

MARACATU DE BAQUE VIRADO IN THE GLOBAL NORTH: TRANSITS, LEGITIMATIONS AND SUBJECTIVITIES¹

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the globalization of traditional Brazilian music by studying the case of maracatus de baque virado in the global north, especially in Europe. It analyses the more general processes that contribute to the internationalization of maracatus, as well as the meanings that traditional Brazilian popular culture acquires abroad. The study is based on bibliographical research and an in-depth interview with the creator/director of a maracatu in Berlin, percussionist Fabiano Lima. In order to make the analysis more concrete, emphasis will be placed on analyzing the connections between maracatus from Pernambuco and two percussive groups in Europe: Baque Forte (Berlin), created and directed by Fabiano Lima; and Baque de Axé (London), affiliated to the Nação do Maracatu Porto Rico, from Recife. The conclusion is that the networks between local and international maracatus involve several levels of globalization processes.

KEYWORDS: Maracatu de Baque Virado. Globalization of Culture. Legitimation. “New” Subjectivities.

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RESUMO: *O presente artigo analisa a globalização das músicas tradicionais brasileiras por meio do estudo do caso dos maracatus de baque virado no norte global, sobretudo na Europa. Analisam-se os processos mais gerais que colaboram para a internacionalização dos maracatus, bem como os sentidos que a cultura popular tradicional brasileira adquire no exterior. O estudo baseia-se em pesquisa bibliográfica e uma entrevista em profundidade com o criador/diretor de um maracatu em Berlin, o percussionista Fabiano Lima. Com o intuito de conferir maior concretude à análise, dar-se-á destaque às conexões entre os maracatus de Pernambuco e dois grupos percussivos na Europa: o Baque Forte (Berlim), criado e dirigido por Fabiano Lima; e o Baque de Axé (Londres), filiado à Nação do Maracatu Porto Rico, de Recife. Conclui-se que as redes entre maracatus locais e internacionais envolvem processos de globalização que atuam em vários níveis.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Maracatu de Baque Virado. Globalização da Cultura. Legitimação. “Novas” Subjetividades.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo analiza la globalización de la música tradicional brasileña estudiando el caso del maracatu de baque virado en el norte global, especialmente en Europa. Analiza los procesos más generales que contribuyen a la internacionalización del maracatus, así como los significados que la cultura popular tradicional brasileña adquiere en el extranjero. El estudio se basa en una investigación bibliográfica y en una entrevista en profundidad con el creador/director de un maracatu en Berlín, el percussionista Fabiano Lima. Para hacer más concreto el análisis, se hará énfasis en el análisis de las conexiones entre los maracatus de Pernambuco y dos grupos percusivos de Europa: Baque Forte (Berlín), creado y dirigido por Fabiano Lima; y Baque de Axé (Londres), afiliado a la Nação do Maracatu Porto Rico de Recife. La conclusión es que las redes entre maracatus locales e internacionales implican procesos de globalización que operan en varios niveles.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Maracatu de Baque Virado. Globalización de la Cultura. Legitimación. «Nuevas» Subjetividades.*

Raising Questions

Globalization, as Diana Crane already stated over two decades ago (2002, p. 1, our translation), “has become an immensely popular topic among social scientists despite being poorly defined and difficult to research systematically.” This statement remains valid even after decades of scholarship. Crane’s argument is reiterated by

Abdal (2022), who, however, offers a sociological and historical “refinement” of the concept of globalization. It is well known that the notion of globalization began to proliferate immensely from the 1990s onward, both in common discourse and in the social sciences. Therefore, Abdal (2022) considers it necessary not only to distinguish it from common sense understandings but also to situate it within a spatiotemporal context and to adopt a processual approach to the phenomena encompassed by the concept. As the author summarizes, based on three axes of conceptual refinement, globalization can be understood as:

- (i) a heterogeneous and more or less convergent or divergent bundle of global cross-border, multiscalar, and multidimensional dynamics, daily produced, reproduced, and regulated by a range of actors, among whom the state plays a central role; (ii) situated in the crisis of the Fordist-Keynesian accumulation regime (or organized capitalism), driven by processes of global production dispersion, productive restructuring, and the rise of locational politics; and (iii) positioned within the medium-term of historical capitalism, more specifically during the financial expansion phase of the U.S. systemic cycle of accumulation [CSA], accompanied by movements of re-unifying the world market (Abdal, 2022, p. 14, our translation).

Regarding the impacts of these processes on culture in general, and music in particular, it is important to consider the specific actions of national states and supranational bodies, as well as those that “transcend groups, social classes, and nations” (Ortiz, 1994, p. 7, our translation)². Among the most relevant processes for this discussion are: the implementation of policies that promote traditional cultures at both national and transnational levels; the expansion of academic studies and growing interest in traditional music; and changes in subjectivities, resulting in new articulations between music and identity, as well as the expansion of musical practices grounded in community life, as opposed to mass consumption.

The internationalization and later globalization of Brazilian popular music unfolded in several stages, following the flows of colonization, diplomatic and economic relations, the cultural market, migrations, and academic interest in Brazilian culture – and, more specifically, its music. Especially after the establishment of the recording industry over the 20th century, various musical genres³ produced in Brazil became internationalized and were influenced by contact with foreign music, includ-

² Ortiz adopts the concept of mundialization rather than globalization, for reasons explained in the book, the discussion of which goes beyond the scope of this article. However, it refers to the same set of empirical phenomena dealt with in this article.

³ The notion of musical genre is a category that mediates musical production and consumption and delimits the rhythmic, melodic-harmonic, and stylistic characteristics of musical compositions (Jannotti; Sá, 2019).

ing *maxixe*, *choro*, *samba*, *bossa nova*, *lambada*, *axé music*, and more recently, *pop* and *funk*⁴. These genres are intrinsically tied to commercial, urban music, produced by individual artists or bands, and therefore are authorial and market-oriented.

But what can be said about the globalization of “traditional Brazilian popular music”? Broadly speaking, these are locally rooted genres produced within communities, with their own masters and oral transmission processes. They are tied to expressions that include music, dance, performance, poetry, orality, ritual, and festivity. Among them are *jongo*, *ciranda*, *congada*, *samba de roda*, *afoxés* and *blocos afro*, *maracatu*, among many others. Two elements should be noted. First, the fundamental difference between commercial and traditional popular music (and their respective genres) lies in their modes of transmission and their distinct instances of legitimation and consecration (Bourdieu, 1992). Second, all the expressions mentioned are of Afro-Brazilian origin or are heavily influenced by Afro-diasporic cultures.

Across various parts of the globe – particularly in Europe, North America, and Japan (not coincidentally, in the most developed capitalist countries of the Global North) – there has been a growing interest in traditional cultures, with a strong emphasis on Brazilian manifestations, especially since the late 20th century. Traditional musical practices began to spread worldwide through folk group tours, the establishment of worship centers for Afro-Brazilian religions (*umbanda* and *candomblé*), and the internationalization of *capoeira* (which necessarily includes its music). This was later followed by the emergence of percussion groups (Carvalho, 2007; Koslinski, 2018). These groups are typically led either by Brazilian agents or local leaders well-versed in musical expressions and Afro-Brazilian cultures in general. More notably, from the late 20th century onward – and especially from the beginning of the third millennium – *batucada* groups began to proliferate, centered around collective learning and the lived experience of Brazilian “rhythms” such as *samba*, *samba reggae*, and *maracatu*.

The establishment of local traditional popular music groups abroad resulted from a set of interconnected phenomena: the increase in migratory flows of Brazilian citizens to the Global North from the 1980s onward; the creation and circulation of hybrid forms of recorded popular music that blended pop, rock, and other genres of globalized music with traditional genres; the growing appreciation for traditional cultures among the urban middle classes, both in Brazil and abroad; and the implementation of intangible heritage policies. Given the impossibility of addressing the vast array of musical expressions considered traditional, I propose

⁴ Most music consumers have some knowledge, even if it's intuitive, about musical genres. However, for further clarification, among the numerous publications on musical genres in Brazil, we recommend consulting the *Enciclopédia Itaú Cultural*. Available at: <https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/>. Accessed in: May 20, 2025.

to analyze a specific case: the *maracatu de baque virado* percussion groups, which will be described in detail throughout the article and whose internationalization has intensified since the 2000s.

The proliferation of *maracatu de baque virado* percussion groups in the Global North stems from initiatives by individuals who either already had ties with the *maracatu* nations originating in the Metropolitan Region of Recife (Pernambuco) or were percussionists seeking specific training by learning directly from *maracatuzeiros*, whether in Global North countries or by visiting their communities of origin in Brazil. Additionally, the establishment of these groups in various countries is also indebted to the internationalization efforts of certain *mestres* (masters), i.e., tradition bearers of the *maracatus* who seek both symbolic and material recognition abroad.

Maracatu de baque virado percussion groups are now found in many countries in Western Europe, as well as in other regions of the globe, such as the United States, Australia, and Japan. In researching globalization processes, it is important to trace the networks that connect the local and the global, which, as Robertson (1995) argued long ago, are not to be seen as opposing poles. By adopting a more nuanced view of the global/local relationship, we are also encouraged to incorporate the legacy of contemporary sociology, which breaks with the dichotomies between individual and society, subjectivity and objectivity (Elias, 1994). In light of these aspects, the final section of this article will focus on analyzing the connections between *maracatus* from Pernambuco and two percussion groups in Europe: Baque Forte, in Berlin; and Baque de Axé, in London. The latter is affiliated with the *Nação do Maracatu Porto Rico*, from Recife, whose *mestre*, Jailson Chacon Viana, plays a key role in the internationalization of *maracatu de baque virado* to several parts of the world.

To clarify the analysis, before exploring some of the relational networks formed by *maracatu de baque virado* groups, it is important to emphasize that this is a music and culture produced in poor communities on the outskirts of the Metropolitan Region of Recife, composed mostly of Black people (both *preto* and *pardo*, according to IBGE categories⁵), who claim the heritage of a tradition marked by slavery and the African diaspora. How has the perception of this culture changed inside and outside of Brazil? What happens when this culture is lived or appropriated by white, European, middle-class, and educated individuals⁶? With these questions in mind, I believe it is important, before delving into the description and analysis of

⁵ As in the 2010 Demographic Census, and in all other population statistics produced by the IBGE, the categories "black" and "brown" appear. See 2010 Census. Available at: <https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/sociais/populacao/9662-censo-demografico-2010.html?edicao=10503&t=destaques>. Accessed in: May 20, 2025.

⁶ The data on the class origin and schooling of the participants in the *baque virado maracatus* has been observed in ethnographic works on these groups, such as those by Carvalho (2007) and Koslinski (2018). Coincident information was shared in the interview given by Fabiano Lima.

the *maracatu* universe, to outline the broader intellectual debate and the transformations in the notions of “popular” and “traditional” in both European and Brazilian contexts, as well as their impact on how *maracatus* are experienced and perceived.

The Popular, the Traditional, and the *Maracatu de Baque Virado*

Broadly speaking, it is well known that the notion of “popular” has had different meanings in different times and countries. This article does not aim to explore the term’s origins or revisit a well-established debate, but rather to examine its uses and the multiple meanings applied to culture – especially music – and its impact on the classification and valuation of expressions of popular tradition in Europe and Brazil. In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams (1985) explores the semantic field covered by this notion through several key terms (such as culture, folklore, and popular), from which a few fundamental traits will be highlighted here.

Over the course of the 20th century, the categories of “folklore” and “popular” were subject to numerous critiques, and their practical applications have shifted considerably. I would like to particularly highlight the critiques raised within the field of British Cultural Studies, interweaving them with elements of the Brazilian trajectory of these concepts. By emphasizing the interrelation between culture and power, these critiques help us reflect on the ongoing issues surrounding the cultural expressions analyzed in this article. Alongside Hall (1981), I understand traditional expressions as sites of transformation and struggles for hegemony in a context of deep power asymmetries involving poor, subalternized populations – mostly Black. We must also consider the contemporary critiques of the “classics” of Cultural Studies, precisely because of the need to account for the profound changes brought about by information technologies, late capitalism, and neoliberalism (Harsin e Hayward, 2013).

From Williams’ (1985) definitions, we can extract several important elements that pertain to the polysemy of the term “popular,” which still resonate whenever the term is invoked. In this context, the focus is clearly on popular culture as that which is produced by the so-called popular classes and/or ethnic communities of a country. First and foremost, one should highlight the issue of heteronomy in popular culture, which is usually defined by others – in other words, by the hegemonic agents of society, those who hold economic and cultural capital, especially those capable of defining an intellectually legitimized narrative/history and implementing cultural policies.

In Brazil, as in many other countries, debates around popular music are often entangled with broader discussions on national identity and the quest for the true

roots of culture. At least until the 1940s, the term “popular music” was associated with rural and traditional expressions and with folklore studies (Vilhena, 1997), particularly in the work of Mário de Andrade, who studied *maracatus* among various popular expressions (Andrade, 1982). Here emerges the second key point: the notion of folklore refers to a particular conception of pre-modern, non-literate cultures, often viewed as “pure” and “static.” Within this framework, change and intercultural contact are interpreted as disruptive forces that destroy “authenticity,” instead of being seen as integral to all cultural processes. From this perspective, tradition is regarded as immutable and atavistic, which, as we shall see, directly impacts interpretations of *maracatus de baque virado*.

As Ulhôa, De Marchi, and Borges (2024, p. 3, our translation) state, when one speaks of folk music, “the understanding of the term ‘popular music’ in Brazil is similar to what is known in French, Italian, and German, respectively, as *musique populaire*, *musica popolare*, or *populäre Musik*, and is associated with the working classes or folk culture.” According to Sandroni (2004, p. 23), “the French expression *musique folklorique* carries pejorative connotations that, if they exist in Brazil, are not as strong.” In France, recorded popular music might be categorized as *musique de variétés*, a term with negative associations tied to “lowbrow” music, or as *chanson française*, an expression that denotes greater cultural prestige – perhaps closer in meaning to the Brazilian acronym MPB (*Música Popular Brasileira*).

Even if considered “lesser” in terms of aesthetic and symbolic value compared to “erudite” culture – a third aspect highlighted by Williams (1985) – the importance of traditional popular expressions reveals itself in the dynamic nature of Brazilian culture, including income generation and increased tourism appeal, and has a specific impact on debates around music. The relationship with popular cultures – especially those from the Northeast – has always been central to defining what constitutes genuine music, one that bears the marks of national identity (Napolitano; Wasserman, 2000; Sandroni, 2004; Wisnik, 1997; entre outros). To summarize a long trajectory through which legitimate representations of authenticity and identity were constructed, it could be said that, over the course of the 20th century, there was a shift from a vision centered on the rural and folkloric to one that sought to highlight the originality of urban expressions. In any case, the legacy of the African diaspora has been erected as a wellspring of authenticity and is also present in recorded popular music. The Northeast region – especially the states of Bahia and Pernambuco, which were major recipients of enslaved Africans due to the colonial sugarcane economy – has become symbolically central.

Folklorists’ and other scholars’ analyses of *maracatu de baque virado*, especially in the first half of the 20th century, were marked by a search for origins, by an understanding of tradition as the “survival” of a set of practices unconsciously perpetuated in continuity with the coronation festivals of Congo kings and queens

during colonial Brazil. However, according to Lima (2019), the impact of these studies on the actual practice has restricted the diversity of experiences and constitutes a perverse kind of “invention of traditions”:

What can be stated based on a brief analysis of current *maracatuzeiros*’ discourse is that their traditions are constantly updated by their keepers, and that the search for the origin of certain practices or customs, far from clarifying, has constituted artifices that led to the construction of a homogenization of that which is diverse, multiple, or simply never existed as it was described (Lima, 2019, p. 259-260, our translation).

It is noteworthy that while – even in some recent literature – there is a reproduction of a discourse asserting a linear historical link between the coronations of Congo kings and queens and the current *maracatus de baque virado*, the traditional *maracatu* groups themselves understand tradition as a reservoir of sounds, images, and values open to constant rearrangement, re-elaboration, and resignification. Tradition is alive, made of both continuities and transformations. This *emic* understanding aligns with the British Cultural Studies approach to the concept of the popular, and also connects with certain developments regarding cultural practices in the 1990s and 2000s.

One of the driving forces behind traditional popular culture was the revitalization promoted by the emergence of a new musical scene in Recife: manguebeat. As I have analyzed in previous works (Mendonça, 2002; 2008; 2019; 2020), manguebeat – or the mangue scene – originated from an informal movement of groups of friends who began organizing parties and concerts in the Metropolitan Region of Recife. The metaphor of the mangrove – a fertile and diverse ecosystem – served as a framework to encompass a variety of musical genres and hybrid styles, blending rock, rap, and other forms of globalized music with the traditional popular culture of the state of Pernambuco.

As is well known, the most prominent figure of the scene was Chico Science (Francisco de Assis França, 1966–1997), who founded the band Nação Zumbi by combining electric guitars and bass with *alfaias* (drums from the *maracatu de baque virado* tradition). Sonically, the band produced multiple blends, from adapting funk and rap rhythms to maracatu drums, to incorporating *coco de roda*, *ciranda*, and other genres in unexpected combinations. Chico Science & Nação Zumbi shook the landscape of Brazilian popular music nationally and achieved a degree of international success within the world music market. The band’s first album, *Da lama ao caos*, produced by the Chaos/Sony Music label, sold 20,000 copies within three months of its 1994 release and was listed among the best albums of that year by music critics (Dávila, 1994). It also ranked 23rd in the World Music

Charts Europe in 1995 – a relatively modest success compared to international pop figures.

However, Chico Science & Nação Zumbi, along with other artists and bands from the mangue scene, contributed to the valorization of local musical traditions, both by incorporating them into their hybrid compositions and by bringing masters of popular culture onto the stage. Mangubeat musicians have always taken pride in featuring these masters in their performances, presenting them at local festivals like RecBeat and Abril Pró Rock, as well as on various international circuits. They never saw themselves as substitutes or representatives of these artists. Moreover, rather than reproducing traditional popular culture, they recreated it in their compositions and performances. From a critical standpoint regarding the cultural industry, one could argue that Mangubeat's valorization of traditional popular expressions was merely a strategy for market projection. However, for these musicians and masters, it represented recognition of a lifetime of work – not only for its commercial exposure, but for the attention they received from mangue scene artists and, in their wake, from younger generations, including more educated middle-class individuals from other parts of Brazil and the world (Mendonça, 2019; 2020).

It is worth noting that the view that mangubeat contributed to the increased visibility and recognition of the value of *maracatus de baque virado* is not universally accepted. Lima (2012) criticizes the idea that the mangue scene – and before it, Maracatu Nação Pernambuco, a percussive and para-folkloric dance group inspired by *maracatu de baque virado*, founded in 1989 – played such a role. On the contrary, he emphasizes the internal strength of the traditional *maracatus*, attributing their perpetuation and expansion to their own tactics and strategies. In this context, it is also important to remember that, in struggles for the legitimization and valorization of cultural expressions produced by poor and mostly Black communities, the strength and originality of their musical creations are often downplayed. An example of this is the fundamental role played by the Bloco Afro Lamento Negro and the Daruê Malungo Center for Education and Culture in creating the beats later used by Chico Science and Nação Zumbi. These two collectives are based in peripheral neighborhoods of the Recife Metropolitan Region, and their contributions are seldom referenced or valued in the literature on the subject (Lemos, 2024).

Even while acknowledging the resistance and resilience of *maracatuzeiros*, another fundamental factor in the appreciation of traditional cultural expressions, in general, must be recognized: the creation of intangible heritage policies at both the national and international levels. A result of decades of debate, intangible heritage policies began to be implemented globally in 2001 with the establishment of the Proclamations of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), held in 2001, 2003, and 2005. These proclamations aimed to register and safeguard

intangible cultural heritages at risk of disappearance. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted in 2003 and enforced in 2006, eliminated the “risk of disappearance” as a criterion for listing intangible heritages (UNESCO, 2006). At the time of this article’s completion, eight Brazilian cultural assets have been recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity⁷, including *Samba de Roda* from the Recôncavo Baiano (2004), *Capoeira Circle* (2014), and *Frevo* (2012), a vital musical and choreographic expression of Pernambuco’s culture.

Brazil preceded UNESCO in institutionalizing intangible cultural heritage policies. In 2000, a methodology was created for the registration of intangible assets, known as the National Inventory of Cultural References (Iphan, 2000). The federal cultural heritage protection body, Iphan (Institute of National Historical and Artistic Heritage), also established the Registry of Intangible Cultural Assets and the National Intangible Heritage Program. The first registration of an intangible cultural asset occurred in 2002: the craft of the *paneleiras* (pot makers) of Goiabeiras (Vitória, Espírito Santo). Since then, over fifty intangible cultural assets have been registered, with more than thirty currently undergoing the registration process. *Maracatu de baque virado*, also known as *maracatu nação*, was recognized as an intangible heritage in 2014. Since 2021, the master practitioners of this form of expression – represented by two institutions, the Associação dos Maracatus Nação de Pernambuco (Amanpe) and the Associação dos Maracatus de Olinda (AMO) – have been advocating for the nomination of *maracatu nação* to UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This nomination was approved by Iphan’s Advisory Council in September 2024 (Iphan, 2024).

Policies and concepts associated with intangible heritage add yet another layer of meanings and practices to the realm of popular or ethnic cultures. As Oliveira Pinto (2018, p. 99) states, “heritage is the basis of identity insofar as heritage is both inherited and continuously constructed.” Within this framework, music stands out as one of the main living heritages, being part of most expressions recognized as intangible heritage. Furthermore, intangible cultural assets are no longer solely at the service of constructing a unified idea of the nation (as samba was in the first half of the 20th century), but are now valued in their specificities, contributing to the recognition of cultural diversity as a value (Abreu; Mendonça, 2012). The recognition of a cultural expression as intangible heritage is also the result of a partnership between its bearers, academic researchers, and state agents; it establishes a recognized body of knowledge that spreads translocally, along

⁷ In addition to the three intangible cultural assets mentioned in the text, there are five others: Kusiwa Art – Wajäpi Body Painting and Graphic Art, the *Círio de Nossa Senhora de Nazaré*, the *Bumba meu boi* Cultural Complex of Maranhão, the Yaokwa Ritual of the Enawene Nawe Indigenous People and the Living Fandango Museum.

with a set of safeguarding procedures that often include processes of “internal migration” and internationalization as means to materially sustain the perpetuation of certain expressions. This is the case of *maracatu de baque virado*, as we will see below.

Maracatus in Recife and around the world

The *maracatus* are among the most important cultural expressions of Pernambuco, playing a central role in defining the state’s identity. They have been dignified through processes of heritage recognition and valued for the incorporation of some of their elements into recorded popular music. *Maracatus* appear regularly in public spaces, especially during Recife’s Carnival. There are two types of *maracatu*: *maracatu de baque virado*, also known as *maracatu nação*, which we have been referring to from the beginning; and *maracatu rural*, also known as *maracatu de baque solto* or *maracatu de orquestra*, due to the presence of wind instruments such as clarinet, saxophone, and trombone. *Maracatu de baque virado* is considered more Africanized, and its practices are also associated with Afro-Brazilian religions (candomblé, umbanda, and jurema). *Maracatu de baque solto*, or rural, originates from Pernambuco’s Zona da Mata region and exhibits Afro-Indigenous influences in both music and its characters. Put differently, *maracatu de baque virado* is often characterized as “ancient, traditional, urban, Black, religious,” while *maracatu de baque solto* is described as “recent, syncretic, rural, mixed-race, magical-religious” (Garabé, 2011).

The word *maracatu*, associated with diverse musical and Carnival expressions, began to appear in the second half of the 19th century. Guillen (2007) points to the polysemy of the term in the first half of the 20th century, when it was even used to describe Carnival groups made up of white individuals who invited Black drummers to accompany them. In the book, *Maracatus do Recife*, originally published in 1955, Maestro César Guerra-Peixe (1980) – one of the leading scholars of *maracatus*, who lived and researched in Recife from 1949 to 1952 – established the term in association with Black groups and distinguished the two types of *maracatu*⁸ based on their geographic locations and ethnomusicological specificities⁹.

A note is warranted regarding why traditional *maracatu de baque virado* groups are referred to as *maracatu nação*. The debate over the meaning of *nação*

⁸ According to Guillen (2007, p. 250), the impact of Guerra-Peixe’s ideas “only became noticeable after the publication of Katarina Real’s book, *Folclore do carnaval do Recife*, in the 1960s, which consecrated the names *maracatu-nação* and *maracatu de orquestra*, or rural.”

⁹ An analysis of the socio-musical aspects of *maracatus* can be found in the articles by Oliveira Pinto (1994 and 1996), as well as in the work of historian Ivaldo Marciano de França Lima (2012; 2019), in the National Inventory of Cultural References of *Maracatu Nação* (Iphan, 2012) and in Crook (2009).

is extensive, but generally, *nação* here does not refer to the political concept, the ethnic origins of the enslaved people, or to the *candomblé* nations (in Pernambuco, predominantly Nagô). Instead, it refers to the differentiation between the communities of practice of traditional *maracatu* groups (Lima, 2012, 2014). Despite the increasingly strong link between *maracatus* and Afro-Brazilian religions in recent years – a process that runs parallel to their heritage recognition and transformation into performance – the *maracatuzeiros* may belong to different religious lineages (Koslinski; Guillen, 2019).

Traditional *maracatu nação* groups perform with a drum ensemble and a royal court, including a king, queen, princes, princesses, nobility figures, vassals, a flag bearer, *baianas*, and ladies of the court, among others. The ladies of the court carry *calungas* – richly dressed wooden dolls that represent ancestral spirits or *orixás* – and lead the parade alongside the flag bearer. Only in the official Carnival competition do the *maracatus* parade with the full royal court (Crook, 2009; Iphan, 2012; Koslinski; Guillen, 2019; Lima, 2012). According to Koslinski and Guillen (2019):

In addition to presenting themselves in the traditional parade format, they also began to perform in the *arrasto* format, which is a percussion parade without the royal court, as well as stage performances that once again highlight the drumming, which has become the main ‘product’ [...] (Koslinski; Guillen, 2019, p. 158, our translation).

The instruments used by *maracatu* percussionists include the *alfaia* (a typical *maracatu* drum), *caixa de guerra*, *tarol*, *gonguê*, *mineiro*, and sometimes *agbê* and *atabaque*. The use of *agbês* and *atabaques* is a recent innovation (Iphan, 2012).

It is important to distinguish traditional *maracatu nação* groups from the numerous percussion groups that emerged, especially from the 1990s onward, in various Brazilian cities and abroad (Carvalho, 2007; Koslinski, 2018). *aracatu de baque virado* percussion groups are usually composed solely of drummers, though they may occasionally include some royal court characters. What sets traditional groups apart is their connection to religion and to a tradition perceived as inherited from time immemorial. The proliferation of *maracatu* groups is not without conflict, including disputes over “authenticity” between traditional and newer groups. These disputes involve not only symbolic recognition but also access to financial resources through projects, workshops, hosting visitors, and performances (Guillen; Lima, 2018; Lima, 2014). Conceived as percussion groups and sometimes incorporating court elements, *maracatu de baque virado* groups abroad emerge and thrive, on the one hand, within this context of symbolic legitimacy disputes and the pursuit of economic opportunities, and on the other, as a search for meaning and community.

The first traditional *maracatu* to internationalize was the *Nação do Maracatu Porto Rico*, founded in 1916. Influenced by the actions of Black movements promoting the appreciation of Afro-Brazilian cultural expressions since the late 1970s, *maracatus* reorganized and gained renewed strength. In 1989, Porto Rico was chosen to represent Recife's culture during a trip to Europe. It performed in the cities of Bonn, Berlin, Hanover, Unna, and Münster in Germany, as well as in Brussels, Belgium, and Barcelona, Spain¹⁰.

A key agent in the internationalization of *Nação do Maracatu Porto Rico* is José Chacon Viana, *batuque* director since 1987 and master since 2000. Son of *dona Elda Viana*, the queen of the *Nação do Maracatu Porto Rico*, he is a *babalorixá*, musician, composer, and cultural producer. Since the mid-2000s, *mestre* Chacon has led *maracatu* workshops in various European countries and in Japan, where he travels almost annually (Ricarte, 2024). These activities eventually gave rise to a number of foreign groups affiliated with *Nação Porto Rico*. On its official webpage, in addition to groups located in various Brazilian states, the following are listed as affiliated: *Baque de Axé* and *Baque de Ogun* in England, *Grupo de Maracatu Baqueba*, and the Japanese Maracatu Confederation in Japan.

Each country has experienced different timelines and influences, depending on migratory flows and the movement of *mestres*, groups, and artists. In France, where the first groups emerged in the 2000s, *Nação Pernambuco*, previously mentioned, was the main promoter of *maracatu* and continues to inspire many Parisian groups. Except for one,

all leaders of other *maracatu* groups in Paris had, at some point, been members of *Nação Pernambuco*. However, in the 2010s, *Nação Pernambuco*'s influence in France diminished, as several Parisian groups began learning directly from *maracatus-nação* in Pernambuco, particularly *Estrela Brilhante, Porto Rico, Leão Coroado*, and *Almirante do Forte* (Chamone; Carvalho; Sandroni, 2022, our translation).

Learning through direct contact with *maracatu mestres*, as all literature on the subject highlights, is a phenomenon observed across all countries. This occurs through travels by *mestres* to Europe and other global regions, as well as journeys by foreign percussionists to live with the *nações* in Recife and participate in performances, especially during Carnival.

Returning to the groups linked to *Nação do Maracatu Porto Rico*, *Baque de Axé* is the current name of the group originally founded by English percussionist Sam Alexander in 2002 as *Maracatu Estrela do Norte*. Koslinski (2018) details

¹⁰ Official website of the *Nação do Maracatu Porto Rico* – <https://nacaoportorico.maracatu.org.br/>. Accessed in: 02 Dec. 2024.

Alexander's path, from his teenage involvement with music and passion for Brazilian percussion – initially through the London School of Samba. Seeking to deepen his knowledge of samba, he spent time in Rio de Janeiro in the early 1990s and then traveled to Olinda, where he first encountered *maracatu*. At the time, it was quite unusual for a white, middle-class person to participate in a traditional *maracatu*. So, he began his learning journey by also playing with *Maracatu Nação Pernambuco*. He later married a dancer from *Nação Pernambuco* and, upon returning to England, began incorporating *maracatu* into his Brazilian percussion classes.

According to Koslinski (2018, p. 201, our translation), *Estrela do Norte's* early musical expressions “were a mixture of the *Maracatu Nação Pernambuco* style, along with some original arrangements by Sam, as well as some patterns from traditional groups *Leão Coroado* and *Estrela Brilhante*.” The group performs in various public spaces, including Notting Hill Carnival. As the group alternated between more and less active periods, according to *Baque de Axé's* official website, a turning point came when Sam Alexander spent six months in Recife with the *Nação do Maracatu Porto Rico* community. This experience led to the group's name change and formal affiliation with the traditional nation. This marked a broader trend of seeking authenticity within the *maracatu de baque virado* tradition.

Like other *maracatu* groups established abroad (Carvalho, 2007; Chamone, 2013; Fernandes, 2017), Koslinski (2018) notes that *Baque de Axé* is organized around percussion workshops where participants pay to access instruments and learn rhythms without requiring prior knowledge. The group has a strong community focus, emphasizing closeness, orality, and social interaction. Most participants are British or European, with only a small number of Brazilian immigrants. In common with other groups, there is a strong effort to travel to Pernambuco to experience *maracatu* in its original context.

Many of the characteristics described above were also reported in relation to *Baque Forte Berlin* by its founder and coordinator, Fabiano Lima, in an interview conducted on November 28, 2024. Fabiano's trajectory is unique. Before emigrating to Berlin in 2004, he spent most of his childhood and youth in Recife, deeply immersed in Afro-Brazilian cultural practices. He is an *Ogan* in *candomblé* and participated actively in *maracatu*, having trained as a percussionist within oral tradition. His pedagogical experiences in Brazil – leading workshops and working in social projects – facilitated the development of percussion teaching in Germany. As interest grew among his students, he eventually founded *Baque Forte* in 2006. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the group has been on pause but is expected to resume activities in 2025.

Baque Forte used to perform in public only once a year, during the Carnival of Cultures held every spring in Berlin. The group also consists mostly of white, European, middle-class individuals. According to Fabiano, 80% are women. There is

a strong German presence, as well as people from Eastern European countries, who, in the percussionist's view, have a deeper understanding of the ancestral and spiritual dimensions present in *maracatu* and in the power of the drums themselves. In his opinion, because it involves a very particular rhythmic structure that challenges Western musical patterns, *maracatu* enables a true "musical decolonization."

One of Fabiano's concerns is to provide some form of reciprocation to the *maracatus* of Recife. He reports having brought around eight masters from different nations to conduct workshops in Europe, not only to offer a complete experience with *maracatu* rhythms but also to allow members of *Baque Forte* to engage with the masters and their sociocultural worlds. While he considers the musical component important, he emphasizes above all, the need for people to understand the struggle to keep the *maracatus* alive, particularly given the social vulnerability faced by *mestres* and *maracatuzeiros* in Brazil.

Fabiano Lima also encourages members of *Baque Forte* to travel to Recife in order to establish direct contact with the *maracatus-nação*. He maintains closer relationships with *Cambinda Africano*, *Estrela Brilhante de Igarassu*, and *Leão Coroado*, which was founded in 1863 and is now led by conductor Karen Aguiar, granddaughter of the late masters Afonso. As such, *Leão Coroado* represents a privileged space for the participation of Fabiano's female students: it embodies a long-standing tradition and a highly welcoming environment for women – something relatively new within the *maracatu* universe.

It is worth revisiting here Bauman's (2003) reflection on two types of communitarianism present in today's world, which relate to the unequal fulfillment of modernity's promises regarding individual rights. The "aesthetic community" seeks to reconcile the principles of individual freedom with the bonding power of community. It is closely linked to lifestyle choices and entertainment. By avoiding long-term commitments among participants, "aesthetic communities" resonate with the disregard for social difference cultivated by the "new global elite." Membership of "aesthetic communities" is the prerogative of real individuals, who can choose their destiny.

On the other hand, "ethical communities" are based on stronger bonds and involve the establishment of long-term commitments, inalienable rights, and unavoidable obligations. Their positive aspect lies in providing collective support in a world marked by indifference and risk. The construction of this type of "community" is the only option open to *de jure* individuals – those for whom the promises of modernity's freedom were never fulfilled. This framework certainly applies to the *maracatu nações* of Pernambuco, which, as fundamental references for European *maracatu* groups, may also lend them the character of "ethical communities."

Final considerations

Taking into account the various factors involved in the internationalization of *maracatus* and the ways in which these groups are constituted in Europe, we can observe the intersection of multiple layers of globalization processes, ranging from the African diaspora to recent migration flows. These processes are not free of contradictions and bring together community-based practices with market logic – especially those of tourism and popular recorded music. Multiple interests are at play, transforming the popular into a field of contestation. While the *maracatus de baque virado* is undergoing a process of spectacularization and cannibalization (Carvalho, 2010), their recognition as intangible heritage grants them symbolic value and new economic opportunities. On the part of the *maracatu* participants abroad, new possibilities for subjectivation are emerging, shaped by community life and diverging from the hyper-individualism that dominates advanced capitalist societies.

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