Title
Analysis and Proposed Organization of the Capoeira Song Repertoire

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RESUMEN
En este artículo se asume que los contenidos de los cantos de Capoeira son una fuente confiable de información sobre los aspectos más importantes de este arte: música, ritual, juego, historia, filosofía y la idiosincrasia de sus practicantes. Este artículo explora el universo musical de Capoeira a través de un análisis sistemático de las letras de un grupo seleccionado de cantos de Capoeira, para los cuales se proponen dos clasificaciones cuyos criterios son analizados. Además, serán estudiados ciertos elementos estéticos de su música para complementar dicho análisis.

PALABRAS CLAVE
Juan Diego Díaz Meneses, Cantos de Capoeira, Ethnomusicología, Música Afrobrasileña.

TÍTULO
Análisis y propuesta para la organización del repertorio de canciones de Capoeira

ABSTRACT
In this paper, the lyrics of Capoeira songs are used as a reliable source of information about the most important aspects of this art-form: music, ritual, play, history, philosophy and the idiosyncrasy of its practitioners. This paper elucidates the musical universe of Capoeira through a systematic analysis of the lyrics of a selected group of songs. The songs are classified using two criteria and both criteria are analyzed. Furthermore, certain aesthetic elements of the music are studied to complement the discussion of the lyrics.

KEY WORDS
Juan Diego Díaz Meneses, Capoeira songs, Ethnomusicology, Afro-Brazilian Music.

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Analysis and Proposed Organization of the Capoeira Song Repertoire

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Introduction*

Capoeira was born within the constructs of Afro-Brazilian culture and has been an expression of resistance of the Afro-Brazilian people in Brazil since at least the beginning of the Nineteen Century. Today, swept up by globalization, it is no wonder that Capoeira has become a new symbol of resistance, not only in Brazil but also in the countries where it has arrived after its first official exit from Brazil in the early 1950s. Its spread through the rest of the world has been more noticeable in urban settings where it arrived, primarily, with Brazilian practitioners who went abroad. The media has subsequently played a role

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* This article is based in a larger work in Spanish by the author named “Una Propuesta de Clasificación del Cancionero de Capoeira”, unpublished.

1 CARLOS EUGENIO LIBANO SOARES. A Capoeira Escrava e Outras Tradições Rebeldes no Rio de Janeiro (1808-1850). Campinas, São Paulo, Editora da Unicamp, 2001, p. 25. Libano Soares coined the term Capoeira escrava (enslaved Capoeira) for the practice of Capoeira at the beginning of the 19th century in the streets of Rio de Janeiro not only by enslaved Afro-descendants, but also by free black men, poor white men, immigrants from other regions of the country and from places all around the world (specially sailors).

2 BIRA ALMEIDA (Mestre Acordeón). Capoeira, A Brazilian Art Form. History, Philosophy and Practice. Berkley, California (USA), North Atlantic Books, 1986, p. 56. Mestre Acordeon asserts that Capoeira left Brazil via cultural shows in the 1950’s. One of these first shows was called Skindo, which featured capoeirists Arthur Emidio and Djalma Bandeira. Later, in 1975 Jelon Vieira (a student of Bimba’s) pioneered the teaching of Capoeira overseas in USA.
in introducing Capoeira into new settings. Interestingly, around the world Capoeira practitioners have found in Capoeira a new path of resistance in the face of the rapid changes imposed by globalization and capitalism.

With Capoeira being practiced around the world many non-Brazilian nowadays sing Capoeira songs (a short search in the web allows one to see that Capoeira is now practiced in countries on all continents). In most of the rodas I have observed, the practitioners sing the ladainhas and corridos in any situation, regardless of what is happening at that particular moment. A deeper understanding of Capoeira songs would allow practitioners to use the songs in specific settings according to the lyrics. The fact that non-Brazilian Capoeira practitioners do not heed the lyrics of the songs they sing, combined with their general lack of knowledge of Afro-Brazilian culture, demonstrate that these practitioners underestimate the power of Capoeira songs. These songs, when used properly, have great influence on the Capoeira roda and furthermore are a vehicle for understanding the history of Capoeira and important elements of Afro-Brazilian culture.

It is remarkable the importance that Mestre Moraes (a well-known traditional Capoeira mestre) gives to Capoeira music:

“The importance of music in the jogo of Capoeira is immeasurable. It creates an atmosphere in which its physical expression reaches the highest level of beauty. The music inspires the players to reach more intensive levels of interaction and calm down the energy of the jogo if it is very exalted. Through music the leader of the bateria can not only intervene in order to mediate the behavior of the players but can also prevent a haphazard moment. Moreover, he [or she] can provide more energy to enhance the players' performance. Sometimes the mediation of the music is explicit: the singers can criticize, joke, praise or challenge the players. The permanent link between music and the movement of the players creates and maintains the Capoeira roda.”

(Translation from Portuguese by the author).

A scrutiny of the lyrics of Capoeira songs permits us to see a universe in which the mestres (Capoeira masters, or the individuals recognized by the Capoeira community as the most distinguished teachers) are kings of unquestionable power and an infinite source of

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3 Roda is the Portuguese word for the formal Capoeira ritual. A further explanation is given farther on in the text.

4 Ladainhas and corridos are types of songs within the Capoeira repertoire. A further explanation is given farther on in the text.

5 Mestre Moraes and Grupo De Capoeira Angola Pelourinho (GCap). Capoeira Angola From Salvador, Brazil [CD liner notes]. Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, 1996.

6 Jogo is a Portuguese word for the physical aspect of the Capoeira ritual. It means “game” or “play” and it is a more inclusive word than “fight” or “dance” because both may occur within the jogo.

7 Bateria is the Portuguese term for a percussion section or ensemble. In this context it refers to the group of percussion instruments used in the Capoeira ritual (there are no melodic instruments).
wisdom. Inasmuch, Capoeira music is a perfect place to start a profound exploration of this complex art form.

This paper is based on a thematic songbook written by me, in Spanish, containing a compilation of some six hundred Capoeira songs and further, a proposed division of the songs, based on an analysis of the lyrics and some aesthetic elements. The songs were taken from the repertoire used by Capoeira groups in Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Mexico and the USA as well as from videos, CD and tape recordings, songbooks and websites, all collected between 2000 and 2005.

In this paper I will discuss my proposed division of the Capoeira song repertoire and analyze certain aesthetic elements in order to contribute to a better understanding of the Capoeira universe through its music. First of all, I will refer to some historical and musical elements which will enhance the reader's understanding of the phenomenon of Capoeira and the ideas proposed here. Second, I will present my proposed division of the Capoeira song repertoire and explain the criteria for that division with some examples. Third, an analysis of some aesthetic elements of several typical Capoeira songs (corridos) will be undertaken to support or refute the lyrics-based division. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn.

**Background Information**

**Historical Overview of Capoeira**

A little history of Capoeira, with a specific focus on events in the 20th century, will be given in order to allow for a better understanding of the processes that led to the development of the two main traditions in Capoeira (Capoeira Angola and Capoeira Regional).

Although Capoeira is an old art-form no doubt related to the Afro-Brazilian people, it is not clear when Capoeira began to be practiced. Most practitioners claim that Capoeira has been practiced in Brazil since the arrival of enslaved people from Africa. However, Cavalcanti claims to have found the earliest document that proves the existence of Capoeira

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8 The name of the original work is *Una Propuesta de División del Cancionero de Capoeira* (unpublished).

9 As the musical universe of Capoeira is extensive and I am a Capoeira Angola practitioner, in this paper the analysis of the aesthetic elements is focused on what I call “traditional songs”. However, some examples of “contemporary songs” will be used to contrast or reinforce the analysis of aesthetic elements of traditional songs in order to draw general conclusions.

10 Most Capoeira mestres and authors claim that this art-form has been practiced since the beginning of the slavery in Brazil (1538). Bira Almeida (1986:15) cites Augusto Ferreira, who romantically relates Capoeira with the quilombo's in the Seventeen century. However, other important researchers like Frederico Abreu (personal interview, Salvador, April 2006) and Almeida himself (1986:20), assert that, despite the fact that throughout history Capoeira has been undoubtedly related to Afro-descendant culture, fights and disorder, there is no documentary evidence of the presence of Capoeira in Brazil before the Eighteenth Century.
Since then, evidence of Capoeira practice has been found in police records always relating to urban disorders, gangs, and even street-based political parties in Rio de Janeiro. Nevertheless, the fact that Capoeira is an oral tradition allows us to suppose that before the end of the 18th century, it was practiced mostly as a martial art in rural contexts, probably as a form of resistance against slavery as imposed by the Portuguese colonizers. At the beginning of the 19th century, it appeared in urban contexts and thus began to radically change its aesthetic.

The practice of Capoeira was banned in Brazil for many years until Mestre Bimba (a well-known figure) opened the first Capoeira academy in 1932, called Centro De Luta Regional Baiana. Bimba was careful to change certain aspects of Capoeira, such as attire, movements and methods of instruction. He included students from the upper-middle class and called this type of Capoeira, Capoeira Regional. Various other mestres found these changes unacceptable and opened their own academy, in order to preserve what they considered to be “traditional” Capoeira. The mestre of this academy, which opened in 1941, was Mestre Pastinha. Pastinha’s group decided to call their style Capoeira Angola in recognition of the African roots of Capoeira and of the region in Africa that gave the most slaves to Brazil. Both Bimba and Pastinha became, respectively, the fathers of Capoeira Regional and Capoeira Angola. From this point onwards, Capoeira was split into these two main streams.

The Capoeira Regional style became more popular in Brazil (and in the other countries into which it has been introduced by Brazilians or local practitioners), whereas the Capoeira

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11 NIREU CALVALCANTI. Cronicas do Rio Colonial. O Capoeira. Journal do Brasil. Caderno B-1ª Edição, Rio de Janeiro, 1999, p. 22. He describes a story of a slave who fled from his master's house to fight using Capoeira and who was subsequently punished by the police because the practice of Capoeira was outlawed. It is not possible to establish from the account if Capoeira was played in an urban or rural context.


13 JOHN FREDY ZAPATA. Desarrollo Histórico de la Trova Antioqueña. Medellin, unpublished thesis, Universidad de Antioquia, 2005, p. 75. According to Zapata, oral poetry is the only means of communication available for farmers, fishermen, miners and illiterate people from the countryside. Thus, oral traditions (like Capoeira itself) are almost always related to rural contexts.


16 In this case, the term Regional refers to both Bimba’s Capoeira Regional and other hybrid styles of Capoeira different than the two main styles. Farther along in the text an exact distinction will be made.
Angola style maintained a low profile\textsuperscript{17}. I have witnessed tensions between the practitioners of these two styles in most of the countries to which I have traveled (Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Mexico and United States). Such disputes are grounded in a struggle for power and a desire for one style to dominate the other. These practitioners hold the idea that their respective style represents the “authentic tradition”. Clearly, behind this is what Ochoa calls a permanent fight for the redefinition of social processes and the ideologies associated with them\textsuperscript{18}.

The Capoeira Roda and the Role of Music

The principal expression of the Capoeira game is a ritual called the \textit{roda}, which means “ring” or “circle” in Portuguese. In the \textit{roda} the practitioners form a closed circle. Some sing, some play music and some play the game. In the \textit{rodas} that follow Pastinha’s tradition (\textit{Capoeira Angola rodas}) there are eight instruments that accompany the songs and the event from beginning to end. The eight instruments belong to the percussion family and are frequently found in several Afro-Brazilian dance-music expressions, especially in those from the Northeast region of the country\textsuperscript{19}. This musical ensemble is comprised of three \textit{berimbau}s (musical bows) of different sizes known as \textit{gunga}, \textit{meio} and viola, two \textit{pandeiros} (samba-like tambourines), one \textit{agogó} (two belled instrument, not unlike a cow-bell, used in both \textit{Candomblé} and samba), one \textit{reco-reco} (friction instrument) and one \textit{atambaque} (drum used in \textit{Candomblé})\textsuperscript{20}. In the \textit{rodas} where Bimba’s tradition is followed, there are only three instruments: one \textit{berimbau} (normally a \textit{meio}) and two \textit{pandeiros}. In other \textit{rodas}, these two formats may be varied with certain inclusions or exclusions\textsuperscript{21}. However, at the very least, one

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{17} According to Frederico Abreu and Mestre Cobra Mansa (personal interview, Salvador, Bahia, April, 2006), \textit{Capoeira Angola} has increased in popularity over the last few years. However, the number of \textit{Capoeira Angola} practitioners is still very small when compared with the popularity of other styles.
  \item\textsuperscript{18} ANA MARÍA OCHOA. Tradición, Género y Nación en el Bambuco. A Contratiempo, #9, Bogota, 1997, p. 43.
  \item\textsuperscript{19} The northeastern region of Brazil includes the following states: Alagoas, Bahia, Ceará, Maranhão, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe. It is within this region of Brazil that the Afro-descendant culture has the greatest influence. Some of the local dance-music expressions related to Capoeira are: \textit{Samba de roda}, \textit{Maculele}, \textit{Maracatu}, \textit{Candomblés da Bahia}, \textit{Tambor de Mina}, \textit{Tambor de Crioula} and \textit{Bumba meu boi}, among others.
  \item\textsuperscript{20} In \textit{candomblé} rituals in Bahia three \textit{atambaques} of three different sizes are used: Rum, \textit{Rumpi} and \textit{Le}, being the first one the biggest drum, the second, the medium and the latter one, the smallest. Normally one \textit{Rumpi} or one \textit{Le} is used in \textit{Capoeira rodas}. However, any of these drums are always indistinctly addressed in \textit{Capoeira} as \textit{atambaque}.
  \item\textsuperscript{21} Mestre Lua Rasta is a well known Mestre who teaches a style called \textit{Capoeira Angola da Rua} (Street \textit{Capoeira Angola}). He holds a very famous \textit{roda} at the Terreiro de Jesus in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil every Friday evening. At one of his \textit{rodas} I observed the use of a \textit{corno} (the horn of a cow used as a simple trumpet), a two-skinned drum and a friction instrument in the form of a frog (and thus called a \textit{sapo}).
\end{itemize}
berimbau and one pandeiro remain in such ensembles and thus, could be considered essential instruments in a roda regardless the nature of the tradition of the group.

A Capoeira Angola roda normally begins with the bateria, led by the gunga (the berimbau with the lowest tonality). The mestre initiates the roda with a typical cry, “E-YEA!” and then sings a ladainha (an introductory song, sung as a solo). The mestre then continues with a responsorial song (the chulas) in which a one-line verse alternates with a one-line chorus (sung by the rest of the participants). Once the chulas have finished, the corridos (songs used during play) begin and these are led by the mestre or by one of the members of the bateria. At this point the game starts. Couples pass to the center of the circle to play Capoeira. Throughout the roda each participant assumes different roles: musician, leader of the songs, chorus or dancer. These roles change over the course of the roda and these changes follow certain rules adopted by the group. After one or two hours of jogos, the roda finishes with a final cry from the mestre: “YE!”.

The standardized ritual described above varies from group to group depending on the school, the mestre and local influences. Many Capoeira Angola groups celebrate their rodas with a format similar to this one. The types of games, lyrics and general musical aesthetic can vary very little or greatly between groups and the trend is towards the latter case when comparing groups whose mestres originate from different regions of Brazil. There is a significant difference between the music in Capoeira Regional (and Capoeira Contemporánea\(^2\)) rodas, as compared to the music in Capoeira Angola rodas. An exhaustive analysis of these differences exceeds the scope of this paper.

Division of the Capoeira Song Repertoire

The use of categories is one of the most popular practices when studying complex issues (in our case a specific musical system). Meyer asserts that this is “a consequence of the limited capacity of human mind”\(^2\). Therefore, in many cases, the use of categories is a helpful tool for the study of musical systems. Conversely, Merriam has greatly contributed to the understanding of oral musical systems by proposing a ten-category classification of songs based on the social function of the songs\(^2\). Therefore, it is no wonder that many

\(^2\) *Capoeira Contemporánea* is the most common term used within the Capoeira realm to address hybrid styles of Capoeira which combines features of Pastinha’s *Capoeira Angola* and Bimba’s *Capoeira Regional*.


authors studying Capoeira have attempted to classify Capoeira songs. Among them Rego is remarkable\textsuperscript{25} as his book includes the first significant Capoeira songbook and uses a thematic classification of Capoeira songs based on diverse criteria.

This paper uses several levels of division in order to organize and make sense of the Capoeira song repertoire. First, the songs are discussed along their lines of function. The Capoeira universe generally recognizes three different types of songs used at different moments in the \textit{roda}. These are \textit{ladainhas} (a non-responsorial song sung by a soloist; it initiates the ritual), \textit{chulas} (one-line responsorial songs that follow the \textit{ladainha}) and \textit{corridos} (the songs used during play). Being able to recognize and differentiate between these three types of songs is necessary for a basic understanding of the Capoeira song repertoire. Note that this paper, for the sake of brevity, tends to focus on \textit{corridos} in all discussions.

Second, I introduce two overarching categories for Capoeira songs: "traditional" and "contemporary". These two categories can be used to analyze both \textit{ladainhas} and \textit{corridos}; however, in this paper only \textit{corridos} are discussed in this manner.

Third, a thematic division of the \textit{corridos} is introduced. This portion is somewhat related to Rego's classification\textsuperscript{26}; however, some of his categories are rejected due to inconsistencies in his criteria. I propose thirteen categories for the "traditional" \textit{corridos} and fifteen for the "contemporary" \textit{corridos}. The division by function proposed by Merriam will be used solely as a theoretical base.

Creating the initial compilation of songs was very complex given that information is dispersed, that sources are not always trustworthy and that songs exist in many versions. Given that Capoeira is an oral tradition that has been significantly impacted by the media, it is important to choose a hierarchy of musical sources. The three levels of orality that Zapata distinguishes were taken into account in this paper: pure orality (such as live performances), mediated orality (such as recordings of live performances) and compound orality (when oral material is influenced by written material)\textsuperscript{27}. Thus, with regards to Capoeira music as
A source of knowledge, the following order of importance was determined and adhered to: the rodas themselves, video recordings of rodas, audio recordings of songs, written documents and group websites.

The differences between the versions of Capoeira songs represented a significant obstacle, as it is hard to decide which version is more “authoritative”. Initially, I attempted to unify the diverging versions, but as the research continued, it became clear that this was not possible or even useful. A recognition of each version, with its differing lyrics (sometimes subject to minor spelling differences with significant influence on possible meanings), structure, melody and rhythm, was the first big achievement of this research: an exposition of the microcosm in each version of the songs that could be studied not only on its own, but also as part of a family of songs.

Division of the Songs into Ladainhas, Chulas and Corridos

It is widely accepted in all Capoeira groups, regardless the tendency or tradition, that there are three types of songs: ladainhas, chulas and corridos. With few exceptions, all the groups use the songs in the same moment in the roda. Therefore, there were no conflicts when dividing these songs along these lines. We will first explore the most common form of these three types of songs.

The ladainha is the song that initiates the roda (except in cases where groups have not properly been initiated into the Capoeira ritual by a formal mestre). It is generally a long solo song in which the mestre tells stories and gives advice. In the groups that follow Pastinha’s tradition, the ladainha normally starts with a call “E-YEAAAA!” and finishes up with the word “Camará!” (see theme 1).

28 Although the ladainhas, corridos and chulas appear in the roda in specific moments and have certain forms, some of the groups (especially Capoeira Regional groups) have incorporated new forms of singing by changing the responsorial nature of the songs.
In most *rodas*, only one *ladainha* is sung, however, sometimes, when the mestre is going to play (partway through the *roda*), he (or she) kneels at the foot of the gunga and sings a *ladainha*, as if he/she were reinitiating the *roda*. The *roda* may be reinitiated in this way for other reasons, such as when an important visitor has arrived.

The *chulas* are short responsorial songs that follow the *ladainha* and prepare for the first *jogo*. They have a standardized size of four bars and the melodies generally go as follows:

![Chula melody](image)

*Chulas* are barely considered as songs themselves. Rather, they are often seen as the natural end of the *ladainha* or the mere transition between the “mystical *ladainha*” and the “bright *corridos*”. Nonetheless, the *chulas* have a standardized form and they hold the most uniform musical and poetic form among the three types of Capoeira songs. The chorus echoes the *chula* sung by the soloist adding the word “camará!” at the end. In a standard *roda* the number of *chulas* may vary, but normally mestres do not spend more than one or two minutes singing them. The themes of the *chula* are often related to the *ladainha* sung previously.

The *corridos* have many different sizes and forms but they are characterized—as are *chulas*—by their responsorial nature. They are the songs used when the physical game is played. Their primary function is to describe and mediate the *jogo*, though some lyrics are related to other themes. Further along I will give examples of *corridos*, as all further organization of Capoeira songs deals specifically with *corridos*.

Since Capoeira practitioners from both Brazil and other countries are influenced by local and popular musical genres, their interpretation of the *ladainhas* and *corridos* has changed. For example Mestre Acordeon has recorded a responsorial *ladainha* called “Vamos pedir o axé” (see theme 2).

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29 In many occasions mestres sing their *ladainhas* as if they were praying, in several cases closing their eyes. Moreover, during the *ladainha* many mestres kneel on the foot of the berimbau and perform various religious gestures. In contrast, while singing *corridos*, mestres often laugh and joke.

30 Axé is an African concept in the nagô which designates the magical-sacred force inherent in every divinity and being of nature. In Capoeira, axé is the energy that all the participants share in the *roda* and is seen as being sustained by the music.
Other Regional/Contemporánea groups have created new corridos with long parts for a soloist (sometimes four or six verses) and short responsorial parts at the end. These corridos seem more like ladainhas in the brevity of the chorus response. An example heard in the group Abolição in San José, Costa Rica (p. 194).

Division of Capoeira songs between “traditional” and “contemporary”

In an initial attempt to divide Capoeira songs into traditional and contemporary, I looked for historical hints in order to locate the first songs used in Capoeira, but this task has been shown to be futile by researchers like Mestre Cobra Mansa. In fact, it seems that the first Capoeira songs actually came from the melodies and lyrics of other dance and music genres from Brazil’s Northeast region, especially from Samba de roda. Although a certain group of songs is considered today as authentic Capoeira songs, the incorporation of new songs into the Capoeira repertoire has not stopped. Thus, creating a musical chronology was not the way to go about this task.

31 I have lumped Capoeira Regional and Capoeira Contemporánea groups just to differentiate them from Capoeira Angola groups.

32 In personal interview with Mestre Cobra Mansa (Salvador, Bahia, April, 2006), he stated that there is no proof of the existence of a repertoire of Capoeira music/songs before the Twentieth Century. Instead, the first songs used to play Capoeira as we know it today, were probably taken from the repertoire of Samba de roda (a very popular dance-music from the northeastern region of Brazil).

33 Among the 174 Capoeira Angola corridos compiled by the author in the original songbook, Mestre Cobra Mansa identified sixteen, as old Samba de roda songs. They are: Boa viagem, A onça morreu, Marimbondo, O moinho da Bahia quemou, Ave Maria meu Deus, Chue chua, E de couro de boi, E por cima da linha, Pé dentro pé fora, Chora viola, Minha comadre, Sou eu maita, Quando eu vim na Bahia eu vim so, Quem vem lá sou eu and Ae goma.

34 Relatively recent incorporation of Sambas and Música Popular Brasileira (MPB) songs into the Capoeira repertoire...
In order to organize Capoeira songs as “traditional” or “contemporary”, one must define these two terms. The transformation of traditions has always caused controversy, as Ochoa mentions\(^{35}\). Moreover, the continuation of a tradition implies its capacity to manage a transformation process that allows it to adapt to new contexts and thus, logically, not remain exactly the same through time\(^{36}\). This sort of understanding of tradition is greatly important in our times of accelerated changes in society.

Capoeira is not immune to the controversy over tradition. There is one group of practitioners, the angoleiros (those who play Capoeira Angola), who believe they are the keepers of tradition, while there is another group, the regionales/contemporáneos (those who play Capoeira Regional and/or Capoeira contemporánea), who, in general, believe that Capoeira must evolve. Of course, both have their own “tradition”, but the angoleiros claim that theirs is older and thus, more authentic.

Before analyzing this controversial issue, it is necessary to state that most of the actual Capoeira mestres follow a tradition that can be traced back through time to Mestre Pastinha (in the case of the Capoeira Angola mestres) or to Mestre Bimba (in the case of the Capoeira Regional mestres). Were one to use this criterion, two main genealogies would be found: the followers of Mestre Pastinha and the followers of Mestre Bimba\(^{37}\). This two-pronged genealogical division is part of an overarching discourse within Capoeira today.

Although every group that I have visited followed one of the two main traditions mentioned above, the division remains problematic. There are certain groups which do not follow a unique tradition like the “purist” angoleiros or the regionales. They have a more open range of influences and tend to practice both styles and hence will be addressed in this paper as Capoeira Contemporanea groups\(^{38}\). Moreover, most of the Capoeira Contemporánea groups recognize Capoeira Angola as the older tradition and begin their rodas with songs

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36 Ibid, p. 35-36.

37 Although most of the groups fit well in these categories, there are other groups that follow a different tradition, such as the groups affiliated with the Associação Brasileira Cultural de Capoeira Palmares whose master is Mestre Nô. Although he is an angoleiro, he was taught by Mestre Pirró, who was not a follower of any of Pastinha’s groups. There are also many well known Capoeira Angola mestres who actually were taught by mestres who did not learn with Mestre Pastinha, but were nonetheless greatly influenced by him. This is the case of mestres like Lua de Bobó, Noronha, Espinho Remoso, Cebolinha Verde, Bom Cabrito and Boa Gente.

38 This is the case of the Grupo de Capoeira Longe do Mar in Mexico City, visited by the author in 2002.
frequently used in the most purist Capoeira Angola groups and ostensibly change their style of play for that portion of their ritual. However, significant changes not only in the lyrics, but also in the musical aesthetic remain. Searching for authoritative origins in this mix is difficult.

Given these considerations, it appears difficult to find well-based criteria for the division between “traditional” and “contemporary” songs. Nonetheless, I propose a division of Capoeira songs into two groups: a) the songs used by the groups that exclusively follow Pastinha’s tradition, which I will call “traditional”, and b) the songs used by the other groups (Capoeira Regional and Contemporánea), which, of course, have their own tradition but will be referred to as “contemporary” for the purposes of differentiation.

Although this criterion seems arbitrary, it emerged as the least refutable option. It was observed that the groups that follow Pastinha’s tradition maintain a close relationship among themselves. In fact, it seems as if they function like a big family whose center spins towards Salvador. This might be explained by many reasons: first, Capoeira Angola mestres and practitioners are relatively few when compared to Capoeira Regional/Contemporánea groups, which enhances their relationship. Second, Capoeira Angola mestres and practitioners are very marked by Pastinha’s philosophy which is very focused on preserving their tradition. This aspect does not seem very strong in Capoeira Regional/Contemporánea mestres and groups.

By using this criterion it was possible to find important differences in rhythm, melody, and musical form between the “traditional” and “contemporary” songs, although a further analysis will show that they maintain several common

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39 According to Mestre Cobra Mansa (personal interview, Costa Rica, 2005), all Capoeira Angola groups, whether located in Brazil or overseas, have received direct or indirect influence of the Grupo de Capoeira Angola Pelourinho and Academia de João Pequeno de Pastinha. These two important groups headed by Mestre Moraes and Mestre João Pequeno are responsible to a great extent for the popularity that Capoeira Angola enjoys today.
elements, such as the purpose of the songs in the *roda*, many lyrics and certain musical and poetic forms.

Let me describe some of the significant differences that can be observed in the use of Capoeira songs between *Capoeira Angola* and *Capoeira Regional/Contemporânea* groups.

The *corrido* “Aidê” distinctly shows some of the differences (and consistencies) in lyrics, melody and rhythm.

Transcription by the author based on a song heard in a *roda* at the *Capoeira Angola Center of Mestre João Grande*, N.Y, USA, Sept. 2003.

Transcription by the author based on a song heard in a *roda* by Grupo de Capoeira Longe do Mar, Mexico City, May, 2002.
The version shown above is probably the most commonly heard in both the Capoeira Angola and Regional/Contemporânea groups. One can see that the soloist’s part superimposes triplets over the binary time played by the percussion. The chorus alternates with the verses every two bars with “Ai, Ai Aidee!”.

Now let us look at a second version of this same corrido. This latter version of the corrido “Aidê”, which was heard in one of the groups that practices Capoeira Contemporânea, is quite different than the first one. Although they are versions of the same song, a question emerges: which of them should be considered “traditional”? The first one is sung in the group of Mestre João Grande, one of the oldest Capoeira Angola mestres and a former student of Mestre Pastinha. The second one is sung by a group in México, where Capoeira arrived some fourteen years ago and which lacks the permanent presence of a Brazilian mestre (at least in mid-2002)\(^\text{40}\). Clearly the first version might be traced back to an older and presumably more formal tradition and the second one could be seen as a further alteration (but this is not reason enough to say that it does not imply a tradition in itself).

A further difference is that, in some cases, angoleiros choose to sing particular songs and regionales/contemporâneos, others. There are a great number of songs specifically identified with the Pastinha’s angoleiros or with regionales/contemporâneos. An example of the former is the corrido “Eu sou angoleiro”, considered an anthem by the angoleiros (theme 4).

An example for the latter is “Capoeira pra estrangeiro”, which was recorded by the Grupo de Capoeira Cordão de Ouro and is very frequently used in Capoeira Regional/Contemporânea rodas (e.g. Grupo de Capoeira Abolição, Medellín, Colombia, see theme 5).

\(^{40}\) In personal interview with Ian Night (one of the most experienced Mexican Capoeira Angola practitioners) in México City, May, 2002, he asserted that Capoeira was brought to Mexico by the Argentine Mariano Andrade in 1992. This Capoeira pioneer in Mexico is now a student of Mestre Curíó (a well-known Capoeira mestre from Salvador who was student of Pastinha) and ostensibly holds the title of contramedre (one step below mestre).
On the other hand, *Capoeira Angola* groups have presumably taken songs from the Regional repertoire, as in the case of the *corrido* “Nhem, nhem, nhem”, which *Capoeira Regional* practitioners claim to be a personal composition of Mestre Bimba. The following version was heard in a *roda* with the professor Minhocã41 in Mexico City (see theme 6).

Versions of this *corrido* heard in *Capoeira Regional/Contemporânea* groups are very similar to versions heard in *Capoeira Angola* groups.

**Division of the Corridos by Theme**

In *Capoeira*, the *corridos* have two primary functions: to describe and to mediate the *roda*. Beyond this, there are historical, romantic, and religious songs as well as songs that challenge and songs that exalt one’s condition. The analysis gets complicated as some songs fit into more than one category. This is the case of the *corrido* “Marimbondo”. The chorus mentions the way in which Catholics cross themselves, “Pelo sinal”, and implies superstitions around this; however, the line “marimbondo me mordeu” will describe the way in which a player took a hit in the *roda* (see theme 7).

It is clear that “traditional” *corridos* use popular poetry in the lyrics. Thus, words relating to nature (rivers, seas, animals, forests, trees, rain, etc.) were an obvious basis for the construction of *Capoeira* songs in the past. Many songs mention animals of the Brazilian forests and draw parallels with players. The animals most mentioned by the *angoleiro* poets are snakes and birds, although monkeys, dogs, crocodiles, oxen, felines and fish are also mentioned. Another element of nature often used by *angoleiros* is the plants of the Northeast region of Brazil. For example, they mention trees such as *barraína*, *gamelêira*, *pau-brasil*, *macaranduba*, *jacarandá* and *beriba* (this last tree provides the wood used to make *berimbau*s). They also mention typical fruits, vegetables and dishes from the Northeast region of Brazil, such as *dendê*, *quiabo* (okra), *limão* (lime), *abobora* (squash), *mamão* (papaya), *farinha de mandioca* (yucca flour), *caruru* and *acarajé* 43.

The musical content of the *Capoeira Angola* songs was divided by theme in thirteen categories during my original investigation (presented below with an example).

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41 Minhocã is a Brazilian student of the *Academia de João Pequeno de Pastinha* who spent one year in Mexico teaching *Capoeira Angola* in 2002. He has already received the title of *contramestre* by his *mestre* and brother *Mestre Pé de Chumbo*, who is also a student of *Mestre João Pequeno*.

42 *Dendê* is the fruit from a palm tree that secretes a red oil used in cooking in the Northeast of Brazil. *Dendê* also signifies, in *Capoeira*, the special way in which experienced *capoeiristas* perform in the *roda*, whether playing instruments, singing or playing the game.

43 *Caruru* and *acarajé* are two typical foods from Bahia and easily found in Salvador. The former is a food made from okra, onion, shrimp, palm oil and toasted nuts and the latter is a food made with shrimp, chili peppers and bean flour.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Descriptive songs used as salutation, used for starting the roda or for when an angoleiro arrives. | Camungêrê  
Como vai como está?  
Camungêrê  
Como vai vos-mecê?  
Camungêrê  
Eu vou bem de saúde  
Camungêrê |
| Descriptive songs used as farewell, for finishing up the roda, or when an angoleiro leaves. | Adeus corina, dão, dão  
Vou-me embora, vou me embora  
Adeus corina, dão, dão  
Como já disse que vou  
Adeus corina, dão, dão  
Mas prossegue o berimbau |
| Descriptive songs for a player who takes a hit or is deceived in the game. | Mas meu facão bateu embaixo  
A bananeira caiu  
Mas meu facão bateu embaixo  
A bananeira caiu  
Cai, cai bananeira |
| Descriptive songs for intrinsic elements such as the instruments and philosophy. | Beriba é pau  
Pra fazer berimbau  
Mas beriba é pau  
Pra fazer berimbau  
Beriba é pau  
Pra fazer berimbau |
| Mediating songs that incite a stronger game. | Quebra, quebra gereba  
Vou quebrar tudo hoje  
Amanhã nada quebra  
Quebra, quebra gereba  
Vou quebrar tudo hoje  
Amanhã quem é que quebra  
Quebra, quebra gereba |
| Mediating songs that incite a slower game. | Ai ai, Aidê  
Joga bonito que eu quero ver  
Ai, Ai, Aidê  
Olha, jogo uma coisa que eu quero aprender  
Ai, Ai, Aidê  
Aidê, Aidê, Aidê, Aidê |
| Mediating songs that inciting the music to play in an specific way. | Chora viola  
Chora  
Oi chora viola  
Chorá  
Oi viola mentira  
Chorá |

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**THEME 6**

**NHEM, NHEM, NHEM**

Olha chora o menino  
Nhem, nhem, nhem  
O menino chorou  
Nhem, nhem, nhem  
É porque não mamou  
Nhem, nhem, nhem  
Cale a boca menino  

**CAPOEIRA ANGOLA GROUPS**

**WHAA, WHAA, WHAA**

Look the child cries  
Whaa, whaaa, whaa  

**CAPOEIRA IS FOR FOREIGNERS**

My brother  
It’s a forest!  
Brazilian Capoeira  
My comrade  
It kills!  
The berimbau is calling  
The roda is forming  
Start blessing yourself  
So you may enter  
The rhythm is Angola  
São Bento Pequeno  
Cavalaria and Iúna  
The mandinga of the game  
Watch your ginga  
Do not hesitate  
Capoeira is fast  
It is Brazilian  
It kills  
Capoeira is fast  
It is Brazilian  
It kills  

(TRANSLATION BY THE AUTHOR)
### Categories for “Traditional” Corridos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mediating songs that incite a challenge among players. | Jogue comigo  
Com muito cuidado  
Com muito cuidado  
Jogue comigo  
Com muito cuidado  
Com muito cuidado  
Que eu sou delicado |
| Historical songs | Quando o nêgo fugia no mato  
O Sinhô mandou lhe buscar  
O nêgo então sacaricava  
Batendo o homem que vinha pegar  
Quem é esse homem  
Capitão do mato  
Quem é esse homem  
Capitão do mato |
| Songs that mention women. | A mulher mata o homem  
É debaixo da saia  
A mulher mata o homem  
É debaixo da saia  
A mulher mata o homem |
| Superstitious songs that ask for protection from gods and saints, both African and Catholic. | Ó Santa Barbara que relampuê  
Ó Santa Barbara que relampuê  
Ó Santa Barbara que relampuê  
Que relampuê, que relampuê  
Ó Santa Barbara que relampuê |
| Songs that exalt Capoeira as a practice and as culture | É legal, é legal  
Jogar capoeira é um negócio legal  
É legal, é legal  
Jogar capoeira e não levar pau  
É legal, é legal  
Oi! tocar berimbau é um negócio legal |
| Songs of free theme | Quem não pode com mandinga, Paraná  
Não carrega patuá, Paraná  
Paranaue, Paranaue, Paraná  
Quem não pode com Besouro, Paraná  
Não assanha Mangangá, Paraná  
Paranaue, Paranaue, Paraná |

**THEME 1**

Marimbondo, marimbondo  
Pelo sinal  
Marimbondo me mordeu  
Pelo sinal  
Oi me mordeu foi no umbigo  
Pelo sinal  
Mas se fosse mais pra baixo  
Pelo sinal  
O meu caso estava perdido  

(HEARD IN THE RECORDING “CAPOEIRA” BY MESTRES WALDEMAR Y CANJUQUINHA)

**THEME 7**

Marimbondo, marimbondo  
By the sign of the Holy Cross  
Marimbondo bit me  
By the sign of the Holy Cross  
It bit my bellybutton  
By the sign of the Holy Cross  
Had it bit me any lower  
By the sign of the Holy Cross  
My case was over  

(TRANSLATED BY THE AUTHOR)
A simple count the number of collected songs in each category led to the conclusion that the favorite themes in “traditional” *corridos* are: a) the descriptive songs for intrinsic aspects, b) the superstition mediating, and c) the songs that incite challenges. On the other hand, the repertoire contains few descriptive salutation songs and few free theme songs44.

It is also interesting that in “traditional” *corridos* the preferred animals are snakes, birds and dogs, the fruit most mentioned is coconut and the preferred plant is dendê. The most popular characters are Pastinha and Besouro45. Bahia and Angola are the most commonly mentioned places. The musical instrument most mentioned is the *berimbau*, but there is almost no mention of the rhythms played by the *berimbau*. Finally, the most frequently referred to movements are *ginga* and *rasteira*.

It is remarkable that, although the groups of each stream often make a special effort to mark the differences with respect to the groups of the other stream, they share almost all of the same themes in their songs. The contemporary Capoeira groups have introduced a couple of new themes in their songs: romantic songs whose exaggerated lyricism can be related to other Brazilian genres like *bossanova* or certain types of *samba*, and anthem songs that function as identifiers for certain groups or schools46. The last category demonstrates the tendency to mark the differences between groups by creating their own repertory of songs, including a song that exalts the group and its members (see Additional Categories for contemporary Songs).

In accordance to my simple counting system, the favorite themes in contemporary *corridos* are: a) the descriptive songs for intrinsic aspects, b) the historic songs and c) the challenge songs. On the other hand, the repertoire contains few descriptive songs for a player who takes a hit and few descriptive farewell songs.

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44 In the original work by the author, among a total of 174 traditional *corridos*, 34 were classified as descriptive songs for intrinsic aspects, 18 as superstition songs, 17 as songs that encourage challenges, 16 as descriptive songs for a player who takes a hit, 16 as songs that mention women, 15 as mediating songs that incitate slower game, 11 as historical songs, 11 as farewell songs, 9 as songs that condition the way to play music, 8 as songs that encourage strong play, 7 as songs that exalt Capoeira as a practice and as a culture, 6 as songs for salutation and 6 as free theme songs.

45 Besouro Mangangá is one of the most celebrated characters in the songs of Capoeira and by far, the greatest legend. The myth is easily pieced together using the information supplied by the Capoeira song repertoire. It is said that he was a black slave and a brave man who defended his people and fought against the Portuguese and the police. It is also said that he had *corpo fechado*, meaning that he could not be killed with a weapon. It is also said that he was killed at the Engenho de Maracangaíba (sugar cane production and processing farm) with a *faca de tucum* (a knife made from a specific type of wood), the only thing able to break the enchantment that protected him.

46 Some Capoeira Angola groups have anthems too, but they are barely heard in public *rodas*. That is why this category was not included in traditional songs. One example of this type of songs is the *corrido* “O quilombo da FICA”, that mentions the name of the International Foundation of Capoeira Angola (“FICA” is the abbreviation in Portuguese). This is one of the biggest Capoeira Angola groups worldwide with its main academy in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. The FICA (or ICAF in English) is headed by Mestres Valmir, Cobra Mansa and Jurandir.
It is also interesting that in “contemporary” songs the preferred animals are oxen and monkeys, the plants most mentioned are the sugar cane and the *beriba* and the most popular characters are Bimba, Pastinha and Besouro. The places most mentioned are Bahia and Luanda. The musical instrument most mentioned is, as before, the *berimbau*. Contemporary *corridos* frequently mention the rhythms of the *berimbau*, most commonly mentioning the *São Bento*, Angola, *Benguela* and *Iúna* rhythms. Finally, the movements in Capoeira that are most mentioned are also *ginga* and *rasteira*, as well as *meia-lua* and *armada*.

It is noticeable that in the repertoires of both styles, Pastinha and Besouro appear as the most popular characters, only superseded in contemporary *corridos* by the mention of Bimba. The mention by contemporary groups of Pastinha can be perhaps interpreted as recognition to an “older tradition”. A reciprocal recognition of Bimba and his contribution to Capoeira is inexistent in the songs of the traditional groups.

**Analysis of Differences in Lyrics and Poetic Structure of the Corridos**

The next paragraphs discuss some of the typical differences among *corridos*. There are illustrative examples from both the traditional and contemporary songs.

**Minor Spelling Differences**

Sometimes the differences between two versions of one song may look very small, but are significant, nonetheless. For example, while the *corrido* “*O Dendê, o Dendê*” is sung...
by Mestre Jogo de Dentro (a young Capoeira Angola master) as shown in theme 8. Nonetheless Mestre Cobra Mansa says that this corrido was previously sung as shown in theme 9.

Although the one-word difference here is minor at first glance, the implication is remarkable. Whereas the first version of this corrido shows a sexist stance, the second one presents age-based discrimination.

Differences in Poetic Structure of the Verses

Another important difference in the various versions of the corridos is the poetic structure of the verses. The basic structure for the verses of a Capoeira Angola corrido is one, two or four lines, sung by the soloist, and echoed by the chorus (whose response is of equal length). This structure is altered at times by including one (or sometimes more) quadra at the beginning of the corrido. The quadra is a four-line verse, which could precede virtually any corrido. Quadras used in these circumstances are never echoed by the chorus. While these quadras are most often improvised or taken from ladainhas and used to describe what is happening in one particular moment in the roda, some of these quadras have been associated with specific corridos and adopted by many groups, both Angola and Regional/Contemporânea.

The quadra that appears in the four first verses of theme 10 is a specific combination of lyrics commonly heard.

Note however, that some groups (e.g. Mestre Bimba’s group, as heard on the album Curso de Capoeira Regional) sing this corrido but do not include the quadra.

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Quadra is a four-line verse with rhyming pairs. It is widely used both in literature and songs in Portuguese. Perhaps the correct English word is quatrain. The general use of the term in this paper must be distinguished from the quadras de Mestre Bimba, which are also four-line verses, but used specifically as introductory songs in Capoeira Regional groups that follow Bimba’s tradition strictly. These particular quadras are not discussed in this paper.
**Analysis of Differences in Musical Aesthetic of the Corridos**

It can be said that Capoeira corridos are responsorial and monophonic, as the chorus responds in unison; however, one may hear thirds or even false intonations in the chorus response due to individuals’ vocal capacities. There are no rules for intonation in the group, as there are no harmonic or melodic instruments in the bateria to support harmony. A song in which parallel thirds are often sung is the corrido Paranaué.

Transcription by the author based on roda of the group Banda do Saci, in Mexico City, in March 2002

The melody of traditional corridos is very simple. The melodic periods of the “traditional” corridos almost always bear two phrases: the antecedent phrase which concludes with a dominant cadence and the consequent phrase which concludes with a tonic cadence. The most common use of this structure is as follows: the soloist introduces the unique melodic period, then he/she leaves the antecedent phrase of the melodic period to the chorus and he/she sings the consequent phrase completing the melodic period. The soloist and the chorus alternate these two phrases during the whole corrido. In general, the soloist improvises verses in his/her part, while the chorus sings a fixed verse.

Transcription by the author based on a roda by the Grupo de Estudio de Capoeira Angola Raiz in San Jose, Costa Rica, January 2003.
Although the structure depicted above is one of the most frequently seen in “traditional” corridos, there are other uses of this structure in which the soloist’s and the chorus’ parts are shorter, splitting the melodic period into four. A good example is the corrido “Camungere”.

Transcription by the author based on a roda by the Grupo de Estudio de Capoeira Angola de Nicaragua in Managua, April 2005.

On the other hand there are corridos whose melodic period is not divided and thus, the soloist’s and chorus’ parts alternate over whole melodic periods. One example would be the corrido “Quem vem la sou eu”.

Transcription by the author based on a roda by the Capoeira Angola Center of Mestre João Grande in New York, September 2003.
Even though many contemporary corridos share the structure described above, they also exhibit many other uses of the structure. While an exhaustive explanation is beyond the breadth of this paper, in brief, the role of the chorus is more active, as its part is not always fixed, neither in melody nor in lyrics. Sometimes, the length of the chorus’ part might even change within the same corrido. To demonstrate this sort of variation, the next example of a song heard in a roda by the Grupo de Capoeira Abolicão in San José, Costa Rica, shows alternating melodic periods sung by the soloist and the chorus that differ both in melody and lyrics.

Transcription by the author based on a roda by the Grupo de Capoeira Abolicão in San José, Costa Rica, March 2003.

An important thing to keep in mind when analyzing musical aesthetics of corridos in Capoeira is that most of the mestres develop a particular style of singing the Capoeira repertoire. That is why the melodies for different corridos frequently vary from group to group. Several examples might be provided, but I will center my attention on Mestre Moraes, who has a distinctive and well-known style.

According to Mestre Otavio Brazil⁴⁸, some mestres, such as Moraes, have a special way of singing, “cantam pra dentro”, which means that as they sing, the songs go into their bodies. Such concepts contribute to or perhaps result from the mystical discourse that continues to surround Capoeira. Based on videos and other recordings, the noteworthy technical aspects

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of Mestre Moraes's singing style are: a) he interjects the melody with calls before and after his part (the soloist's part) in the corridos that he is leading, b) he overlaps tertiary melodic rhythms with the binary percussion base and c) his voice is very nasal.

Below are two transcribed versions of the corrido “Paranaué”. The first one was taken from a recording that features Mestre Moraes and illustrates aspects of his melodic style. The second one was taken from another recording and shows a more standardized version, which is generally found in Capoeira rodas outside of Brazil.


Transcription based on the version recorded by Grupo de Capoeira Baraka, “Capoeira Baraka” (date unknown).
While the first version exhibits a more intricate rhythm combining binary and tertiary musical forms, the second one shows the repeated use of the following rhythmic pattern\(^49\):

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c|c|c}
\hline
\text{H} & \text{2}\times 4 & \text{3}\times 4 & \text{4}\times 4 & \text{5}\times 4 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

As Rio de Janeiro is not only the birthplace of Bossanova but also an important centre that influenced the early development of Capoeira, further investigation of the relationship between these rhythms could prove interesting.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, I proposed a division of the Capoeira song repertoire using specific criteria. Furthermore, I analyzed some poetic and musical elements of Capoeira songs in order to better understand the intricacy of Capoeira. There are different versions of Capoeira songs that are, simultaneously, unique and representative of differing microcosms within the realm of Capoeira, and part of a larger family of songs.

This work proves that it is possible to approach the universe of Capoeira through its music. This type of approach is indispensable given that Capoeira is an oral tradition where the mestres pass down their knowledge through stories most often in the form of songs. From a didactic point of view, the study of the song repertoire is important for the attainment of a better understanding of Capoeira. This is advisable for all Capoeira practitioners and especially for those not native to Brazil. The division of these songs by theme allows one to see how Capoeira songs are integrated into the ritual. Finally, the study of these songs makes it clear that they are a fertile source of historical, philosophical and technical information.

An analysis of the lyrics, poetic structure and musical aesthetic shows that although both “traditional” and “contemporary” styles have significant differences, the corridos of both styles still share a great number of elements in common. The styles diverge in the use of tertiary melodic rhythms that overlap a binary percussion base (“traditionalists”) compared to more syncopated melodic rhythms (“contemporaries”)\(^50\); however, the styles parallel each other in such elements as the common themes, the responsorial nature of the songs, the alternation of melodic periods (or fractions of them), and the improvisation exhibited by the soloist.

\(^{49}\)This rhythmic pattern is similar to the rhythm of many Bossanova songs, such as “Berimbau” by Vinicius de Moraes and Baden Powell, “Gema” by Caetano Veloso or “Samba de Uma nota Só” by Antonio Carlos Jobim and Newton Mendoça.

\(^{50}\)Not that contemporary songs do not use tertiary melodic rhythms, but this musical figure appears very infrequently. Traditional songs are also syncopated but to a lesser extent than contemporary songs.
The tensions between Capoeira groups for the recognition as “authentic” and/or “traditional” represents a desire for reaffirmation as individuals and as groups in societies that suffer rapid change. Taking up and defending a tradition as one’s own can be seen as a way of resisting such change. Often overlooked and misunderstood is the fact that the roots of the entire ritual, including the music, are identical. As both sides are involved in the same fight for recognition, it is not surprising that the changes that they have incorporated into their practice go in the same direction. This has been depicted through a study of their music.