the CCFR (Centro de Cultura Física Regional) designed by his student Angelo Decânio and embroidered by one of his wives, Mãe Bena. Decânio, *A herança de Mestre Bimba: filosofia e lógica africanas da capoeira*: 44-45.

⁴³² Campos, *Capoeira regional: a escola de Mestre Bimba*: 128.

graduation ceremony at Bimba's school.⁴³³ In an effort to "rescue" the tradition of Capoeira Regional, Rego focuses on the *ceremonial* aspects of this graduation ceremony and the very gravity of Bimba's presence. Rego describes the order of the events, including speeches and a formalized sequence of games. Finally, Rego continues,

[w]e arrive at the golden moment in the graduation ceremony—Mestre Bimba blows his whistle. Silence reigns and the ceremony begins. He quickly recounts what he knows and he saw what about capoeira and capoeiristas; and remembers passages from his life to serve as an example. After this, he invites the godmothers [*madrinhas*] to place the medals on the chest and the silk scarf around the neck of the godchildren [*afilhados*], speaking again, this time to explain about the medal[,] which is the symbol of the school[,] and the silk scarf. About the scarf [...] he explained that in the old days the greatest defense of the capoeirista against getting their necks cut by a straight razor was the use of a scarf called *esguião*, made out of pure, imported silk.⁴³⁴

In this passage, Rego foregrounds the importance of Bimba's life experiences and recognizes the merit in Bimba's contributions to capoeira during the previous five decades. Bimba's invented traditions of conferring medals, tying scarves, and choosing "godmothers" (often a graduating capoeirista's girlfriend) to ceremoniously participate in this ritual had the desired effect on Rego, convincing him of Capoeira Regional's "tradition." Bimba signaled the import of concluding his Capoeira Regional course through the conferral of medals, syncretically appropriating the distinction of military achievement; he also drew authenticity from the past through his use of the silk scarf, "rescuing" a lost tradition—an act of restoration congruent with the recommendations of the folklore movement.

Rego further reinforces his view of Bimba's Capoeira Regional as worthy of respect by framing the acclaimed "guardian" of capoeira Angola's tradition as a newcomer. He stops just

⁴³³ Graduation ceremonies nevertheless included some of the same elements as folkloric shows, such as acrobatic demonstration games, samba duro and samba de roda. The fact that the demonstration games were clearly choreographed was not condemned by Rego as a "loss" (in fact, he barely mentions these games, referring to them only through his attempt at an English spelling of *escrete*: "schath"). The addition of samba to the ceremony seemed traditional enough for Rego and met no objections. Rego, *Capoeira Angola; ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 286.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

short of calling Pastinha a fraud when he attributes his recent notoriety to the rise of the tourism industry, and adds that Pastinha's capoeira skills are only noteworthy considering his "old" age (discussed in Chapter 2). Rego goes as far as questioning Pastinha's capoeira credentials, suggesting that Aberrê (the capoeirista who played a leading role in bringing Pastinha back from his nearly thirty-year "absence" from capoeira, discussed in Chapter 1) might have been Pastinha's *teacher* rather than his student, countering what Pastinha had claimed since Aberrê's death.⁴³⁵ Rego also harshly criticizes Pastinha's book *Capoeira Angola*, taking issue with the author's explanation of capoeira's origins, which, according to Rego, was a task beyond Pastinha's "cultural reach."⁴³⁶ It is no coincidence that Rego also names his book *Capoeira Angola* (1968), certainly his attempt to correct the "absurdities" stated by Pastinha in his own *Capoeira Angola* (1964).

Rego considered himself an authority on capoeira, and indeed he did undertake substantial ethnographic work in the capoeira community in Salvador. His training as a historian, however, was deeply intertwined with his role as a tourism bureaucrat: Rego completed the course on "History and Tradition of Bahia" offered by the *Diretoria Municipal de Turismo* (Municipal Tourism Directorate, DMT) in 1954. Later Rego was chosen to pass on this knowledge—condensed and state-approved sound bites about Bahia's "traditions"—through workshops offered to the city taxi drivers, preparing them to interact with tourists. The "History and Tradition of Bahia" course, however, was not recognized by Bahia's Education Department

⁴³⁵ Mestre Cobrinha Verde also questions Pastinha's version of this story: "I [had] never heard of Pastinha. Never, only after Aberrê's death. Before Aberrê died, Pastinha was often accompanied by Aberrê. It was only afterwards that Pastinha started directing the school and saying that he had been Aberrê's teacher. Aberrê never told me who his teacher was." Santos, *Capoeira e Mandingas: Cobrinha Verde*: 18.

⁴³⁶ Rego, *Capoeira Angola; ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 271.

and was not affiliated with any educational institution.⁴³⁷ While in the 1950s this course was taken mostly for personal enrichment by amateur tour guides (mostly women of the Bahian elite), after the reorganization of the tourism department as SUTURSA the course was geared towards professional tour guides and travel agents.⁴³⁸ Although Rego did not work officially as a tour guide himself, he was well-versed in the official version of Bahia's history and tradition, and was known to lecture to tourists who attended municipal folkloric shows (discussed later in this chapter).

Rego adamantly objected to the practice of including what he considered to be misinformed, fantasized retellings of capoeira's history in folkloric shows: "there is always some wiseass that claims to be a 'professor' and, in an informal tone, lectures on the origin and history of capoeira, saying the greatest heresies."⁴³⁹ While the movement and the ritual of capoeira may have been the domain of capoeiristas, history, for Rego, was the domain of "real" professors and historians. Thirty years earlier, Carneiro had invited people from "the folk" to speak at the Second Afro-Brazilian congress, recognizing them as experts in their cultural practices. Taking over Carneiro's role as spokesperson for Afro-Brazilian "tradition," Rego took on a much more conservative stance and sought to keep the "folk" from deviating from what they did best: "bearing folklore."

The cultural tourism industry in Bahia—its urban setting in the capital, Salvador—disrupted neat notions of folklore as something found in rural areas, "traditions" subsequently collected and studied by intellectuals preoccupied with their preservation. Folklore had been

⁴³⁷ This course was taught by local experts on Bahia's history and culture, such Luiz Monteiro, Carlos Ott, Hildegardes Vianna, Alberto Marinho and Wanderley Pinho. The course also included visits to local candomblé temples and to the Pelourinho. Queiroz, *Turismo na Bahia: estratégias para o desenvolvimento*: 47;60.

⁴³⁸ ———, "A gestão pública e a competitividade de cidades turísticas: a experiência da cidade do Salvador," 319;45.

⁴³⁹ Rego, *Capoeira Angola; ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 290.

conceptualized as the cultural practices of “folklore bearers,” people “from the people” (*gente do povo*) who were born into certain folk “traditions” and subsequently carried them, passively, in their bodies. The fact that Bimba taught several white, college-educated, middle-class students, some of whom now performed with his folkloric ensemble, disrupted class and skin color associations with “tradition,” as well as the notion of “bearing” (rather than learning) folklore. Capoeiristas whose socio-economic background and skin color matched the stereotype of the “folklore bearer,” nevertheless began including music and dance forms other than capoeira to folkloric shows, which they had themselves learned from other “folklore bearers.”

Throughout Rego’s *Capoeira Angola*, his anxieties regarding innovation are palpable as he struggles with conciliating the demands of the tourism industry with the maintenance of Bahia’s history and tradition. Giving continuity to the “tradition” of bureaucratic intervention in processes of cultural change, Rego takes sides. Diverging from Amado and Carneiro, however, he proposes a capoeira whose traditions were honored by Bimba (despite his alleged foreign borrowings), exposing Pastinha as an “invented tradition.” Rego’s *Capoeira Angola* marks a shift in attitude towards Bimba; however, Rego’s emphasis on Bimba’s rituals and ceremonies tells only part of the story. As the most comprehensive and most widely cited book about the state of capoeira in the late 1960s, the absence of information about Bimba’s folkloric shows in *Capoeira Angola* has all but erased this important aspect of Bimba’s work from the history of capoeira. It is ironic that *Capoeira Angola*, written by an employee of the tourism department, harshly criticizes and selectively erases capoeira’s involvement in the development of Bahia’s tourism industry.

III. The happiness of capoeira: Mestre Canjiquinha

*"If today—I don't know if you'll believe me—if today capoeira is spread all over the world, you can thank me."*⁴⁴⁰

--Mestre Canjiquinha

In 1954, the *Diretoria Municipal de Turismo* (DMT) inaugurated its new building, complete with a stage for folkloric shows.⁴⁴¹ This building was considered a tourist attraction in and of itself, featuring an elaborate fountain designed by visual artist Mario Cravo and two telescopes aimed at the Bay of All Saints. This building was located at the Belvedere da Sé—the same location where the Odeon Stadium once stood, and where capoeira attained visibility and popularity during the 1936 pugilistic season (discussed in Chapter 2).

For several years, the folkloric shows offered at the municipal stage were directed by capoeirista and public functionary Washington Bruno da Silva (1925-1994), better known as Mestre Canjiquinha. Canjiquinha is best remembered for his active participation in the tourism industry—as the capoeirista who indeed defined himself in relationship to it. The son of a single mother who worked as a washer-woman, Canjiquinha began working at age fourteen. Still a minor, he began performing odd manual jobs informally for the mayor's office, and was formally hired as a public functionary after he turned eighteen.⁴⁴² Soon after the DMT moved to its landmark building, newspaper columnist and DMT employee Guilherme Simões invited

⁴⁴⁰ Video-recorded interview with Canjiquinha by Raimundo César Alves de Almeida and Luis Renato Vieira, c. 1988, unpublished.

⁴⁴¹ Goli Guerreiro, "A cidade imaginada: Salvador sob o olhar do turismo," *Revista Gestão e Planejamento* 6, no. 11 (2005): 8; Queiroz, "A gestão pública e a competitividade de cidades turísticas: a experiência da cidade do Salvador," 318.

⁴⁴² Video-recorded interview with Canjiquinha by Raimundo César Alves de Almeida and Luis Renato Vieira, c. 1988, unpublished. See also Antônio Moreira et al., *Canjiquinha: A Alegria da Capoeira* (Salvador: Fundação Cultural do Estado da Bahia, c. 1989), 28;46.

Canjiquinha, who taught capoeira at the time at Pastinha's school,⁴⁴³ to stage folkloric shows at the Belvedere da Sé.⁴⁴⁴ His job as a public functionary was then divided between the copy room, where he operated the mimeograph in the mornings, and the stage, where he directed and performed in folkloric shows in the afternoon.⁴⁴⁵ Canjiquinha's capoeira shows mark a shift in the DMT's approach to staging folklore: having previously relied on folkloric stagings by Hildegardes Vianna,⁴⁴⁶ now the DMT placed Canjiquinha, a "genuine" working-class Afro-Brazilian "folklore bearer," in charge of staging the tourism department's capoeira shows.

Canjiquinha drew his capoeira lineage to Aberrê.⁴⁴⁷ Aberrê, although an "old time" practitioner of capoeiragem, did not seem to align himself with Capoeira Angola as a formalized style.⁴⁴⁸ Canjiquinha, perhaps influenced by Aberrê's autonomy, saw the division of capoeira into two styles as a marketing strategy, and insisted that "*capoeira é uma só*": there was only one capoeira. Canjiquinha, the only well-known capoeirista at the time who refused to choose between "tradition" and modernity, explained:

There is only one kind of capoeira. [...] There is neither capoeira regional nor capoeira angola, there is capoeira. Tell me to sing a capoeira angola song and I won't know one. I didn't learn capoeira in Angola, I learned it in Bahia, in Salvador. [Mestre Bimba] was an intelligent guy, so he created capoeira regional, which was from the region of Bahia, but [capoeira regional] doesn't exist.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴³ Several capoeira players who had not been Pastinha's disciples taught at the Capoeira Angola Sports Center in the 1950s, including Canjiquinha and Cobrinha Verde (Rafael Alves França). Santos, *Capoeira e Mandingas: Cobrinha Verde*.

⁴⁴⁴ Moreira et al., *Canjiquinha: A Alegria da Capoeira*: 59.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁴⁶ Vianna staged folkloric shows to be performed at professional conferences held in Bahia. Queiroz, *Turismo na Bahia: estratégias para o desenvolvimento*: 62.

⁴⁴⁷ Aberrê, also spelled ABR, born (Antônio) Raymundo Argolo, discussed in chapter 2.

⁴⁴⁸ Pastinha states that Aberrê died in September, 1942, shortly after the formation of the Capoeira Angola Sports Center in 1941, which prevented him from participating in the further development of the center. Canjiquinha, according to his biographers, remembers studying with Aberrê until 1951, which would point to Aberrê's unwillingness to work with Pastinha at the Capoeira Angola Sports Center, rather than an absence due to his untimely death. Pastinha, "Quando as Pernas Fazem Miserêr," 7; Moreira et al., *Canjiquinha: A Alegria da Capoeira*: 59.

⁴⁴⁹ Mercia Queiroz and Ricardo Ottoni, "Capoeira em Cena," (Brazil: IRDEB, 1982).

By stating that he did not learn capoeira in Angola, Canjiquinha dismisses the story of origins circulated by Pastinha of a capoeira brought from Angola (the dance of the zebra called *'ngolo*). He also dismisses the capoeira marketed as “regional” by Bimba, the savvy entrepreneur. The fact that Canjiquinha was not restricted by an affiliation to either of the two capoeira styles—he indeed exposed both as “invented traditions”—allowed him the freedom to create and reinvent his own capoeira for the stage.

As capoeira schools and performance ensembles rapidly proliferated during the late 1950s in Salvador, Canjiquinha realized the need to add variety to his capoeira shows. Like Bimba, he began adding samba to his capoeira performances, as well as other “folkloric” dances:

Capoeira, maculelê, samba de roda, I was the first to put all this on the market, because I used to do capoeira shows, and when I saw that it didn't work I added samba de roda, and from samba de roda I added maculelê, and from maculelê I added the fisherman's net [dance], and the maculelê I learned in 1954 from the now deceased Mestre Popó. He taught me, if I know maculelê it is thanks to him.⁴⁵⁰

Canjiquinha realized that capoeira was not enough to entertain tourists, who sought performances of Brazilianness that matched the effusive, vibrant and “over the top” destination image disseminated by Hollywood in the 1940s and 50s.⁴⁵¹ Regardless of who first “invented” this folkloric suite (with capoeira, samba de roda, and maculelê as core “numbers”), the fact that

⁴⁵⁰ Video-recorded interview with Canjiquinha by Raimundo César Alves de Almeida and Luis Renato Vieira, c. 1988, unpublished. Although I have not been able to determine exactly when Canjiquinha began including samba and maculelê in his performances, it is unclear whether or not he was “the first to put all this on the market”: Emília Biancardi's folkloric ensemble (at the time called *Conjunto Folclórico da Secretaria de Educação*) performed maculelê shows at the municipal stage at the Belvedere da Sé from 1964-1967, and Bimba and Pastinha had been including samba in their capoeira demonstrations at least since the early 1960s.

⁴⁵¹ In fact, it was Carmen Miranda, the embodiment of Brazilian excess in Hollywood films at this time, who provided the inspiration for the nickname “Canjiquinha,” given to Washington Bruno da Silva because of his habit of singing one of Miranda's popular songs, *Canjiquinha quente* (hot corn porridge). Rego, *Capoeira Angola; ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 275.

it has endured into the second decade of the twenty-first century, at the time of this writing, attests to the widespread popularity of this innovation.⁴⁵²

Canjiquinha gives continuity to the tradition of inventiveness also present in the contributions of capoeira innovators such as Zuma, Bimba, and Pastinha—a tradition that challenges conservative approaches to cultural production such as the model of folklore *borne* by people “from the people,” whose creativity was to be regulated by cultural “authorities” such as Rego. Canjiquinha, a semi-literate⁴⁵³ son of a washer-woman, a working-class man “from the people,” further challenges the “folklore bearer” model by admitting to having himself learned maculelê from a “folklore bearer,” Mestre Popó, who himself “rescued” and reinvented maculelê after the increased interest in the form in the 1950s and 1960s. Carneiro’s model of collection and restoration of “endangered” folk traditions, which relied on a clear erudite/folk dichotomy, did not prepare culture bureaucrats such as Rego to deal with a situation in which people from “the folk” engaged in learning, “restoring” and staging traditions.

Rego writes about Canjiquinha at length in *Capoeira Angola*. Also a municipal public functionary, Rego knew Canjiquinha well and spent a lot of time observing his capoeira classes and folkloric shows.⁴⁵⁴ In fact, Rego would often lecture about capoeira to tourists who came to watch Canjiquinha’s shows.⁴⁵⁵ He praises Canjiquinha as a singer and extols his ability to improvise:

He sings like few others and has an extremely vast repertoire, including a great facility for improvisation and[,] of everyone[,] he is the one who has contributed the most to the adaptation of other folkloric songs to capoeira. A large portion of the songs in this essay

⁴⁵² Although Canjiquinha states he was “the first to put all this on the market,” it is unclear who pioneered the folkloric suite that continues to perform “Brazil” around the world.

⁴⁵³ About his formal education, Canjiquinha stated: “I have no Portuguese. I didn’t graduate in philosophy. [...] My reading is very weak.” Moreira et al., *Canjiquinha: A Alegria da Capoeira*.

⁴⁵⁴ Magalhães Filho, “Jogo de Discursos: a disputa por hegemonia na tradição da capoeira angola bahiana,” 83-84.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with Mestre Geni quoted in *ibid.*, 83.

were collected from Canjiquinha. He was[,] out of all the capoeiristas in Bahia[,] the one with the most invitations for exhibitions, travels to the interior as well as other states, as well as the one who most acted in films, short and full-length features[.]⁴⁵⁶

Rego follows this praise with an impressive list of travels and performances by Canjiquinha between the years of 1959 and 1966. Rego positions Canjiquinha clearly as a “folklore bearer” (and one of the main informants for his book) when he states that most of the songs included in his essay were collected *from* Canjiquinha.

Rego recognizes Canjiquinha’s creativity in adapting songs from other “folk” traditions to capoeira in this passage, but criticizes Canjiquinha harshly in a later chapter for stepping outside the “permitted” limits of innovation. Although he omits Canjiquinha’s name, Rego still gives the reader enough information to determine he speaks of Canjiquinha—the only one who held shows with exclusivity at the municipal folkloric stage at the Belvedere da Sé. Declaring that this nameless group had been “completely prostituted,” Rego, continues:

Preoccupied with maintaining its exclusivity, [this group] does everything imaginable in terms of corrupting tradition [*descaracterização*]. At one point in the exhibition, the mestre loses his composure, tells jokes, tells anecdotes, tap dances and moves his hips and brings in someone to tell a quick history of capoeira, where the greatest aberrations are said. Afterwards he leads a samba de roda to the sound of capoeira musical instruments[.] One time I asked him why all that, to which he answered that it was *so that it wouldn’t get monoto* (he meant monotonous) and scare the tourist away.⁴⁵⁷ (Italics in original)

Again, Rego asserts his authority as a capoeira historian and objects to the historical “aberrations” told on stage by someone he considers less qualified than himself (and who also remains nameless in this account.) Unfortunately, Rego does not cite examples of such “aberrations.” Since he believed that capoeira was a creolized form born in Brazil rather than imported whole from Africa (a common debate at the time, which lasted well into the 70s and

⁴⁵⁶ Rego, *Capoeira Angola; ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 275-76.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 362.

80s) certainly such historical “aberrations” included stories of capoeira’s African origins. Rego also undermines Canjiquinha’s authority by ridiculing his pronunciation of the word “monotonous,” a shortening of the word that reveals his lack of formal education and his working class status. Composure was a measure of tradition for Rego—and found in abundance in Bimba’s demeanor. Canjiquinha’s use of humor as well as his dancing are used here as examples of loss of both composure and tradition, even though Bimba was also known for telling jokes and entertaining his audiences, as discussed earlier.

In spite of Rego’s protests, Canjiquinha continued to tell jokes, dance, and innovate, at the Belvedere da Sé. Canjiquinha’s understanding of humor was related simultaneously to capoeira’s sense of play and to Amado’s image of the happy, convivial, tropical Bahian: “You see[,] I’m the happiness of capoeira[.] I play [*brinco*] with one, I play with another, I play with a student, I play with the audience.” Using the verb *brincar* (to play, as in child’s play), Canjiquinha describes his playful and happy approach to capoeira, both on and off stage. Canjiquinha’s own slogan, “I am the happiness of capoeira” was closely related to BAHIATURSA’s 1979 slogan “Bahia, land of happiness.”⁴⁵⁸ Through his very “being,” Canjiquinha matched the destination image of the land of happiness during his shows.

Despite Rego’s ridicule, avoiding “monotony” was a real concern in staged shows. Although capoeira demonstrations attracted relatively large crowds from the 1930s through the 1950s, by the early 1960s capoeira on stage was no longer a novelty and had become standard tourist fare. Tourists’ short attention span demanded brief, “action-packed,” music and dance “numbers.” Canjiquinha used all the elements at his disposal to create a fast-paced show that kept tourists engaged; not only did he innovate by incorporating samba de roda, maculelê and the

⁴⁵⁸ Eufrázia Cristina Menezes Santos, “Performances culturais nas festas de largo da Bahia,” in *30th Annual Encontro da Anpocs, Performance Drama e Sociedade Working Group* (Caxambu2006), 6.

fisherman's net dance [*puxada de rede*] into his shows, he also created three new subgenres of capoeira: the *muzenza*, the *samango* and the *samba de angola*.⁴⁵⁹

Canjiquinha understood that the success of his shows depended on invention and creativity. He explained that “[i]f mestre Bimba created [capoeira] regional I thought it was appropriate to create the *muzenza*, the *samango*.” Canjiquinha explains that he borrowed a rhythm from *candomblé* to create the *muzenza*; to this borrowed rhythm, he deliberately crafted a new movement style by practicing in front of a mirror.⁴⁶⁰ In creating new movement to a *candomblé* rhythm, Canjiquinha authorizes his creativity and further Africanizes his capoeira performances through the Africanity of *candomblé*. For the *samango*, he remembers inventing both the rhythm and the movement: “The dance is different. [...] The *samango* is very violent, it has flying scissor [kicks] it has everything.” Like Bimba, Canjiquinha amplifies and choreographs capoeira's violence for the stage in the *samango*—“acting out” violence in a hyperbolic, virtuosic fashion. The *samba de angola*, which he connected to his own *samba* performances during carnival parades, was a mixture of capoeira and *samba*: “I started to dance *samba de angola*[,] playing capoeira while [dancing] *samba*.”⁴⁶¹ Like Pastinha, who also danced a “*samba de Angola*” during his demonstrations for tourists,⁴⁶² Canjiquinha turns capoeira into a

⁴⁵⁹ Because Rego does not mention these innovations in his book, I assume Canjiquinha invented these three styles of capoeira after 1968.

⁴⁶⁰ “It is played [*toca*] differently, it is played [*joga*] differently. It occurred to me like this: I arrived at the *candomblé* and I heard they playing: it's *muzenza*, it's *muzenza*. I played it on the *berimbau*. Then I said: how am I going to play [*jogar*] this? Then I would practice in front of the mirror. Then I had [my students] practice the movement. I saw that it worked.” Canjiquinha quoted in Moreira et al., *Canjiquinha: A Alegria da Capoeira*: 40.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁶² Jorge Amado, in his 1960 revision of *Bahia de Todos os Santos*, mentions that Pastinha would dance the “*samba de Angola*” in his demonstrations for tourists, pointing to the possibility of prior versions of this amalgamation of *samba* and capoeira. Amado, *Bahia de todos os santos: guia das ruas e dos mistérios da cidade do Salvador*: 209.

dance by adding the syncopation and “happiness” of samba, well-established in tourists’ minds as the quintessential Brazilian carnival rhythm, to his capoeira repertoire.

Not only did Canjiquinha innovate by adding variety to his shows, he also used plots in some scenes. Mestre Geni and Mestre Lua Rasta, both former performers in Canjiquinha’s shows, remember participating in a section of the show called *festa de arromba*,⁴⁶³ a simulated brawl:

Canjiquinha would put one group of capoeiristas on one side and another group of capoeiristas on the other and [we] would simulate a fight[,] everybody would fight with everybody [...] It was a simulated fight where nobody got hurt.”⁴⁶⁴

Like Bimba and Pastinha, Canjiquinha, transformed capoeira’s violence for the stage. Like Bimba’s demonstration games, these simulated brawls foregrounded and “acted out” violence. Canjiquinha, however, also included the re-enactment of the social context in which this violence would have taken place: a confrontation at a party or large social gathering. However, Canjiquinha also shared the same preoccupation with Bimba and Pastinha in articulating a capoeira for the stage without losing capoeira’s potential as self-defense. According to Lua Rasta, Canjiquinha would remind his performers that the *festa de arromba* scene was also an exercise to prepare capoeiristas for situations of conflict off stage: “we had to learn [for when we] had to defend ourselves, because in a public festival at a plaza [*festa de largo*] [...] you’re on your own.”⁴⁶⁵ Here, Canjiquinha expresses the same double consciousness as Bimba and Pastinha of a capoeira simultaneously capable of pleasing audiences and rehearsing violence for situations of self-defense.

⁴⁶³ *Festa de arromba* is an expression from the 1960s and 70s, still in limited use today in Brazil, that can be loosely translated as “an amazing party.” Canjiquinha’s use of the phrase is probably related to a popular song titled “Festa de Arromba,” recorded by rock/pop singer Erasmo Carlos in 1964.

⁴⁶⁴ Mestre Geni quoted in Castro Jr., “Campos de visibilidade da Capoeira Baiana: as festas populares, as escolas de capoeira, o cinema e a arte (1955-1985),” 113.

⁴⁶⁵ Mestre Lua Rasta quoted in *ibid.*, 114.

Canjiquinha was sharply aware of capoeira's importance to the tourism industry, and he knew his shows played an important role in performing Bahianness for visitors to the state—a happy, colorful, festive conviviality, not without the *frisson* of conflict, performed within the safety of the stage. He also knew that, through his participation in several films, he played a significant role in the global dissemination of capoeira: “If today—I don’t know if you’ll believe me—if today capoeira is spread all over the world, you can thank me, because through films, capoeira is now all over the world.”⁴⁶⁶ Capoeira on film, however, was framed as a backwards, dangerous Afro-Brazilian practice rather than a harmless, festive celebration of Bahianness.

Through his participation in films such as *The Turning Wind (Barravento)*⁴⁶⁷ and *The Given Word (Pagador de Promessas*, nominated for an Oscar and recipient of a *Palme d’Or* at Cannes),⁴⁶⁸ both released in 1962, Canjiquinha introduced the world to capoeira.⁴⁶⁹ In both these films, capoeira is framed as a primitive practice (and a practice of “primitives”) and used as a contrast to Brazil’s modernity. While in his staged shows Canjiquinha was free to innovate and experiment with creating new rhythms and new movement styles, the directors of these films, with international audiences in mind, made sure capoeira was framed to match the destination image of Brazil, where Afro-Brazilians “bore its traditions.”

In *The Turning Wind*, Canjiquinha’s capoeira is removed from its urban setting and set in a fishing village, much like the place where capoeira was destined to eventually recede and disappear, as Carneiro had predicted in 1936. In *The Given Word*, Canjiquinha’s capoeira is staged in its urban setting, in Salvador’s historic district, on the stairs of the church of the Holy

⁴⁶⁶ Video-recorded interview with Canjiquinha by Raimundo César Alves de Almeida and Luis Renato Vieira, c. 1988, unpublished.

⁴⁶⁷ Written and directed by Glauber Rocha and produced by Rex Schindler.

⁴⁶⁸ Written by Anselmo Duarte and Dias Gomes and directed by Anselmo Duarte.

⁴⁶⁹ Although he received credit for “original music” in *The Turning Wind*, his performance in the film goes uncredited; for his role in *The Given Word*, Canjiquinha is credited as “capoeira fighter.”

Sacrament. However, his fast moving circular kicks, along with editing that alternates rapidly between the musical instruments and the movement, gives the capoeira game a sense of chaos, of a “primitive” danger barely under control.

While Canjiquinha took capoeira to the world through his participation in films, his shows were performed almost exclusively inside Brazil, and remained largely confined to tourist settings. Even though Canjiquinha was extremely creative as director, choreographer, and performer in his own shows—combining the “happiness” of samba with the contained theatricalized violence of *festas de arromba*—his innovations, more often than not, were read as authorless “folkloric tradition” on the municipal stage at the Belvedere da Sé. Both the destination image of happy conviviality met by Canjiquinha’s staged shows and the destination image of “savage” primitivism reproduced by the directors of these films continued to guide choreographies of Brazilianness on stage and on screen throughout the 1960s and 70s.

IV. Capoeira on stage: the tradition and modernity of *Viva Bahia*

“Viva Bahia wasn’t just samba de roda, maculelê, capoeira, no it wasn’t. It was an experimental group that I started and I did it my way, the way I wanted.”

--Emília Biancardi

Cultural policy during the military dictatorship focused on the protection and preservation of national “patrimony,” giving continuity to Gustavo Capanema’s directives as Minister of Education and Health under Getúlio Vargas (discussed in Chapter 2). The Conselho Federal de Cultura (Federal Culture Council), a commission created by Minister of Education and Culture Jarbas Passarinho in 1966, among other administrative duties, was charged with

devising strategies to “preserve, restore and disseminate” Brazil’s cultural patrimony.⁴⁷⁰

Although initially this commission was still primarily focused on tangible heritage (historical buildings and monuments), by the early 1970s, the CFC had broadened the definition of patrimony to include what is today understood as intangible cultural heritage, including “habits and customs” and the “artistic and literary creations most representative of the Brazilian creative spirit.”⁴⁷¹ Folkloric shows, found in abundance in Bahia, were included in the roster of artistic creations “representative of the Brazilian creative spirit.”

Throughout the 1960s, dozens of folkloric ensembles sprang up in Salvador, performing at capoeira academies, at nightclubs and restaurants, and at the new municipal *Centro Folclórico* (with Rego himself curating the programming).⁴⁷² A few of these ensembles were able to secure short engagements at “high-brow” venues such as Salvador’s Teatro Castro Alves. Among these, the most “polished” shows were chosen by the federal government to represent Brazil abroad. The *Grupo Folclórico da Bahia* (later renamed *Olodum*)⁴⁷³ and the *Conjunto Folclórico Viva Bahia*, directed by well-spoken, educated, middle-class Bahians, were selected to perform at international folklore festivals in Argentina, Ecuador, and Peru in the 1960s and 70s. In the last section of this chapter, I will briefly discuss the work of the short-lived *Grupo Folclórico da Bahia/Olodum*, continuing to an in-depth analysis of the folkloric performances of the *Conjunto Folclórico Viva Bahia* between 1963 and 1974.

⁴⁷⁰ Tatyana de Amaral Maia, "O patrimônio cultural brasileiro em debate: a ação do Conselho Federal de Cultura (1967-1975)," *Revista CPC (Centro de Preservação Cultural USP)* 11(2011): 71.

⁴⁷¹ “Diretrizes para uma política cultural” (document drafted by the CFC in 1973), quoted in *ibid.*, 68.

⁴⁷² Shortly after the publication of Rego’s *Capoeira Angola* in 1968, the SUTURSA acquired a second folkloric stage, the new *Centro Folclórico* at the Castro Alves Square (the former location of the famous Tabaris nightclub and brothel). According to Mestre Geni (José Serafim Ferreira Júnior), Rego was in charge of the programming of that stage. Magalhães Filho, "Jogo de Discursos: a disputa por hegemonia na tradição da capoeira angola bahiana," 91.

⁴⁷³ By 1969, the group had reorganized under the name *Olodum*, performing at the Teatro Castro Alves, touring to Ecuador, and participating in a documentary about Bahia by Rex Schindler titled *Bahia por Exemplo*. By the late 1970s, the group was renamed *Brasil Tropical* under the direction of Camisa Roxa.

In 1964, a group of Bimba's disciples, many of them university students, formed the *Grupo Folclórico da Bahia*.⁴⁷⁴ These capoeiristas' middle-class origins, as well as the fact that most of them were not of Afro-Brazilian origins, foregrounded their "non-folk" status, simultaneously lending "respectability" to the performances and challenging the idea of folklore as the domain of working-class, brown or black "folklore bearers." Having learned directly from a respected "folklore bearer," Bimba, these white university students put forth a learned rather than "borne" model of folklore that disquieted folklore traditionalists. In the same way that Rego objected to the "folk" taking on the role of historians, he objected to middle-class university students "infiltrating" folklore ensembles, which, as he saw it, detracted from their authenticity: "the infiltration of people with a different social *status* from [the status] of these [capoeira schools] takes away their authenticity."⁴⁷⁵

The *Grupo Folclórico da Bahia* drew its authenticity in part from the presence of indisputable "bearers" of tradition on stage. In order to mollify criticism regarding the "non-folk-ness" of its members, the group hired Mãe Zefa, a 100-year old "traditional Bahian woman,"⁴⁷⁶ who performed with the ensemble until she was 104; through her black skin and her

⁴⁷⁴ The Grupo Folclórico da Bahia was founded by Acordeon (Ubirajara Guimarães Almeida), Itapoan (Raimundo César Alves de Almeida), Camisa Roxa (Edvaldo Carneiro e Silva) and Beijoca (Francisco Benjamin Muniz). One of the founding members of the *Grupo Folclórico da Bahia*, Acordeon, moved to Northern California and was the first capoeira mestre to begin teaching Bimba's Capoeira Regional on the west coast of the United States. Mestre Acordeon was my first capoeira teacher.

⁴⁷⁵ Rego, *Capoeira Angola; ensaio sócio-etnográfico*: 290. Rego dwells at length on what he considered an ill-advised attempt by this group to stage the history of capoeira: "In Bahia, the *Grupo Folclórico da Bahia*, directed by Ubirajara Guimarães Almeida, a disciple of Mestre Bimba, has been organizing performances of stylized capoeira. [During] a show titled *Night of Folklore* [...] there was the above-mentioned group at the end of the program, presenting *History of Capoeira and Samba Duro*. Sadly, this does not match up with the truth in terms of the History of Capoeira. The group is misinformed and sometimes resorts to the imagination, in terms of the historical and socio-ethnographic aspect of capoeira, beginning to spread untruths to those in the audience. It would be better if, starting with concrete facts about capoeira, stylized as they might be, they would create their own histories and put together a show, without the pretense of making the history or ethnography of capoeira." Ibid., 322-23.

⁴⁷⁶ Mãe Zefa had been a live-in nanny with Acordeon's family for two generations. Almeida, *Capoeira: A Brazilian Art Form*: 46;133.

old age, Mãe Zefa, billed as the “spiritual mother of the group,”⁴⁷⁷ lent authenticity to these shows—an authenticity not sufficiently conveyed through the white, middle-class bodies of many of its performers.

The *Grupo Folclórico da Bahia* was dissolved around 1968, briefly reorganizing under the direction of Camisa Roxa and Beijoca as *Olodum*. Mãe Zefa continued to perform with *Olodum*, who complemented Mãe Zefa’s presence with beautiful young “mulatas.” As one enthusiastic newspaper listing warned, viewers had only one day left to “be swept away by the ecstatically beautiful mulatas in the cast[.]”⁴⁷⁸ In the early 1970s, the group, renamed *Brasil Tropical* under the sole direction of Camisa Roxa, fully embraced the scantily clad “mulata” as its main attraction, favoring a brown “exotic” femininity over the “raw” masculine physicality of capoeira, despite the fact that the group’s original founders had all been skilled capoeiristas.⁴⁷⁹

Although maculelê was initially the featured dance (often the finale) in the shows of the *Conjunto Folclórico Viva Bahia*, capoeira became its main attraction during its international tours in the mid 1970s. Emília Biancardi Ferreira, *Viva Bahia*’s founder and director, was the only non-capoeirista, and the only woman, to direct a folkloric ensemble. Biancardi was the only child of a middle-class interracial couple from Vitória da Conquista, in the interior of Bahia.⁴⁸⁰ Born in 1944, Biancardi moved to Salvador with her mother at age thirteen after her father’s

⁴⁷⁷ "Mãe Zefa é a força do grupo," *Jornal J.C.*, July 19th 1970.

⁴⁷⁸ Jurandir Ferreira, "Olodum sai de cartaz," *Diário de Notícias*, July 17th 1970.

⁴⁷⁹ According to the program for their 1979 show at the Teatro Castro Alves, capoeira was still present in the group’s repertoire, including a “modern” *pas de deux* titled *Capoeira do Amor*, choreographed by Domingos Campos, who had been a student of Mercedes Baptista, who in turn was influenced by U.S. choreographer Katherine Dunham. The “traditional” capoeira scene followed a simple plot, similar to Canjiquinha’s *feita de arromba*, his choreographed brawl. Edvaldo Carneiro e Silva and Domingos Campos, "Brasil Tropical," ed. Teatro Castro Alves (Salvador 1979).

⁴⁸⁰ Her father was an Afro-Brazilian lawyer from Vitória da Conquista and her mother was the daughter of Italian immigrants. Despite the fact that Biancardi’s father was Afro-Brazilian, she is light-skinned and is considered “white” in Bahia. Although her second last name, Ferreira, is her father’s family name, she chose the more unique Italian last name from her mother’s side as her professional/stage surname.

death. In Salvador, she studied piano at the Escola de Música da Bahia (Bahia's School of Music), earning a teaching certificate in *Canto Orfeônico* in 1960. A young widow, Biancardi's mother, Margarida, went to great lengths to allow Emília to pursue her musical talents (aside from piano, she played the drum set and the accordion), supporting her all-girl pop band, *Les Girls*,⁴⁸¹ and later financing her daughter's research in Brazilian folklore.

Biancardi got her first job in 1960 as a music teacher at the Instituto de Educação Isaías Alves (IEIA), a public school in Salvador. Rather than follow her training in *Canto Orfeônico* and teach music through patriotic anthems, Biancardi decided to teach her students through folklore:

Let me clarify that, when I was appointed, in the 1960s, Music teacher at the Instituto de Educação Isaías Alves (IEIA), in Salvador, instead of teaching traditional classes, with anthems, choirs and music theory (which was how the discipline was taught at the time), I opted for creating a group of applied folklore, with the intent of undertaking, along with students, research about the ludic performance practices in Bahia, a research later reproduced and presented on stages around Salvador.⁴⁸²

Biancardi began her teaching career at a time of relative creative freedom: the period following the end of Getúlio Vargas' New State known as the first re-democratization of Brazil. Four years before another military coup d'état in 1964 would return Brazil to a dictatorial regime, a young school teacher's idea of rejecting patriotic anthems was bold, but still congruent with the gradual shedding of Vargas' nationalist doctrine.

After 1964, Biancardi's "group of applied folklore" was embraced as the official ensemble of the Inspectorate of Music and Orpheonic Song (Inspetoria de Música e Canto

⁴⁸¹ Biancardi was the band leader and drummer for the all-girl cover band *Les Girls* in the late 1950s. The band was named after the 1957 Hollywood musical *Les Girls*. Emília Biancardi, personal communication, 2010. Jaime Sodré, a Bahian professor and researcher specializing in Afro-Brazilian culture, remembers being amazed at seeing a woman playing drums at a *Les Girls* concert. He later approached Biancardi and asked her to teach him how to play the drum set, and she obliged. Jaime Sodré, personal communication, 2011.

⁴⁸² Emília Biancardi, *Raízes Musicais da Bahia* (Salvador: Secretaria de Cultura e Turismo da Bahia, 2006), 14.

Orfeônico), an arm of Bahia's Department of Education (Secretaria de Educação), until 1967. During this time, the ensemble performed maculelê shows at the SUTURSA stage. Biancardi's rebelliousness in her choice of the "folk" over the national was quickly coopted by state agencies preoccupied with meeting the tourism industry's rapidly increasing demand for representations of Bahianness. In the late 1960s, Biancardi dissociated the ensemble from the Department of Education, and, renamed *Conjunto Folclórico Viva Bahia* (Viva Bahia Folkloric Ensemble), the ensemble became a private enterprise funded primarily by Biancardi and her mother.



Figure 3.2 *Conjunto Folclórico Viva Bahia* performing maculelê. Photographer unknown, c.1968. Courtesy of the Fundação Gregório de Mattos and the Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Salvador.

Biancardi sought the guidance of Hildegardes Vianna—a folklorist, newspaper columnist, member of the Campaign for the Defense of Brazilian Folklore, and SUTURSA

employee—who went on to advise Biancardi’s research on the folkloric traditions she hoped to stage. Although Biancardi traveled a few times with her students to the “interior” of the state for brief ethnographic field research experiences, the bulk of the transmission of “folk” traditions took place at Biancardi’s house, where “folklore bearers” were hired to teach maculelê, the fisherman’s net dance, samba de roda, dances from candomblé, and capoeira.⁴⁸³ At Vianna’s recommendation, Biancardi later invited some of these “folklore bearers” to perform with the ensemble: rather than purveyors of “culture” merely listed on the programs or erased altogether, these “folklore bearers,” people “from the people,” were invited to create and perform alongside her students.⁴⁸⁴ Among the “folklore bearers” who became core members of Viva Bahia were candomblé practitioners Dona Coleta (Clotildes Lopes Alves), who taught dances from candomblé, and Seu Negão (Gilberto Nonato Sacramento), in charge of candomblé drumming. Although Pastinha taught capoeira to Biancardi’s students, he did not perform with the group; instead, he recommended one of his best students, João Grande (João Oliveira dos Santos), who became a core member of Viva Bahia and travelled with the company throughout the 1970s.

⁴⁸³ Zezinho de Popó (José de Almeida Andrade) taught maculelê, Mestre Canapum taught the fisherman’s net dance (puxada de rede), Dona Coleta (Clotildes Lopes Alves) and Seu Negão (Gilberto Nonato Sacramento) taught the music and dances of candomblé, and Seu Vavá (Valdécio Santos) taught the *Rancho do Boi*, *Rancho da Burrinha*, and *Baile Pastoril* (dramatic dances). Ibid. Around 1964, Pastinha himself was hired to teach capoeira to Biancardi’s students at her house. (While both male and female company members learned capoeira, on stage capoeira was performed only by men. The only existing photographic record of Pastinha teaching women comes from these sessions at Biancardi’s house.)

⁴⁸⁴ Although Biancardi’s students were not wealthy, the fact that they were finishing their secondary education indicates a middle-class socio-economic status.



Figure 3.3 Dona Coleta teaching Emília Biancardi's students at her residence in Salvador circa 1964. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Emília Biancardi.



Figure 3.4 Mestre Canapum teaching Emília Biancardi's students at her residence in Salvador circa 1964. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Emília Biancardi.



Figure 3.5 Mestre Pastinha teaching Emília Biancardi's students at her residence in Salvador circa 1964. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Emília Biancardi.

Placing “folklore bearers” on the stage—not the low-brow tourist show stage but stages devoted to presenting “the arts”—lent authenticity to the material presented by Viva Bahia while simultaneously “ennobling” the folk through high art. By 1969, the amateur ensemble of teenagers performing in a school auditorium had become a professional ensemble performing in Brazil’s most prestigious high art performance venues, such as Salvador’s Teatro Castro Alves as well as the historic municipal theater of Rio de Janeiro (Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro, a theater modeled after the Paris Opera, inaugurated in 1909). Working with Viva Bahia was

among the most prestigious jobs for Bahia's dancers and capoeiristas at the time: "if you danced in Emília Biancardi's show you were the man."⁴⁸⁵

Folkloric shows for tourists featuring capoeira, maculelê, and various types of samba were commonplace in Salvador by the time Viva Bahia became a professional ensemble. On any given day, tourists could choose from a number of shows listed in the tourism/entertainment section of Bahia's newspapers. However, as Vianna declared in an open letter of support, Viva Bahia was "more than a simple folkloric ensemble. [...] Viva Bahia is not a group organized for entertaining tourists."⁴⁸⁶ Viva Bahia's shows, categorized as art rather than entertainment, were included in the theater listings rather than in the tourism section of newspapers, available for limited engagements rather than performing on an ongoing basis. Viva Bahia's audience members sat in assigned seats facing a proscenium stage and devoted an hour or more of their undivided attention to the show, unlike audience members of tourist shows, who might sit in informal bleacher-type seating "in the round" (such as the SUTURSA stage), or enjoy a drink and a meal during shows held at bars and restaurants.

Viva Bahia was decidedly not an average tourist show, as Biancardi explains: "Viva Bahia wasn't just samba de roda, maculelê, capoeira, no it wasn't. It was an experimental group that I started and I did it my way, the way I wanted."⁴⁸⁷ While Canjiquinha, as a "folklore bearer," was criticized for innovating, Biancardi—not a "folklore bearer" herself but an urban, educated, middle-class school teacher—was *expected* to innovate. After the company was no longer an amateur ensemble in a school setting, Biancardi approached Viva Bahia's shows as a creative endeavor rather than an attempt to preserve, restore or rescue folklore. Remembering

⁴⁸⁵ Mestre Renê quoted in Magalhães Filho, "Jogo de Discursos: a disputa por hegemonia na tradição da capoeira angola bahiana," 87.

⁴⁸⁶ Hildegardes Vianna, "Statement of support for Viva Bahia," (Salvador: Coleção Emília Biancardi, 1969).

⁴⁸⁷ Emília Biancardi, audio-recorded interview with by author. Salvador, April 2011.

the breadth and boldness of her experimentation, Biancardi marvels at her own courage to push boundaries:

I was a crazy young woman who thought she was some kind of super genius. Now I'm an old woman who learned and who wouldn't do it again. It was the beginning of my career. It was the kind of creativity that, forgive my lack of modesty, I did have.⁴⁸⁸

The difference between Viva Bahia's shows and shows held at SUTURSA's folkloric stage was that Biancardi's creativity was not only allowed but sanctioned by Salvador's leading folklorists, including Vianna⁴⁸⁹ and the director of the Campaign for the Defense of Brazilian Folklore, Renato de Almeida.⁴⁹⁰ In a note, in English, reprinted in the program for the show that commemorated Viva Bahia's tenth anniversary in 1973, Almeida expresses his full support for Biancardi's folkloric stagings:

I hereby state that the group "VIVABAHIA", organized by the teacher Emília Biancardi Ferreira, to which she gives a secure direction, performs shows that are very close of the folkloric authenticity, maintaining the feasible fidelity when projecting the folklore, thanks to the researches she has made [on] the very origins of the popular culture. Miss Emília Biancardi Ferreira's performance deserves to be shown [...] to the Brazilian people and also to the foreign public, because it does not diminish the Folklore. On the opposite, *it gives to the folklore the high sense of art and love to the national traditions.*⁴⁹¹ (original text in English; italics mine)

Although Biancardi did not approach her work as a patriotic or nationalist undertaking, those working under the military dictatorship, such as Almeida, lauded her work as such. Giving folklore a "sense of art," Viva Bahia legitimized the folk through the "artistic." This and other

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Vianna goes on to claim some of the credit for Viva Bahia's success for herself, adding that Viva Bahia's distinction among folkloric shows was due to the fact that they sought the advice from "people who see folklore as a science." Vianna, "Statement of support for Viva Bahia."

⁴⁹⁰ After the military coup d'état, Édison Carneiro, branded and persecuted as a communist, stepped down from the leadership of the Campaign for the Defense of Brazilian folklore, at which time Almeida took over as director. See Vilhena, *Projeto e missão: o movimento folclórico brasileiro, 1947-1964*.

⁴⁹¹ Text by Renato de Almeida, then president of the Campaign for the Defense of Brazilian Folklore, printed in the program for the show *Viva Bahia 10 anos* (1973) sponsored by Bahia's Culture Department.

official statements of support printed in this commemorative program,⁴⁹² however, underscored Biancardi's ethnographic research and the "authenticity" of Viva Bahia's staged traditions rather than Biancardi's artistic input.⁴⁹³ Biancardi's creativity was carefully monitored by Bahia's intellectual elite: while "artistic" input was allowed and welcomed, this input was expected to "elevate" rather than "diminish" Brazilian folklore, i.e. cause folklore to lose its "character."

During the two decades of activity of Viva Bahia, Biancardi struggled with the complexities of staging folkloric traditions while "preserving" their "original purity." Biancardi had read Carneiro's "Folklore's Dynamics" (1965), and took to heart his views of folklore as always in flux. Carneiro envisioned folklore's dynamics as "naturally" occurring, brought about by the "folk" with minimal "outside" intrusion. According to Carneiro, "erudite intromission" was allowed, but any outside intervention should be carried out with "extreme discretion." This model perpetuates the erudite/folk binary, even though Carneiro had begun reconsidering this binary, proposing that folklore was a result of a dialectic process "where the whole society participates" (see Chapter 2).

Carneiro's model, however, did not account for the changes that would result from collaborations between performers "from the people" and "erudite" directors, choreographers and producers in re-choreographing folklore for the stages of the world's major opera houses. In the following sections of this chapter, I focus on the work of Biancardi and the members of Viva Bahia in negotiating the complexities and paradoxes of staging folklore. I analyze how the tropes of authenticity and purity were deployed in authorizing the repertory of Viva Bahia

⁴⁹² Aside from statements by Almeida and Vianna, the program includes statements of support by "culture" heavyweights such as Edison Carneiro and Jorge Amado.

⁴⁹³ Albeit briefly, Vianna's statement does acknowledge Biancardi's creative input: "Although, pressed by the competition [Viva Bahia] abandoned its initial approach of laboratory-ensemble, it did not discard the constant search for new forms in the [...] popular traditions of our land." Statement printed in the program for the show *Viva Bahia 10 anos* (1973) sponsored by Bahia's Culture Department.

throughout the early 1970s—and how such authority and prestige allowed for innovation. For this analysis, I have selected the ensemble’s most significant productions: *Aluandê* (1970), *Odoiá Bahia* (1972), *Capoeiras da Bahia* (1974) and *Festa Brazil* (1974). *Aluandê* and *Odoiá Bahia* were performed mostly in Brazil and had Biancardi as artistic director; *Capoeiras da Bahia* and *Festa Brazil*, however, were staged specifically for two separate concurrent tours abroad. For these last two shows, producers of international prestige hired artistic directors deemed more qualified than Biancardi to meet international standards, and her artistic control was diminished to “director of the Viva Bahia ensemble.” My analysis is based on program notes, reviews, and photographs of these shows as well as on interviews with Biancardi and former performers of Viva Bahia.



Figure 3.6 Emília Biancardi (at the piano) and members of *Viva Bahia* in rehearsal in the early 1970s. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Emília Biancardi.

Aluandê (1970)

The show *Aluandê*, subtitled *The soul and heart of Bahia* (*Aluandê: A alma e o coração da Bahia*), marks Viva Bahia's first major theatrical production as a private ensemble, dissociated from the Education Department. Although by 1969 the group was already performing at prestigious local theaters such as the Teatro Castro Alves in Salvador, Viva Bahia's shows prior to *Aluandê* were billed generically as "folkloric shows." A specific show—one with a title—lent Viva Bahia distinction from folkloric shows performed on less prestigious tourist stages, identified only by the name of the folkloric group. A title implied that the show had been artistically conceived and authored by someone, and that it moved beyond mere reproduction of authorless, "collectively accepted" folklore.

With the ensemble now independent from the Education Department, Biancardi was free to hire performers other than her students, increasing the number of "folklore bearers" in the cast.⁴⁹⁴ Although Viva Bahia already drew from the expertise of two respected candomblé practitioners, Seu Negão and Dona Coleta, Biancardi hired the well-known Capoeira Angola player João Grande, as well as capoeiristas from other groups (such as Madame Geni and Olhando p'ra Lua,⁴⁹⁵ who also performed with Canjiquinha). Viva Bahia's strong suit had been maculelê up until this point.⁴⁹⁶ However, pressed by the competition with other folkloric

⁴⁹⁴ Prior shows through the Education Department included performances by Seu Negão, who remembers at times having to perform behind a curtain because he was not a student: "There was a performance at the Normal Institute and I couldn't participate because it was just for students. What could I do? The boys [and girls] hadn't learned anything. So I stayed behind the curtain singing and playing and they were in front performing the composition." "Viva Bahia precisa de mulatas altas e belas," *Tribuna da Bahia*, February 22nd 1973. Although this page-long article is about Seu Negão and his participation in Viva Bahia, the headline states "Viva Bahia looks for tall and beautiful mulatas," referring to an upcoming audition pitched by Seu Negão at the end of the interview.

⁴⁹⁵ Madame Geni is known today as Mestre Geni, and Olhando p'ra Lua is known today as Mestre Lua Rasta.

⁴⁹⁶ Maculelê, a dance largely "restored" by one person, Mestre Popó (Paulinho de Almeida Andrade), from a "dead" African tradition from the interior of Bahia—allegedly a dance with no living bearers other

ensembles—most of them directed by capoeiristas, who could effortlessly stage capoeira’s crowd-pleasing leaps and flips—Viva Bahia strengthened its capoeira scenes through these capoeiristas’ creative input and virtuosity.

Folklore bearers not only brought “traditional” movement material and choreographic ideas to folkloric ensembles, but their presence on stage authorized creativity and legitimized the show.

Although Biancardi’s student-performers were not all white, many were light skinned enough, as was Biancardi herself, to be read as white, both on and off stage.⁴⁹⁷ Like Mãe Zefa in *Grupo Folclórico da Bahia/Olodum*, Viva Bahia’s dark skinned “folklore bearers” such as Seu Negão, Dona Coleta and João Grande brought authenticity to Viva Bahia’s shows. Unlike centenarian Mãe Zefa, however, these performers were more than token symbols of Africa and the past on stage: in their thirties and forties, these “folklore bearers” were young enough to actively choreograph and perform with the ensemble for many years.

In a prominent note on the first page of the program for *Aluandê* (both for its performances at the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Theater and at the Teatro Castro Alves in 1970), Biancardi asserts the legitimacy of the show by drawing attention to its “folklore bearers”:

In this show we try to interpret popular expressions without letting go of their primitive and spontaneous forms. With this aim, we place individuals of the people [*elementos populares*] (folklore bearers) in the main roles, allowing them to move freely, without stage blocking or any other [directions].⁴⁹⁸

than himself—lent itself perfectly for stage adaptations and performances by “non-bearers.” In the absence of “authentic” bearers, Viva Bahia’s amateur performances “kept maculelê alive.” Mestre Popó’s account of the “restoration” of maculelê is quoted in the program for *Aluandê*: “My mother told me that maculelê came from Africa. As a boy I danced maculelê with João Obá and Barão here in Santo Amaro, [but] after these old black slaves died I held on [to it], [and] only after [my] boys [were old enough] I asked if they wanted to know this game from the past.” Emília Biancardi, “Aluandê: alma e coração da Bahia,” (Rio de Janeiro Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro, 1970).

⁴⁹⁷ For a discussion of the non-binary approach to blackness and whiteness in Brazil, see Patricia de Santana Pinho, “White but not quite: tones and overtones of whiteness in Brazil,” *SX* 29(2009).

⁴⁹⁸ Biancardi, “Aluandê: alma e coração da Bahia.”

Here, Biancardi reproduces current ideas about folklore, such as the “spontaneity” proposed by Carneiro, as well as the notion of folklore as knowledge passively carried by the “folk.”

Biancardi downplays her own input as director by stating that these “individuals from the people” moved freely, without stage directions. Without her stage directions, these “folklore bearers” made their own choreographic decision and adapted their own “traditions” for the stage. However, the myth of “primitive” bodies moving freely and spontaneously perpetuated by this statement does not acknowledge, and indeed erases, these “folk” performers’ creativity and decision-making. In addition, this statement implicitly draws a distinction between the folklore bearers and the non-bearers in the cast: the former playing “themselves” on stage, and the latter re-enacting these “traditions,” learned from these and other “folk” informants.

Biancardi jokingly admits to her inexperience as a director at the time: “I accomplished my stagings through divine inspiration.”⁴⁹⁹ Since Viva Bahia did not hire a choreographer for *Aluandê*, most of the choreographic decisions were made by the performers in collaboration with Biancardi, who summarizes her role as one of structuring the show and shortening the dances:

For the show that went to the Municipal [Theater of Rio de Janeiro], I was the one who directed, Carlos Moraes [Viva Bahia’s first choreographer] was there [in the audience]. I didn’t have a choreographer yet, I was the one who gave it choreographic structure, but I left it the way it was taught by the folklore bearers, all I did was arrange and shorten [the dances].⁵⁰⁰

In addition to arranging and shortening dances, Biancardi also sought ways of making the movement larger and more spectacular—aiming to make a stronger “impact” on the audience. In the extensive program notes for *Aluandê*, Biancardi explains her choreographic contributions to one of the types of samba included in the program:

⁴⁹⁹ Audio-recorded interview with Emília Biancardi by author, Salvador, April 2011.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

The knife samba [*samba de faca*] in its true form consists of a contest between two dancers to see who is the most dexterous. Let me clarify that I added capoeira strikes for greater impact.⁵⁰¹

Biancardi, not a capoeirista herself, certainly collaborated with her capoeirista performers in adding movement from capoeira to this type of samba. By combining capoeira, a combat form, with a danced confrontation between two knife-wielding performers, Biancardi and her performers magnified the danger, virtuosity and excitement of this dance, transforming it into a spectacular closing number. Not unlike the demonstration games choreographed by Bimba's students (where knives were also used) this knife samba "acted out" danger and violence to create spectacle.

In fact, the program for *Aluandê*, despite its stated goal of faithfully staging folklore in its "true" form, offers many indications of its "stagedness," reminding the audience that, despite its authenticity, the show was not "the real thing"—a particularly important reminder in reference to the candomblé scene. In candomblé ceremonies, practitioners dance both as themselves and, after possession, as/with the *orixá* (god/goddess) that possessed them. The candomblé scene in *Aluandê* is accompanied by a clarification in the program: "[Candomblé] is a fetishistic ritual which is performed in a didactic way [by] the ensemble." Performed in a "didactic way," these dances were divorced from possession, and audience members could rest assured that the deities would not be invoked into the theater.

Although *Aluandê* removed candomblé dances from its religious context, Viva Bahia still vowed to adhere to the recommendations of leading folklorists and culture bureaucrats at the time: staged folklore should carefully "retain" folklore's authenticity. This objective is clearly stated in the program: "to research Bahia's folklore, reproducing [it] without letting go of its

⁵⁰¹ Biancardi, "Aluandê: alma e coração da Bahia."

authenticity.” The idea that folklore could and should be faithfully reproduced implied a stable, fixed original with no “prospect of progress.” Despite the fact that such progress was at the core of the dynamic model proposed by Carneiro, Biancardi still expressed an ongoing preoccupation with authenticity, a concern undoubtedly encouraged by her mentor, Hildegardes Vianna.⁵⁰²

Odoiá Bahia⁵⁰³ and Panorama Brasileiro: “folk-pop” spectacle (1972-73)

Two years after *Aluandê*, Biancardi, in collaboration with choreographer Carlos Moraes, takes the company on a drastically different direction. Renamed *Ballet Folclórico Viva Bahia* (*Viva Bahia Folkloric Ballet*), the ensemble hires not only Moraes, a ballet-trained dancer and choreographer, but also dancers trained in ballet, modern and “primitive” dances (from the Federal University of Bahia’s dance program and from the Rio de Janeiro-based Balé de Mercedes Baptista).⁵⁰⁴

Seeking to break free from the tight boundaries dictated by Bahia’s folklorists, Biancardi decided to embrace the impossibility of staging a “pure” and “authentic folklore,” and joined forces with Moraes and set designer J. Cunha to create *Odoiá Bahia: a folk-pop spectacle*.

⁵⁰² Nostalgia is at the core of Vianna’s oeuvre; longing for vanishing customs from the past is evident in the titles of both her books: *Bahia was once like this* (1973) and *This is how it once was* (1994). Hildegardes Vianna, *A Bahia já foi assim* Coleção baiana (Salvador: Editora Itapuã, 1973); ———, *Antigamente era assim* (Salvador: Editora Record, 1994). For an detailed analysis of Vianna’s work in relationship to race, class and gender, see Consuelo de Almeida Matos, “A Bahia de Hildegardes Vianna: um estudo sobre a representação de mulheres negras” (Universidade do Estado da Bahia, 2008).

⁵⁰³ *Odoiá* is a greeting used in candomblé for the deity of the sea, Iemanjá.

⁵⁰⁴ The Federal University’s dance program was influenced by German expressionism through the Polish dancer Yanka Rudzka, who co-founded the School of Dance in 1956. Rudzka was intrigued by Afro-Brazilian culture, and her early works were based on candomblé-related themes. The Balé Mercedes Baptista was founded and directed by ballet-trained dancer Mercedes Baptista (born Mercedes Ignácia da Silva, she later added her husband’s last name, Krieger). Baptista was influenced by the folk-inspired “national” dances of Brazilian dancer Eros Volúcia (who was herself influenced by the Orientalist trends that shaped early modern dance) and by North-American ethnographer/choreographer Katherine Dunham. Batista taught a dance technique called “dança primitiva” (primitive dance), later renamed “dança-afro” (afro-dance). See Ida Vicenzia, *Dança no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: Funarte and Atração Produções Ltda., 1997); Paulo Melgaço da Silva Junior, *Mercedes Baptista: a criação da identidade negra na dança* (Brasília: Fundação Cultural Palmares, 2007).

Moraes, a former dancer with the Rio de Janeiro's Municipal Theater's ballet company, brought the "modernity" and prestige of ballet vocabulary, such as expansive leaps with extended legs and pointed feet.⁵⁰⁵ Biancardi hoped that tradition and modernity could co-exist on stage. In a program note for *Odoíá Bahia*, she writes: "In this show we will interpret folk forms or forms that tend towards the folkloric, in a stylized way, through elaborated choreography, maintaining, however, its true roots."⁵⁰⁶ The term stylized (*estilizado/a*), as it was used at this time, refers both to a simplification and a modernization, and this modernization was intimately tied to the concept of "choreography." Although "staging" (*arrumação cênica*) and "directing" (*direção cênica*) are terms often used by Biancardi to refer to her minimal interference in the movement vocabulary itself, the term "elaborated choreography" is used here to indicate new movement material derived from ballet and modern dance, dance forms considered urban, "modern" and erudite.

A newspaper listing recommends *Odoíá Bahia*'s combination of modernity and tradition:

It's a good choice. On the 13th and 14th [...] at the Castro Alves Theater, the Ballet Folclórico VivaBahia, with a modern and well thought-out production—Odo Iá Bahia—where the group conceptualizes the ancient popular (folkloric) traditions within our times, employing to this end the most modern techniques of theater and dance, without, however, taking away the character of the folk dances per se, attempting, as much as possible, to stay faithful to its origins.⁵⁰⁷

While the idea that Afro-Brazilian folklore needed ballet technique to be "updated" to "our times" reinforced the conflation of Africa and the past, Biancardi's and Moraes' innovations put

⁵⁰⁵ Moraes found in the partnership with Viva Bahia a way of accessing a wide array of Afro-Brazilian folk traditions as sources for his choreography, which he would go on to develop as director of the Ballet Brasileiro da Bahia. In the early 1970s, Moraes was invited to teach at the Ballet School of the Teatro Castro Alves in Salvador (EBATECA) and began directing and creating choreography for the folk-inspired ballet company Ballet Brasileiro da Bahia, where Afro-Bahian themes were danced using ballet technique, including pointe work. Moraes is considered today one of Bahia's most important *maitres de ballet*.

⁵⁰⁶ Emília Biancardi, "Odoíá Bahia: espetáculo folk-pop," ed. Teatro Castro Alves (Salvador 1972).

⁵⁰⁷ "Ballet Folclórico Viva Bahia," *Tribuna da Bahia*, July 13th 1972.

Carneiro's dynamism into practice and tested its limits. Knowing that she had broken the cardinal rule of "discrete intromission," Biancardi expected the negative criticism that she and Moraes would indeed receive from the folklore establishment. In an interview for the newspaper *Tribuna da Bahia*, the reporter points out Biancardi's anxiety:

Concerned with the fact that it has become commonplace to label any new experimentation in this field as a disfigurement of folklore, Emília Biancardi says that the disfigurement much discussed in Bahia, is a consequence, in large part, of the perspective of traditional folklorists. She adds that "we need to get rid of the taboo that folk traditions are disappearing just because artists try to introduce more modern things", as if she was already answering in advance to any criticism that she expects to receive after the performances of the show.⁵⁰⁸

Anticipating the criticism she was sure to receive, Biancardi urges a rethinking of conservative views of folklore as static and endangered, and suggests that the anxieties about loss and "disfigurement" [*deturpação*] might be a matter of perspective.

Biancardi believed that such stylized staged adaptations would not result in any kind of loss or "disfigurement" to these traditions off stage. She knew, from experience, that *subtle* adaptations for the stage were far more likely to influence "folk" practices off stage.⁵⁰⁹

Odoia Bahia, like *Viva Bahia*'s previous shows, opened with samba de roda and capoeira. The program frames these two movement forms as simple, "spontaneous" folk forms found in poor neighborhoods. Interestingly, the folk/erudite divide here is framed as a matter of socio-economic class rather than along a rural/urban binary. This "folk" beginning gives way to increasingly balleticized and "stylized" choreography. Closing the first half of the show, the

⁵⁰⁸ "Um folclore moderno que não deturpa o tradicional," *Tribuna da Bahia*, July 12th 1972.

⁵⁰⁹ In retrospect, Biancardi discusses the impacts of staging maculelê for *Viva Bahia*. Writing in 1989, she notes that "In the past few years, [we can see] the introduction [into maculelê] of moves from capoeira, hip movements from samba, steps from frevo [a carnival dance from the state of Pernambuco], and especially [from] dances of candomblé, as well as some acrobatics and spontaneous steps, created by the dancers." Biancardi quotes from Vianna, who states that "Maculelê grew and was transformed [...] It moved to a new land, new conditions, unable to continue with the same characteristics of yore. [...] It is now a dance for shows."———, *Olelê Maculelê* (Brasília: Edição Especial, 1989), 22.

Suite Bahiana (Bahian suite)—a potpourri of energetic, fast-paced dances, not necessarily from Bahia—exemplifies Biancardi’s and Moraes’ willingness to experiment. Featuring set design by J. Cunha, inspired on the poem by nineteenth-century Bahian abolitionist Castro Alves titled *Navios Negreiros (Slave Ships)*, this suite culminated in a scene called *Fantasia Afro (Afro Fantasy)*. As the title promised, this scene brought to life Hollywood-inspired fantasies of Africa, such as semi-naked warriors bearing shields and spears, and grass-skirt clad brown-skinned women, their bare breasts and torsos decorated with body paint.⁵¹⁰ Viva Bahia’s “Africans,” however, challenged the “wildness” and “primitivism” that might accompany such fantasies of Africa, dancing according to a controlled, extended, and upright ballet aesthetic.⁵¹¹

⁵¹⁰ Such fantasies of Africa were certainly also influenced by the primitivist images of a “savage” Africa, complete with leopard skins, nude female breasts and painted faces seen in Felicitas Barreto’s “national” dances in the 1940. See Vicenzia, *Dança no Brasil*: 142-44.

⁵¹¹ Several dancers in this cast were trained in ballet, and some were brought in from the Katherine Dunham-influenced Balé Mercedes Baptista, based in Rio de Janeiro, to perform in *Odoia Bahia*. Some of the male dancers were also Moraes’ ballet students at the Teatro Castro Alves Ballet school (EBATECA).



Figure 3.7 In this photo, a dancer from the Balé Mercedes Baptista cast in *Odoiá Bahia*, leaps with extended legs and pointed feet, embodying a ballet aesthetic. Her bent arms and clenched fists, however, transform a potentially sylph-like gesture of lightness into a gesture of strength. Photographer unknown (possibly Leão Rozenberg). Courtesy of Emília Biancardi.



Figure 3.8 A dancer poses for a photo in front of the backdrop for *Odoiá Bahia* by J. Cunha. Her torso extended and arched back, her arms raised and fists clenched, she gazes upward and outward, defiantly. Photographer unknown (possibly Leão Rozenberg). Courtesy of the Fundação Gregório de Mattos and the Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Salvador.

The second half of the show featured some of the most controversial elements of *Odoiá Bahia*. Inspired by candomblé themes, Biancardi and Moraes combined the “folk” with the “pop,” adding electric guitars (the pop) to the traditional candomblé drum ensemble (the “folk”). This section of the program included solos and duets based on dances performed by different *orixás*, the candomblé deities. The duet between Exú (the trickster demi-god, danced by Sputnik⁵¹²) and Pomba-gira (listed as Exú’s wife in the program, danced by Bebê⁵¹³) included foreign movement patterns such as the touching and lifting from a ballet *pas de deux*.⁵¹⁴ Biancardi remembers the overall reaction to this scene: “it was a scandal, everyone criticized it.” According to Biancardi, *Odoiá Bahia* was criticized both by the folklore establishment and the candomblé community for disrespecting and “disfiguring” candomblé.⁵¹⁵ During an interview in 2011, still feeling the need to justify her decisions, she explains: “I wasn’t a folklore bearer, I was a music teacher who experimented with folklore; what I did were *re-creations*.”⁵¹⁶

Odoiá Bahia was controversial precisely because it was a drastic departure from the company’s previous approach, which claimed to present “folk” forms in their “original purity.” No longer tied to the Education Department, Viva Bahia shed its former didactic purpose,

⁵¹² Marcos Aurélio Fernandes, who went on to study ballet with Moraes and dance with the Ballet Brasileiro da Bahia.

⁵¹³ Neusa Saad, one of Emília’s former students, who today teaches folk dances at the Federal University of Bahia.

⁵¹⁴ Based on information obtained during interviews with Saad and Biancardi. No visual documentation is available for this duet, although during my research I was able to access photos taken during a later reworking of it (for performances abroad, discussed later in this chapter).

⁵¹⁵ Although staged candomblé dances undoubtedly influenced dancing during candomblé ceremonies, such changes are beyond the scope of this study. It is unlikely, however, that such foreign movement elements such as pointed feet and partnered lifts would be adopted during candomblé ceremonies, resulting in a “disfigurement” of the religion.

⁵¹⁶ Audio-recorded interview with Emília Biancardi by author, Salvador, April 2011.

approaching *Odoiá Bahia* as both art and entertainment.⁵¹⁷ Although perhaps *Odoiá Bahia* “improved” the folk through the erudite—following Mario de Andrade’s model, discussed in chapter 2—it provided an opportunity for Afro-diasporic bodies to perform as other than “themselves,” even if this meant dancing out someone else’s “Afro” fantasies. This collaboration between Biancardi and Moraes also provided people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds—many of them Afro-Brazilian—access to ballet training, which at the time meant increased opportunities for employment as professional dancers.⁵¹⁸

Immediately after its three-day run at the Teatro Castro Alves, *Odoiá Bahia* began a tour of several Brazilian cities, going on to represent Brazil at the music and dance festival *Carifesta* in Guyana. However, according to Biancardi, the show was modified for the international performances: “Abroad, we took candomblé, samba de roda, in a very authentic way. We couldn’t take [all this innovation] abroad.”⁵¹⁹ Moraes’ choreographic influence was nevertheless still present in the *Carifesta* performances, as was Biancardi’s desire to go beyond the tight boundaries of “tradition.” Bebé, who danced as Pomba-gira, remembers proudly that a photo of her *pas de deux* with Sputnik was featured in Guyanan newspapers for an entire week. She also remembers that Biancardi, realizing that the reduced touring company of nine performers would seem small and unimpressive on the vast festival stage, decided to add her own performance skills as a musician to the show, playing the drum set as she did in her cover band *Les Girls* in the 1950s.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁷ Whereas in the past *Viva Bahia* had been supported by the Inspectorate of Music and Orpheonic Song and the Education Department, this show was funded in part by BAHIATURSA, a branch of the state’s tourism department.

⁵¹⁸ Several of the dancers in *Odoiá Bahia* went on to perform in Moraes’ *Ballet Brasileiro da Bahia* in addition to their work with *Viva Bahia*.

⁵¹⁹ Audio-recorded interview with Emília Biancardi by author, Salvador, April 2011.

⁵²⁰ Audio-recorded interview with Neusa Saad by author, Salvador, April 2011.

While it may have been criticized by Bahian “purists,” the modernity of *Odoiá Bahia* made a favorable impression on Rio de Janeiro music producers Walter Sales and Hermínio Bello de Carvalho. In 1973, Carvalho and Biancardi collaborated to create a show aimed at foreign audiences called *Panorama Brasileiro (Brazilian Panorama)*, a show that, like *Odoiá Bahia*, combined the “folk” with the “pop.” Well-connected in the Rio music scene, Carvalho assembled a group of professional musicians, including emerging vocalist Simone Bittencourt de Oliveira (known only as Simone), and the show toured to Paris, Cologne, and Brussels.⁵²¹ Despite the fact that the show included a significant element of Brazilian pop music, including the *bossa-nova* sounds of the group *Tamba Trio*, as well as the music of Dorival Caymmi (one of the founding fathers of bossa-nova) sung by Simone, Biancardi insisted on the “primitivism” of the show. In an interview for a Bahian newspaper shortly before the company’s departure to Europe, Biancardi reassures the reporter that Viva Bahia would continue to honor Brazil’s folk traditions:

In Brussels, Viva Bahia will perform with a minimum of elaborated forms, precisely the opposite of its previous phases, which foreground[ed] the adaptations for folklore performed on stage, with all its modern resources of set design and choreography. [This show] will have the characteristics of the early Viva Bahia, in all its primitivism[,] which reflects the roots that cannot be pushed aside.⁵²²

In this interview, Biancardi expresses her commitment to show Brazilian folklore “in all its primitivism,” downplaying the show’s pop music element for the readership of the *Jornal da Bahia*. She agreed, however, that a certain amount of sophistication was necessary for a stronger “aesthetic appeal”:

In Brussels, [...] Viva Bahia will show the primitivism of our culture [...] however, the costumes will be the most sophisticated. [...] This aesthetic appeal is especially necessary

⁵²¹ Hermínio Bello de Carvalho, e-mail communication, April 2012.

⁵²² "Viva Bahia: 10 anos de folclore sem auxílio," *Jornal da Bahia*, August 19th and 20th 1973.

abroad because the majority of the spectators is lay [and] few have heard of anything Brazilian, or more precisely Bahian, and they don't know anything about folklore.⁵²³

Biancardi and Carvalho knew that, to be successful abroad, it was necessary for the “primitive” and the “folk” to be entertaining rather than merely didactic; through “sophisticated” costumes—elaborate carnival costumes—the directors hoped to meet a “lay” destination image of “Latin exuberance.” This combination of the “primitive” and the sophisticated proved to be a recipe for success, and, following the European performances of *Panorama Brasileiro*, Biancardi and Carvalho signed contracts for international tours to take place the following year. In 1974, Biancardi expanded and divided Viva Bahia into two groups, and the companies embarked on two simultaneous tours: one bound for the United States and Canada—*Festa Brazil*—and the other to Europe and Iran—*Capoeiras da Bahia*.

Festa Brazil and Capoeiras da Bahia: overwhelming, hypnotic, fierce and wild (1974)

Capoeiras da Bahia, produced by Ruth Escobar and Ninon Tallon Karlweis, played in the most prestigious opera houses in more than ten European countries between May and October, 1974;⁵²⁴ *Festa Brazil*, produced by Walter Santos, took Brazilian exoticism to prestigious U.S. venues such as The Kennedy Center, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Madison Square Garden. These producers hired directors from Rio de Janeiro (Gilda Grillo and Hermínio Bello de Carvalho, respectively), who replaced Biancardi as artistic director. In the program for the Canadian performances of *Festa Brazil*, Biancardi's role is reduced to “director of the Viva Bahia ensemble”; for the performances at Royce Hall at the University of California in Los Angeles, she is listed as “Directress and Folklorical Researcher for the Viva Bahia Folk

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ According to the framed tour schedule displayed proudly on one of the walls of the Capoeira Angola Center of Mestre João Grande in Manhattan, *Capoeiras da Bahia* performed in Spain, France, Italy, England, Switzerland, Belgium, the former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Greece, Germany, as well as Iran.

Ensemble”; in the French-language program for *Capoeiras da Bahia*, she is credited with having “trained” the company: “La compagnie a été entraînée par Émilie [sic] Biancardi Ferreira.”⁵²⁵ Moraes was not included in the credits for either of these shows, although sections of Moraes’ choreography were reworked by the directors and the performers. No choreographer is listed in the programs, and neither are Biancardi’s adaptations for the stage; absent also is the list of “folklore bearers” consulted for the show, always included in previous programs. If these shows were to construct a fiction of “primitives” spontaneously performing themselves on stage—their dances “untouched” and “pure”—any evidence of purposefully “elaborated” choreography should be carefully erased.

While *Festa Brazil* choreographed a sultry and exotic destination image of Brazil, *Capoeiras da Bahia* fulfilled European fantasies of a savage and primitive South America. In my analysis, I focus on how both these shows choreographed an image of Brazil for export based on the masculine vigor, youth and physical prowess of the capoeiristas, as well as on the thrills of re-enactments of rituals of possession, complete with actual animal sacrifice. I argue that it was precisely the perceived danger of these two “traditions”—magnified and “acted out” on stage—that provided audience members with the thrills they expected.

Festa Brazil

“Vigor you expect and vigor you get”
--Christopher Dafoe
Vancouver Sun Drama Critic

Under Carvalho’s artistic direction, *Festa Brazil* drew heavily from *Panorama Brasileiro*, which in turn retained many choreographic elements from *Odoia Bahia*. (Many of the original

⁵²⁵ Ruth Escobar and Ninon Tallon Karlweis, "Les Capoeiras de Bahia," ed. Le Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin (Paris: Les Publications Willy Fischer, 1974).

members of *Odoiá Bahia* also toured with *Festa Brazil*, including Bebé, Sputnik and Seu Negão.) Even though its U.S. producer, Mel Howard Productions, based *Festa Brazil*'s publicity on its "primitive" and spectacular aspects, featuring photos of capoeiristas flying through the air in press packets, this show continued to combine the "folk" with the "pop."

Festa Brazil was performed at Madison Square Garden's Felt Forum in April, 1974 as part of the "International Festival of Entertainment," a festival that featured "ethnic" performance ensembles from various countries. For *New York Times* dance critic Anna Kisselgoff, *Festa Brazil* stood out at the festival precisely for contrasting the "folk" with the "pop," which Kisselgoff interprets as evidence that, indeed, Brazil is a "land of contrasts." Kisselgoff finds such contrasts in the "sophisticated urban nightclub musical combo and singer" who perform "as an integral part of a program that stresses rituals of an early rural culture."⁵²⁶ Here, the assertion of Brazil's "sophisticated," urban modernity is achieved through its juxtaposition with a primitive "early" Brazil, the vestiges of which can be seen in the "rural rituals" staged in *Festa Brazil*. It is not surprising that modernity is found in the performances of light skinned "pop" performers, such as Simone, while brown and black "folk" performers symbolize Brazil's past.

A 23-year old emerging vocalist at the time, Simone was a tall Bahian with pale skin and cascading black curls. A brief bio in the program describes her as "an ideal representative of Brazil—a young and progressive country—but with a great cultural background. The Afro-European roots in Brazilian popular music have in Simone their ideal interpreter."⁵²⁷ Brazil's progress and youth are embodied by Simone, as well as its "cultural background," i.e. its blend

⁵²⁶ Anna Kisselgoff, "The Dance: Festa Brazil," *New York Times*, April 10th 1974.

⁵²⁷ Hermínio Bello de Carvalho, "Festa Brazil," ed. Walter Santos' Productions (New York: Madison Square Garden Attractions, Inc., 1974). According to Carvalho, the text in the program was heavily edited by Mel Howard Productions. Hermínio Bello de Carvalho, personal e-mail communication, April 30th, 2012.

of African and European “roots.” Although Simone’s skin color and hair texture clearly mark her as white in Brazil, she is framed as “the ideal interpreter” of Brazil’s Afro-European musical traditions (perhaps entirely independently from her family background.)

Kisselgoff describes Simone’s “sophisticated” yet “down-to-earth” stage presence:

The studied[,] chic dishevelment of Simone, a popular singer who wanders around the stage barefoot, encounters no resistance from the three Maria sisters, dressed in the traditional Bahia white hoop skirts. Armed like Simone with portable microphones, they meet her on her ground in their folk material.⁵²⁸

While Simone’s dishevelment (her barefoot performance) is read as studied and chic, what Kisselgoff notes about the three Maria sisters (the show’s Afro-Brazilian backup singers, billed as “Marias de Salvador”) is that they wear “traditional” dresses⁵²⁹ and hold their own despite finding themselves out of their element, on Simone’s “ground”: the modern proscenium stage equipped with portable microphones. The show successfully frames the three Marias as rural, unfamiliar with the stage, despite the fact that they came from one of Brazil’s largest cities and the former capital of Brazil: Salvador.

Carvalho’s artistic direction successfully sets up the contrast between modernity and tradition along skin tone. Kisselgoff notes that Carvalho “emphasizes the heritage of the black population,” which provides “some of the program’s most exciting sections.” Kisselgoff was particularly impressed by the maculelê and capoeira scenes: “The ferocity and vigor with which these young men strike out at one another leave no room for pussyfooting, and yet they perform with choreographic precision.”⁵³⁰ A “ferocious,” barely controlled primitive physicality stands in stark contrast to Simone’s “studied” performance of Brazilian chic. Kisselgoff identifies the

⁵²⁸ Kisselgoff, "The Dance: Festa Brazil."

⁵²⁹ These “traditional” hoop dresses were mandated by SUTURSA in the mid 1960s as the official uniform for female Bahian street vendors, establishing the image of the “typical” Bahiana as one of the “postcards” of Bahia. Queiroz, "A gestão pública e a competitividade de cidades turísticas: a experiência da cidade do Salvador," 345.

⁵³⁰ Kisselgoff, "The Dance: Festa Brazil."

vigor and youth “of a young, progressive country” in the brown bodies of the capoeiristas.

Although their “choreographic precision” was as “studied” as Simone’s chic dishevelment, what stands out for Kisselgoff is the capoeiristas’ animalistic “ferocity” and vigorous physicality.

The masculine vigor of *Festa Brazil*’s capoeiristas stands out as the most memorable aspect of the show for *Vancouver Sun* drama critic Christopher Dafoe, whose review is titled “Vigor you expect and vigor you get.”⁵³¹ Dafoe, like Kisselgoff, deems the show a “curious combination of night club and folk festival.” The night club atmosphere is created by the musical ensemble, composed of both acoustic and electric guitars, a *cavaquinho* (a string instrument similar to the ukulele) an electric bass, a synthesizer, as well as a drum set, and of course, by the sultry presence of Simone. In his review, Dafoe describes the singer as a dark, statuesque beauty:

The Festa Brazil company of 35 dancers and singers provides a suitably exotic background for the two big stars of the show, guitarist Joao [sic] de Aquino and former basketball star Simone Bittencourt de Oliveira, a dark, statuesque lady with snakeskin vocal chords. De Aquino plays guitar in the great Latin pop tradition and Miss Simone is almost overwhelming in bare feet.⁵³²

Viva Bahia’s performers are reduced to a “suitably exotic background” for Simone and Aquino, providing the “folk” roots for the Brazilian “pop.” These “background” performers, most of them Afro-Brazilians (combined with Carvalho’s description of Simone as representative of Brazil’s Afro-European culture), have a “browning” effect on Simone, who is read as “dark” by Dafoe in spite of her light skin color. While the show included some female nudity—bare breasts, as it had become customary in most Brazilian folkloric shows abroad—Simone was always fully clothed. Her bare feet, however, were enough to almost overwhelm this critic in their sensuality.

⁵³¹ Christopher Dafoe, “Vigor you expect and vigor you get,” *Vancouver Sun* 1974.

⁵³² *Ibid.*

Dafoe also picks up on the director's efforts to de-emphasize the regional Bahian affiliation of the show and re-signify Afro-Bahian music and movement as "national culture"; for this critic, the show evokes images of Rio rather than Bahia:

Brazil [...] is where the nuts come from. It is also the home of the coffee bean and the samba. Many of us would love to roll to Rio someday before we are old. Brazil, in fact, exerts a strong attraction upon many who live in these austere northern latitudes. As the cold rain pours down, they dream of mad nights in Rio, that exotic city of pleasure where everybody stays up until dawn dancing in the streets and where all the women are at least six feet tall and wear baskets of fruit on their heads.⁵³³

Referencing both the 1941 film *Charley's Aunt* ("where the nuts come from") and Carmen Miranda's signature fruit-laden headdresses, Dafoe establishes his own destination image of Brazil—a destination he hopes to reach someday before he is too old to enjoy a few pleasure-filled "mad nights in Rio." Bahia is never mentioned in this review, alluded to vaguely as "the Brazilian outback," the source of "rough" folk traditions that had been "tarted up" for the stage. In the process of being "tarted up," Bahian music and dance are made to conform to a Rio-based, made-in-Hollywood destination image of Brazil, complete with a Rio *carnaval* finale. As Dafoe concludes, "Festa Brazil strives vigorously to live up to every romantic notion of what a big, flashy Latin spectacular should be."⁵³⁴

Through *Festa Brazil*, residents of "austere northern latitudes" could experience the excitement and exoticism of "mad nights in Rio" from the safety of their seats at the Queen Elizabeth Theater in Vancouver. As Dafoe continues to describe this contagious spectacle, he focuses on the embodied responses of those in attendance:

Toes tap, should vibrate, and in the audience, one suspects, dentures click in time to the music. As all those big, strong, handsome men surge through their wild gymnastic dances one tends to feel middle-aged and badly out of condition.⁵³⁵

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

With toes tapping and shoulders vibrating, seated audience members participate in an “austere,” attenuated version of the movement on stage. Here, Dafoe comments on the lack of youth he identifies both in himself and in others in the audience, whose “dentures click in time to the music.” Perhaps Dafoe hopes to rescue some of this lost youth through an empathic experience with the young performers, especially those “big, strong, handsome” capoeiristas who surge through the air in their “wild gymnastic dances.” This masculine vigor, in fact, seems central to Dafoe’s experience. Although he found *Festa Brazil*’s “Latin vibrations” “fairly numbing” at times (“as if someone is beating you over the head with a pineapple”), Dafoe admits that the show has met his expectations: “Vigor, however, is expected and vigor is provided in full measure. That is Brazil.”⁵³⁶

Capoeiras da Bahia

“The most energetic, and for me the most thrilling item of the strangely exciting Brazilian programme at the Roudhouse is the dance fight, the “Capoeira.”

--Jane King

Morning Star Dance Critic

Capoeiras da Bahia differed from *Festa Brazil* in that it staged the “folk” without the “pop.” In 1973, Ninon Tallon Karlweiss, a New York-based experimental theater producer approached Ruth Escobar, a Portuguese-born actress and producer based in São Paulo, Brazil, with the idea of taking a group of capoeiristas from Bahia to “folk” festivals in Europe, Asia, and Africa.⁵³⁷ Ruth Escobar hired emerging actress and director Gilda Grillo to direct this show, and assembled a cast of dancers and capoeiristas through Biancardi’s Viva Bahia. While both

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ After dealing with harsh censorship during the “led years” (*anos de chumbo*) of the military dictatorship under General Emílio Garratazú Médici (1969-1974), Escobar certainly found in folklore a “safe” option, one that would appease the censors. Rofran Fernandes, *Ruth Escobar: 20 anos de resistência* (São Paulo: Global Editora, 1985), 176.

Biancardi and the dancers had vast creative input in this show, Grillo—a cosmopolitan, upper class, white *carioca*⁵³⁸—positions herself as the show’s innovator, and Viva Bahia’s members, including Biancardi herself, take on the role of “folklore bearers” in both the publicity and credits for this show. In London’s *Morning Star*, Grillo is described as “tanned, blonde and beautiful and supremely articulate even in a language not her own.”⁵³⁹ While Biancardi would have been at least equally as articulate (she was certainly more knowledgeable than newcomer Grillo about the show’s material), the fact that she did not speak a foreign language meant that only Grillo’s voice was heard in numerous newspaper interviews during their European tour.

In an interview for London’s *Time Out* magazine, Grillo takes the blame (and the credit) for altering “tradition”: “I am the corruptor. The moment you present a ritual on stage you are interfering.” Echoing Biancardi’s earlier statements about retaining folk “purity” despite innovation, Grillo continues:

In spite of this, nothing in the Candomblé is changed. I had to find the way of capturing the essence of the rite and show it as close as possible to reality, without, however, endangering the dancers.”⁵⁴⁰

Under Grillo’s direction, Viva Bahia strove to bring “raw” Afro-Brazilian primitivism to European stages. Grillo clarifies to *Time Out* that the drummers in the show avoid the “forbidden” rhythms, but even so, “we still run some risk [of possession] every night [...] We’re interfering with powerful forces that should be respected.”⁵⁴¹ In the same way that Bimba’s students magnified and “acted out” the danger and violence of capoeira through demonstration games, the performers of Viva Bahia, in collaboration with Biancardi and Grillo, “acted out” the danger and violence of both capoeira and candomblé, creating a show that fulfilled the

⁵³⁸ A carioca is a person from Rio de Janeiro.

⁵³⁹ Jane King, “A unique tradition survives,” *Morning Star*, August 30th 1974.

⁵⁴⁰ Interview by Jan Murray for *Time Out London*, August 1974, quoted in Fernandes, Ruth Escobar: 20 anos de resistência: 177.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

destination image of Brazil as home to a “savage,” dangerous Afro-diasporic hyper-physicality, barely under the director’s control.

In an interview for the British newspaper *Sunday Times*, Grillo highlights the inherent violence of the movement performed in this show and the “wild” nature of the dancers:

There is bound to be a doctor in the house when the Capoeiras da Bahia—a company of Brazilian Voodoo Dancers—opens at London Round House on July 30th. In fact, he’ll be permanently waiting in the wings. “The reason is that the show is so incredibly violent” said Gilda Grillo, the company director. If we don’t have three accidents a night [...] we feel like celebrating.” The other week one of the dancers was hauled off to hospital when—in the course of a dance called Maculele, during which the performers battle with sticks and swords—his right arm was run through with a cutlass. “He was stitched up and shot full of penicillin and told to take it easy. But as soon as my back was turned he was back on stage waving his knife about more wildly than ever.”⁵⁴²

Here, the dancers go beyond “acting out” and accidentally carry through the violence inherent in staging combat forms such as maculelê and capoeira with machetes. The fact that this accident is featured at length in this short article (based primarily on an interview with Grillo) points to the director’s awareness of the fascination of foreign audiences with the show’s violence and bloodshed. Again, Grillo reiterates the idea that these “wild” performers, with their machetes and their “voodoo,” were only barely under the director’s control.

Although the bloodshed described by Grillo was an accident, the director, in collaboration with Biancardi and the performers, in fact included actual bloodshed in the show in the form of animal sacrifice (which took places in countries that did not prohibit the sacrifice as animal cruelty). Grillo explains to the readers of the *Sunday Times* that *Capoeiras da Bahia* was

a distillation of Brazilian folklore and ritual, including ceremonies of initiation, exorcism and celebration which—at other stops in their tour—has included the sacrifice of a white cockerel in full view of the audience. “In Paris we slaughtered a cockerel every night, no trouble. In London, though, no cockerel.”⁵⁴³

⁵⁴² Philip Oakes, "Doing a voodoo," *Sunday Times*, July 28th 1974.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

Here Grillo refers to the fact that their animal sacrifice scene was not permitted in England.⁵⁴⁴

Her nonchalant attitude toward the sacrifice reinforces the “wildness” of the show’s performers, capable of killing an animal every night, “no trouble.” This animal sacrifice—anything but trivial in its religious context—emphasizes the allegedly unmediated primitivity of the performers. Critic Henri Terrière, writing for the French newspaper *Ouest-France*, describes this highly theatricalized moment of actual bloodshed:

We watch the sacrifice of a white rooster[,] which a man decapitates with this teeth to anoint the shaved head of an initiate with blood and feathers[,] who is the object of an extraordinary exaltation.⁵⁴⁵

These dangerous “primitive” practices, (barely) contained by the fourth wall of the proscenium stage, allowed European theatergoers to experience the thrills of these “dangerous” rituals from the safety of their seats—an experience that reinforced their own modernity and civilization.

Rather than eliciting the desire to “roll down to Rio” expressed by Dafoe after seeing *Festa Brazil*, viewers of *Capoeiras da Bahia* might be a bit more hesitant about planning a trip to Brazil after witnessing this violence. Perhaps for this reason, the show closed with the spectacular physicality of capoeira followed by a festive audience participation finale, where viewers could go up on stage and dance the samba with “some of the most attractive and outgoing performers on any stage anywhere.”⁵⁴⁶ According to a French festival organizer, the

⁵⁴⁴ Biancardi remembers that in England, the theaters required a veterinarian to monitor all animal handling both on and off stage, including supervising the treatment and well-being of the goat used in the show—the animal was brought on stage on the shoulders of João Grande, its feet tied, and laid down as if awaiting sacrifice. The chicken was still present, and the sacrifice was indicated by holding the live chicken over the initiate’s head, without killing it. Emília Biancardi, personal communication, April 2011.

⁵⁴⁵ Henri Terrière, “Sensationnel départ de Festival hier soir à la maison de la Culture,” *Ouest-France*, May 21 1974.

⁵⁴⁶ “Audience participation is decidedly encouraged, providing a rare opportunity to dance with some of the most attractive and outgoing performers on any stage anywhere.” Jane Murray for *Time Out London*, August 1974, quoted in Fernandes, *Ruth Escobar: 20 anos de resistência*: 177.

ability to control this “extraordinarily savage and spontaneous” Afro-Brazilian physicality was what made *Capoeiras da Bahia* “a true work of art.”⁵⁴⁷

In several interviews during their European tour, Grillo establishes her position as the creative force behind the show, while reinforcing the notion that the performers—who were said to come from a rural, “primitive Brazil”—performed “themselves” on stage, with minimal interference. In an interview for the *Sunday Times*, Grillo states that the company was composed of dancers and musicians from “a small village in Bahia on the eastern coast of Brazil,”⁵⁴⁸ even though Grillo knew perfectly well that this “small village,” the city of Salvador, was, at the time, Brazil’s fifth largest city with a population of over one million. She explains that, in this village, Biancardi founded a center “dedicated to preserving folk traditions.” According to this narrative, Biancardi and her ensemble are stripped of any vestige of modernity or creativity; instead, they are framed as the purveyors of a “pure,” unadulterated tradition which must be preserved.

A review by *Morning Star* ballet critic Jane King echoes the narrative of Afro-Brazilian folklore as “endangered” put forth by Carneiro in 1937, when he predicted that capoeira would recede to small coastal villages and eventually disappear altogether, wiped out by progress. In the review, entitled “A unique tradition survives,” King quotes Grillo, explaining that Afro-Brazilian culture, “the authentic culture of Brazil[,] is in danger of disappearing. [Grillo] and her associates in this venture feel it was too important to be allowed to die.”⁵⁴⁹ Almost forty years later, Carneiro’s fiction of a “dying” Afro-Brazilian culture endures, despite ample evidence to the contrary.

⁵⁴⁷ “It’s a fantastic show [...] this troupe is absolutely stunning physically speaking. It’s an extraordinarily savage and spontaneous expression, but perfectly controlled afterwards. One could say it’s truly [a work of] art.” Interview with Danielle Delorme, *Ouest-France*, May 21, 1974. Quoted in *ibid*.

⁵⁴⁸ Oakes, “Doing a voodoo.”

⁵⁴⁹ King, “A unique tradition survives.”

For King, the most energetic, “the most thrilling item of the strangely exciting Brazilian programme at the Roundhouse was the dance fight, the ‘Capoeira,’ from which the company takes its name.” The “ritual” atmosphere established by the realistic *candomblé* ceremony during first half of the show carried through to the capoeira section, characterized by King as “hypnotic”: “the male dancers engage one another in fierce, rhythmical combat, dancing on their hands and taking lethal swipes and jabs at one another with their feet.”⁵⁵⁰

This hypnotic, action-packed capoeira scene marked by “lethal swipes and jabs,” was preceded by a highly “ritualized” solo by João Grande, who solemnly entered the stage playing his *berimbau*. After introducing the audience to the sounds of this unusual musical bow—seen for the first time by the majority of the spectators in Europe and Iran—João Grande would lay the *berimbau* down on the ground and, slowly and ceremoniously, “dance” capoeira around and over it in silence.⁵⁵¹ After this intriguing, quiet beginning, other capoeiristas, drummers and *berimbau* players would join João Grande on stage in an explosion of sound and movement.

For *Capoeiras da Bahia*, Biancardi remembers casting “only the best capoeiristas,” those whose performance skills “could make the audience stand up.”⁵⁵² João Grande remembers that what pleased audiences were capoeira’s acrobatics, especially jumps and flips. Audiences wanted speed and attack, bodies slashing the air with fast circular kicks and multiple flips: “for

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ While João Grande, the company’s representative of Capoeira Angola, did not participate in *Odoia Bahia*, he was hired back for *Capoeiras da Bahia*. In a capoeira “encounter” (retreat/workshop) I attended in 2010 (*Dancebatukeira*, at the Ouro Verde Cultural Farm in southern Bahia, directed by Contra-Mestres Cabello and Tisza) where both João Grande and Biancardi were the honored guest “mestres,” João Grande re-enacted this opening dance and taught it to one of his students from New York, Jamel Brinkley. My description is based on having observed this reconstruction, as well as conversations about this scene with both João Grande and Biancardi.

⁵⁵² Emília Biancardi, audio-recorded interview by author, April 2011.

shows on stage, you already know [what they want], it's *vup vup vup*.”⁵⁵³ The capoeiristas knew how to deliver the masculine “vigor” expected by audience members such as Dafoe: “those big, strong, handsome men surg[ing] through their wild gymnastic dances.”⁵⁵⁴ Since the days of Bimba’s capoeira matches at Odeon Stadium in the mid 1930s, capoeiristas knew how to please audiences with displays of virtuosity, speed, and violence.

⁵⁵³ “[Capoeira] em show de palco, já sabe, é vup vup vup.” “Vup vup vup” refers to the sound of the capoeiristas’ bodies slashing the air with flips and kicks, like the English “whoosh” or “swoosh.” Mestre João Grande (João Oliveira dos Santos), audio-recorded interview by author, November 14th, 2011.

⁵⁵⁴ Dafoe, “Vigor you expect and vigor you get.”



Figure 3.9 Capoeiristas exchange high, fast circular kicks in one of *Viva Bahia*'s shows in the early 1970s. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Emília Biancardi.



Figure 3.10 Capoeiristas perform assisted backflips in an unidentified staged show in the early 1970s. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Fundação Gregório de Mattos and the Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Salvador.



Figure 3.11 Performers of *Grupo Oxum* during a photo shoot for photographer Leão Rozenberg. Courtesy of the Fundação Gregório de Mattos and the Arquivo Histórico Municipal de Salvador. Figures 3.9 and 3.10 are clear examples of how the grabbing of balões gave way to assisted flips, where the player being “thrown” takes an active role in his own “throwing,” using the other player’s body for support.

While the understated, slow-motion, dance-like Capoeira Angola developed by Pastinha worked well in situations where audiences watched at close range, it was not large enough or virtuosic enough to fit the stages of opera houses. The grabbing and throwing of Bimba’s abandoned waist (*cintura desprezada*) techniques, which had been transformed into choreographed assisted flips by Bimba’s students in their demonstration games (*escretas*), were further transformed on stage into acrobatic solos, where each capoeirista would exhibit his most impressive jumps, flips, headspins and upside-down balances. Capoeira’s spectacle of youth, vigor and virtuosity was one of *Capoeiras da Bahia* main attractions during their European tour;

in fact, Grillo decided to highlight capoeira in the title of the show because “she saw that, among all the scenes, it was the most sensational.”⁵⁵⁵

Although staged capoeira has been blamed for an excessive emphasis of capoeira’s “sensational” acrobatics, incurring “loss of character,” I argue that players were merely extending and magnifying a “traditional” aerial aspect of capoeira that had been downplayed and eventually eliminated in Capoeira Angola: *balões*. The stage innovation that was indeed foreign to capoeira—a form of combat between two people—was the introduction of the solo format. Solos allowed for expansive movement capable of moving through space, sometimes in a linear fashion, such as in sequences of multiple backflips. It also divorced movement from its functionality—striking or tripping the adversary or avoiding strikes and sweeps—allowing for an increased attention to the aesthetics and the visual pleasure achieved through the movement.

Geni, who performed both with Canjiquinha and briefly with Viva Bahia, attributes the increased use of “decorative moves” (*floreios*) in contemporary capoeira to the adaptations made for staged performances:

The capoeira that exists today all over the world, it’s thanks to folkloric shows. [...] Because before capoeira was held back, both angola and regional. You didn’t have movements for decoration [*floreios*], you didn’t have a thousand jumps, you didn’t have these things.⁵⁵⁶

On stage, a “held back” capoeira gives way to a capoeira where players are allowed to drop their guard and be creative, adding movements “for decoration” without the need to be defensive.

Pavão (Eusébio Lôbo da Silva), who performed with the folk ensemble *Grupo Oxum* in the 1970s, remembers that, on stage, games were “decorative [*floreado*], or beautiful games, in

⁵⁵⁵ Emília Biancardi, audio-recorded interview by author, April 2011.

⁵⁵⁶ Mestre Geni quoted in Magalhães Filho, “Jogo de Discursos: a disputa por hegemonia na tradição da capoeira angola bahiana,” 85.

which the objective was the embodied aesthetics produced by the capoeiristas.”⁵⁵⁷ João Grande, in an interview for the documentary *A Arte da Capoeira (The Art of Capoeira)*, explains that on stage, capoeira becomes free, beautiful, and playful:

On stage, it’s a free game, a beautiful game: “come get me!” In the roda it’s different, on stage it’s all pre-arranged. In the roda you come in sure of yourself, you can’t hesitate. But on stage [...] it’s for the public. [...] You open up for the other guy to come get you and you get out of the way with a roll or a cartwheel. [It’s] an open, beautiful game on stage.⁵⁵⁸

In this statement, João Grande’s pleasure in performing “open” games on stage is apparent.

Rather than a co-optation and “reduction” of capoeira, as has been claimed, these pre-determined movement sequences—“open” games, devoid of “real” violence—in fact released players to take pleasure in a creative process focused on “decoration” rather than survival. Since no choreographers were hired for either *Festa Brazil* or *Capoeiras da Bahia*, capoeiristas were free to engage (and indeed indulge) in a practice that had been highly valued in capoeira since at least the early twentieth century: individual innovation. Each solo was a display of each player’s best acrobatic skills, and choreographed “duets” like the one described by João Grande allowed players to perform “open,” “beautiful” games which were not only aesthetically pleasing, they were also playful and pleasurable for the players.

João Grande, today the most revered “grand master” of capoeira angola and the founder of the most sought-after capoeira angola school outside Brazil, looks back on the pleasure he found in performing on stage:

⁵⁵⁷ Lôbo is currently a professor in the dance department at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), in Brazil. Eusébio Lôbo da Silva, *O corpo na capoeira* (Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2008), 25.

⁵⁵⁸ Frede Abreu, Josias Pires Neto, and Hans Herold, *A Arte da Capoeira* (Salvador: Instituto de Radio Difusão Educativa da Bahia (IRDEB), 2010).

What I really liked were staged shows. I didn't like teaching capoeira [laughter]. I liked the stage, hitting the maculelê, doing the samba, to travel a lot, I liked it a lot, and I still like it.⁵⁵⁹

For João Grande, the pleasure of stage performance was intimately tied to the pleasures of traveling and exploring new places. He adds that the performers were very well taken care of—always staying at nice hotels, all expenses paid.⁵⁶⁰ At the same time as Grillo and the European media constructed images of primitive, “wild” performers from a “small village,” the 1974 tours of both *Capoeiras da Bahia* and *Festa Brazil* established Viva Bahia’s performers as global citizens. Many of the cast members traveled abroad—to Europe, Iran, and the United States—for the first time with Viva Bahia. After seeing (and being seen by) the world, several members of Viva Bahia emigrated to teach capoeira and/or Brazilian music, including Biancardi herself, who moved to Woodstock, NY, in 1990;⁵⁶¹ capoeiristas Jelon Vieira (Jelon Gomes Vieira Filho) and Loremil Machado (Josevaldo de Souza Machado) moved to New York City in the late 1970s and founded a Brazilian dance company, initially named after the show *Capoeiras da Bahia* and later renamed *Dance Brazil*.⁵⁶² Mestre João Grande has taught capoeira angola in Manhattan

⁵⁵⁹ Mestre João Grande (João Oliveira dos Santos), audio-recorded interview by author, November 14th, 2011.

⁵⁶⁰ João Grande stated: “we were very well taken care of, we were put up in nice hotels, everything was paid for, everyone was paid according to the contract, if anyone says otherwise it’s [out of] spite.” (“A gente foi muito bem tratado, botava em bons hotel, pagava tudo, todo mundo direitinho, se alguém falar mal delas é despeito.”) Mestre João Grande (João Oliveira dos Santos), audio-recorded interview by author, November 14th, 2011.

⁵⁶¹ Biancardi spent a decade in the United States teaching Brazilian music and leading an all-women musical ensemble called “Iabás,” in collaboration with Geralyn Burke. She has since returned to Brazil and now lives in Salvador.

⁵⁶² Writing for the *New York Times* in 1977, Don McDonagh accurately predicted: “The Capoeiras of Bahia, with their raw, colorful energy, will undoubtedly become familiar to larger audiences in the near future.” According to this reviewer, Vieira and Machado’s show closely resembled Viva Bahia’s *Capoeiras da Bahia*; their show included samba, a staged candomblé ceremony, maculelê danced with both sticks and machetes, and capoeira, described as “a stylized display of foot and leg fighting that found blows coming perilously close to landing. In both [capoeira and maculelê] there was a feeling of controlled aggression, so that the fierce slashing was smoothly meshed into wheeling and ducking patterns that grew in intensity.” Don McDonagh, “Dance: Brazilian Troupe Appears at City University Mall,” *New York Times*, Jul 8th 1977. The trajectory of Dance Brazil and its continued emphasis on

since 1990, and his Capoeira Angola Center on 14th Street has become the “mecca” of capoeira angola.

Festa Brazil constructed Brazilian “folk” and “pop” (i.e. tradition and modernity) along a skin color continuum; *Capoeiras da Bahia* reinforced associations between black skin and violence, savagery, and primitivism. Both shows met the destination image of Brazil as a festive place where “happy people” stay up dancing and partying all night; where dark, statuesque barefoot women overwhelm in their sensuality and “big, strong, handsome” men share their youth and vigor with middle-aged audience members in “austere northern latitudes.”

From the performers’ perspective, however, the 1974 tours also provided opportunities for individual creativity and innovation, as well as the prestige that came with having toured with Viva Bahia. Folklore “bearers” such as João Grande were freed from the burden of a tradition imposed from the outside, and seized the opportunity to be creative, choreographing solemn solos and “beautiful,” playful duets. While capoeira’s violence was highlighted through the narratives that accompanied the performances, it was precisely its non-violence on stage that freed performers to explore a pleasurable and creative virtuosity.

Conclusion

Rather than being a source of “loss” of capoeira’s character, I have shown that capoeira’s acrobatics are, in fact, a re-articulation for the stage of the nineteenth-century practice of grabbing and throwing. Choreographed as part of demonstration games (*escretas* or *esquetes*), these *balões* allowed capoeiristas to “act out” capoeira’s violence within the safety of these

capoeira is briefly described on their website, dancebrazil.org: “For over thirty years, DanceBrazil has thrilled audiences across the United States and throughout the world with its [...] unique fusion of Afro-Brazilian movement, contemporary dance and Capoeira, the traditional dance/martial arts form that had its origins in Africa and evolved in colonial Brazil as a means of fighting enslavement.” Jelton Vieira, “Dance Brazil,” Jaki Levi and Arrow Root Media, www.dancebrazil.org.

rehearsed games. In these demonstration games, actual grabbing gave way to assisted flips, where the player “being thrown” took an active role in his own “throwing,” using the other player’s body for support. This cooperation allowed for attention-grabbing, fast-paced, spectacular demonstrations of controlled violence; this magnified capoeira—faster and higher—proved well-suited for the proscenium stage, and became what is often referred to as “show” capoeira (*capoeira de show*).

Despite the fact that Bimba’s balões and their application in demonstration games were crucial in the development of a capoeira suited for the stage, his contributions to staged capoeira and his participation in the tourism industry have been downplayed in the capoeira literature. In an effort to clear Bimba’s name of decades of accusations—of having turned his back on his own roots and “disfigured” capoeira de Angola—Rego erases Bimba’s participation in the tourism industry and does not record the performances of the *Grupo Folclórico do Mestre Bimba* in his otherwise comprehensive “socio-ethnographic essay,” focusing instead on the rituals of his graduation ceremonies. Among so many newcomers in the capoeira scene, Rego recognized Bimba’s innovations as capoeira’s new “traditions.”

Trying to control the “quality” of cultural tourism in Salvador, the SUTURSA broadened its reach, and after 1964, the department managed not one but two folkloric stages in Salvador (with Rego himself as curator). Directing the first folkloric shows sponsored by the city, Canjiquinha cleverly negotiated the need to perform an “official” image of Bahia—Jorge Amado’s mixture of tradition and conviviality—with his desire to innovate. Although he briefly taught at Pastinha’s school, Canjiquinha avoided establishing an affiliation with either Capoeira Regional or Capoeira Angola, developing instead his own brand of capoeira, one focused on

variety and innovation—elements he saw as essential for holding tourists’ interest and standing out in a fast-growing market of folkloric shows.

While by the late 1960s there were dozens of folkloric shows catering to tourists in Salvador, only a few ensembles achieved distinction from “common” tourist shows. Both the capoeiristas-directors of *Grupo Folclórico da Bahia* and Biancardi (with Moraes and other collaborators) created “authored” shows that secured them short engagements on “high art” stages. It is no coincidence that the directors of both these groups were light-skinned, college educated, middle-class Bahians, whose education, socio-economic status and skin color undoubtedly open many doors in the 1960s and 70s in Brazil, including the stage doors of the Teatro Castro Alves.⁵⁶³

When Viva Bahia began the collaboration with Moraes that resulted in *Odoió Bahia* in 1972, Biancardi remembers Moraes vowing he would move heaven and earth if necessary to make sure the ensemble—a “racially integrated” cast including performers “from the people”—could rehearse in the Teatro Castro Alves.⁵⁶⁴ Although there were no racial segregation laws in Brazil, the “high art”/“folk art” divide was very much drawn along skin color and socio-economic class. It was no small accomplishment to bring brown and black performers to dance “folklore” on the same stages that presented European “high art” such as ballet and opera.

As “art,” Viva Bahia’s work allowed Afro-Brazilian performers access to the prestige of the proscenium stage; as “folklore,” Viva Bahia’s work largely avoided problems with the theatrical censorship during the 1970s. From the perspective of Brazil’s culture-regulating

⁵⁶³ Expressing his admiration for Biancardi’s work with Viva Bahia, Jaime Sodré describes her as “a white woman [who] opened doors to black people, without any discrimination.” He further describes her work with Viva Bahia as the place where “black pride [in Bahia] was awakened.” Jaime Sodré, personal communication, 2011.

⁵⁶⁴ Inês Bogéa and Moira Toledo, *Figuras da Dança: Carlos Moraes* (São Paulo: São Paulo Companhia de Dança, 2010).

agencies and commissions, folklore, especially Afro-Bahian folklore, celebrated the “roots” of the Brazilian nation, protecting its heritage and patrimony while at the same time disseminating a youthful, seductive and alluring destination image of Brazil abroad and promoting economic growth in the area of tourism.

Viva Bahia’s shows in the 1960s and 70s fulfilled made-in-Hollywood destination images of Brazil and helped establish Brazil as cultural tourism destination. Although *Festa Brazil* fulfilled expectations of Brazil’s exotic primitivism—vigorous, strong brown men leaping through the air and sultry barefoot “dark” women overwhelming in their sensuality—it also presented Brazil’s modernity through its bossa nova rhythms and “nightclub” atmosphere. Lacking a “pop” element, *Capoeiras da Bahia* not only met, it magnified and “acted out” European audiences’ fantasies of a savage, wild, barely under control Afro-diasporic corporeality. Grillo, however, saw *Capoeiras da Bahia* primitivism as a subversive act—a refusal to conform to a government-sanctioned image of Brazil as “a land of contrasts” between modernity and tradition (as observed by critic Anna Kisselgoff). In an interview for *The Sunday Times*, Grillo stated: “the government does not like us. They prefer to promote the Hollywood image of Brazil.”⁵⁶⁵ Both *Festa Brazil* and *Capoeiras da Bahia*, however, brought to life kinesthetic destination images of marked, racially othered bodies moving in “excessive” ways, overflowing with “natural” exuberance and sensuality as well as with the potentially violent physicality of capoeira.

While capoeira’s violence was “acted out” for audiences in “northern latitudes,” the lack of actual violence on stage allowed capoeiristas to experiment with capoeira’s aesthetics rather than its function, developing a wide vocabulary of *floreios* (decorative moves)—including

⁵⁶⁵ Oakes, "Doing a voodoo."

headspins, backflips and other floreios that have since become part of off-stage capoeira practice.

In *Capoeiras da Bahia* and *Festa Brazil*, capoeiristas engaged in capoeira's tradition of inventiveness, choreographing playful, pleasurable, "beautiful" open games.

Conclusions

Throughout this dissertation, I have challenged previous analyses of the development of twentieth-century capoeira as a series of rescues and losses. By giving serious consideration to iterations of capoeira previously dismissed as cooptation, de-Africanization, and “loss of character,” I was able to identify previously overlooked processes through which capoeira’s “traditions”—both its choreographic tactics and movement tropes—were tactically re-articulated through the hegemonic discourses of modernity. Similarly, by considering Capoeira Angola as more than a static “survival” of a capoeira practiced in an imagined past across the Atlantic, I was able to acknowledge both the modernity and the creativity of those responsible for choreographing capoeira’s traditions.

Here, I have not only striven to destabilize a linear, teleological relationship between tradition and modernity, but I have also problematized the notion that “non-erudite” (i.e. “folk”) cultural production is the result of either spontaneous, collective invention or authorless continuity. In each chapter, I have identified the “who” as well as the what, where, and when of changes in capoeira in an attempt to honor the repeated claims of authorship made during each innovator’s lifetime—claims either downplayed or used as evidence of “loss” throughout most of capoeira historiography. Zuma’s parenthetical note “(of the author)” taking credit for new strikes listed in *National Gymnastics*, Bimba’s claim to have improved Capoeira de Angola through foreign borrowings, the competing narratives of who was (or were) the first director(s) or founder(s) of the Capoeira Angola Sports Center, and Canjiquinha’s claims to having invented the “folkloric suite” made up of capoeira, maculelê, the fisherman’s net dance, and samba de roda, all show a clear desire for recognition of authorship. Although the folklore studies establishment under Carneiro’s leadership had begun to allow for the possibility of its dynamics,

folklore was still understood as produced by “society as a whole.” These repeated claims of authorship challenged this model of anonymous cultural production and, in fact, challenged the very notion of “bearing” folklore.

An analysis of the invention of capoeira’s modern traditions would be incomplete without acknowledging the participation of Bahian intellectuals and culture bureaucrats who, through their publications, recommendations, invitations to perform at local conferences and to tour outside of Bahia, actively shaped these traditions. As I have shown here, Carneiro and Amado, as well as Rego, Vianna, Simões, and other administrators of Salvador’s tourism department, were influential in fashioning Bahia as the cradle of Afro-Brazilian tradition, and in selecting or rejecting specific styles of capoeira as representative of this tradition. Here, I have attempted to complexify the notion that “the state” coopted capoeira’s traditions as tourist spectacle by identifying the conflicts and alliances between folklorists, tourism bureaucrats, and capoeiristas.

Although recent publications locate the effects of tourism on capoeira as a late twentieth-century phenomenon, I have shown that modern capoeira (both Angola and Regional) developed in the 1950s in tandem with the tourism industry in Bahia. Pastinha’s demonstrations at the historic Pelourinho location (highly recommended by Amado in his revised “guide to the streets and the mysteries of the city of Salvador”), Bimba’s own folkloric ensemble and his contracts with travel agencies, and Canjiquinha’s eclectic shows at the SUTURSA stage provide ample evidence of a formative entanglement between the development of capoeira and the transformation of Bahia into one of Brazil’s main cultural tourism destinations. And although capoeira mestres tried to keep a capoeira for tourists separate from a capoeira practiced as self-defense, the influences of staged capoeira—choreographed acrobatic assisted flips or a dance-

like, “well-behaved” capoeira where kicks are only suggested—bled through to a capoeira practiced offstage, resulting in what we, in the early twenty-first century, understand as capoeira.

By turning my attention to the diversity of capoeira’s movement vocabulary, both synchronically and diachronically, I have been able to untangle the notions of Africa, tradition, and the past, and show that the practice we now consider to be “more traditional” is in fact quite different from a capoeira practiced farther back in the past, when capoeira was marked by jumping, hopping, headbutting, and “projecting” the opponent to the ground with kicks and throws—suggesting directness, quickness, and contact between players, features markedly different from what is considered traditional today. By linking Africanity with documented movement continuities *in capoeira* rather than relying on imagined connections across the Atlantic or theories of a homogeneous “African dance” that has changed little “for at least four hundred years,” I was able to recognize the Africanity in capoeira’s modernity, exemplified by movement practices such as *balões*—Bimba’s “invented modernity.”

Tracing the transformation of *balões* into capoeira’s staged acrobatics through Bimba’s demonstration games (*escretas*) allowed me to reconsider “show capoeira” as a site of invention, pleasure, beauty, and play rather than one of loss. *Balões*—amplified and re-choreographed as assisted flips and solo *floreios* that thrilled audiences throughout Europe and North America, gave continuity to a practice discarded by “traditional” capoeira. Having been removed from Capoeira Angola for their excessive violence, *balões*, reconfigured as staged acrobatic sequences, created the illusion of danger and violence in order to meet a kinesthetic destination image of hyperphysical, “wild” and dangerous Afro-diasporic bodies. Ironically, these pre-determined acrobatic sequences, devoid of actual violence, allowed performers to focus on the aesthetics and artistry of capoeira’s movement, choreographing “beautiful,” “open” games.

Although capoeira on international stages was largely understood as “traditional”—folklore borne by “people from the people” from a “small village” in Brazil, these stage performances provided a space for the creativity and innovation of capoeiristas who were as urban and as modern as the audience members and critics “from northern latitudes” who marveled at their “wild gymnastics.”

In the 1970s, the world was introduced to capoeira’s violence and virtuosity through staged folkloric shows. These shows allowed theater-goers to experience the thrills of capoeira, the rituals of *candomblé*, and the happiness and sensuality of samba from the safety of their assigned seats. In the twenty-first century, however, a visual experience of Afro-Brazilian culture separated by a fourth wall is no longer enough. Folkloric ensembles have dwindled, and the only Brazilian professional folk ensemble that gives continuity to the stage traditions of Viva Bahia at the time of this writing is the *Balé Folclórico da Bahia*, founded by Walson Botelho and Ninho Reis in 1988.⁵⁶⁶

The visual encounter provided by folkloric spectacles has been replaced, since the early 2000s, with embodied experiences of Afro-Brazilianness at retreats known as *encontros* (encounters) or *eventos* (events).⁵⁶⁷ At these *encontros*—often held in rural areas in southern Bahia where several capoeira mestres have set up “cultural centers” adjacent to near-virgin

⁵⁶⁶ For an analysis of the *Balé Folclórico da Bahia*, see Meredith A. Ahlberg, "Dancing Africa in Bahia: Dance, Embodied Authenticity and the Consumption of "Africa" in Bahia, Brazil" (University of California, San Diego, 2011).

⁵⁶⁷ Among these *encontros*, most of them held annually, the most established are: *Capoeirando*, organized by Mestre Suassuna (Reinaldo Ramos Suassuna); *Dancebatukeira*, organized by Contra-mestres Cabello (Éldio Rolim) and Tisza (Helena Coelho); *Permangola*, organized by Mestre Cobra Mansa (Cinésio Feliciano Peçanha). Although these *encontros* take place in relative proximity—all in southern Bahia—they each have very distinct characteristics: *Capoeirando* is an *encontro* of large proportions (attended by 400-500 people) catering primarily to capoeira regional practitioners; *Dancebatukeira* and *Permangola* are attended by 20 or 30 people at one time, and cater towards practitioners interested in “drinking from the fountain” of traditional capoeira and communing with nature. Mestres from other capoeira groups are invited as guest instructors for these *encontros*, and such participation increases their international visibility and facilitates invitations for teaching workshops overseas.

beaches, hiking paths, lakes and waterfalls—capoeira practitioners, many from “northern latitudes,” participate in week-long workshops of capoeira and Afro-Brazilian music and dance.⁵⁶⁸ The schedule of classes of these *encontros*—which frequently include *maculelê*, dances from *candomblé*, *samba de roda*, and capoeira—attests to the lasting influence of the folkloric suite developed through the collaboration between “folk” performers, tourism bureaucrats, local directors/choreographers and international producers in the 1960s and 70s.

This historically complex heritage, however, is often downplayed in favor of implicit and explicit connections that add “nature” as a fourth ingredient in the authenticating equation Africa/tradition/past. A direct link between capoeira and an unmediated, “ancestral” nature allows “traditional” capoeira to bypass the contradictions, incongruencies, and, most importantly, the modernity of urban twentieth-century capoeira. Twenty-first century capoeira innovators have established connections between nature and capoeira *angola* through *encontros* that combine hands-on learning about environmentally sustainable, “green” agricultural practices and building techniques with capoeira *angola*, creating the hybrid concepts of “permangola” (permaculture and capoeira *angola*) or “eco-capoeira” (ecology and capoeira). These nature-centered *encontros*, a growing trend in capoeira which deserves its own in-depth study, superimpose twenty-first century concerns with an endangered environment on early twentieth-century views on a “dying” capoeira in need of rescue.

In 2010, however, the directors of the *encontro Dancebatukeira* not only recognized but foregrounded the influences of the folkloric stage on contemporary capoeira by inviting

⁵⁶⁸ In the summers of 2007, 2008 and 2010, I attended *Dancebatukeira*, held at the *Fazenda Cultural Ouro Verde*, directed by Contra-mestres Cabello and Tiza. I also attended three different *encontros* organized by Mestre Jogo de Dentro (Jorge Egídio dos Santos), in 2006, 2007 and 2008, held both in Salvador and in the area known as the Vale do Capão, an eco-tourism destination in inland Bahia sought for its hiking paths and waterfalls. Today Mestre Jogo de Dentro also directs a cultural center, *Espaço Cultural Casa Grande da Ilha*, in the area known as Cacha Pregos on the island of Itaparica, accessible by ferry from Salvador.

Biancardi as an honored guest instructor. Mestre João Grande, a recurring honored guest at *Dancebatukeira*, proudly acknowledged his past as a performer with Viva Bahia by publically thanking Biancardi for being his own *mestra de palco* (mestre of the stage). Inviting Biancardi and honoring her alongside the oldest living grand-master of capoeira angola was a critical move toward destabilizing the fixity of the tradition/modernity binary, re-claiming and recognizing twentieth-century staged capoeira as part of capoeira's tradition.

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