65 - MEMORIES OF THE CAXIAS' "RODA DE CAPOEIRA"

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The aim of this paper is to describe from the testimonial of the founders and former frequenters the memories of the Caxias' capoeira, the "Roda" de Caxias" ("roda" refers to the circle formed by the capoeira players for their performance). For this purpose, we carried out an ethnographic research during the year of 2003, aiming to understand how the social actors share the memories of one of the most traditional and important capoeira "rodas" of Brazil. In this paper, the empirical material privileged were the interviews carried out with the founders and former frequenters of the "Roda de Caxias".

Although the municipality of Duque de Caxias, located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is not identified in the "map" by the incipient capoeira historiography as a place that helped to establish the capoeira tradition, its streets and squares were the stage for the creation of one of the most traditional capoeira "rodas" of our days: The Roda de Caxias. Created in the 70s appeared from the rupture of a group of young practitioners of the system we identify here as sporting capoeira.

The Roda, which apparently gathered unpretentious participants at the beginning, settled down during the 70s and the 80s, attracting players from several capoeira trends to the "rodas" that took place on the weekends in the municipality of Caxias. Lots of the young players who helped establishing the "roda" and many others who gathered the group later, had become leading exponents of the capoeira in Brazil and, consequently, in other countries. Throughout this paper, some of this former-frequenters will be mentioned.

It was not possible to draw a precise map of the first capoeira players of the municipality, however, the testimonials lead to Master Barbosa as the precursor in the teaching of capoeira in gymnasiums at Duque de Caxias. José Barbosa da Silva, Master Barbosa, was born in 1946, in Pernambuco. He was initiated into capoeira in the year of 1962 in Recife, migrating to Rio de Janeiro in 1965. In 1971, he settled his home in Vila São Luiz, a neighborhood in Duque de Caxias. He began teaching at Líder gymnasium, located in downtown Caxias. Master Barbosas's group was called Group of Capoeira Zum Zum Zum. At this gymnasium, some of those who acquired prestige and recognition at the Roda de Caxias had been trained. During an interview, carried out in December, 28th, 2003, Master Barbosa stated the following on the origins of capoeira in Caxias: "*I can not tell you who brought it, but the one who has organized, made it uniform and produced it until today was me*". Master Barbosa's gymnasium was a member of the Brazilian Boxing Confederation; therefore, its participants wore a specific uniform consisting of white sporting trousers and knitted T-shirts. It also adopted a grading system named *cordel*.

Josias da Silva is another master alive in the memory of the capoeira in Caxias. According to the testimonials, his work is subsequent to that of Master Barbosa. Master Josias, as he is known in the municipality, may be regarded as one of the disseminators of the sporting capoeira in the region. He founded a capoeira association with his own name and surname, and taught classes in the rooms of the Press Association, located in a *Shopping Center,* in downtown Caxias. Some well know names of the Roda de Caxias were there, some of which became prominent names in the capoeira.

Despite having a more complex structure and apparently counting on the government support, this systematized capoeira, practiced in the gymnasiums, was not the one that became noted as the capoeira of Caxias, arousing interest of well-known capoeira players, from several sites of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil. It was the capoeira played by some young people on the streets and squares of this municipality that has configured a kind of "free zone" which, from the 70s on, attracted players from several places of the state of Rio de Janeiro and from different styles and schools.

According to the testimonials, there is a specific date for the appearance of the Roda de Caxias: June, 13th, 1973. A group of young capoeira players, most of them practitioners of sporting capoeira, gathered to form a "roda" de capoeira in a party at Santo Antonio Church, located in Caxias. As this first "roda" had a positive repercussion, they decided to keep it on a weekly basis. Amongst these young players, there were many who became famous capoeira masters and keep on practicing it nowadays; others have quitted, or have died.

The first formation of the "roda" was as follows: Jonas Rabelo (Master Russo), Cinésio Feliciano Peçanha (Cobrinha Mansa), Itamar da Silva Barbosa (Peixe), Jurandir Francisco Nascimento (Jurandir), Paulo Ferreira (Paulo Brasa), Rogério Soares Peixoto (Rogério), Ulisses Ribeiro de Souza (Velho), Marcos Antônio dos Santos (Marcão PQD), Silves Luiz Francisco (Sílvio Azulão), José Iramar da Silva Barbosa (Popota), Ângelo Beatro (Julinho), Carlos Magno Ribeiro de Souza (Ninho), Anizia da Silva Barbosa, Jorge Luiz dos Santos (Gol). Most of the players were teenagers at the time of the foundation. The older ones, who seemed to be the organizers of the "roda" were: Paulo Brasa, Rogério, Azulão and Russo.

This nucleus, according to Master Russo's testimonial, appeared from the rupture of the two first capoeira gymnasiums of Caxias, Master Barbosa's and Master Josias'. A group of pupils of both gymnasiums, unsatisfied with that capoeira model, decided to seek alternative ways to the current models. Vassalo (2003) describes a Parisian capoeira association named *Maíra* that, alike the Roda de Caxias, was created from by the rupture of a group of students who wanted to abandon the capoeira models introduced by Brazilian Masters in Paris. According to its founders, all of them French, these models have an extremely strict and hierarchical social organization. It seems to be the story of the young players of Caxias repeated in the old continent.

Here we have to give the debate some nuances of meaning. The history of capoeira in Brazil dates back to the fight of the slaves, who created it. They had no power within society, and sought for a way of resistance against the white enslaver. They lived in a society that did not regard them as equal human beings. This dynamics of the oppressed versus the oppressor

1 This work was originally the final paper for the graduation course of Physical Education at Gama Filho University, Brazil. The construction of the paper included participating observation, interviews with the sports elite and questionnaires distributed to current practitioners of the "roda" de capoeira. These were the tools to understand the consolidation of the Roda de Caxias as well as the profile of the current players. In this paper we will privilege the interviews carried out with former players of the "roda", however, we will make punctual use of data collected from the questionnaires distributed to current frequenters of the "roda", whenever we understand it to be relevant for the arguments built here.

2- The capoeira practiced in gymnasiums is called academic system by some former frequenters of the "roda"; here we call it sporting capoeira. This model seems to have a structure similar to that of the oriental martial arts, with uniforms, graduations and hierarchy, making use of training and sporting discipline.

3- Angola and Regional are the two main existing capoeira styles. The Regional, which presents a more offensive characteristic, was created in the beginning of the 20th century by Master Bimba (Almeida, 1982). The Capoeira Angola, that seem to have as its main characteristics the entertainment and the traditionalism, had its strongest supporter and representative in Master Pastinha (Pastinha, 1988).

4- It is worth remembering that the capoeira began to be practiced indoors after Master Bimba. Manoel dos Reis Machado, known as Master Bimba, was born in Bahia in 1889 and was the creator of the Capoeira Regional style (Almeida, 1982). Master Bimba's gymnasium was created in 1932; it was the fifth gymnasium of the country (Capinussú,1989).

5- This gymnasium is still in operation.

would be present in the formation and consolidation of the "Roda" de Caxias as we will notice in the testimonials made by the former founders.

In an interview carried out with Master Russo, at his home, on December the 18th, 2003, he stated the following about the founding of Roda de Caxias:

We were inside an academic system but we were seeking the capoeira in different places... on June the 13th, 1973, when we idealized a "roda" inside a catholic fair, at Santo Antônio Church, they decided to keep this "roda". Things began to go wrong; we were misunderstood and even hostilized by the academic system. They started to dedicate even more intensely to the "roda" they formed on Sundays and to the training on empty yards in order to improve the fight and the union of the group, which was being excluded at that moment.

After the first "roda" held by the group of young capoeira players of Caxias, at Santo Antônio Church, many of them kept linked to their respective gymnasiums for a period of time, until a certain moment when all of them disconnected from their former masters. Then, the group begun to promote training on a wasteland which was previously the place of rehearsal of a carnival group named Urro do Leão. One of the founders of the "roda", known as Peixe, on March 13th, 2003, told us the following regarding how the "roda" started and the places where it has been until the present time:

It started in the community's fair, in a party that used to happen in Caxias, at the church.. The first "roda" happened inside the church; then, they sent us out and we started to make it at the Praça do Relógio, where we stayed for a long time, but then we started to have problems with the commerce due to our timetable. So, we moved to nearby Banco do Brasil. Then, we went to Praça do Pacificador. We've been everywhere. We also had a break when there was no "roda", I'm not sure if it was for about five years. It happened because people dispersed; it dispersed, didn't it! There was only me and Russo here and it was impossible to form the "roda" with just the two of us. Then, we went back to Praça do Pacificador again, we stayed there and then Russo asked for opinions and we decided to settle the "roda" here and it's been some two years we are here.

Russo tell us that the group suffered persecution from members of the capoeira institutionalized in gymnasiums, who regarded the attitude of those young people as an insult to the running system, calling them delinquents, alleging they damaged the image of the capoeira which, at that time, was about to reach a social recognition never achieved before. It is interesting to remember that the streets of some Brazilian capitals of the colonial period are regarded to as possible places for the appearance of this cultural expression (Soares, 1994). However, the sporting capoeira severely opposed to the capoeira played on the streets squares of the municipality of Caxias, alleging that that kind of "roda" spoiled the image of an ascending and new sporting modality which was seeking legitimacy in several sectors of the sports organization and of society. Here we have set the debate on the opposed identities: those who aimed a higher organization and legitimacy of the capoeira with the sports system and the society and, in opposition, the ones who claim the rescue of the "original" capoeira, of the old body technique created by the slaves. If the former ones aim legitimacy in the expansion and the development of new markets for a product that is gaining value not only in Brazil but also abroad; the latter ones stress the identitarian speech of being the representatives/practitioners of the "true capoeira". Nevertheless, the "true capoeira" is also a current speech on the fields of this body practice that becomes a currency in the market; so it is that, many of those who left Caxias have gone abroad United States and Europe to teach classes and to settle down gymnasiums in the name of the "true capoeira". The identiterian speech of the scentialist kind, does not depend on the social actors beliefs; it must be regarded as a strong argument in the market of products and services. Our society gets permanently enchanted through the different narratives based on the symbolic strength of the tradition of ethnic or telluric character.

The "Roda", which apparently appeared with no big pretensions, idealized by a group of young people, begun to consolidate; however, it continued not to be accepted by some masters of the capoeira practiced in gymnasiums. Despite accidental problems, the "roda" got famous and in the 70's and 80's it was visited and attended by players who are nowadays prominent on the capoeira field, many of them are set up in Brazil and some abroad. Names such as Pedro Morais Trindade (Morais), José Tadeu Carneiro Cardoso (Camisa), Sidney Gonçalves Freitas (Hulk), André Domingos (De Mola da Bahia), Sérgio Souza Oliveira (Nagô), Luís Malhado de Souza (Luís Malhado or Luís Peito Pelado), Jair Moura, Mucungê, Waldenkolk Oliveira (Preguiça).

The testimonials of the old frequenters of the Roda de Caxias identify Pedro Morais Trindade, known in the capoeira and renown as Master Morais, as one of the players who influenced the most the capoeira style played in the "Roda". Living in Duque de Caxias, Morais started visiting the Press Association where the Capoeira Association Josias da Silva was held, and also the extinct Center Club of Caxias, the place where Master Barbosa coordinated the Capoeira Association Zum Zum Zum. The gifts of Master Morais as a good capoeira player are largely commented by old frequenters of the. His playing style really seams to have impressed the frequenters of the "roda" in its early years; so much that, from the ten founders of the Roda de Caxias mentioned here, three decided to train capoeira with him, Cobrinha Mansa, Jurandir and Rogério.

Isaac Inácio da Silva, known in the capoeira as master Angolinha, who gathered the Roda de Caxias soon after its foundation and who later on became a pupil of Master Morais, is one of those who comments on Morais's several abilities as a capoeira player. According to him, the only player who managed to face him on a capoeira play at an equality level was Luís Malhado, to whom he refers to when asked about the best player who attended the Roda de Caxias in the past. Let us check this piece of a testimonial given by Angolinha in a bar in downtown Caxias on March,14th, 2004:

Well then, a good one who has uised to come around here in the Roda de Caxias was Luís Malhado or Luís Peito Pelado... Because he was really good, mandingueiro. Mandingueiro! Mainly when he was playing with Master Morais; that was a game, a game for... There was no chance for any boy... He was the only one in Rio who played and managed to complicate Morais in the Play.

Master Peixe, one of the founders of the Roda de Caxias, who was taking part of the interview, reinforces what was said about Luís Malhado stating that: "*He (Luís Malhado) was really one of the guys whose game I saw; I saw him giving Morais a hard time"*. Master Morais became, according to the testimonials, a kind of parameter for the quality of the play at Roda de Caxias. The player's prestige is often built by comparison with what the group defines and ranks hierarchically as competence.

6- We can mention Marcos Antônio dos Santos (Marcão PQD), Ulisses Ribeiro de Sousa (Velho), Itamar da Silva Barbosa (Peixe), Luislan de Oliveira (Luizão) and Jonas Rabelo (Russo).
7- The *cordel* is still in use by some capoeira groups of the present days; it is a cord made of silk threads twisted as a braid, with the colors of the Brazilian flag, so as to identify the player's level. This system was created in 1969 by Damionor Mendonça and presented in a symposium at Campo dos Afonsos, in Rio de Janeiro,during the military dictatorship, when the praising of the country and its flag was a means of propaganda applied by the Armed Forces.
8- Jurandir Francisco Nascimento, Pedro Luís Soares Mello (Pedrinho de Caxias), Cinésio Feliciano Peçanha (Cobrinha Mansa), Welligton Rosa da Silva (Camaleão), Humberto Dantas Amaral (Baba) are some of Master Josias' prominent former-students.
9- Nowadays, the Roda de Caxias is visited by capoeira players from several places in Brazil and the world.
10- Master Russo was born on September the 22nd, 1956 in Rio de Janeiro. Residing in Caxias since childhood, he learned capoeira there with a cousin of his known as Crioulo. In 1997 he founded the Cosmos Capoeira Group. Nowadays he coordinates the Roda de Caxias and is one of the main organizers responsible for its continuity.

The players' oral memory describes/selects styles and deeds of players, which collectively serve as indicators of the game quality. The oral transmission of these body techniques, which have individuals as referents, proves to be a fertile field of study for the research on physical education and its relations with the social sciences.

Master Morais seems to be the greatest responsible for the migration of several capoeira players from the Roda de Caxias, who didn't belong to any trend or specific capoeira style, to the Capoeira Angola. Some made this change directly influenced by him, others became *angoleiros* because of different Angola masters, some others, in a mysterious and at least questionable way, entittled themselves *angoleiros* without following the procedures considered traditional by the practitioners of this trend. This in fact seemed to satisfy a market reserve because this issues, according to the historiography, didn't seem to be so relevant in the first decades of the 20th century.

The Roda de Caxias, in its early years, according to the founders' testimonials, was persecuted by the sporting capoeira system; that's why it had some defense strategies to make the probable attacks of its opponents difficult. We can not avoid mentioning that the speech of persecution and threat is a discursive tactics of identity statement and group cohesion. One of these strategies, for instance, according to the testifiers, was not to promote the "Roda" on places of easy access and near the main entrance of the municipality. Because of this, the "rodas" were held on places where the visitors who intended to spoil the "roda" would have problems to run away. However, we must note that the "roda", as a free zone, was also used as a place to demonstrate rivalry and different capoeira styles.

The fact that the "Roda" was held on the streets made it, regardless the persecution narratives, vulnerable to problems with the street peddlers, the police and even with other cultural expressions, like the fact that happened in the Carnival of 1981. Let us listen to Master Peixe's comments on this event:

In 81, we were having a Carnival "roda", right there on Presidente Kennedy Stree,t on the other side of the road there. It was a Carnival Tuesday, the last day of carnival; we were on a "roda", and the Carnival group tried to invade. Then the deceased Chiquinho didn't let the guys pass, and the fight began. Every one got hit and hit one another; even Master Dentinho was there. Russo hit the others a lot, he got hit as well, we lost all of our instrument;, the only one that remained was the "atabaque" (conga type drum). My wife, who was my girlfriend at the time, saved the instrument herself. She was really hit, but she managed to save the "atabaque".

This event seems to have been really outstanding for the frequenters that were in this "roda". This can be observed in the testimonial of another founder of the Roda de Caxias, known as Velho. In an interview carried out on May 6th, 2003, when asked about the most outstanding fact he witnessed in the Caxias "Roda", he also answered that it was the incident of the Carnival of 81. He said the following:

The unforgettable "roda" took place during the Carnival. There was a fuss and people from the Carnival group of men dressed like women wanted to invade the "roda" and the guys didn't allow it; then there was turmoil and a fight. Then each one went away in a different direction and the policemen went after us asking: where are the capoeira players, where are the capoeira players... There were eleven capoeira players against five hundred transvestites in the Carnival group. That was the most remarkable fact on the Roda de Caxias.

The confrontation mentioned above seems to have given a sense of cohesion to the group. One can notice the narrators felt proud for having participated in this event, judging from the enthusiasm they demonstrated as they described the facts of the confrontation day. They sounded like war veterans narrating a battle in which they fought for the national sovereignty.

In the 90s, the Roda de Caxias stopped for five years. According to the testimonials, this interruption was due to the fact that its main organizers were having some private problems, but these problems were not revealed. This fact is a relevant hint to be investigated in studies about the analysis on how institutions of this nature are formed, kept, and disappears in time. The "Roda" was interrupted in 1993, and restarted in 1998 by the initiative of Master Russo who, as mentioned above, currently organizes the gatherings in the "Roda" de Caxias.

Conclusion

The "Roda" de Caxias, according to the testimonials, is still outside the circuit of a sporting capoeira and does not seem to be interested in taking part of it, maybe because most of its participants are linked to the capoeira Angola, even if some of them do not define a style inside the "Roda".

However, we cannot forget that the capoeira Angola has a schedule of events, "rodas", broadcasting sites and even participates in a market of services that attempts to attract followers. On the other hand, it is much probable that the speeches of the capoeira players linked to more sportive capoeira styles build identity-construction narratives with slight variations in comparison to the studied group. In this case the "other" may be more strongly anchored on what is defined as non-national, but which was culturally incorporated and appropriated. Theoretically, one could think these sportive capoeira players would state that capoeira is the only genuinely Brazilian national sport.

The capoeira played at Roda de Caxias affirms itself in its identity-construction speech as resistant to the types of classification that prevail in the systemized models available in the market. Even after thirty years of its institution, the "roda" is regarded as an alternative model for the capoeira organization, without affiliation, with no entry fee and even without any specific labeling for the capoeira played there. From a different perspective, the analysis of the testimonials may indicate that the "Roda" has become a place of competition for status between capoeira players, between styles, and demonstrate to be a place where capital values can be conquered in the capoeira market. The accumulated prestige may represent important assets for the individual movement in the capoeira field, either it in the practitioners' memory, or in the individual's existence affirmation or even as a means of access for those who aim to set up their own center or business. This does not mean by any chance that the participants join the "Roda" for the specific intentions just described. However, the trajectories of the capoeira players remembered by the participants in the "Roda" de Caxias indicate that many of them set up their own business and/or formed groups in Brazil and abroad. The "Roda" de Caxias also brings job market opportunities for its former participants, who can give lectures and teach courses about it.

In the capoeira market, the "Roda" de Caxias is like a "celeiro de *bambas*" (stock of experts) where the "true capoeira" is played". Despite the apparent informality and spontaneity, the "roda" has a previous organization and a structure that have survived for more than three decades. Although the status rivalry does not show on the foreground, the competitions show on the "roda" field. The ethnographic experience in the "Roda" de Caxias has indicated that playing capoeira in this place seems to play the part of a rite of passage for the capoeira player, that is, the good capoeira player must take the chance and

11- Whenever Master Russo mentions an academic capoeira system, he is referring to the capoeira played in gymnasiums and clubs, ruled by sporting discipline and training, which, according to his view, would be a model contrary to the focused "roda".

12- Note that being linked to the capoeira practiced in the gymnasiums meant to be connected to the capoeira established as a product on the market of sports / physical activity. The speech of rupture is praised by the pioneers of the Roda de Caxias, seen as an alternative place. They state clearly that they have now crossed to "the other side of the bridge" exactly like their ancestors slaves, who were on the fringes of the running system.

13- At the time this testimonial was collected, the Roda de Caxias took place at the Calçadão of Downtown Caxias; it has currently gone back to Praça do Pacificador, also located in downtown Caxias.

test his body techniques in Caxias. The picturesque stories, disseminated through the oral memory and affirmed as an identity-construction speech by the participants, seem to attract players and interested people from several states and countries. The "Roda" de Caxias affirms itself as a kind of link with the original or primitive capoeira, which constitutes an obligation for the players who intend to become "genuine capoeira players".

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MEMORIES OF THE CAXIAS' "RODA DE CAPOEIRA"

ABSTRACT
This paper aims at describing the memories about the Caxias "Roda" de capoeira as they are presented in the testimonials of former founders and participants. In order to do so, we have carried an ethnographic research during the year of 2003 to understand who the social agents share their memories of one of the most traditional and important "rodas" de capoeira in Brazil. The profile of the current participant in the "Roda" de Caxias was mapped through the replies to fifty questionnaires applied among its frequenters. The appearance of this "roda de capoeira" in the 70s was characterized as an alternative model, which to a certain extent, created conditions for the co-existence, not always pacific, among participants and representatives of the Angola and Regional "capoeira schools".
Key-words: Capoeira, Roda de Caxias, Popular Culture, Ethnography.

LES MÉMOIRES DE LA RODA DE CAPOEIRA DE CAXIAS

RÉSUMÉ
Lóbjectif de cet article est de décrire, à travers le récit des fondateurs et des anciens frequentateurs, les mémoires de la « Roda de Capoeira de Caxias ». Aussi, nous avons fait une recherche ethnographique pendant l'année 2003 pour comprendre comment les acteurs sociaux se partagent la mémoire d'une des plus traditionnelles et importantes rodas de capoeira du Brésil. Le profil du fréquentateur actuel de la Roda de Caxias a été dessiné à travers cinquante questionnaires répondus par les fréquentateurs. La naissance de cette Roda de Capoeira, vers la décade de 70 est devenue un modèle alternatif que, dans une certaine mesure, rendait possible la cohabitation, qui n'était pas toujour pacifique, des participants et représentants des « écoles de capoeira » Angola et Régionale.
Mots-clés: Capoeira, Roda de Caxias, Culture Populaire, Éthnographie

LAS MEMORIAS DA RODA DE CAPOEIRA DE CAXIAS

RESUMEN
El objetivo del articulo es describir, a través dos testimonios de antigos fundadores y participantes las memorias da Roda de capoeira de Caxias. Para eso realizamos una investigación etnográfica durante el año de 2003 objetivando entender como los agentes sociales comparten sus memorias de una del "rodas" más tradicionales y importantes del capoeira en Brasil. El perfil del participante actual en el "Roda" de Caxias se trazó a través de cincuenta cuestionarios aplicados entre sus frecuentadores. Lo nacimiento de esta "roda del capoeira" en los años setenta se caracterizó como un modelo alternativo que, hasta cierto punto, posibilitaba la co-existencia, no siempre pacífica, entre los participantes y representantes das "escuelas de capoeira" Angola e Regional.
Palabras Clave: Capoeira, Roda de Caxias, Cultura Popular, Etnografia.

UMA RODA DE RUA: NOTAS ETNOGRÁFICAS DA RODA DE CAPOEIRA DE CAXIAS

RESUMO
O objetivo do artigo é descrever, através do depoimento dos fundadores e antigos freqüentadores, as memórias da "Roda de Capoeira de Caxias". Para isso realizamos uma pesquisa etnográfica durante o ano de 2003 objetivando entender como os atores sociais partilham a memória de umas das mais tradicionais e importantes rodas de capoeira do Brasil. O perfil do freqüentador atual da Roda de Caxias foi mapeado através de cinqüenta questionários respondidos por seus freqüentadores. O nascimento dessa roda de capoeira, na década de 70, se tornou um modelo alternativo que, em certa medida, possibilitava a convivência, nem sempre pacífica, dos participantes e representantes das "escolas de capoeira" Angola e Regional.
Palavras-chaves: Capoeira, Roda de Caxias, Cultura Popular, Etnografia.