Samba de Roda and the Threat of Epistemicide on the North Coast of Bahia

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Abstract: This paper presents an ethnography of samba de roda in the north coast of Bahia from the point of view of its mestres [chief practitioners]. We highlight the network of community activities that support samba as a multivocal and singular cultural practice. Emerging in a rural context with profound association to religious and labour practices of communities, samba de roda developed a vast choreographic and musical repertoire. However, it now faces challenges in maintaining its aesthetic and poetic richness, in the face of a new context brought on by the tourism industry. We ponder the extent to which samba de roda can (and cannot) withstand such socioeconomic transformations. At the same time, we consider that these activities should be included in the samba de roda safeguard policies. As the objectification of cultural practices is a harmful factor that can result from safeguard policies, this study can simultaneously serve as a cautionary tale for Recôncavo Baiano and its own safeguarding policies.

Résumé : Cet article présente une ethnographie de la samba de roda de la côte nord de Bahia du point de vue de ses mestres (meilleurs praticiens). Nous mettons en exergue le réseau des activités communautaires qui soutiennent la samba en tant que pratique culturelle multivocale et singulière. Apparue dans un milieu rural, en étroite association avec les pratiques religieuses et de travail des communautés, la samba de roda a développé un immense répertoire musical et chorégraphique. Cependant, elle doit à présent relever de nombreux défis pour conserver sa richesse poétique et esthétique, devant le nouveau contexte imposé par l'industrie du tourisme. Nous évaluons dans quelle mesure la samba de roda peut (et ne peut pas) résister à de telles transformations socioéconomiques. En même temps, nous pensons que ces activités devraient être incluses dans les politiques de protection de la samba de roda. Puisque la réification des pratiques culturelles est un facteur nuisible qui peut résulter de politiques de protection, cette étude peut servir de conte de mise en garde pour le Recôncavo bahianais et ses propres politiques de préservation du patrimoine.

This article has accompanying videos on our YouTube channel. You can find them on the playlist for MUSICultures volume 48, available here: http://bit.ly/MUSICultures-48. With the ephemerality of web-based media in mind, we warn you that our online content may not always be accessible, and we apologize for any inconvenience.

Domenici, Eloisa. 2021. Samba de Roda and the Threat of Epistemicide on the North Coast of Bahia. *MUSICultures* 48: 142-167.

The risk of cultural homogenization in a rapidly globalizing world was one of the motivators that led UNESCO to promulgate, in 2003, the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage. This Convention sought to change UNESCO's theretofore understanding of cultural expressions as "folklore," in response to a "progressive shift away from considering cultural expressions as objects to considering them as processes" (Bortolotto 2007: 21). However, the tensions of such a shift cannot be resolved by the mere proclamation of an intangible heritage. The implementation of safeguarding policies ruled by market logic (Salama 2016) can end up reinforcing the objectification of cultural practices. Thus, a deeper reflection is called for in understanding how cultural expression is embedded in daily life and how it relates to other practices in communities. This essay will discuss such relations in the case of *Samba de Roda* in the state of Bahia, Brazil.

In 2005, *Samba de Roda do Recôncavo da Bahia* (that is, from the region of the Recôncavo Basin in Bahia) was included in UNESCO's Third Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Samba de Roda is a specific form of samba in which participants play instruments, sing, and dance while in a circle (roda). It is most often present in rural contexts and is distinctive to Bahia. Having received the largest contingent of enslaved Africans among Brazilian states, Bahia is home to a long-standing Afro-diasporic culture of utmost importance. In the candidacy dossier for samba de roda, labour practices are mentioned as part of the region's contextual description, but not in terms of their intrinsic relation to samba. Similarly, the relations between religion and samba are presented merely as co-occurrences in characterizing moments where samba takes place. What I will show here is that these relations aren't simply of history and simultaneity, but are rather structuring and constitutive, ie. deterministic in samba de roda. Furthermore, I contend that these practices — samba, religious events, and communal labour — form an important cultural complex that is foundational not just for samba de roda but for the communities that practice it.

The candidacy dossier submitted to UNESCO characterizes Recôncavo Baiano as the region where samba de roda is especially important, and also recognizes its presence throughout the state of Bahia (Sandroni and Sant'Anna 2007: 17).[1] However, there were consequences to declaring that samba de roda is particularly significant to one part of Bahia rather than to the entire state, as had been argued for the Bumba-meu-Boi complex, which was proclaimed as a heritage pertaining to all of its home state of Maranhão. Ethnomusicologist Carlos Sandroni, who coordinated the samba de roda proclamation dossier, recounts that, until the candidacy was submitted to UNESCO, no one had particularized the existence of Recôncavo samba de roda: such a notion took

shape in the minds and words of the region's *sambadores* only during the process of proclamation, as they rejected such particularization themselves.[2] After the proclamation process, almost all the attention given to samba de roda has focused on its existence in the Recôncavo region, ignoring its importance in other regions — despite the form's nearly ubiquitous presence throughout the state of Bahia. This concentration is also evident in scholarly studies of samba de roda, most of which were conducted in Recôncavo, both before and after that milestone (see, for example, Doring 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Lima 2010; Marques 2008; Nobre 2009, 2018; Iyanaga 2010, 2015; Campos 2011; Amoroso 2017; Queiroz 2019).[3]

This case study presents samba de roda in the North Coast of Bahia, a region contiguous with Recôncavo that has undergone intense change over the last 30 years under a model of development guided by neoliberal globalization — which is to say, in a context where its communities are living under constant threat from economic and political forces with significantly more power. Paradoxically, I was able to find highly meaningful data on the relations between samba de roda and other daily practices in the communities, which I shall present here. Despite the proximity to Recôncavo, samba de roda on the North Coast has evolved in unique ways. The two regions, though contiguous, have profound differences. While the economy of Recôncavo Baiano has experienced continuous decline since the early 20th century, the North Coast experienced rapid economic development starting in the 1980s, particularly in the tourism and construction sectors, and specifically in the municipalities of Mata de São

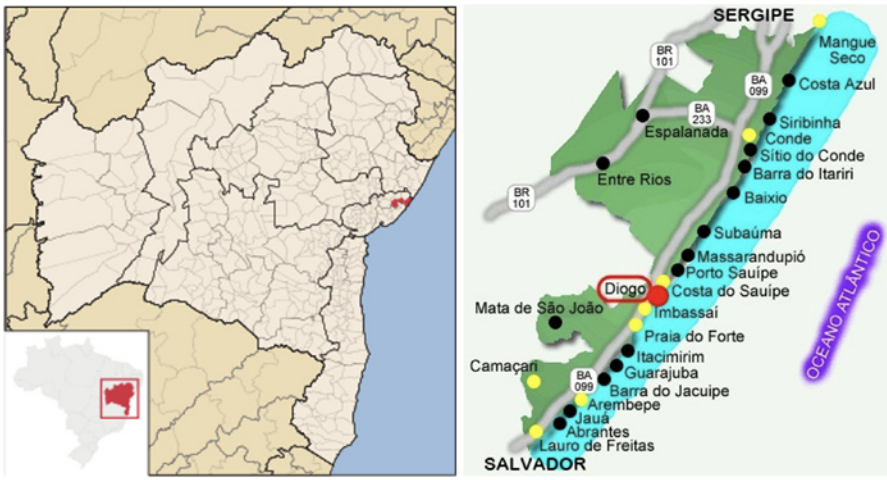

Fig. 1. Map of the state of Bahia with detail of the Coconut Coast.

João and Entre Rios. This was due to state a development policy — beginning with the BA-099 highway connecting Salvador to Aracaju — that drastically changed land use and injected capital into the region. Subsequently named the "Coconut Coast," the area has been subjected to heavy land speculation, with the introduction of hotels, inns, and luxury condos — mostly in the district of Praia do Forte, as well as with the hotel complex of Costa do Sauipe.

North Coast communities transformed significantly beginning in the 1980s. In the span of a few decades, the previously rural, agriculture-based municipality (a conglomeration of neighbouring coastal towns located 70 km north of the state capital of Salvador – see Figure 1) has become an international tourist destination with a high influx of summer and weekend visitors. Once a peaceful town, Mata de São João — current population c. 41,000 — is listed as the most dangerous place in Brazil, with the highest rate of firearm homicides.[4]

Besides demonstrating the significance of samba de roda in the North Coast region and identifying the threats it faces, my main purpose is to show that samba de roda in the North Coast of Bahia can serve as a case study of the intrinsic relation between samba de roda and other practices in the community — while simultaneously serving as a cautionary tale for Recôncavo Baiano and its own safeguarding policies, where such relations are perhaps not taken into consideration, as we will further discuss. My goal is to understand the conditions that are sustaining samba de roda as a multivocal and singular practice of this region's community. It is important to recognize not only that samba de roda as a practice has cultural roots within communities, but also the extent to which its continuity is sensitive to changes in the communities' ways of life.

I have spent five years among the *sambadores*[5] and *sambadeiras* in the region, cataloguing their narratives, attending *rodas de samba,*[6] and generally trying to understand what samba de roda is now and what it was in the past: what has changed and why. This research was conducted in partnership with two *mestras sambadoras* and one *mestre sambador*:[7] Dona Maroca, *mestra sambadeira* in Porto Sauipe; Dona Moça, mestra sambadeira in Pau Grande (Praia do Forte); and Seu Honorato, mestre sambador in Areal. These *mestres* organize exhibition groups and also perform samba de roda in the traditional custom: in devotion toward a saint, conducted at their homes or at those of other members of the community. I deliberately sought more traditional rodas de samba, those practiced in community, eschewing staged examples designed for tourists, and I have come to understand important aspects regarding the network of community practices that are intertwined with samba, their sociological importance for local communities, as well as aesthetic traits that

emerge in specific contexts — all of which I discuss below. When talking about private samba de roda culture, I mean the rodas de samba that happen as part of a community's daily life, linked to companionship, devotion, and labour. The professionalization of samba de roda groups began in the last decades of the 20th century (Nobre 2018: 151) and has intensified with the process of proclamation (Campos 2011; Doring 2013). However, contrary to trends in safeguarding practices that follow market logic (Vianna and Salama 2012; Salama 2016), I intend to argue that samba needs the support of other community practices in order to keep its characteristic polysemy, multivocality, and vitality.

In the following section, I will present the mestras and the mestre whose accounts contextualize the presence of samba de roda in the community while revealing the intrinsic relation between samba and communal work practices. The second section presents samba in the household worship of saints, with a description of a particular celebration, and comments on structural aspects of samba that were evident in that context. The third section features reports that describe various dances and genres of samba, which speak to its vitality as a cultural complex. The fourth section summarizes relations that were observed between samba, labour practices, and religious practices, while showing them to be constitutive toward samba de roda and the communities' ways of life. In the final considerations, I present some projections arising from the ideas previously discussed.

Understanding Private Samba de Roda Culture with the Mestras and Mestres[8]

Dona Maroca, Bernardina Alves, is a 74-year-old[9] mestra sambadeira and leader of the "Pancada Forte" Samba Group, which was created by her uncle some decades ago. Born in Porto Sauipe (30 km north of Praia do Forte), she recounts having been a midwife for many years, assisting in hundreds of births in the local area. On the many occasions when we were together, this remarkable woman showed me many aspects of the relationship between samba and household celebrations devoted to saints. Every year on the night of February 1st, Dona Maroca performs a celebration devoted to Our Lady of Candeias (Candlemas) at her home, which usually consists of a unique roda de samba, as I shall discuss below. I watched many presentations of the Pancada Forte group on various occasions when they were invited to perform. In one instance, they were called to participate and perform at a party for Marujos at a *terreiro de Candomblé* (a worshiping ground for Candomblé, an Afro-Brazilian syncretic

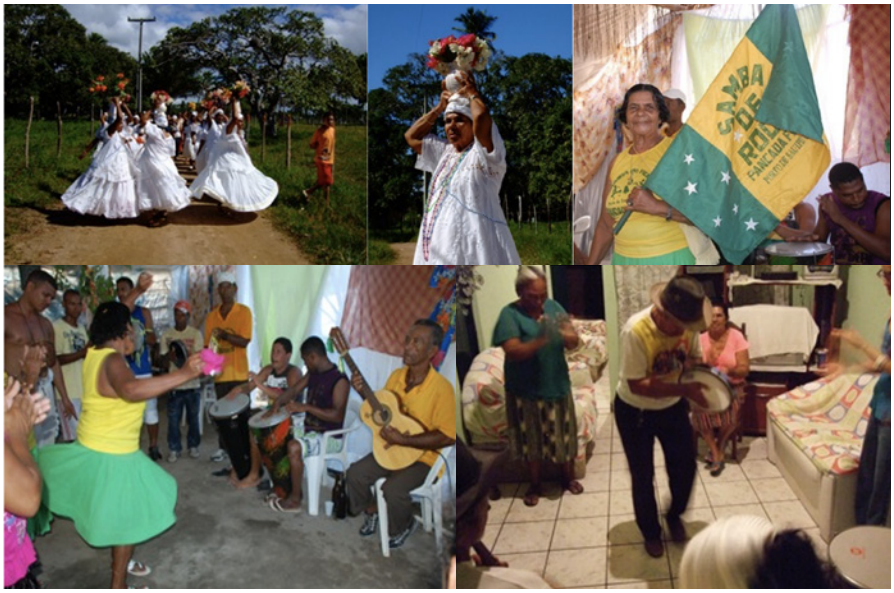

Fig. 2. Mestra Dona Maroca: *Lavagem*, presentation of the group *Pancada Forte*, and rehearsal of the group at her home.

religion) — demonstrating that their faith moves freely between Catholicism and Candomblé.

Dona Moça, Anatália Bispo da Cruz, is a 67-year-old, third generation mestra sambadeira and leader of the group "Samba de Raiz," which is composed of friends and relatives. She recounted that her grandmother used to sing lead in the celebrations of Three Kings' Day, and gave valuable information regarding samba de roda's occurrence in the context of other community practices, performing her narrative with detailed gestures and movements from her body memory (a concept I will elaborate on later). Her group performs in public celebrations held in the touristic areas of the region. Much like Dona

Fig. 3. Mestra Dona Moça (on the left, playing the small timbal): rehearsal of the group *Samba de Raíz*.

Fig 4. Mestre Norato and his wife in front of a house made of adobe (*taipa*).

Maroca, Dona Moça is a strong leader and proudly states that her samba is done in "the same way as it was in the past" (personal communication, June 19, 2010) — which is why her group is named "Samba de *Raiz*, or "roots samba," referring to its origins and denoting ancestry. She is the lead singer and plays a small *timbau*.[10]

Mestre Honorato, 74, better known as Norato, was born in Areal (20 km north of Praia do Forte), where he still resides. He began watching rodas de samba at a very young age and became a sambador early in his life — one capable of composing sambas and singing lead — which required knowing many *chulas.*[11] He is an experienced singer and is very demanding of the accompanying vocalist or *viola*[12] player. A prolific samba composer, Mestre Honorato has recorded two CDs of original songs. He makes a living by helping his wife produce straw handicrafts. He does not hide his frustration at not being able to live off of samba.

These mestres are committed to conserving the samba de roda features of yore, often complaining about how much samba has deteriorated. Upon talking to them and to other sambadores, sambadeiras, and local residents, I understood that — prior to the highway construction in 1993 — samba de roda was normally devoted to saints, performed at devotees' houses, and involved prayers, food, and drinks. These types of roda de samba are also known in the Recôncavo region as "*samba de caruru*" (see Iyanaga 2015). According to my interlocutors, these celebrations of worship generally coincided with the feast days of the most important Catholic saints, so samba de caruru took place all throughout the year.

> For as long as I can remember, there were sambas at the houses where there were prayers. There were the prayers of Saint Cosmas, Saint Anthony [of Padua], Our Lady of Candeias [Candlemas], Saint Crispin, the Three Kings [the Magi]. There were always the Kings. For the Kings, we began the samba on January 5th, it went on during the 6th, the 7th, the 8th, sometimes we spent five or six days doing samba." (Bernardina Alves, personal communication, January 15, 2010)[13]

Seu Norato's account describes the goings-on of the festivities of Three Kings' Day, celebrated on January 5th. When he was a young man in the 1960s, parties toured many households in the community — anyone wishing to welcome the partygoers could host them. The celebration lasted several days, until it had passed through all houses, as I will further discuss. Dona Moça describes the surprise caused by the arrival of the samba party to a household on Kings' Day:

> In those days, the violas didn't go in the machine [amplifier], they were just "simple" [acoustic, unamplified]. Then the *violeiro* [viola guitar player] accompanied us folks to the houses that had issued invitations. There were people who invited [the samba party], and we folks went. We would samba for two, three, four days, and everyone went quietly from one house to the next. In those days, when there was house-hopping, one kilometre, even two kilometres apart, there was samba in one house, [and you] couldn't hear it in the other. People at the house were asleep. When they heard, the Kings were already at the door, they awoke with the noise, that's how we'd do it. (personal communication, June 19, 2010)

Dona Maroca adds:

> Back then there was the Kings, there was the month of September, October was caruru, [Saints] Cosmas and Damian. Then we'd pray, and we'd samba all night, respectful samba, organized samba, each one dancing their samba at the right time.[14] (personal communication, January 15, 2010)

These accounts indicate that samba de roda was practiced in these localities at least once a month, present at moments of great social and cultural significance.[15]

Samba de roda was not only present during festivities, but also in labour activities particular to communities, such as *taipagem* and the making of manioc flour. In taipagem, friends and relatives gathered to help an individual in covering their house with mud.[16] The process took place over one or two days, after which the beneficiary would offer food, and samba took place in celebration of the feat. Singing began during the construction phase, as an encouragement to the workers, as Dona Moça describes:

> There was a song for stomping the mud, there was another song for cutting the mud. I remember, my uncle there on the drum, the lyrics went: "Turn the *beiju* [tapioca pancake], 'cause it's good and it's ready, the coconut beiju, it belongs to my lady." And when cutting the mud with the hoe was all done, we went on to stomping the mud: "Zé! Zé, what's that? The *caboclo* [mixed-race man][17] in the mill who don't work without a hat" … I witnessed that from the age of ten. They made that big old hole for ten, twelve men to stomp, they went like {she gestures as if the men were all hand in hand in the pit, stomping mud to the rhythm}. (personal communication, June 19, 2010).

Dona Moça showed us, with gestures and movements, how samba de roda was intimately related to the mud-stomping chore. In her demonstration, the call-and-response of the choir takes on the rhythm set by the mud stomping, and I can clearly see how the responsive chant assumes characteristics that are particular to that body-mediated activity. This indicates the extent to which the structure of samba is sensitive to its context, given that the body that toils is the same body that plays and dances the samba — the very samba that mediates the narrow relationship between poetry and daily life.

Another tradition that was once deeply connected to samba was the handmade production of manioc flour. The traditional method is a task involving several families around communal equipment named *casa de farinha* [house for making flour]; the equipment is communally operated and sometimes also communally owned. "In the casa de farinha, production occurs by way of different familial relations, of mutual help between neighbors" (Silva and Silva 2015: 62). The task can take an entire day, from grinding the cassava, to drying and baking the flour, then making the beiju. In former times, this process ended in a roda de samba. This productive activity would bring together members of the community, uniting them in solidarity and collaboration while producing and reinforcing important social relationships. I observed that the handmade production of flour is now practiced by only a small fraction of each community — and it no longer involves samba. Most families switched to buying flour from the market, so this change in habit entails losing food autonomy, since manioc flour is the staple food in the region, while simultaneously reducing the contexts in which samba de roda is practised.

In highlighting the importance of these labour activities, I evoke the relations recognized by Brazilian anthropologist Klaas Woortmann, who conducted an ethnographic study of Brazilian peasantry. He pointed to "a rural ethic that constitutes a moral order" (1988: 11). In this context, land, family, and

labour are "nucleating and, above all, related [categories], for one does not exist without the other" (23). The point is not the value of work itself, but work as an ethical value. Work has a subjective value that "depends on the place where it occurs ... and on the people who interrelate through that work" (25). Therefore, *subjective* here means something that has value as a symbol and defines the subject itself. In family-based production, the subject has control and agency: the work engenders dignity and is subjectivizing — that is, it constitutes the subject and the subject's sense of itself. By contrast, paid labour may undermine a sense of dignity, signifying humiliation, subjection, and bondage. Autonomy is an essential value in the ethics of the labourer. Barter of work is part of their ethics — the so-called "*exchange of time* not only addresses a practical necessity, but also has a symbolic meaning: one is not merely producing a plot of land; one is reproducing a community" (32). Samba de roda, within the context of the communities of the North Coast of Bahia, is clearly part of a dense and diverse network of cultural relationships sustained by communal bonds. Here, the practice of samba plays an important role in the knitting of the social fabric. The aesthetic and poetic characteristics of samba are intimately related to the aforementioned activities, such that its very practice depends on this social fabric and weakens with its deterioration. This observation also corroborates Woortmann's proposition that such communal practices are constitutive of subjectivity. This remark is key to our analysis, and I shall return to it below.

Celebrating Saints in the Household with Samba de Roda

Early in my research, I had witnessed samba de roda exclusively in the context of organized group shows. Even though there was audience participation, performances did not exceed two hours. I wondered what samba would be like inside a home, while worshipping a saint? I had the opportunity to participate in the *Festa de* [feast of] *Nossa Senhora de Candeias*,[18] organized by Mestra Dona Maroca at her own home, which allowed me a more profound understanding of samba de roda.

Thirty-two years earlier, Dona Maroca made a promise to *Nossa Senhora de Candeias*, to celebrate her with samba every year on the night of February 1st. I was there on that night in 2012. Her living room was arranged for receiving guests: the couch, television, and chairs had been pushed back, and the small icon of the saint was placed front and centre, adorned with many flowers and candles over a big, white sheet of lace paper. At seven o'clock, the faithful began arriving. Within 30 minutes, there were about 20 women gathered in the room, awaiting the two women who would conduct prayers. Following their

appearance, the group began to sing Catholic hymns with great devotion, in both Portuguese and Latin. At the end, the faithful asked for "Glory to Our Lady of Candeias! And Glory to the host of this house!" amidst the sound of many fireworks. Dona Maroca and her daughter ran to the kitchen to fetch cakes and sodas for the guests and began serving children first.

How would the roda de samba begin? The gesture was direct: Dona Maroca went to her bedroom and brought the percussion instruments (*timbais* and *pandeiros*) back to the living room, where the musicians were to remain. Soon, the violeiro and the sambadores gathered around and got ready to begin the roda. The samba set off to a cheerful start at 9 p.m., with many sambadeiras already competing for a turn at the centre of the roda. Around midnight, the samba was still "on fire" as a sambadeira entered the roda dancing samba with a bottle full of liquid balanced atop her head: she danced the samba once, twice, three times — without dropping the bottle (see 7:00 to 8:10 in the video "danças 2"). The same move was done by other sambadeiras. Then another sambadeira made her entrance, dancing with a cloth underneath her feet in order to dry the sweaty floor. The samba kept going uninterrupted until 3 a.m. About 100 people participated in the party, rubbing shoulders in Dona Maroca's small living room. Some were there for the prayers, while others only arrived for the samba. All were equally welcomed by their host, as well as by the other participants.

On that night I noticed the rare appearance of some sambadeiras who would not have shown up for just any occasion, but who came especially to this celebration because of their devotion to or in solidarity with Dona Maroca's saintly pledge. One of these guests in particular exhibited a very singular corporeity. She was a petite and elderly woman with a surprising agility to her samba, manifested in the form of "accents" and "breaks." Every time she entered the roda, she would encourage and challenge the musicians and other sambadeiras, creating a frisson in the roda de samba (see 3:16 and 4:04 in the video). There were other elder sambadeiras like her, with equally peculiar presences and manners of samba.[19]

My observations will make more sense with some explanations regarding body movements (see the video from 2:28 to 4:08). The dance in samba de roda is made up of subtle movements that require a complex explanation. The feet are displaced in an alternating motion, where the toes grab the floor and pull the soles with minimal detachment from the ground, while generating micro-shifts of weight between the outer side of the foot, the inner side, and the heel. Concurrently, there are micro-swings of the hips and shoulder blades, together with small lateral flexions of the spine. The short, continuous motion of displacement goes sideways, forward, or backward. It is suddenly emphasized

by a larger displacement with a weight shift — as if a fall will occur — but a very quick recovery resumes the previous motion or leads to another "fall" on the opposite side. In those moments of larger displacement, the whole foot leaves the ground in a longer step. The subtle footwork where toes alternate pulling and pushing on the floor is known as a *passo miudinho*, or tiny step, a distinctive feature of samba de roda (Queiroz 2019; Amoroso 2017). The structure of the dance is open to improvisations and there is a feeling of suspense in a constant dialogue with the instruments, leading up to the moments where an accent or quasi-fall will happen: a momentary change in the rhythmic cell of the pandeiro, referred to as *chamado* [a call]; a particular *toque* [pattern] of the viola guitar; a specific chula; a variation in the handclaps around the roda; or even a phrase uttered by a participant. In this elaborate communication between each sambadeira and the musicians (who tease each other, playing off of these falls and accents), syncopation can happen in the body and in the music at any moment, and the surprise caused by this game is an element of aesthetic fruition among participants.[20] Bahian sociologist Ordep Serra notes: "The roda de samba is a small laboratory of musical creativity" (Serra 2009: 120) — and, I might add, of choreographic creativity. In this sense, the diverse range of corporalities and manners of dance are enriching to samba. The samba is further enriched by the presence of elder sambadeiras who are experienced in the movements of samba and the interplay with the instruments — their bodies replete with memory and ancestry, or what Leda Maria Martins calls *oralitura* (2003). During festivities of worship, the participation of elder sambadeiras in the roda de samba prompts respect and reverence, due not only to their recognized expertise, but also to the admiration they elicit from the young. Moreover, when the roda de samba is part of a spiritual rite (involving acts of devotion and the dynamics of a lengthy, cathartic celebration), it takes on the character of an epiphany and of a connection between different temporalities (ancestry), which is favored by the attendance of people from various age groups (see the video from 1:20 to 4:08).

Key to understanding what takes place in a festivity of this nature is Brazilian sociologist Muniz Sodré's concept of *pensar nagô* [to think as a Yoruba descendant] (2017). In opposition to a Eurocentric epistemology, Nagô thought puts corporality at the centre of knowledge. Existence is corporified and incorporated, as it ensues from *orixás*, *inkisis*, and ancestors.[21] This entails a collective form of subjectivation in the face of the dilemma brought on by slavery's diaspora, in which potency is embodied — a subjectivation anchored in the body's position relative to its territorial inscription (101). "The sacred experience is more corporal than intellectual, more somatic than properly psychic, if one understands psychism as [a] record of a non-ritualistic interiority"

(117). These processes go beyond rites and become part of a thought process, an *arkhé*, the cosmological version of an ethic. As such, the acts of singing, dancing, and playing perform essential roles in life, connecting with *axé*, or life force. That is why Afro-Brazilian cultural practices, such as samba de roda, assume a central position in the lives of communities — it is a vital necessity, which Sodré calls *alacridade* (or alacrity, from the Latin *alacritas*; *ayó* in Yoruba). Understanding alacrity as regency and poetics, he claims that experiences of commotion and of strong bodily engagement are fundamental in renewing *axé* or life force — it is a rapture that grants fulfillment. This means joy presides over samba, an idea which can be better understood in the myth of Ibeji — a story about twin brothers whose music allowed them to cheat death by causing Death to dance and thus forget to reap the lives of men. Here, joy carries the sense of vitality, of resisting death. The Ibeji from the Yoruba pantheon are associated with Saints Cosmas and Damian, who are especially honoured on September 27th with samba de roda and a feast — a fact that reinforces the notion of samba de roda as a source of vitality that conquers death. This sense also appears in sayings such as, *"Enquanto tá sambando, tá vivo!"* ("If it dances samba, it's alive!"). When we say that samba de roda entails processes of subjectivation, we understand it as being at the core of the modes and processes through which individuals are constituted as subjects in those communities. According to Sodré, this derives from the fact that these processes emerge not from an intellectual enunciation, but from these forms of corporal engagement within the territory — and samba de roda is fundamental to that complex of practices.

This is where I can better understand the question of body memory, for knowledge is constructed by the positioning of corporal potency as it is inscribed in the territory, in connection with ancestral knowledge. That is why oral/corporal performances have a degree of importance that justifies the affirmation that every master who dies is a library that departs. Sodré's discussion offers important insights that expand and deepen what has been previously noted by several authors regarding the appropriation of Catholic rites by African descendants in Brazil, who turned these rites into expressions of their own worldview and values (see Lucas 2002).[22] Therefore, when one is at a festivity for Catholic saints in Bahia, whose population is 82% Black, we are in an Africanized territory in regard to the beliefs and the meaning of rites (Serra 2009). Regarding the manner in which Catholic saints are worshipped through samba in the Recôncavo, Iyanaga remarks:

> Hardly just a dance, then, devotional samba indexes a New World [B]lack understanding of Catholicism and of Catholic

> saints. In this way, this Catholic samba represents neither passive assimilation nor un-bridled resistance—it fits somewhere in-between. And, I think, it is in fact this "in-between-ness" that most accurately depicts the history of the [B]lack experience in the New World. [….] European and Euro-Brazilian Catholic saints (and by extension Catholicism) were "Africanized"—or more accurately, perhaps, "creolized" (or "Afro-Brazilianized")—and could thus be embraced not as the gods of the oppressors but as personal protectors of the enslaved and oppressed [B]lack population. And it was this version of the saints that helped construct Afro-Bahian culture (and later Bahian culture). (2015: 121-122)

This is how I make sense of Dona Maroca's party: the coming together, in the same event, of a range of seemingly unrelated feelings — contrition and joy, faith and feast — corroborates the idea that the religious/profane binary does not apply to the traditional cultures of Brazil.

A Dynamic and Multivocal Structure

While there are two main categories of samba de roda — samba corrido and samba chula (see endnote 12) — mestres recognize additional types and subtypes. For instance, Dona Moça talks about *samba camisão* and *samba santo-amarense,* among others.[23] Seu Norato can identify small differences in the way samba is played and sung in neighbouring locales only 15 km apart. He respects those differences and encourages others to do the same. As Dona Moça said, "When I go somewhere and listen to somebody playing samba, I have to follow that person's rhythm. If they come here, it's the same thing, they have to follow our rhythm" (personal communication, June 19, 2010). It's clear that there are differences between groups in the way they play and sing, whether in their rhythms, tempos, verses, or vocal modulations.

Regarding the samba dance, mestres frequently say of a good *sambadeira* (dancer): "She knows how to step on the ground." I ask Seu Norato what it means to *know how to step on the ground* in samba de roda, to which he replies: "Gotta trample just like the pandeiro. Do that trample with the feet on the ground like the pandeiro" (Honorato Gomes, personal communication, November 12, 2010). He adds that before entering the roda, the sambadeiras first listen closely to the viola solo, to make sure it's time. They don't start dancing whichever way, carelessly, without listening to the sound of the viola. But there's also the violeiro's attentiveness to the moves of the sambadeira: "And so the viola kept

up with that stepping of hers… One kept up with the other. The sambadeira keeping up with the viola and the viola keeping up with the sambadeira," like mestre Norato once said (quotation lifted from my ethnographic fieldnote). Daniela Amoroso (2017) has previously noted the feet's predominance in samba de roda's *passo miudinho* [tiny step] dance. Clécia Queiroz adds that sambadeiras do not recognize the term "dance": "I have heard many of them say that 'dance is one thing, samba is another,' and that the sambadeira doesn't dance, she stomps her feet" (2019: 17).

The metaphors used by Seu Norato, "stepping on the ground," "stomping," "tremble the ground," "trample like the pandeiro," "trampling the feet on the ground like the pandeiro," and "go all crazy in the roda de samba" (personal communication, November 12, 2010), denote the intensity and the pleasure that sambadeiras feel inside the roda de samba, corroborating Sodré's principle of African alacrity (2017). The term *pinicado* [prickling], which refers to a manner of playing in which the viola strings are pinched or plucked individually (Nobre 2009), also refers to the corporeity of samba. Dona Moça comments: "The viola starts doing that pinicado, and you just come undone" (personal communication, June 19, 2010). The verb *pinicar* also carries a sense of provocation, as if the viola provoked a certain frisson in the bodies of sambadeiras, hence the saying: "No one can stand still in the presence of a roda de samba." As Ralph Waddey puts it, "The violeiro (viola player) not only provides a rhythmic background for a dancer or dancers, but also he is encouraged to challenge the dancer to follow with his feet the rhythmic dexterity of the violeiro's finger" (1980: 198). That is why the sense of hearing is fundamental in a roda de samba, for the kinetic dialogue depends on the interaction between the sambadeira and the very materiality of sound (pinching, prickling, scratching). This follows from the fact that samba de roda is a game played between dance and music, in which sound instigates movement and vice-versa. As Clécia Queiroz noted, even though women don't play instruments in the roda de samba, the corporal dialogue they establish with *tocadores* is also a way to participate in samba music-making (2019: 10). Therefore, the roda de samba is at once a corporal and a musical game with a dynamic improvisation of calls and responses, in which each participant must not only listen and respond, but also return the question. As such, when we talk about a sambadeira's hearing in the context of a roda de samba, we mean more than just the auditory sense, but rather the ability to establish a sophisticated dialogue of listening/responding and asking bodily. This complexity unfolds as soon as we observe the sambadeira's movement in detail, for the response/question happens as a refined and subtle alternation of tonicities (hold/release) in different parts of the body (see Domenici 2017). The tocador is required to

have the same "hearing" toward the sambadeira's movement, which means the ability to "listen" — respond/ask.[24]

There are also variations in dramaturgy[25] revolving around the invention of plays that serve as "arguments" for samba, with the intentions of prolonging the visit of guest sambadores in a household and exploring new themes. Dona Moça gave me an example: they once threw a party featuring a small pet tortoise. Having set up a board on which they placed the adorned tortoise, they would take turns carrying the contraption over their heads, while singing: "Oh lord give me permission, permission be given me, today is the first of the year that the tortoise came to play." To which others replied, "Oh tortoise come oh-ee-oh, oh tortoise come ah-ee-ah." "That's when the party went nuts," she said (personal communication, June 19, 2010). Someone would come in dancing with the tortoise on their head, and danced, and danced, and handed the tortoise over to the host — who would give out money — then the party went off to the next house. On another occasion, sambadores did the same with a *mangaba* (a local fruit), and another time with a *membeca* or *robalo* (two local fish species), and also with the ox: a man danced with an ox mask, pretending to be a Boi-Bumbá (a character of Brazilian traditional culture). All these plays reveal an endless inventiveness surrounding the practice of samba de roda.

These observations reinforce the perception that — within the rural context where it developed — samba de roda is a living cultural complex. It is permanently evolving, always being reinvented, and strongly dependent on community dynamics. Even though samba de roda dates back to the time of slavery, it is not frozen in time. Rather, it has developed in close association with such communal practices — whether they relate to religion, labour, or play.

Structuring and Constitutional Relations for Samba in its Communities

The present study shows something that hasn't yet been emphasized in the studies on Recôncavo, namely the interrelation between samba and labour practices, such as taipagem and flour-making. On the North Coast, that interrelation occurs in such a way that samba encourages work, which in turn serves as motivation, content, and inspiration for samba. Taking into account the participatory, communal manner in which samba de roda is structured — i.e., the circle, the improvisations, and the dialogues between sambadeiras and tocadores, as I have mentioned — one can comprehend its relation to other similarly structured practices. The aforementioned work activities are based on

relations of reciprocity and companionship that characterize the communities' ways of life and how those communities are inserted in the territory, for that is how the people collectively face challenges of subsistence, such as nourishment and shelter. Such practices are effective in creating and maintaining communal bonds, which is to say, they help to structure the communities (Woortmann 1988). This stems from the fact that (as I have previously illustrated in many examples) the structural relationship between samba de roda and communal practices is flagrant and decisive.

Likewise, samba de roda is structurally informed by the religious practices with which it is directly associated — religions of African and Indigenous origin, and the worship of Catholic saints in the Africanized form that is particular to Bahia.[26] As demonstrated by Muniz Sodré (2017), these religions are constitutive of subjectivities — in tandem with orixás, inkisis, ancestors, and saints — in processes where the body's action has primacy as a mode of enunciation and subjectivation, while *alacrity* emerges as regency and poetics. Samba is one of the most ubiquitous and important forms giving rise to this mode of subjectivation, as I have previously explained. Being integrated in rites, celebrations, and festivities, and crossing environments and occasions, samba not only brings carefree joy and the corporality of everyday life to religious events, but also incorporates the ancestral ideals and narratives of those religions, while transfusing poetry and imagination into work and other moments of daily existence.

The account I have proposed differs from the candidacy dossier for samba de roda, in which labour practices are mentioned only in passing in the region's description and are not linked directly to samba. Similarly, religious practices are described as moments when samba takes place but not in terms of the dialectical relationship between dance and belief. What I wish to emphasize here is that these relations aren't simply of history and simultaneity, but are rather structuring and constitutive (i.e., determining for samba de roda).[27] Furthermore, I contend that these practices — samba, religious events, and communal labour — form an important cultural complex that is foundational for subjectivities and therefore susceptible to epistemicide.

Final Considerations

This study shows that samba de roda is an important cultural complex for the North Coast of Bahia, one that has been clearly suppressed by the model of economic development that is currently underway. Its presence in the life of communities has been in significant decline, despite efforts on the part of

mestres. The region is changing from a rural area to a rural-metropolitan one, radically altering the dynamics of land use in a process that is comparable to gentrification.[28] The changes happened abruptly, and the flow of people, capital, and information was so intense, that there was not enough time for communities to adapt. Their entire way of life is changing: the modes of production, the occupations, and the expansion of Pentecostal religions such as Assembleia de Deus and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God,[29] which demonize all Afro-Brazilian expressions (such as Candomblé and samba de roda) and forbid their followers from participating. There's also the unbalanced competition "due to mass-media communications and the immense prestige of modern Brazilian popular music" (Sandroni and Sant'Anna 2007: 75).[30] Nowadays, almost exclusively in public performances by organized samba de roda groups, there is a tendency toward homogenizing manners of playing instruments, singing, and dancing. This functional and stylistic loss follows from the process of commoditization (Campos 2011: 146), and, as I have discussed here, is perhaps due to the weakening of other social practices that once served as material and inspiration for samba de roda.

In the samba de roda candidacy dossier, the lack of economic development is indicated as a cause of people's difficulty to keep living in the region, as well as a justification for the safeguarding process: "The practice of samba de roda has suffered considerable decline over the course of the 20th century. One of the contributing factors was the economic decadence of Recôncavo" (Sandroni and Sant'Anna 2007: 75). While the authors attribute the waning of samba de roda in Recôncavo Baiano to economic decline, in the North Coast of Bahia we see economic growth as a threat to its continuity — which demands thinking through the concept of development. This model of development, which many would call "progress," means — to local populations — impoverishment, expulsion from their territory, loss of food security, and epistemicide. Sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos has warned that the processes of hegemonic globalization produces the epistemicide of subordinate subjectivities (2018: 30).

In considering the structuring and constitutive relations of samba that I have discussed here, I can indicate two main conclusions. First, samba, together with religions of African and Indigenous origin, and with the worship of Catholic saints, forms a complex that is constitutive of subjectivities in the communities where it is present — as such, it is a complex that is susceptible to epistemicide. In this sense, one must reconsider the importance of samba in all regions where it occurs within the state of Bahia, not only where it is patrimonialized — remembering that the reasons that led to focusing on Recôncavo were formal (in attending UNESCO's requirements) and political (Sandroni 2010; Salama 2016). Consequently, the expansion of Neo-charismatic and Pentecostal

denominations is a serious threat, taking into account that the attack on African-derived religions is at the core of structural racism, even genocide (Nascimento 2016), which has a historic and systematic presence in Brazilian society. Undoubtedly, the anti-racist struggle must be firmly established in the agenda for safeguarding samba de roda.[31]

Second, regarding the relationship between Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity and models of economic development, samba de roda in the North Coast can serve as a case study as well as a cautionary tale for Recôncavo Baiano and its safeguarding policies. As I've said before, a safeguarding plan must ensure the continuity of cultural expressions and processes at the heart of communities that live under constant threat from vastly more powerful economic and political forces. Nevertheless, would it be enough to invest in professionalization and diffusion, as do plans for the safeguarding of intangible heritage in Brazil (Salama 2016: 221)?[32] Evaluations indicate that market logic stimulates competition and the dissolution of bonds within communities (Sandroni: 2010).[33] This essay brings an important answer: samba de roda was born and bred deep within practices that create, recreate, and reinforce communal values in societies and that maintain the bonds of reciprocity and solidarity. In order to protect samba de roda, it is undoubtedly necessary to empower communities' practices of solidarity, which sustain its modes of insertion in the territory.[34]

Acknowledgments

This research has received support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I would also like to thank researchers Jeff Packman, Danielle Robinson, and Luciano Carôso for their contribution, as well as research assistants André Luiz Barbosa, Leandro Uema, Leila Santos, and Nath Delabianca for their valued participation as team members in this project.

Notes

1. The samba de roda candidacy dossier for UNESCO, produced by IPHAN (Brazil's National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute), is a reference document which will be frequently cited hereafter as Sandroni and Sant'Anna 2007. Sandroni states that samba in the Recôncavo region was singled out for candidacy because "intangible heritage, such as conceived by the Proclamation of Intangible Cultural Heritage, is necessarily rooted in geographically delimited communities or ethnicities (in the manner of classical ethnographies)" (2010: 375).

2. The Association of Sambadores, established in 2005, in the wake of this process, recognized and resisted the growing tendency to link samba de roda with the Recôncavo region by deliberately defining itself as the Association of Sambadores and Sambadeiras of the State of Bahia (Asseba) and not of Recôncavo.

3. It is important to say that papers on samba de roda prior to the proclamation were also concentrated in the Recôncavo (Waddey 1980; Doring 2004).

4. A study conducted by sociologist Julio Waiselfisz for FLACSO, termed *Map of Violence*, catalogs the evolution of gun deaths in Brazil between 1980 and 2014. The Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) is an autonomous inter-governmental organization, founded in 1957 by the Latin American countries that subscribed to a recommendation made by UNESCO's 11th General Conference.

5. Sambadores (fem. Sambadeiras) is a local term in Bahia for the people who participate in samba de roda. In this manner, they differentiate themselves from those who practice samba in other locations, such as Rio de Janeiro, where they are referred to as *sambistas*.

6. Rodas de samba are samba circles, i.e. gatherings or events where samba de roda takes place.

7. Mestre sambador (fem. Mestra sambadeira) is someone who takes a leadership role in the maintenance of the samba de roda tradition, overseeing the processes of teaching and learning, and of group organization.

8. Some of the interviews referenced here are available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yQLJl-oE1s&t=333s

9. All of my interviews were conducted 2007-2012. At the time, all the mestres were over the age of 60 and all my other interlocutors were over the age of 40, except Dona Moça's nephew, who was in his 20s at the time.

10. According to Wikipedia, "the timbau or Brazilian timbal is a membranophone instrument derived from the caxambu drum, usually played with both hands. Slightly conical and of varying sizes, it is usually light in weight and made of lacquered wood or metal (usually aluminium) with a tunable nylon head. It is in the shape of an ice cream cone with the top and the point cut off" (Timbau n.d.). It is very characteristic of afro-Brazilian rhythms, mainly in Bahia.

11. Chula is a special type of samba distinguished by its poetry and the way it is performed and danced. Doring explains,

> In samba chula, there is a predefined choreography, denominated by different Mestres as a 'logic' or a 'rule', in contrast to samba corrido, where 'anything goes' — which is frowned upon by chula singers. In samba chula, only one [sambadeira] dancer is allowed after a chula is sung, which is followed by the *relativo*, a sort of sung answer. Once the vocal part is done, instruments are played with greater intensity and dynamics, emphasizing rhythmic accents and variations. These are reinforced by women's handclaps and wooden board hits, all of which serve to signal the sambadeira to get ready to enter the roda. (2015b: 12)

Unlike the monophonic call-and-response of samba corrido, samba chula's poetry features longer stanzas, sung in parallel harmony, with or without a subsequent relativo — a short monophonic stanza, made of one or two verses, sung by the whole group. (see Doring 2016)

12. *Viola machete* is a small, handcrafted viola guitar with two-stringed courses, chiefly representative of samba de roda, especially in northern Recôncavo, up until the recent past (Sandroni 2010: 379). Nowadays, however, it has been largely replaced by the standard industrial viola (ten-string guitar) or even the *cavaquinho*, which is bringing about changes to the musicality of samba (Nobre 2009: 6).

13. All interview quotations are my translations from the original Portuguese unless otherwise noted.

14. The expression refers to the rule of participation in samba chula, that is, the sambadeiras wait for the singer to finish the verses and for the viola solo to begin. Only then do they dance into the centre of the circle, one at a time.

15. The structuring role of the *Folias de Reis* [Kings' Day Feasts] in rural societies of Brazil has been previously analyzed by Brandão (1981) and Jurkevics (2005).

16. *Taipa* [rammed earth] and adobe are construction methods which employ clay and mud, rather than bricks, directly applied over a wooden frame. Such methods were widely used in colonial-era Brazil and persist to this day within rural contexts.

17. "Caboclo" is how people of mixed race in the region refer to and recognize themselves, as an ethnic group.

18. Also known as Our Lady/Virgin of Candelaria, of Candlemas, of Candles, of Lanterns, of Light, of Purification, and protector of seafarers. The celebration for Nossa Senhora das Candeias begins on February 1st and ends on February 2nd, which is the honorary day of the orixá Iemanja, the water deity, the great mother in the pantheon of Candomblé. This is an example of the permeability between the worship of Catholic saints and the deities of Candomblé, which we will discuss further on.

19. Footage of the roda de samba from Dona Maroca's party is available at the following address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=419&v=XRKT7TEaAzk&feature=emb_logo. Note that there is no sound until 5:39. Video footage of a woman dancing with a bottle on her head can be seen at 7:00.

20. Footage from different rodas de samba from the North Coast is available at the following address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=497&v=c8TY-G65oNk&feature=emb_logo.

21. Such rites include processes of subjectivation in which one part of the subject is human and the other part is made up of different entities (orixás, inkisis, and ancestors).

22. The reinterpretation of European Catholicism by descendants of enslaved Africans in Brazil is a topic discussed by several authors, such as Glaura Lucas on Congado (2002), Ordep Serra (2009) on Catholic saints' festivities in Bahia, and Michel Iyanaga (2015) on Catholic saints and samba de roda in Recôncavo.

23. In the samba de roda dossier, samba amarrado is identified with samba chula or samba de viola (Sandroni and Sant'Anna 2007: 34-35), but there is no mention of samba camisão. These are possibly regional varieties of this cultural complex that merit further studies.

24. Therefore, the dynamics of samba are as interesting as the awareness of its participants to one another, to small kinetic or sonic gestures that each may present as a surprise in this game — a game of particular attention to the present time, but having ancestral memory as an amplifier of temporality.

25. There is an ongoing discussion regarding dramaturgy in dance (DeLahunta 2000; Kerkhoven 1994). In it, what is understood as the central feature of structural organization is not narrative, but rather the fluid sequence of corporified images. In this sense, a motif can be structuring of a playful activity without the need for narrative, as is the case here. Instead of narrative giving rise to dramaturgy, it is dramaturgy that creates narrative. This is a distinct aspect of dramaturgy in dance, one which theatre has come to understand following the advent of the idea of "postdramatic" (Lehmann 2007). In this sense, the concept of dramaturgy has greatly expanded in the post-modern dance scene, toward a "process-oriented dramaturgy," as analyzed by Portuguese dramaturg Ana Pais (2010: 85).

26. As exemplified here as well as according to other authors (Iyanaga 2015; Serra 2009).

27. The relation between samba and Catholic saints has been emphasized by Iyanaga (2015), as previously mentioned.

28. Sociologist Cristina Alencar conducted a study in the region, focusing on territorial dynamics. She states that the region is undergoing a process of development marked by tensions and disputes that are representative of the notion of metropolitan rurality. In this situation, "the non-agricultural 'rural' of beach life remains subordinate to the representation of leisure as captured by the process of accumulation of capital by the tourism industry" (2010: 23). One structural feature of this territorial dynamic is that the state induces development in a manner that is exogenous to the territory and alien to its inhabitants.

29. This is an ongoing phenomenon in all of Brazil (Mariano 2004).

30. Sandroni and Sant'Anna warn: "Such prestige convinces the youth that samba de roda is a pastime for the elderly, the outdated, and the unhip" (2007: 75). Doring has also highlighted the carnival industry, which is dominant in Bahia:

> This industry in turn has straight ties to industrial beverage multinationals, to powerful media corporations (TV, radio, newspapers, record labels), and plays the role of the 'dictatorship of the mega-event,' with astronomical profits. While it imposes the consumption of watered-down musical and visual aesthetics, it hammers the Bahian mantra of feel-good happiness that annihilates other visions, practices, and aesthetic expressions that are complex, diversified, and authentic in particular sociocultural environments. (2013: 150)

31. With the growth of far-right conservatism and the increasing vulnerability of poorer populations, attacks on African-derived religions, as well as racism in general, have intensified in Brazil over the last several years.

32. Morena Salama raises the critique that intangible heritage safeguarding plans in Brazil are based on market logic, which generally implies significant transformations in the function and social significance of patrimonialized goods, in the sense that their existence is made dependent upon potential gains to be generated from their insertion in the culture market (2016: 221).

33. Sandroni evaluates that the process of patrimonializing samba in Recôncavo has led to harsh disputes, which caused significant rifts in communities (2010: 337).

34. The region of Recôncavo is home to a successful initiative named "Rota da Liberdade" [Freedom Route]. It is a program for "community-based ethnic tourism" taking place in *quilombola* communities, with a focus on their history and culture. This inspiring experience was created by the Center of Education and Culture of the Iguape Valley (CECVI) with links to a movement of solidarity economy that features a community bank and a local currency entitled "Sururu." This example illustrates the circumstance Woortmann suggested: "Tradition is therefore not the past surviving in the present, but rather the past that, in the present, builds the possibilities of the future" (1988: 17).

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