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Wired ancestrality: recording the Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte

Ancestralidade conectada: a gravação do Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte

Ancestralidad conectada: la grabación del Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte

Caio de Souza[1]

Abstract

The proliferation of capoeira album recordings in styles such as Angola, Regional, and Contemporary reflects its national and transnational expansion, establishing it as one of Brazil's most globally recognized cultural expressions. Ethnomusicologists have explored capoeira as a sonic performance space (Downey, 2005), where bodily movement interacts with music shaped by the roda, berimbau, and other percussion instruments. However, few have examined how non–studio recording environments influence performance or how practitioners engage with sound's ancestral and spiritual dimensions. This paper analyzes the recording of Coco Maduro, an album by Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte, led by Mestre Iuri and recorded in 2024 at the group's training space in Bloomington, Indiana. A central concern was the generation of axé, an Afro–Brazilian "spiritual energy or life force" (Kurtz, 2024), fundamental to capoeira and fostering sintonia—a resonant attunement between music and movement. Drawing on two years of fieldwork—including participant observation and participatory action research—this study also engages with the capoeira recordings made by Lorenzo Dow Turner in Bahia (1940–41), which inspired the album's production. This analysis raises critical questions about how axé is conceptualized, how it translates sonically, and how space and spirituality shape Afro–diasporic recording practices.

Keywords: axé, Capoeira Angola, recording studio, ancestrality, Lorenzo Dow Turner.

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Resumo

A proliferação de gravações de álbuns de capoeira nos estilos Angola, Regional e Contemporâneo reflete sua expansão nacional e transnacional, consolidando–a como uma das expressões culturais brasileiras mais reconhecidas no mundo. Etnomusicólogos têm explorado a capoeira como um espaço de performance sonora (Downey, 2005), no qual o movimento corporal interage com a música produzida na roda, com o berimbau e outros instrumentos de percussão. No entanto, poucos investigaram como ambientes fora de estúdios influenciam a performance ou como os praticantes se relacionam com dimensões espirituais e ancestrais do som. Este artigo analisa a gravação de Coco Maduro, álbum do Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte, liderado por Mestre Iuri e gravado em 2024 no espaço de treino do grupo em Bloomington, Indiana. Uma preocupação central foi a geração de axé, uma "energia espiritual ou força vital" afro–brasileira (Kurtz, 2024), fundamental na promoção da sintonia — um alinhamento entre música e movimento. Como o axé é conceituado pelos capoeiristas? Como se traduz em som? O que distingue uma gravação em estúdio de uma feita em um espaço de treino? Baseado em dois anos de trabalho de campo, o estudo também dialoga com as gravações de Lorenzo Dow Turner na Bahia (1940–41).

Palavras-chave: *axé, Capoeira Angola, estúdio de gravação, ancestralidade, Lorenzo Dow Turner.*

Resumen

La proliferación de grabaciones de álbumes de capoeira en los estilos Angola, Regional y Contemporáneo refleja su expansión nacional y transnacional, consolidándola como una de las expresiones culturales brasileñas más reconocidas en el mundo. Los etnomusicólogos han explorado la capoeira como un espacio de performance sonora (Downey, 2005), en el cual el movimiento corporal interactúa con la música producida en la rueda, con el berimbau y otros instrumentos de percusión. Sin embargo, pocos han investigado cómo los entornos fuera de los estudios influyen en la performance o cómo los practicantes se relacionan con dimensiones espirituales y ancestrales del sonido. Este artículo analiza la grabación de Coco Maduro, álbum del Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte, liderado por Mestre Iuri y grabado en 2024 en el espacio de entrenamiento del grupo en Bloomington, Indiana. Una preocupación central fue la generación de axé, una "energía espiritual o fuerza vital" afrobrasileña (Kurtz, 2024), fundamental en la promoción de la sintonía —un alineamiento entre música y movimiento—. ¿Cómo es conceptualizado el axé por los capoeiristas? ¿Cómo se traduce en sonido? ¿Qué distingue una grabación en estudio de una realizada en un espacio de entrenamiento? Basado en dos años de trabajo de campo, el estudio también dialoga con las grabaciones de Lorenzo Dow Turner en Bahía (1940–41).

***Palabras-clave**: axé, Capoeira Angola, estudio de grabación, ancestralidad, Lorenzo Dow Turner.*

Introduction

The transatlantic connections between Africa and the Americas are rooted in European economies based on enslaving African peoples. Millions of Africans were forcibly taken from their places of origin, undergoing capture, imprisonment, and transportation under rough conditions to work as enslaved people in Brazil as well as in other parts of the continent. Along with these deterritorialized bodies came knowledge, practices, and languages, which were resignified to maneuver colonial power structures.[2] Approximately four million people arrived in Brazil from different regions of Africa between the 16th and 19th centuries, "about 1.55 million disembarked in ports of Bahia, practically all originating from two broad geo–cultural areas: West Africa (54 percent) and West Central Africa (45 percent)" (Díaz, 2021:16). In Salvador, Brazil, the conviviality between different African ethnic groups paved the way for the creation of a myriad of Afro–Bahian practices.[3] Among these practices is capoeira, an Afro–Brazilian cultural expression created by Africans and their descendants in Brazil. It is an embodied practice that blends dance, music, ritual, play, and combat—often described as a game, a word that captures its fluid and hybrid nature—in which music serves as the driving force behind its practice (Downey, 2002:490). Capoeira influences come from the Bantu tradition, an ethnolinguistic group living in present–day Angola and Congo.

In the 20th century in Salvador, the Afrodiasporic cultural legacy laid the groundwork for capoeira's transformation into a symbol of resistance and empowerment for Afro–descendant populations facing oppression. Capoeira expresses a counterculture of modernity within the Black Atlantic consciousness (Gilroy, 1993:36), through bodies in motion, its music, and a rich ancestral heritage. Since the 1970s, capoeira's roda (circular formation)[4] has been found in the most remote corners of Brazil as well as in countries across the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Oceania. Consequently, its practice has become transnational due to the increasing flow and international dialogue among practitioners. This network of connections results from both a collective effort and the individual courage of Brazilians and people from other nationalities who come together around an art form, carrying with them a living memory and an embodied knowledge (Granada, 2020).

Building from this cultural and historical background, this paper reflects on the pre–production, production, and recording processes of the capoeira album *Coco Maduro*, which occurred between March 2023 and March 2024 in Bloomington, Indiana, USA, home to the Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte. Mestre[5] Iuri, a native of Salvador, Bahia, Brazil,

[2] For foundational and comparative perspectives on African retentions and Afro-diasporic cultural expression in the Americas, see: Melville J. Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941); Alan Lomax, Folk Song Style and Culture (Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1968); Gerhard Kubik, Africa and the Blues (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999); Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Robert Farris Thompson, Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy (New York: Vintage Books, 1983); and Fernando Ortiz, Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar, trans. Harriet de Onís (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995 [1940]).

[3] Other Afro-Bahian practices include Candomblé, a syncretic religious manifestation, and samba de roda, a musical practice of responsorial singing, usually performed in a circle.

[4] The roda de capoeira is a circular formation in which participants practise capoeira, as well as other cultural manifestations of African and Afro-Brazilian origin.

[5] Throughout this work, I have chosen to use the word mestre in Portuguese to refer to capoeira masters. I haven't used the literal translation of this word into English, which would be "master", due to the fact that this historically refers to the times of slavery. Masters were those referred to as slave owners. What it means to be a mestre in Brazil: "The mestre is one who is recognized by their community as the holder of knowledge that embodies the struggles and sufferings, joys and celebrations, defeats and victories, pride and heroism of past generations. They have an almost religious mission to make this knowledge available to those who seek it. The mestre, thus, embodies the ancestry and history of their people and, for

has led the group since moving to the United States in 1998. While preparing for the recording process, I realized that I needed to prioritize ethical considerations to value the cultural and historical contexts—rather than merely striving for perfection in musical performance—when creating phonographic recordings of Afro–diasporic traditions, especially capoeira. To grasp the deeper implications of capoeira recordings, I draw from Esther Viola Kurtz's (2024) theories on axé, Luiz Antonio Simas and Luiz Rufino's (2018) concept of the enchanted science of macumbas[6], and Muniz Sodré's (2002) ideas regarding terreiro[7] and city. In this article, I explore how the recording process can embody spiritual and cultural vitality, particularly through the concept of axé, a vital energy present in manifestations of Afro–diasporic origin.

This study enriches discussions on the foundational aspects of the cosmology of the capoeira universe (Lewis, 1992; Downey, 2002, 2005, 2008; González Valera, 2013, 2017, 2023; Diaz, 2016, 2017, 2021; Kurtz, 2024). While most works focus on how these foundational aspects operate within the roda, my emphasis is on exploring how they manifest beyond it—specifically while recording a capoeira album. The recording process becomes a moment of celebration and devotion to the mestres of the past, the ancestors, and the group's legacy—bringing to the forefront a complex network of influences that manifest in spaces other than the capoeira roda. This work connects with studies on listening and the body (Novak & Sakakeeny, 2015) and those addressing recording processes (Théberge, 1997; Meintjes, 2003; Porcello & Greene, 2012; Pereira, 2016; Goold, 2018, 2024).

I draw on my conversations with Mestre Iuri, whom I coincidentally met in Bloomington in 2022. At the beginning of 2023, I invited him to participate in interviews I was conducting for my Fieldwork in Folklore course. At the same time as these interviews, I was working on the field collections of the African–American linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner[8], who in 1940 and 1941 carried out research in Salvador on Yoruba speakers, as well as having the opportunity to record the main capoeira mestres of the time (Souza, 2024). These recordings became the seed and inspiration for creating the *Coco Maduro* album. Between March 2023 and April 2024, Mestre Iuri and I developed a lasting friendship, which made it possible for us to work together to create this project. This allowed me access to his capoeira training sessions, clinics given at universities, countless hours of small talk, interviews with both him and his students, and, of course, the recording itself. Mestre Iuri embodies capoeira Angola in his daily life, serving as a key figure in preserving and disseminating Afro–Brazilian cultural traditions in the Midwest of the USA.

In what follows, I will first explain the meanings of ancestrality within the capoeira Angola universe and how Mestre Iuri interprets them. I then address the concepts of axé and terreiros from an Afrocentric perspective, especially considering their impact on creating the recording space. Finally, I analyze a case study of the recording process.

this reason, assumes the role of the poet who, through their song, is able to restore the past as an instigating force that emerges to dignify the present and guide the constructive action of the future." (personal translation). ABIB, Pedro Rodolpho Jungers. Capoeira Angola: cultura popular e o jogo dos saberes na roda. Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2005, p. 17.

[6] For a better understanding of the term *macumba*: "A generic term for Afro-Brazilian cults derived from the Nagô, but modified by Angolan-Congo and Amerindian, Catholic, spiritist and occult influences, which initially developed in Rio de Janeiro" (Cacciatore, 1977, p. 166).

[7] Place where Afro-Brazilian religious ceremonies take place.

[8] Stored since 1988, in the Archives of Traditional Music (ATM) at Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.

Embodied ancestrality

Capoeira Angola is a way of life and being in the world. I understand the practice of capoeira as something always open to the unpredictable and permanently unfinished, or as the maxim spoken by Mestre Pastinha, "capoeira is everything the mouth eats and everything the body gives." According to Varela (2017:81), this phrase synthesizes capoeira's ontological status; from the moment that its practice is all that the mouth eats, it lets us grasp that it embraces the human and beyond the human, and dissipates the boundaries between the profane and the sacred. The religious foundations of capoeira emerge from these unfinished aspects, even though people do not explicitly characterize it as an Afro–Brazilian religious manifestation. I understand religion as a dynamic interplay of social practices and beliefs that revolve around experiences of the sacred. In the context of capoeira, the influential figure of the mestres are one of the possible connections with the sacred, because they are the living representatives of the ancestors and the ancient mestres. This ancestrality and spirituality embodied by the mestre manifests in capoeiristas' (capoeira practitioners) day–to–day practice. I will explore the distinct ways in which ancestrality is understood by Mestre Iuri through his words and capoeira lyrics, constantly intertwining with a more holistic perspective of how the sacred manifests in the practice of capoeira Angola.

After observing countless capoeira classes, I realized how often the word ancestrality appeared in Mestre Iuri's teachings to his students. In one of my interviews, I decided to ask him what he understood by the word ancestrality:

> Ancestrality, we venerate our ancestors every day... That, an ancestrality is connected, it's reading about these mestres, it's researching. That's what I tell my students, boy, this is the key to the future in capoeira... Because we don't live in the past, but the past shows us where to go in the future. Even through the mistakes, the wrong things they've already done, the way they behave... So it's good to always be looking at the past, the mestres and to project yourself into the future, to know what you're going to do, to stay connected with this energy, because I think that every time I play my capoeira, that I'm playing, that it's my berimbau, that I'm singing, I'm with them together with me, with the mestres, with the old ones, right? They're with me, supporting me! (Personal translation)[9]

From Mestre Iuri's perspective, ancestrality in capoeira Angola is a driving force that connects the past, renews itself in the present, and generates power for the future (Abib, 2017:190). However, ancestrality is not only symbolic and devotional—it is deeply tied to identity, family, lineage, and belonging, manifesting as a living, embodied memory (Magalhães Filho, 2023:240).[10] According to González Varela (2017:82), while capoeira is not commonly regarded as a religious practice, it encompasses, from a holistic perspective, a form of religiosity expressed through both living and deceased capoeira mestres. Capoeira Angola shares some aspects with Afro–Brazilian religions such as Candomblé, which is evident in song lyrics, rhythms, and protection rituals. However, only in capoeira do we find

[9] Original: "A ancestralidade, nós veneramos os antepassados todos os dias… Isso, uma ancestralidade está conectado, está lendo sobre esses mestres, está pesquisando. Isso que eu falo aos meus alunos, rapaz, essa é a chave do futuro na capoeira…Porque a gente não vive no passado, mas o passado amostra a gente para onde ir no futuro. Inclusive através dos erros, das coisas erradas que eles já fizeram, a maneira de se comporta…Então é bom estar sempre observando o passado, os mestres e para você se projetar para o futuro, saber o que vai fazer, ficar conectado com essa energia, porque eu acho que toda vez que eu toco minha capoeira, que eu estou tocando, que é meu berimbau, que eu estou cantando, eu estou com eles junto comigo, com os mestres, com os antigos, né? Eles estão junto comigo, me apoiando!"

[10] Original: "Es encarada desde una perspectiva simbólica, relacionada a un legado de identidad, familia, linaje, pertenencia" (Magalhães, 2023, p. 240).

the unique ontological presence and veneration of ancestors and former mestres. The living mestres serve as the bridge between the present and these ancestral figures.

This devotion can also be understood as an affirmation of resistance against colonial oppression, cultural erasure, and ancestrality within an Afro–Brazilian tradition. The perspective proposed by Sergio González Varela (2017:88) suggests that both ancestors and mestres of the past are ontological figures who influence the dynamics of capoeira practice. He goes further by inferring that the most experienced capoeira practitioners can perceive the presence of these beings as something real (ibid.), as a form of embodied knowledge that surpasses the merely symbolic. Mestre Iuri's assertion that when he plays his berimbau and sings, the old mestres support him reinforces this interpretation. Thus, ancestors and mestres from the past are not only remembered but also actively participate in the political, cultural, and spiritual dynamics of capoeira.

Another example of this devotion can be found in the lyrics. Capoeira lyrics evoke memories of capoeiristas from past eras, as stated by Mestre Iuri. He further affirms that the old mestres accompany him while he sings and plays his berimbau (a calabash resonator with a single steel string struck with a stick), expressing a symbolic exchange. The lyrics of capoeira songs are living examples of this devotion to the ancestors and mestres of the past. Through them, new textual elements are redefined into something original while remaining within the boundaries of tradition (Assunção, 2008:12). The following lyric, composed by Mestre Iuri for a song on his first capoeira album, contributes to a more elaborate understanding of this devotion to the mestres of the past:

> Ladainha "Memórias" (Memories) – composed by Mestre Iuri
> Na Bahia onde eu cresci, foi lá de onde eu vivi
> *In Bahia where I grew up, that's where I lived*
> Memórias que eu tenho agora, tempos que não voltam mais
> *Memories I have now, times that will never come again*
> Capoeira de Angola é que me satisfaz
> *Capoeira de Angola is what satisfies me*
> Olha eu trago comigo, colega velho nunca que eu vou esquecer
> *Look, I'll carry it with me, old friend, I'll never forget it*
> Da luta dos grandes mestres para gente aprender
> *The struggle of the great mestres for us to learn*
> Olha o quanto é importante, colega velho não deixar ela morrer
> *Look how important it is, old colleague, not to let her die*
> Camará…

The lyrics pay homage to past mestres, celebrating their enduring legacy in the present. Eduardo David de Oliveira (2005:258) states that "ancestrality is a category of relationship, connection, inclusion, diversity, unity, and enchantment. It comprises both enigma–mystery and revelation–prophecy. Ancestrality is a way of interpreting and producing reality." Yet, music is just one essential element of capoeira Angola practice that evokes ancestrality

In all the capoeira classes or presentations by Mestre Iuri that I have attended, this devotion to previous mestres is enduring. During one of our interviews, Mestre Iuri referenced Mestre Pastinha, recognised as the creator and disseminator of capoeira Angola, "he's our greatest reference... So much so that our negativa resembles Mestre Pastinha's negativa." Negativa is a dodging movement in which the capoeirista lowers himself to the ground with one leg extended and the other flexed to dodge the opponent. Therefore, I understand this capoeira move and its music as part of a repertoire of embodied knowledge which, according to Diana Taylor (2003:20), enacts an "embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing." She affirms that the "repertoire requires

presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there,' being a part of the transmission." The songs and the negativa only become present and active through the constant reproduction and circulation of people. The repertoire's main characteristic is its ability to be susceptible to change, keeping and transforming capoeira's choreographies of meaning. The living memory and the legacy of Mestres Pastinha, João Pequeno, and Marrom comes into being through capoeira Angola moves, through bodies.

Diana Taylor (2003, p. 20) advocates an "alternative perspective on historical processes of transnational contact," which allows for different ways of conceiving the Americas on the map and enacts this perspective through embodied practice. Therefore, by understanding capoeira from this perspective, the living mestres and the dead mestres share agency, allowing capoeiristas to become the main characters of their history, as they tell, perform, and transmute it through their bodies, activating an ancestrality that recognizes enchantment through living and embodied memory. Below is another song by Mestre Iuri as a clear example of how his story can be sung:

> Ladainha (Litany) "Minha Escola" (My School) – composed by Mestre Iuri
> Nasci no bairro de Brotas
> *I was born in the Brotas neighborhood*
> Na grande São Salvador
> *In greater São Salvador*
> No Boulevard Copacabana
> *At Boulevard Copacabana*
> Onde o mestre me ensinou
> *Where the mestre taught me*
> No Cosme de Farias, Mestre Alfredo e Roberval
> *In Cosme de Farias,* Mestres *Alfredo and Roberval*
> …
> Essa foi minha escola, ora meu Deus capoeira angola é maior camará
> *That was my school, oh my God capoeira angola is the greatest camará*

Through this ladainha (litany), Mestre Iuri offers homage to other capoeira mestres who have influenced him. Mestre Iuri's lyrics repertoire is constantly in dialogue with these mestres, creating a network of permanent influences. Capoeira's song lyrics " help musicians build up several other dialogues: one is with the players in the roda, another is with the audience around the circle, and a third one is among the musicians themselves" (Assunção, 2008:213). The repertoire materializes as a fluid and vivid ancestrality that emanates in the moment of the roda through music and body movements.

One caution is not to conceive ancestrality in capoeira Angola as a single, monolithic entity. At the beginning of this section, I pointed out that ancestrality can manifest in countless ways in capoeira Angola. Here, I trace how Mestre Iuri understands and expresses it, while avoiding any essentialization of Afro–diasporic cultural expressions. Therefore, we can speak of multiple ways ancestries manifest within these traditions and dialogues between these practices. Capoeira presupposes life unfolding via ancestral memory through resonant, playful, and enraged bodies (Rufino, 2023:38). Researcher Linconly Jesus Alencar Pereira gives us a way of understanding ancestrality in the context of capoeira:

> Ancestrality symbolizes the rupture of the Newtonian–Cartesian paradigm and points to the need for an epistemic deepening to develop an ancestral paradigm in which materiality and spirituality are interconnected through cultural and

> religious manifestations of African and Afro–Brazilian matrices. (Pereira, 2023:207, personal translation)[11]

Among the numerous unfoldings of this ancestral memory, I highlight here the axé as a vital force that emanates from this ancestrality, expressed in the moment of the roda, in the sound of the berimbau, and in the day–to–day of capoeiristas.

The crafting of axé: a vital energy

Luiz Rufino (2023:38) invites us to understand capoeira as something that dialogues beyond the human realm, with the beings of the forest, the sky, and the sea. He also presents it as a powerful cultural expression through which we can read the world. In this case, from an upside–down perspective. However, for this disposition to emerge, a "deep listening" to these stimuli is necessary, as they will be translated in the moment of the roda.

This listening mode is not limited to an active mode of auditory perception or even a "deliberate channeling of attention toward a sound" (Rice, 2015:99). It can be understood beyond auditory stimuli, as "listening can engage the whole of the listener's body" (ibid.). Capoeira illuminates this expanded concept of listening, where "it is the physicality of listening and the fullness of the body's response to sound (for instance, through rhythmic entrainment and corporeal vibration) that is foregrounded" (ibid.). Therefore, "the sensory dimension of listening, however, might be understood as only one aspect of its wider cognitive and affective engagements" (ibid.).[12] I understand that deep listening can be one of the multiple aspects that provide a channel for the maintenance or even the creation of axé in roda de capoeira.

This connection between listening, movement and axé sets the stage for exploring the materiality of this ancestral energy in capoeira, which is known as a vital force that "derives from the Yorùbá àṣẹ, but in Bahia and across the African diaspora, axé (or aché in Cuban Spanish) has transcended religion and geographic place to pervade popular discourses and music–dance practices" (Kurtz, 2024:123). Both in the context of capoeira and Candomblé, "axé's vibrational properties[...]reveal how sound moves bodies and bodies summon sound–movement, both within the space–times of ritual events and beyond, cohering a sense[...]of African matrix community" (ibid.). However, it's important to highlight how these two cultural practices understand axé differently.

In Candomblé, axé is a vital energy that resonates within a person's body and a mythological, ancestral energy that nurtures the material and spiritual realms. When initiates are entranced, "they are believed to embody the axé of the orixás, which is represented in Candomblé mythology as elements of nature" (Díaz, 2016:117). According to Olga Gudolle Cacciatore (1977:55), axé in Afro–Brazilian religions is "the dynamic force of the deities, the power of realization, the vitality that is individualized in certain objects, such as plants,

[11] Original: "La ancestralidad simboliza la ruptura del paradigma newtoniano-cartesiano, y señala la necesidad de una profundización epistémica para el desenvolvimiento de un paradigma ancestral, en el que la materialidad y la espiritualidad se interrelacionan a través de las manifestaciones culturales y religiosas de matrices africanas y afrobrasileñas." (Pereira, 2023, p. 207)

[12] See also FELD, Steven. Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression. 2nd ed. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990; ERLMANN, Veit. Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity. Oxford: Berg, 2004; NOVOTNY, Patrick. Listening as Ethnographic Method: Performance, Experience, and Temporality in Afro-Caribbean Religiosity. Ethnomusicology 64, no. 3 (2020): 397–425. For intersectional approaches between Sound Studies and Disability Studies, see FRIEDNER, Michele; HELMREICH, Stefan. Sound Studies Meets Deaf Studies. The Senses and Society 7, no. 1 (2012): 72–86; and FRIEDNER, Michele; TAUSIG, Benjamin. The Spoiled and the Salvaged: Modulations of Auditory Value in Bangalore and Bangkok. In: STEINGO, Gavin; SYKES, Jim (eds.). Remapping Sound Studies. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019, pp. 156–172.

symbols, metal, stones, and others that constitute a secret,"[13] becoming the spiritual safeguard of the terreiro, the space where Afro–Brazilian religious ceremonies take place.

Muniz Sodré (2002:49) describes axé as the key aspect of a preserved symbolic heritage transmitted by Afro–Brazilian religions—something that literally "'plants' itself (thanks to its material representations) in a place, to be then accumulated, developed, and passed on."[14] Therefore, axé, as a cultural definition, navigates between two discursive domains: that of spirituality and that of creativity, "with its meanings and associations of what it is to be human in the world, questions of existence, the power to be, [a] dynamic force in all things" (Davies, 2008:119).[15]

"If Candomblé expresses axé through the elements of nature, it makes it a universal force, for 'everything that moves has axé" (Prandi, 2022:3). It transcends the religious and connects body, sound, and ancestrality.

In the context of Capoeira Angola, Esther Viola Kurtz (2024:143) through her research collaborators from the Grupo de Capoeira Angoleiros do Sertão proposes an understanding of axé as a "sounding, moving force that brings bodies into sintonia across practices [...] blurring the sensorial boundaries between capoeira, samba, and Candomblé, and gesturing toward a broader sense of community." This view of axé corresponds with wider insights into the significance of sound and movement in capoeira, highlighting how these practices are interconnected. As Kurtz highlights, the intersections between capoeira and Candomblé are fluid and endless, fostering a sense of kinship between the two practices despite their differences. While it is common to find capoeira mestres and students who are adepts of Candomblé, this work engages with the understanding of Mestre Iuri, who does not practice the African matrix religion but has, in our many interviews and capoeira classes, consistently shown respect for and knowledge of these religions. He also acknowledges how they interact with the practice of capoeira and the role of axé as a vital force, which is decisive both in daily practice and in recording the *Coco Maduro* album.

According to Maria José Somerlate Barbosa (2005:94), the place of transmission of the axé in the capoeira ritual is the roda because the axé "circulates and flows through the instruments, songs, claps, and the movements of the bodies." She reports that capoeiristas, at the climax of the game's dynamic, "feel in a kind of almost religious trance, and the ecstatic state that exists in the capoeira rodas is derived from the interaction of the participants" (ibid.). In this case, there is also interaction between the capoeiristas and the audience. Expanding upon this understanding of axé as a transcendent force within capoeira, Kurtz (2024) further investigates the significance of axé in both Candomblé and capoeira. In Candomblé, axé acts as a trigger for the trance in the initiate, which will later serve as a call to the orixás. In Capoeira Angola, however, the capoeirista "occupies a position more like that of orixá than initiate. The music calls to the angoleiro, who responds with movement and/or sound.' Therefore, in both Candomblé and capoeira, when we understand axé as sound, its vibration calls the bodies to movement" (Kurtz, 2024:139). Axé is a powerful link

[13] Original: "Força dinâmica das divindades, poder de realização, vitalidade que se individualiza em determinados objetos, como plantas, símbolos, metálicos, pedras e outros que constituem segredo[...]tornando-se a segurança espiritual do mesmo" (Cacciatore, 1977, p. 55).

[14] Original: "Axé é algo que literalmente se 'planta' (graças a suas representações materiais) num lugar, para ser depois acumulado, desenvolvido e transmitid" (SODRÉ, 2002:49).

[15] The academic literature on Candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian religions is extensive, and I will cite here some of the works: Carybé, Iconografia dos Deuses Africanos no Candomblé da Bahia, (São Paulo: Raízes, 1981); Vagner Gonçalves da Silva, Candomblé e umbanda: caminhos da devoção brasileira, (São Paulo: Selo Negro, 2005); Roger Bastide, O candomblé da Bahia: Rito Nagô, (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2001); Edison Carneiro, Candomblés da Bahia, (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira: 1978); Reginaldo Prandi, Mitologia dos orixás, (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2001); Pierre Verger, Orixás, (São Paulo: Corrupio, 1981).

between both practices, enabling a flexible exchange of energies, sounds, and movements that merge them within the broader Afro–Brazilian matrix.

In capoeira, a prominent space conducive to creating axé, vibration, and sintonia (affinity between two or more people) is the roda de capoeira, "an acoustical event framed by musical landmarks" (Downey, 2002:491). Within it, bodies attune themselves to the sound of the berimbau, pandeiro (drums), agogô (bells), atabaque (drums), reco–reco (scraper), and call–and–response singing.

The roda de capoeira is both a physical training ground and a metaphorical space that exists wherever capoeira takes place, serving as a site of mutual respect and a symbol of resistance and collective memory against historical oppression. When a capoeirista enters the roda, they imbue themselves with respect for the territory, the mestre, the sacred, and the energy emanating from the roda, all of which form a bodily unit governed by axé (Pereira, 2023:202). In this environment, deep listening develops and axé manifests, creating sintonia—a resonant attunement between bodies in the roda and the music (Kurtz, 2024:139). The sound of the roda, composed of unique musical textures, facilitates and enacts a sonic performance space, giving materiality to sound beyond the physical aspects of listening. What happens to axé and sintonia when practitioners move from the roda de capoeira to a recording studio?

Axé, territory and terreiro

I proposed to Mestre Iuri the idea of recording a capoeira album by Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte in March 2023. In the subsequent months, this seed began to flourish between Mestre Iuri and his students. I was responsible for thinking through and planning the technical aspects of recording the album. It was a significant challenge as it exceeded my experiences with recordings—I had never recorded a capoeira album before.[16] Throughout this process, I reached out to individuals experienced in recordings so that, through numerous exchanges, I could develop the best possible plan for the album's recording. Among these individuals, I was incredibly fortunate to count as a friend and partner in this endeavor the sound engineer and ethnomusicology PhD candidate Kyle Fulford, who, in one of our initial conversations, immediately offered to assist me with anything I needed for the recording.

His first suggestion was to rent a studio to ensure optimal acoustic conditions, and he would provide his recording equipment and handle all the technical details, such as microphone placement, cabling, and controlling the recording programmes on the computer, among other tasks. I sat with this idea for about four months while researching several studios in Bloomington, Indiana, and Indiana University's studio. All of these appeared to meet our recording needs. It's important to highlight the key characteristics we were looking for in a recording studio—typically composed of one or more acoustically treated spaces, specially designed to capture the best possible sound. The studio's structure is also isolated to prevent external noise from entering the recording environment (Huber & Runstein, 2010:23–24).

Nonetheless, a question arose regarding this potential option. Throughout my fieldwork, I participated in many capoeira classes taught by Mestre Iuri at his house, which also serves as the headquarters for his capoeira group in Bloomington. At the start of his classes, Mestre Iuri frequently engages his students in an activity he refers to as "musicality."

[16] Over the last few years I've had the opportunity to produce my own artistic works: Urutu with Leticia Leal (viola caipira), Espalha Brasa - Zequinha de Abreu na Viola Caipira (Caio de Souza Quartet), and Onde Está o Jeca? (Soprano a Viola), and one EP: Foi Ontem, Será Amanhã with Arthur Boscato (7-string guitar).

This involves teaching various berimbau toques (the name given to the different capoeira rhythms played on the berimbau), instruction on playing the atabaque and pandeiro, and learning new capoeira songs to add to their repertoires and other practices.

In one of these numerous classes that I had the opportunity to observe, he positioned himself with his students on an extended bench. He held a berimbau gunga (berimbau with the lowest pitch). At the same time, he gave the berimbau médio (berimbau with the middle pitch) and berimbau viola (berimbau with the highest pitch) to the other students and a pandeiro and atabaque to the remaining two. At first, they only played some basic berimbau toques (Angola, São Bento Grande, and São Bento Pequeno). During the toques, Mestre Iuri would get up and correct the students, one by one, from how to hold the instruments to rhythmic consistency, which is essential to maintaining the music in a capoeira roda. At one point, he handed the berimbau gunga to one of his students and moved to the atabaque. At this moment, he began to sing new songs to his students, who gradually picked up the lyrics. Throughout this whole moment, I not only carefully observed with my eyes all of his attention to his students, but I could also listen attentively. With each passing minute, the space became immersed in a resonant sonic tide.

At that moment, I realized that the perfect recording location had been closer than Mestre Iuri and I had imagined. This location would be the group's headquarters, their capoeira training space, a richly adorned room of wood. Hanging on the walls were posters of capoeira events organized by him, a dozen berimbaus ready to be played, pictures of old mestres, a large painting of Mestre Pastinha, posters with the reggae flag referencing Iuri's reggae group's concerts, and a massive flag with the capoeira group's logo on the enormous wall. On the wooden floor were three long benches, two atabaques, and a shelf with several books and records about capoeira. This capoeira training room is also part of Mestre Iuri's house. From that moment on, we knew with certainty that the ideal place to record the album was the home of Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte. Initially, we selected the space for its convenience; however, it soon acquired greater significance as we began recognizing its symbolic power.

We can resignify Mestre Iuri's house and the headquarters of his capoeira group as a metaphorical terreiro. The terreiro is where ceremonies and preparations for the worship of Afro–Brazilian religions occur. According to Juana Elbein dos Santos (1986:32), "these 'terreiros' constitute true communities that present special characteristics" [17], as a portion of the members of the terreiro live near it, and even those who live farther away frequent this space regularly. However, we can broaden these physical and temporal limits, as well as the religious attachment to the concept of terreiro, as it "goes beyond the material limits (so to speak, a radiation pole) to project and permeate global society" (ibid.).[18] We should understand this expanded concept of terreiro as the creation of a territory of resistance and the strengthening of cultural identities in practices of Afro–diasporic origins (Elbein, 1986; Sodré, 2002; Simas & Rufino, 2018). According to researchers Luiz Rufino and Luiz Antônio Simas:

> The inventions of terreiros in the diaspora highlight the complexity of the ways of life practiced here and the possibilities of relationships woven. Thus, the many configurations of terreiros suggest that they can reflect both a search for the redefinition of life referenced by an African imaginary, as well as pointing to the disputes, negotiations, conflicts, hybridizations, and alliances that take place in the

[17] Original: "Esses 'terreiros' constituem verdadeiras comunidades que apresentam características especiais" (Santos, 1986, p. 32)

[18] Original: "Ultrapassa os limites materiais (por assim dizer pólo de irradiação) para se projetar e permear a sociedade global" (Santos, 1989, p. 17).

> recoding of new practices, territories, socialities, and associative bonds. The notion of terreiro, as we suggest, is oriented around the wisdom rooted in cultural practices. We consider that "practicing terreiros" allows us to invent and read the world from the logics of enchanted knowledges. The enchanted perspectives practice and interpret the world, expanding the possibilities for invention, validating diversity, and referencing what the foundations of the most diverse "macumbarias" define as an enchanted science. Thus, terreiros invent themselves from the time/space practiced, ritualized by knowledge and its respective performances. (Simas & Rufino, 2018:43–44)[19]

I view Mestre Iuri's house as part of the diaspora's terreiro inventions. This terreiro serves as the backdrop to the history of the Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte, establishing it as a territory—a "marked place of a game that broadly represents a protoform of culture: a system of rules guiding the movements of a group, a framework for engaging with reality" (Sodré, 2002:23). Consequently, this territory, redefined as a terreiro, extends beyond mere physical dimensions. It allows for conceptualizing numerous possibilities for creating worlds and lives amidst enslaved African peoples' tragic and alarming deterritorialization (Simas & Rufino, 2018:40). Thus, we recognize that "the philosophical tenets that drive terreiros are reflected in capoeira[...]ancestry, circularity, cosmobiointeraction, and orality[...]as essential themes in this discussion" (Pereira, 2023:199).[20] So, Mestre Iuri's house, which also serves as the training ground for his capoeira group, is not just a shelter but a living archive of memories, identity, and spirituality. This house embodies the relationships between the present community and the ancestors, where stories and ritual practices are continuously exchanged and reinforced.

The traditional recording studio

Ethnomusicologist Louise Meintjes (2003:84) likens professional recording studios in Johannesburg to space capsules with a "dark bounded interior," evoking an aura of mystery and desire, which she conceptualizes as 'inner worlds' – exclusive spaces where access is limited. Musicians and music producers fetishize a studio's physical structure and all the technological equipment. These conditions allow for greater control over all the interwoven processes, from pre–production to recording, mixing, and mastering a piece of music. Meintjes (2003:90) describes this aura as central to preserving and reproducing sound's social, physiological, and sensory characteristics, as the studio's acoustically sealed environment allows technology to contain or expand sonic possibilities.

Brett D. Lashua and Paul Thompson (2014) describe the studios as complex access spaces, as they are primarily private, making both physical and social entry challenging. They

[19] Original: "As invenções dos terreiros na diáspora salientam a complexidade dos modos de vida aqui praticados e as possibilidades de relações tecidas. Assim, as muitas possibilidades de configuração de terreiros apontam que os mesmos podem refletir desde uma busca por ressignificação da vida referenciada por um imaginário em África, como também aponta para as disputas, negociações, conflitos, hibridações e alianças que se travam na recodificação de novas práticas, territórios, sociabilidades e laços associativos. A noção de terreiro orienta-se, conforme sugerimos, a partir das sabedorias assentadas nas práticas culturais. Consideramos que "praticar terreiros" nos possibilita inventar e ler o mundo a partir das lógicas de saberes encantados. As perspectivas encantadas praticam e interpretam o mundo ampliando as possibilidades de invenção, credibilizando a diversidade e referenciando-se naquilo que os próprios fundamentos das mais diferentes "macumbarias" definem como uma ciência encantada. Assim, os terreiros inventam-se a partir do tempo/espaço praticado, ritualizado pelos saberes e as suas respectivas performances" (Simas & Rufino, 2018, p. 43-44).

[20] Original: "Que los principios filosóficos catalizadores de los terreiros también están presentes en la capoeira[...]la ancestralidad, la circularidad, la cosmobiointeracción, la oralidad[...]como categorías clave para esta discusión" (Pereira, 2023, p. 199).

list three characteristics that shape daily life in the studio and its uses and functions: first, to avoid external sounds, studios are intentionally dissociated from their surrounding acoustic environment. Second, as mentioned earlier, they are not spaces of intense socialization since access usually requires an invitation or payment. Third, only those directly involved in the production—musicians, producers, and engineers—will be in the space. Besides ensuring control over acoustic aspects, a recording studio's intimate and restricted nature also introduces a social and cultural filter that reflects the economic dynamics determining who has access to this environment. Therefore, the studio emerges as a space where technical mastery intersects with the social interactions that shape and define its accessibility.

The factors mentioned above didn't play a crucial role in selecting the recording site for the album *Coco Maduro;* however, they highlight some challenges we faced, including limited resources for renting a studio. While a professional studio could offer a more controlled environment and greater technical precision, we chose a different path—guided by a sense of community, familiarity, and creative adaptability. Although unconventional for a recording session, the space we selected played a central role in shaping the spirit and essence of the recording process.

Mestre Iuri's home: a capoeira recording territory

As in many recording projects, this one involved countless possibilities—different paths, choices, and even mistakes that ultimately turned into highlights. One of the successes was choosing Mestre Iuri's house as the recording location, which fostered a strong sense of belonging and recreated, as closely as possible, the atmosphere of a capoeira roda. Naturally, conducting a full roda during the recording was not feasible, as the focus was on capturing the music of capoeira.

In a traditional recording studio, engineers often hear acoustic leakage from outside sounds as an obstacle, but that was not the case in this context. Instead, the lack of acoustic isolation provides a permeability to the rhythms of daily life happening right there, contrasting with a sealed room of a conventional studio. In this instance, the room had already served as a musical performance territory for at least ten years for the weekly training sessions led by Mestre Iuri. Transforming this territory into a recording studio wouldn't represent an abrupt change; it would simply involve bringing the recording equipment there, with a clear understanding of its significance as a territory embedded within a living musical memory, where songs, rhythms, and movements had been continually rehearsed, remembered, and reinvented. Beyond merely recording music, we were in constant dialogue with the affective and spatial resonances shaped by the embodied experiences of all the capoeiristas who had gathered, played, and trained there.

In recent decades, home studios, defined as "a recording studio built in a domestic setting" (Beltrame, 2017:143), have gained significant popularity. These spaces often begin with affordable equipment, facilitated by the low cost of digital devices and the availability of inexpensive microphones and audio interfaces. Additionally, the democratization of access to technical information regarding the recording process has been crucial in this context (Woodside & Jiménez, 2012:92). Kyle's recording equipment, although part of his home studio, is of the highest quality, which would allow us to capture the capoeira ensemble at a high level.

This phenomenon implies that "artists are using the democratization of recording knowledge to restore agency and power in the recording, and by contributing their creative labor are reducing the economic burden of recording in a more formalized manner" (Goold, 2022:250). Our recording environment at Mestre Iuri's home and the intimacy of this

territory for all those involved in the recording made it possible to break down hierarchies between the musicians and the technician. This allowed the recording process to reveal itself collectively, intuitively, full of axé.

When I asked Mestre Iuri about recording the album in his home, he replied: *"It was good. I think it was much more relaxed... Here is our home where we do capoeira all the time. So we felt at home."* Jamal Borden, one of the group's longest–standing students, shared the same sentiment: *"I have to say I liked recording here better... Because this is home. You know? So it always feels a little more comfortable being surrounded by, you know, by in a familiar place."*[21]

Mestre Grande, who was specially invited to participate in the album recording, also highlighted this difference when comparing it to a previous experience: *"The first one was recorded in a studio... this one was in the academy. It's a completely different vibe."* He added: *"Capoeira is everyday life, every day... this is where the energy of capoeira is"* pointing to the group's training room where we recorded.

The importance of being in a familiar environment is evident in all these statements – a home space and a capoeira territory. This "different vibe" described by Mestre Grande is contained within this house, where capoeira lives daily. Axé is one of the structuring forces of this space, as its vital energy creates the necessary conditions for its activities and serves as a driving force for the practice of capoeira. According to Kurtz (2024:144), "axé thus allows a conception of community not as something forged or bound, but rather syntonic, summoning bodies to engage in the active, generous, intentional seeking of shared frequencies in sintonia". This axé can generate territory, home, and belonging through capoeira's communal and ritualistic practice.

When Mestre Iuri was asked about his feelings during the recording, he said, *"The energy is always there. During the recording, I feel, I feel like there's a, there's a little more pressure on everybody's mind, you know, to get things right. But once you start playing, it just becomes, it just becomes capoeira, you know."* In this sense, when everything becomes capoeira during the recording, it can be understood as feeling the axé in the sound–movement and in the reciprocal process of giving and receiving (Kurtz, 2024:143). This moment of exchange and connection highlights axé's influence as a component that surpasses technique and performance, standing out as the vital force that sustains shared experience and lived practice.

A similar merging of sacred intention and recording technology can be found in another Afro-Brazilian project that further illustrates how sound recording becomes a ritual practice in itself. When we understand the context of sound recording as a space of devotion and celebration of the ancestors, we perceive the intertwining of two fundamental components: the sacred ritualistic and the technological. As a comparative experience, I bring the research and recording project *Ilê Omolum Oxum: Cantigas e Toques para os Orixás* (2004), which consists of the documentation and editing of an Afro-Brazilian repertoire, coordinated by anthropologists Ricardo Freitas, Edmundo Pereira, and Gustavo Pacheco. This project proposed recording the candomblé songs within the terreiro itself, rather than in a conventional studio.

According to Pereira (2016, p. 229), in this context there is no distinction between the "recording situation" and the "ritual situation," since the act of recording is itself ritualistic, just like the musical practice of candomblé. Therefore, in this context, recording is not dissociated from the ritual; on the contrary, it becomes, to a certain extent, an integral

[21] The hybrid recording format is marked "by a sense of artistic ownership, a reclamation of power and control of space, and with fewer temporal and economic concerns" (Goold, 2022, p. 253). Additionally, "when artists are part of the transformation of a domestic space into a recording space, they report feeling more part of the studio production process, bringing feelings of comfort and relaxation" (ibid.). These factors enhance the agency of everyone involved in the recording process and closely parallel Mestre Iuri's own experience.

part of it. Recording a ritual song is not merely the capture of sound, but rather a journey through ancestral forces, symbolic conditions, and collective exchanges that transform a technical act into a sacred experience. This understanding resonates with my research experience, in which the act of recording brings together the sacred, ritualistic, and technological aspects as an embodied experience.

Wired ancestrality

Ancestrality in capoeira is wired through material and spiritual realms, rooted in African and Afro–Brazilian cultural and religious matrices. This section explores how capoeira is entangled within these matrices that transcend the specific moment of the recording process. Here, electrical impulses transmitted through microphones and recording equipment can be acts of devotion and celebration – honoring the ancestors and the mestres of the past and present, all imbued with axé.

The concept of "wired ancestrality" also evokes what Greene (2012, p. 14) describes as "corporeal simulations in the form of technologically constructed or inflected spaces, bodies, and voices." The vibrations here embody an intersection of electrical impulses, ancestry, and spirituality, materialized in the music of Mestre Iuri and his capoeira group.

Lorenzo Dow Turner initiated the dawn of this wired ancestrality in the 1940s, when he recorded the voices and music of key capoeira mestres Bimba, Juvenal, and Cabecinha, in Salvador, Bahia. The African American linguist sought to understand how African practices, words, and customs had survived the transatlantic diaspora and become embedded in everyday life throughout the Americas. At the time, Bahia stood out for its large population of Yoruba speakers, a factor that strongly motivated Turner's visit to Brazil. His field collection consists of "(1) materials from African-Brazilian cults (candomblé)[...](2) capoeira singing[...](3) popular secular music (some perhaps from the radio)[...](4) language informants who conversed, counted, and spelled, usually in Portuguese" (Wade–Lewis, 2007, p. 130).

The sound recordings were made on aluminum discs using a tape recorder that offered excellent technical quality for the time. According to Sansone (2023, p. 107), most of these sessions took place in a small studio at Rádio Sociedade da Bahia, located near the Gantois terreiro in the Federação neighborhood, Salvador. "Close listening" to the recordings reveals a modestly controlled acoustic environment, in which both the capoeira vocals and the accompanying instruments berimbau, caxixi, and pandeiro are clearly audible.

Turner's goal was to produce a sonic testimony with an ethnographic character. This approach reveals a hierarchical, colonial, and extractivist dynamic between the researcher and his interlocutors. This is not a value judgment on the interpersonal relationships between the linguist and his informants, but rather a critique of the historical and temporal context, and of the imperialist frameworks in which those relations were embedded.

In contrast, the phonographic recording with the Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte engages through a collaborative, participatory, and reciprocal perspective, with active voice from its members (Pereira, 2016; Souza, 2024). Nevertheless, Turner's capoeira recordings sparked the creation of this album, serving as the seed for everything that would later unfold. *Coco Maduro* celebrates multiple generations of capoeira, at the crossroads of this wired lineage, shaping each step: the choice of Mestre Iuri's home for the recording, the songwriting process, the rehearsals, and the recording itself. Today, this wired ancestrality resonates, creating echoes of axé through speakers worldwide (Souza, 2024).

The day before the recording

Kyle and I arrived at Mestre Iuri's home around 6 p.m. It was a sunny but cold Friday that marked the waning days of winter. The last streaks of daylight stretched across the group's training space, soon to be transformed into a temporary recording studio. The air carried a lingering scent of wood and the sweat of past training sessions, now merging with the metallic tang of cables, the plasticky scent of microphones, and the faint rubbery smell of mic stands, as we unloaded them from Kyle's car and carried them inside.

He had brought his portable studio, which included a 16–channel Universal Audio (UA) Apollo x8 audio interface, a UA 410–D microphone preamp, a laptop running UA Luna recording software (digital audio workstation) nine microphones, and an array of cables and mic stands. A few days earlier, I had borrowed three more microphones from friends, adding to the arsenal of equipment.

I visited the training space throughout the week, imagining possible instrument and microphone placement layouts. On Friday, I shared my ideas with Kyle, and together, we settled on a half–moon formation with three large benches. Every microphone placement was a negotiation between science and intuition, between the rigid logic of engineering and the space's organic acoustics.

To my left, we positioned three microphones, attuned to the shimmering, piercing resonance of the berimbaus, and another one dedicated to Mestre Iuri's lead voice. At the center, two microphones would capture the unison voices of the chorus. To my right, we arranged mics to pick up the crisp metallic ring of the agogô, the textured rasp of the reco–reco, the syncopated slap of the pandeiro, and the deep, ancestral pulse of the atabaque. At the very center, two additional microphones would capture the whole atmosphere of the room.

Moving through the maze of stands, cables, and interfaces, Kyle and I stepped with deliberate care—every wire a thread weaving past, present, and future, each a conduit through which memory and music would flow the next day.

Warming up for the first day of recording

On a sunny Saturday morning, Kyle and I arrived a bit earlier than the agreed time with the members of the capoeira group and the guests for the recording to check the microphone placements once again. The transformation of the training space into a recording location was noticeable. By 11 am, the members and guests began to arrive, gradually settling into their respective places, all previously arranged by Mestre Iuri.

After everyone had settled, he asked for a moment of attention, during which he thanked everyone for being present. His speech gave a warmth and a sense of a collective experience, as he said this moment was important for him and his group. At the end of his speech, he wished everyone a good recording. Before we began the sound check, Mestre Iuri proposed a warm–up session.

Forming a semi–circle, we began with small body movements, stretched our arms and legs, made light movements with our heads, and rhythmically engaged our lungs with brief breathing exercises. This moment created an unspoken bond, we could see each other's eyes, a shared silent understanding, feeling the space and the bodies present. At the end of the warm–up, he started singing some of the capoeira songs and asked his students to sing along, a kind of small rehearsal. There, the creation of this space of axé, of vibration, of a mutual energy that resonated in the wooden walls, began, and observed attentively by the portrait of Mestre Pastinha hanging on the wall.

The portrait of Mestre Pastinha expresses a devotion to the mestres of the past and signals the lineage to which Mestre Iuri belongs. His ancestrality traces back to enslaved Africans and their descendants who created capoeira in Brazil, including Benedito, the African mestre who taught Pastinha. The portrait also connects us to Mestre João Pequeno, Pastinha's direct disciple, and Mestre Marrom, who introduced Iuri to capoeira in Salvador during his teenagehood.

Figure 1: Photograph taken by Charles Exdell at the warm–up session before the recording started on March 16, 2024.

Source: Exdell, 2024

Figure 2: Photograph taken by Charles Exdell at the warm–up session before the recording started on March 16, 2024.

Source: Exdell, 2024

Before we started recording the first song, I asked to do a quick sound check to hear how each instrument sounded. This was the delicate and laborious part, as I had to feel and listen to how the timbres behaved, and so we figured out where to place the microphones to get the best possible sound, the sweet spot. The berimbaus were challenging, with their sharp, metallic, and penetrating sound, along with the gourd's hum, the string's tightness, and the changes in the players' angles—it was quite a challenge until we managed to find its ideal voice.

The emblematic instrument of capoeira is the berimbau, and Greg Downey (2002:492) proposes that we understand the sound of the berimbau not only through its abstract acoustic properties but also through the sensory connection between the musician and the instrument. For this, he uses the concept of grain, coined by Roland Barthes (1977), which describes the intersection between the materiality and sonority of sound, emphasizing how it moves physical traces of its origin. Therefore, the capoeirista's perception, beyond hearing the sound, is able to distinguish its materiality: the friction of the coin against the string, the weight of the wood, the resonance of the steel. Thus, we can understand the grain of the berimbau as a palpable, real, and sensitive presence of its elements, which goes beyond its acoustic qualities but portrays its own construction and the bodily movement that animates it.

After we found the right spot to capture all the materiality of the berimbau's sound, we checked the voices. The goal for microphone placement for the voices was first to get the best out of Mestre Iuri's voice, who was the soloist, with one microphone just for his voice and the other five microphones spread throughout the room for the choir.

For the agogô and reco–reco, we listened to determine the ideal height to capture both the instruments' sound and the percussion participants' voices. I already had more experience capturing the pandeiro, so I showed the capoeiristas the distance I estimated would be right for the sound to be good, around a foot away from the microphone just below the instrument. Finally, it was the atabaque and its ancestral sound, with a microphone pointed directly at the head.

Like the berimbau, the atabaque plays a vital role in the capoeira roda, marking the time and embodying a spiritual connection. In Candomblé, its rhythms evoke entities; capoeira carries a sense of devotion to ancestors and mestres. When asked about ancestrality, Mestre Iuri described it as a daily practice of respect and reverence for the ancestors and mestres from the past. He shared that when playing the berimbau or atabaque, he feels the presence of those who came before, offering strength, support, and guidance.

Start of the first set of songs: first day of recording

In March 2024, Kyle and I began recording the first set of songs on a sunny Saturday morning.[22] The recordings were divided into three sets of five songs: one ladainha (introductory song, sung as a solo), one chula (responsorial song that serves as a transition between ladainhas and corridos), and three corridos (songs used during the play). In this set, we recorded "Vida é Curta" (corrido), " Chula, " "Venha ver o que é" (corrido), "Tim Tim Tim Aruandê" (corrido), and "Bom Jesus da Lapa." (corrido).

Mestre Iuri started off slowly, making mistakes during his first two attempts at singing the ladainha. He said he needed to remember the words, and I remarked that it must have

[22] The formation of the capoeira bateria (capoeira musical ensemble) for the recordings was as follows: to my left were Mestre Iuri (berimbau gunga), Mestre Grande (berimbau médio), and Jamall Borden (berimbau viola); in the center were Ray Surzycki and Ronald Butler II (singing), and to my right were Ivan B. Watkins (reco-reco), Zeca Santos (agogô), Lalena Parkhurst and Karl Ost (pandeiros), and Dustin McKinney (atabaque)

been his initial nervousness. The third attempt went smoothly. He began singing the ladainha, the chula, and two corridos, while Mestre Grande sang the last corrido. When Mestre Iuri stopped singing and handed the song to his friend, he pulled me aside and whispered, "The new berimbaus have arrived," while nodding toward the outside. They were playing on the older berimbaus that already belonged to the group. He had ordered these berimbaus from a builder in Brazil in January, and they were supposed to arrive two days before the start of the recordings. When he told me, I rushed out, knowing how important the berimbaus were.

There was a shift in the traditional organization of the capoeira roda when we positioned the microphones to capture both the vocals and the instruments. This situation resembles that described by Pereira (2016, p. 227), as setting up a semi–circle instead of a full roda led to "new attentions, concerns, and limits for musical practice." This, in turn, intensified "the debate and critical exercise regarding the recorded material and the execution required during the recording and editing of pre–selected repertoires" (ibid).

Interaction among the participants became more focused as we encouraged them to heighten their attention in order to play in sync and avoid mistakes. Both Kyle and I had functional roles: our aim was to guide the participants at the beginning and end of each recording. We did not see ourselves as being in charge, nor did we feel the need to intervene in the musical content.

Even so, the presence of the recording equipment and the repetition inherent to the process significantly influenced how they sang, played, and interacted. The technique, therefore, acted as a mediator in the process of sonic capture, merging the "recording situation" with the "ritualistic situation." Mestre Iuri coordinated both situations through his interventions, determining whether a given take met the collective standards and expectations.

The third set of songs: first day of recording

"Doutô" (Karl) went for the old berimbau, while Mestre Iuri and Jamal picked up two new berimbaus that had arrived. Mestre Iuri was anxious for these berimbaus to arrive in time for the recording; they arrived in the middle of the recording session. Not only were they new, but so were the two pandeiros and the agogô. Mestre Iuri intended to have new instruments for the album recording.

Despite being new, the berimbaus were incorporated into the roda without breaking the sonic continuity or altering the group's sonic identity during the recording. This continuity occurs because the search for sound is collective, being more determinant than the individual characteristics of each instrument.

In the "Está Chegando a Hora" corrido, I got caught up in the verse "with Mestre Pastinha in my memory." This corrido is the farewell, announcing the end of the capoeira roda.

Está chegando a hora da Capoeira ir embora
It's nearing the time for Capoeira to end
Tá bom demais mas já chegou a nossa hora
It's been so nice but our time is coming
Gunga, médio e viola segura a pancada vamo embora
Gunga, médio and viola hold the beat
Simbora Angoleiro com Mestre Pastinha na memória
Let's leave Angoleiro with Mestre Pastinha in our memories.
Está chegando a hora da Capoeira ir embora
It's arriving the time for Capoeira to leave
Não fique triste,semana que vem é outra história

Don't be sad, next week is another story
…

In this corrido, as in Mestre Iuri's other corridos, there is constant reverence for the old mestres, the living memory of Mestre Pastinha. Instead of a definitive closure, the end of the roda is merely a pause; the memory of the mestres remains active in the sound and gestures of the participants. Past and present intertwine in this case, creating a sense of collective belonging.

This collective belonging was nurtured throughout the recording process. Mestre Iuri always emphasized this as a moment of axé that intersects with the embedded ancestrality and a vivid spirituality. He told me immediately after recording this particular corrido that the axé was present. I noticed during the recordings that this vital force usually manifested its peak in the middle of the recording sessions, when there was a clear feeling of bodies vibrating in sintonia, a communal enthusiasm present among everyone.

Figure 3: Photograph taken by Charles Exdell during the recording session on March 16, 2024.

Source: Exdell, 2024

Figure 4: Photograph taken by Charles Exdell during the recording session on March 16, 2024. From left to right: Mestre Iuri (berimbau gunga), Mestre Grande (berimbau médio), and Jamal Borden (berimbau viola).

Source: Exdell, 2024

The second day of recording

We are scheduled to arrive at 9 am. All said and done, everyone was there to start the second day of recording. This time, we didn't warm up; we went straight to recording.

Before we started recording, Mestre Grande commented on the differences between recording in a place like an academy and in a professional music studio. According to him, in the academy of the Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte (Iuri's home), everywhere he looked, there were references to capoeira*:* berimbaus and pandeiros hanging on the walls, posters of past capoeira events, countless photos of old Mestres playing capoeira, a large drawing of Mestre Pastinha, and the sounds of singing atabaques. When comparing the space where we recorded to a recording studio, Mestre Grande praises the significance of capturing *capoeira* music in the same environment where capoeira rodas are held. The recorded music engaged in a constant dialogue with all the references to capoeira in the space, creating a sense of belonging that would be harder to establish in a professional recording studio.

After two days of recording, when we proposed to record at the house of the capoeira group, we were not only seeking a dialogue with tradition through the capoeira recordings made by Lorenzo Dow Turner. Above all, we were exploring ways, paths, and possibilities to activate the axé of capoeira during the recording. Therefore, all the references mentioned by Mestre Grande not only reinforce the continuity of knowledge but also converge with this vital energy that flows through each berimbau strike, each pandeiro beat, and each song sung by Mestres Iuri, Grande, and the others in the roda. Taking this into account, we can reinterpret the recording process beyond the simple sound recording by understanding this moment as a creation and maintenance of the axé in capoeira.

Concluding remarks

In his *Dicionário da Música Brasileira* (1989, p. 111), Mário de Andrade describes the music of capoeira as essential for the moment of the roda and the game, functioning as music of sorcery. The definition is further complemented by noting that its rhythm is repetitive, which accelerates and intensifies alongside the beats of the pandeiro, atabaque, and berimbau, driving the capoeiristas into a state of agitation. According to the author, sorcery music refers to those found in Afro–Brazilian religious rituals, characterized by an incisive and varied rhythm, with a hypnotic power and choreographic nature, acting powerfully on the physical body and connecting humans with the deities (Andrade, 2006, p. 37–39). This agitation can be translated by the word axé, or even vibration. This intangible force ensures the performance is meaningful and pleasurable, resonating within the bodies. It is interesting to note that the word axé is not even mentioned in either the dictionary or the book *Música de Feitiçaria no Brasil*, both by Mário de Andrade. The absence of this term in the author's writings unveils an analytical focus that does not fully encompass this practice's sonic and spiritual conceptions. This gap leads us to reflect on the consequences of phonographic recordings of these musical practices, with particular attention to the ethical issues involved in documenting them.

This paper sheds light on the ethical considerations that must be considered in the phonographic recordings of Afro–Brazilian musical manifestations, specifically capoeira. However, this can extend beyond the scope of capoeira; within Brazil alone, we could mention a hundred musical practices, each with its own cosmologies, beliefs, and spiritualities. Some examples include Candomblé, samba de roda, maracatu, coco, boi, marabaixo, tambor de crioula—just a small fraction of what could be listed. Phonographic recordings in these contexts are not limited to merely inscribing sound or searching for perfection in the musical performance. The materiality of sound transcends physical boundaries, being understood in spiritual, cosmological, affective, and various other distinct ways in each of these manifestations.

The launch party for the album *Coco Maduro* took place on October 4th and 5th, 2024, in Bloomington. In addition to the album launch, the Grupo de Capoeira Angola Estrela do Norte organized a capoeira gathering with the participation of Mestre Grande, leader of the Filhos de Dunga capoeira group from New York, and Mestre Deraldo, leader of the Academia de Capoeira Angola Mestre João Pequeno de Pastinha from Boston. Both mestres are important figures in Mestre Iuri's journey in practicing, teaching, and spreading capoeira in the U.S. Understanding that axé goes beyond the capoeira roda, there exists a mutual axé among these three mestres, rooted in camaraderie, partnership, and respect. This resonance can be heard in Mestre Grande's voice on the album recording, as well as in the rodas organized during the launch event and others that followed, where all three mestres were present.

The socio–cultural and historical context of capoeira is marked by strong oppression both from the state and from civil society itself. Its legitimacy, or we can say its presumed acceptance by these spheres, began to emerge in the mid–1950s, although in a timid manner. In recent decades, its practice has spread from north to south across Brazil, gaining widespread acceptance and becoming a symbol of resistance and the protagonism of Afro–Brazilian cultural manifestations. This research joins this movement and also proposes an expanded dialogue through the "invention of terreiros" proposed by Simas and Rufino (2018, p.41), which seeks to rethink the terreiro beyond religious practices and also challenges the division and identification of points of view considered sacred and profane.

Capoeira and other Afro–Brazilian manifestations join in this web, this vast terreiro, symbolizing a form of extended resistance and struggle. In this way, issues that surround what could be seen as a "simple" recording of a capoeira album are elevated into something larger, in dialogue with these terreiros/worlds. Thus, this research highlights the grandeur and power of capoeira's sonic manifestations as part of an ongoing dynamic of reinvention and consolidation of Afro–Brazilian epistemologies.

I understand axé as the driving force behind this invention of terreiros/worlds, an "invisible force, the magical–sacred force of all divinity, of all living beings, of all things" (Bastide, 1961, p. 64). This vital force is essential in the sense that if we allow ourselves to be guided solely by modern Western logic, instead of diversity, we will indeed experience a scarcity of possibilities (Simas & Rufino, 2018, p. 45). The recognition of the multiplicity of knowledge, understandings, and distinct cultural practices is translated in the crossing of pluralities, in the different ways of being and existing in the terreiros/worlds.

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