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## Experiencing Music and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Some Thoughts on Safeguarding Music's Intangible Dimension

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### Abstract

This article presents some thoughts toward a conceptualization of musical traditions as Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Afro-Brazilian *samba de roda* and *candomblé* serve as paradigms to discuss the dichotomy of intangibility/tangibility of cultural expressions, i.e. between the ephemerality of their experience and the endurance of their material objects and documentation. The special importance of the human body in both traditions points to the centrality of human experience in practicing, transmitting and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Such a perspective puts into question safeguarding measures such as inventory-making and documentation of musical practices and may open the way for more appropriate methods for fostering them.

**Keywords:** Heritage, Afro-Brazilian music, music documentation, performance, embodiment

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## Experienciando la música y el patrimonio intangible: algunas ideas sobre la salvaguarda de la dimensión intangible de la música

### Resumen

Este artículo presenta algunas ideas para una conceptualización de las tradiciones musicales como parte del patrimonio cultural intangible. La samba de roda y el candomblé son tomados como paradigmas para discutir la dicotomía entre la tangibilidad y la intangibilidad de las expresiones culturales, es decir, entre lo efímero de su experiencia y la condición más permanente de sus objetos materiales y de su documentación. La importancia del uso del cuerpo para ambas tradiciones apunta al rol central que juega la experiencia humana en la práctica, transmisión y preservación del patrimonio cultural intangible. Esta perspectiva lleva a cuestionar medidas de preservación como la inventarización y la documentación de las prácticas musicales, incentivando el desarrollo de métodos más adecuados para su fortalecimiento.



**Palabras clave:** patrimonio, música afro-brasileña, documentación musical, *performance*, *embodiment*

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## **Experienciando Música e Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial: Reflexões sobre a Preservação da Dimensão Imaterial da Música**

### **Resumo**

Este artigo apresenta algumas reflexões para conceitualizar tradições musicais como Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial, usando o samba de roda e o candomblé como paradigmas para se discutir a dicotomia entre a materialidade e a imaterialidade de expressões culturais, isto é, entre a efemeridade de sua experiência e a qualidade mais permanente de seus objetos materiais e documentação. A importância do uso do corpo para ambas as tradições aponta para a centralidade da experiência humana na prática, transmissão e preservação do Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial. Essa perspectiva questiona medidas de salvaguarda tais como a inventarização e a documentação de práticas musicais e pode incentivar o desenvolvimento de métodos mais adequados para o seu fortalecimento.

**Palavras-chave:** Patrimônio, música afro-brasileira, documentação musical, *performance*, *embodiment*

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## Introduction

With UNESCO's "Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage" of 2003 the international debate on heritage was broadened to include cultural practices. Until then, the "authorized heritage discourse" (Smith 2006) established by UNESCO's *World Heritage Convention*<sup>1</sup> of 1972 was mainly concerned with tangible heritage like monuments, sites as cultural landscapes, which are typical of developed countries –the so-called North Countries (Agakawa and Smith 2009). Most of the cultural heritage of "South Countries" is, on the contrary, considered "intangible," on account of its ephemerality: costumes, rituals, forms of expression, among others. Even though since 2003 the performing arts have become an important issue for international cultural policy, research on the subject, especially focused on musical traditions, is still scarce –and so are the methods for preserving them<sup>2</sup>.

In my research on *samba de roda* from Recôncavo Baiano<sup>3</sup> I observed that the safeguard measures implemented in the region after UNESCO's nomination of the practice as a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" in 2005 raised some paradoxes like homogenization of the practice and its adaption to external interests, instead of promotion of local and national respect for its particularities (Graeff 2012, Graeff & Pinto 2012). Since then, I have been trying to conceptualize musical traditions as heritage<sup>4</sup>, in order to develop adequate methods for strengthening them. In this paper, I will present some thoughts on the dichotomy of the intangibility/tangibility of cultural expressions, i.e. on the ephemerality of its experience and on the endurance of its documentation, by using *samba de roda* and the Afro-Brazilian religion of *candomblé* as paradigms.

Ethnomusicology has long focused on the documentation and analysis of musical cultures. Sometimes preserving a culture becomes a synonym for documenting it, that is, of materializing

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<sup>1</sup> The official title of the convention is Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO 1972).

<sup>2</sup> Only a few individual papers (e.g. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995; 2004; Taylor 2008; Vianna and Teixeira 2008) and the volume *Intangible Heritage Embodied* (Ruggles and Silverman 2009a) treat heritage from the perspective of the performing arts. In the field of ethnomusicology Anthony Seeger (2009) reports on the experience as coordinator of the evaluation processes for the nomination of musical traditions as "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" and Isabel Wong (2009) makes a historic overview of Kunqu Opera from China while discussing the consequences of UNESCO's nomination on a socio-political level. An essay was written concerning the Afro-Brazilian musical and martial art capoeira becoming national heritage (Pelegri 2008). Hilder (2012) reports the special history of documentation and transmission of Sámi musical performances. Graeff and Pinto (2012) offer an analysis of the musical and performative changes occurred in the context of a UNESCO's nomination.

<sup>3</sup> From 2009 to 2011 I did fieldwork and music analysis of *samba de roda* from Recôncavo da Bahia for writing my master's thesis. Preliminary results may be found in Graeff (2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a) and Graeff and Pinto (2012). The complete manuscript will be published in 2014 under the title "Os Ritmos da Roda. Tradição e Transformação no Samba de Roda".

<sup>4</sup> Although "heritage" or "cultural heritage" is a term linked to cultural-political management, especially since UNESCO's Convention, I do not use it here in administrative terms by referring only to traditions that have been focus of political measures. Instead, I invoke it in a broader sense, in which cultural heritage may be understood as some aspect of cultural practices, which for a group of people is so meaningful that they wish to preserve it and pass it on to further generations.

it in pictures, audio and visual recordings, scores, transcriptions and texts. But material records may endure even if the cultures that produced them vanish. Moreover, documents portray a very limited part of much broader and more dynamic cultural processes, which are carried out in and by human bodies collectively. The special importance of the human body both in *samba de roda* and *candomblé* illustrates the centrality of human experience in transmitting, safeguarding and living intangible cultural heritage (cf. Smith et al. 2003, Smith 2006).

### Expressing and experiencing ideas

Part of this paper was presented at an international conference. The issues it deals with unfortunately cannot be addressed here the way they were live, since I used the opportunity not only to present my ideas but to make the audience somehow *experience* them sensually. As this paper states, the so-called intangible heritage only exists at the moment of being experienced by humans (or “practiced” cf. Taylor 2008). However, I believe that readers will still be able to intellectually understand my ideas, which I now *inscribe* in this text.

At the very beginning of my presentation I played a video made by ethnomusicologist Tiago de Oliveira Pinto in the 1980s, in Recôncavo da Bahia, Northeastern Brazil. It showed João da Viola playing a special rhythmic-melodic pattern, the *toque de machete em ré maior*, on a small guitar inside of a house in a rural environment. João da Viola was one of the last masters of viola *machete*, a small guitar typical from the region that may be considered extinct nowadays<sup>5</sup>. The disappearance of the Portuguese musical instrument and of its strongly African-influenced playing technique was one of the arguments for the nomination of *samba de roda* as *Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* by UNESCO in 2005.

Afterwards, I sung the first verses of a song called “Gotas de luar” (“Moonlight tears”) composed by Nelson Cavaquinho, a samba composer from Rio de Janeiro in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The song was recorded by famous musicians, notably Marisa Monte; its lyric is a love poem. I know and have been singing this song publicly for nearly 15 years.

Finally, I asked the audience to keep both the video and song in their minds while reflecting upon the following question during my presentation: Which one can be considered intangible cultural heritage, the video or my singing? Now I ask the reader to imagine and keep the scenes I have described as well as the question I have proposed in mind while reading this paper.

### Tangible and intangible cultural heritage

The first scientific efforts towards the preservation of heritage were made by architects, centering on architectural or natural monuments and places –regarding an urgency of conservation and restoration– of historic or artistic value (Smith 2006). The focus laid on different aspects according to preoccupations of the period, as for instance the need to restore historic buildings after war damage. Within this context, the *Convention Concerning the*

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<sup>5</sup> There are still some old handmade exemplars of viola machete, but the last machete-maker, Clarindo dos Santos, died in 1980, leaving no successors in the art of machete-making. Recently, there have been some attempts to build a copy of one of the exemplars, made by carpenters, which resulted in heavy guitars with an inappropriate sound.

*Protection of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage* was adopted by UNESCO in 1972. After years of debate and creation of other political instruments like the *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* of 1989, UNESCO decided to use the term “intangible cultural heritage” for referring to those aspects of cultural heritage that were being neglected by the 1972 Convention (cf. Ruggles & Silverman 2009b).

Epistemologically, one cannot separate the tangible and intangible aspects of culture, since culture is a *web of shared significance* (Geertz 1973), which cannot be dissociated from social practices (Sahlins 1976). Objects, places, sites, landscapes, and the so-called tangible cultural heritage only become heritage when they are assigned with cultural values –which are intangible. Accordingly, heritage is a social construction, having no immanent value as assumed in the “authorized heritage discourse” (Smith 2006). It is, independently of the form it takes, intangible in essence. For instance, when a human being uses an object to produce sounds, organizing them in order to create music –as Blacking’s definition of music (1973)– he turns it into a musical instrument, he assigns it with meaning, and the object becomes a cultural one. Nevertheless, the dichotomy is useful for management purposes, for the preservation methods of material objects are of a different nature than that of cultural practices:

The tangible cultural heritage, be it a monument, a historic city or a landscape, is easy to catalogue, and its protection consists mainly of conservation and restoration measures. Intangible heritage, on the other hand, consists of *processes and practices* and accordingly requires a different safeguarding approach and methodology to the tangible heritage (Bouchenaki 2003).

It goes without saying that no ritual, no musical performance is purely intangible, just like no cultural object is purely material, i.e. devoid of value. However, this interchangeability –or this “symbiotic relationship” (Munjeri 2004)– has only recently begun to be explored from points of view other than those of “tangible heritage” experts (e.g. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 2004, Taylor 2008, Ruggles & Silverman 2009a, Wulf 2011, Graeff & Pinto 2012).

### **Afro-brazilian traditions between tangibility and intangibility**

Millions of Africans were dispossessed of their “tangible heritage” –their material goods– while being transported to Brazil between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries during the slave trade. They were not only forbidden to bring material things other than their own bodies, but they were also constantly persecuted and prohibited to practice their traditions by both government and Church. Nevertheless, Africans have succeeded in transplanting their customs, beliefs, rituals and musical concepts into the new land and passing them on over centuries –not to mention that traditions like samba and capoeira have spread all over the world.

In order to achieve it, and at the same time hide their costumes from their masters, Africans and African descendants had to adapt and re-signify the materials of their new environment. That is how an instrument of Arabic origins, the pandeiro, was adapted and became so important for many Afro-Brazilian traditions, for instance. But the most astonishing example of this re-signification process is the “symbol-switching” process (Kubik 1986) that took place in *candomblé*: even today practitioners identify Yoruba deities in the images of

catholic saints. For them, Saint George and the war deity “Xangô” are the same entity. Unlike material goods, which can be immediately destroyed, the embodied memory of Africans could not be erased by deportation and marginalization.

*Candomblé* is a religion of West-African, especially Yoruba, origins with many deities – the *orixás*–, which are identified with colors, elements of nature, foods, dance steps and percussion rhythms, among other things. The symbolic complexity of *candomblé* is particularly illustrative of the interconnectedness between tangible and intangible aspects of musical traditions: to pray to the *orixás* means to express devotion through body movements, singing, cooking, gestures, dancing and so on, inside of temples and in front of shrines, sacred figures and insignia.

*Candomblé* rituals take place in *terreiros* –the *candomblé* temples–, which, as buildings, should pertain to the definition of tangible heritage. However, buildings must have an artistic, architectural value in order to be considered heritage, which is not the case with the *terreiros de candomblé*, which are mostly simple houses with no external ornamentation. In the year of 1984 the Brazilian State gave for the first time official recognition to an Afro-Brazilian tradition, considering the 150 year old *candomblé*-temple “Casa Branca” in Salvador da Bahia national heritage, after a long and intense struggle (Velho 2006). Until then, the Portuguese architectural heritage in Brazil was the main subject of preservation. Although the significance of Casa Branca was recognized, its meaning does not lie in its walls but in the beliefs and rituals that have been practiced there for more than a century.

Practitioners go through an initiation process in order to develop means of communication with their deities. Apart from singing the specific songs and speaking out the specific greetings to an *orixá* in the Yoruba language, among others, initiators must learn to respond to and control body stimuli caused by their own *orixá*, so as to attain the highest stage of spiritual communication: the possession of their bodies by the deity. This happens during specific ceremonies and only becomes possible by singing and dancing to the rhythms played by three drummers. The deities will inhabit the bodies of the practitioners according to the power of the rhythms and of the dance. Hence, if rituals can only attain their efficacy through intangible practices taking place in specific sacred houses, the dichotomy tangible/intangible becomes meaningless.

*Samba de roda*, on the other hand, is not tied to a specific place and its sole material aspect –apart from the musicians’ bodies– rests on musical instruments. However, the choice for specific sound production devices may be so random in a culture<sup>6</sup>, that even if a musical instrument is forbidden or disappears, its substitution by another device tends to maintain musical concepts like playing techniques, rhythms and melodies. This seems to have been the case of the *machete* guitar, in which Afro descendants seem to have adapted techniques used

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<sup>6</sup> *Samba de roda* is a good example of such randomness, for the “samba circle” may begin anywhere, making use of the instruments available at the moment. Musical concepts will not necessarily change because of the instruments being used, even though they may produce very different timbres. The same applies for the basic samba rhythm, which maintains the same structure being played with *pandeiros*, rattles, *ganzás*, *prato-e-facas* and so on (Graeff 2013b, 2014a).

with African lamellophones instead of playing the instrument as the Portuguese did, who invented and brought the *machete* to the new continent<sup>7</sup> (Pinto 1991).

Today, in the absence of *machete* makers, the previously mentioned musical patterns *toques de machete* have been adapted to new instruments, above all to the cavaquinho. This adaption has resulted in alterations in playing technique –formerly the strings were plucked and strummed by thumb and index finger, now they are exclusively plucked with a plectrum–; in alterations of timbre –the *machete* is said to have a “softer” sound– as well as of symbolism, since machete guitars used to be treated as female, with seductive powers in the samba circle (Pinto 1991, Graeff & Pinto 2012).

In considering these short examples, some questions arise: If the tangibility of music – musical instruments, scores, recordings– is conserved, is its intangible aspect also preserved? Does musical documentation arrest or foster musical traditions? To what extent must measures to safeguard traditions be implemented? How can the intangibility of music be safeguarded? How are the specific values of music to be regarded and eventually preserved?

Although musical instruments produce sounds and musical practices need a place to occur, what actually constitutes musical heritage and musical diversity is its intangible dimension: the concepts and values behind every musical event, structure and improvisation. The intangible dimensions of music include the following:

Sound quality/timbre: instrumentation, amplification, playing and singing techniques, sonorous space (which instrument is played, how and where).

Music structures: melodic, harmonic, rhythmic systems, movement patterns.

Aesthetic values: evaluation of musicians and listeners about the performance, improvisation, individual and collective interpretation.

The interrelationship between music and other performance modes: in many traditions music becomes meaningless in the absence of dance or poetic content.

Symbolism: meanings may be assigned to instruments (e.g. *machete*'s feminine and seduction power), to sonorities (e.g. imitation of animals and sacred sounds) as well as to musical structures (e.g. *orixás* have their specific rhythm patterns).

The intangible dimension of *samba de roda* has been strongly and rapidly transformed as a consequence of the safeguarding measures (Graeff 2012, Graeff & Pinto 2012). *Samba de roda* shifted from a familiar musical encounter to a staged event, in which amplification and the introduction of a greater number of instruments and increased volume is demanded<sup>8</sup>. The participation of new musicians has likewise changed the sound quality and the structures of the musical practice. By becoming a staged event, musicians and public are separated, the

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<sup>7</sup> The *machete* technique involves the exclusive use of thumb and index finger, which pluck and strike the strings alternate or simultaneously. This technique is also known in baroque lute and in Portuguese fado, such that it could have been borrowed by African slaves from Portuguese masters. Nevertheless, Kubik (1979) observed the gradual substitution of lammelophones by European guitars in Central Africa and stressed the fact that African guitar players tend to execute melodic-rhythmic patterns (Kubik 1983), just like *machete* players do.

<sup>8</sup> About the introduction of the surdo, a big and deep sounding drum characteristic of samba forms from Rio de Janeiro, Nicinha de Santo Amaro expressed that the new context of *samba de roda* “is demanding” it (“tá exigindo”). Santo Amaro da Purificação, 12<sup>th</sup> march 2010.

interrelationship between music and dance is loosened and aesthetic success of the musical performance is measured by the satisfaction of the public<sup>9</sup> –often external to the cultural context of the groups. Samba groups professionalize themselves, are formalized and thereby folklorized<sup>10</sup>. Much of its traditional symbolism gets lost, since new musicians orient themselves toward other interests like commercial success.

Hence, although *samba de roda* has an increasing number of practitioners, invitations for concerts, regional reference centers, a museum and other facilities, it does not mean that its intangible dimension is being safeguarded. Moreover, elders are dissatisfied with the whole patrimonialization process, for many young musicians take advantage from the new conditions offered for samba groups without necessarily respecting the traditional forms of samba, whereas older masters spent their lives cultivating it. For such reasons, the particularities of the dynamic of intangible cultural heritage require further research if cultural diversity is to be fostered.

### Intangible heritage as performance

All the above-mentioned aspects of music's intangibility can only be fully enacted at the moment of performance. Or, as Pelinski (2005) puts it, “we could state that the ‘only’ way of knowing music is to live it, to become one with music in the process of musical experience”. At the moment right where I sing or where someone listens to it, we are all experiencing such intangibility, we are re-enacting past experiences, sharing meanings, and reinforcing –even by rejecting– values. If the listener has the predispositions –the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1972)– required for recognizing the signs and meanings being conveyed by my performance –the song I sing and how I sing–, he will feel bonds and share an identity with me, at least at the moment of my performance. Perhaps if someone else would sing the same song –altering its intangible dimension–, or if the listener was in another mood, this moment of sharing meaning would not take place.

Performance is an expression form of the present, a dynamic process instead of a fixed product, resulting from embodied knowledge socially learned (cf. Butler 1988, Taylor 2003). For through the body human beings make sense of the world and learn how to act and express themselves in it (Goffman 1959). It is inside of social environments that the human body registers movements, sensations, signs in an automatic, unconscious way –though they may also be conscious–, and constitutes thereby a *practical sense* (Bourdieu 1980) enabled by the *habitus*, both of which orient individuals in their actions (Bourdieu 1972, 1980). Accordingly, a musical performance or composition, no matter how innovative it may sound, will never be totally detached from a cultural context, just like the musician is not. It will express either continuity or a rupture within a tradition, since it represents a result of socially learned behavior.

This social learning implicates the transmission of social values, knowledge, aesthetic preferences, the maintenance as well as the change of collective memory and, hence, of heritage

<sup>9</sup> “Temos que mudar para agradar as pessoas” (“we have to change in order to please people”), Mário, São Félix, 18<sup>th</sup> march 2010.

<sup>10</sup> For a broad survey on the process of folklorization of musical traditions, see Baumann (1976); for its relation with *samba de roda*, see Graeff (2012).



itself. One can learn the dance steps or percussion rhythms of samba without knowing its context, just like people can learn to speak English without living in an English-speaking country, but to acquire competences in a cultural practice –to be able to speak for instance the colloquial language of London and communicate efficiently among Londoners– means to assimilate the gestures, meanings and feelings, values bond to its cultural context. In this sense, someone who learns the cultural practice of *samba de roda* will incorporate the sense of community, solidarity, spontaneity, respect for the tradition, and so on.

The transmission of bodily knowledge is done, deliberately or not, by mimesis, i.e. by the imitation and repetition of models (Bourdieu 1980, Gebauer and Wulf 1992, 2003). *Samba de roda* is immediately learned inside of the *roda*, the music and dance circle, by the interaction of moving bodies and sounds. This does not require the verbal expression of masters during the performance, although they may show or say things in order to improve the execution of the dance or the music by newer practitioners. In the same way, the models to be imitated do not have to be expressly determined, like teachers in a school, but are persons with commonly acknowledged mastery of the competence in question. All this results from an incorporated *practical sense*:

By means of mimesis a practical knowledge is developed, which is strongly interconnected with the body and has a central significance for the social competence of human beings. In mimetic processes, *components of action and knowledge* cross each other and are linked to a “practical sense” (Bourdieu), without being internally different (Gebauer and Wulf 1993, 1998). In orally transmitted cultures such *bodily knowledge of action* has a great significance. It expresses itself in actions characterized by rhythm, gestures and sounds and that integrate the body of the subject, for instance those of the presenter and of the listener. The whole body turns into an instrument, similar to a musical instrument that vibrates and produces resonances (Gebauer and Wulf 2003: 21)<sup>11</sup>.

The realization of such bodily knowledge acquired through repetition, is never an identical repetition, but, instead, an adaptation of past experiences to the present cultural context, or what Schechner (1985) calls “restored behavior” or “twice-behaved behavior”. In musical traditions, the repertoires are not pre-given, but will always be established situationally in the course of performance, according to who will be playing and dancing and especially how. For instance, when someone arrives in a *samba de roda* event, a song about arrival may commence. Even one sole master will not sing this song identically at each time: he may change the lyrics, sing it louder, slower, higher, with rough or soft voice, etc., depending on the context in which he finds himself. Each time he will experience it differently, and the song as well as the performance will

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<sup>11</sup> „Mit Hilfe von Mimesis wird ein praktisches, eng mit dem Körper verbundenes Wissen entwickelt, das für die soziale Handlungsfähigkeit des Menschen von zentraler Bedeutung wird. In mimetischen Prozessen verschränken sich eine *Handlungs-* und eine *Wissenskomponente*, die sich, ohne sich intern zu differenzieren, zu einem „praktischen Sinn“ (Bourdieu), einem praktischen Handlungswissen miteinander verbinden (Gebauer/Wulf 1993, 1998). In schriftlosen Kulturen kommt diesem *körperlichen Handlungswissen* eine außerordentliche Bedeutung zu. Es wird von Handlungen ausgedrückt, die durch Rhythmus, Gesten und Laute gekennzeichnet sind und den ganzen Körper des Subjekts einbeziehen, beispielsweise diejenigen des Vortragenden und seiner Zuhörer. Der ganze Körper wird zu einem Instrument, ähnlich wie ein Musikinstrument, das in Schwingungen gebracht wird und Resonanzen erzeugt“.

at the same time confirm old and acquire new meanings for him and for those present in the situation.

Hence, all the values, knowledge, memory of a cultural practice are not only expressed, but constituted and continually actualized by human action (Bourdieu 1980), that is, by performance. In the sole *Candomblé* house of Berlin<sup>12</sup> such constitution and change constantly takes place. The practitioners do not come from the same regions in Brazil –and Germany– and the masters are not from the same *candomblé* traditions, so that their experiences of the tradition are to some extent very different. Each time a song is sung, even by the same master, it is done in different melodic, rhythmic and poetic ways, fact that often leads to confusion between members and discussion among masters. Nevertheless, *candomblé* practitioners perceive the divergences merely as different manners or “accents” (*maneiras, sotaques diferentes*) of singing the same song. Changes and differences do not represent ruptures within the tradition, but natural consequences of the context's shifting conditions.

The house's *babalorixá*, the *candomblé* priest, cannot expect everyone to sing his whole repertoire as he does, for he would be alone in transmitting it; instead, he must often accept the changes occurring in the necessary intervention of other cultural transmitters. Moreover, the practitioners memorize the songs as they are able to, according to their very diverse backgrounds. For instance, even Brazilians find difficult to sing the assymetrical rhythms implicit to the melodies and tend to symmetrize it, accentuating every downbeat<sup>13</sup>.

Although performance is something happening in the present time, it always re-enacts and is based on the past, for its symbols and meanings can only be perceived in their association with past experiences: “Before any contribution of memory, what is seen has to first organize itself in the present in order to offer me a picture through which I can recognize my former experiences”<sup>14</sup> (Merleau-Ponty 1976: 43). Hence, in the moment of performance, of experiencing it, participants may feel bond to another for reliving and actualizing something they already know from the past. They are sharing an experience, an identity, which may be so meaningful that they strive for its further transmission, understanding it as part of their own cultural heritage.

### Memory and documentation

Heritage evokes memories and the sense of identity<sup>15</sup>, so that its physical representations in buildings or documents may become “sites of memory” (Nora 1989). Nora argues that the modern society needs more and more sites of memory since the “environments of memory”, the

<sup>12</sup> As part of my Ph.D. Studies on the transculturality of Afro-Brazilian musical heritage, I began to do fieldwork in 2013 on *candomblé* outside of its cultural context, in Berlin.

<sup>13</sup> For further details on the symmetrization of rhythms see Graeff & Pinto (2012), on the tendency of Westerners to invert the metric of African rhythms see Kubik (1983).

<sup>14</sup> “Avant tout apport de la mémoire, ce qui est vu doit présentement s'organiser de manière à m'offrir un tableau où je puisse reconnaître mes expériences antérieurs”.

<sup>15</sup> I use the term “identity” as Stuart Hall does, referring to cultural - not individual - identities as meeting points of “temporary attachment to the subject positions which constructive practices construct for us” (1995: 19). Accordingly, they result from identification processes, in which common aspects are recognized between persons or groups (Hall 1995: 6) and may give them a sense of bond.

actual environments where memory arises, vanishes, and contemporary observers may experience memory more externally than internally. Accordingly, they depend on external and material supports in order to remember: archives, museums, monuments, recordings, etc. In this way, Nora suggests that memory –a set of spontaneous experiences– is being replaced by history –a reconstructed representation of the past–, requiring “every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history” (15) through the material preservation of historic traces and identity references.

This recent turning point of human history criticized by Nora turned the materialization of memories and identities into a political matter, one necessity for marginalized groups. In Brazil, those of African descent have to prove –and that means materially prove– their cultural, historical links with, for instance, their geographic locality, in order to attain legal ownership of their properties (Castro 2006). For Poulot (2008), since legislative and regulative instruments are being developed and applied to preserve tangible and intangible heritage, thereby imposing the concepts behind it, heritage has become “a synonymous of social bond” (26). In this way heritage, heritage preservation and heritage materialization are taken for granted; each culture, each community has to institutionally define its own cultural heritage –according to governmental rules– in order to guarantee basic conditions of life.

Not only physical representations of heritage evoke past experiences, memories, but these are also re-enacted through performance. According to Aleida Assmann (1999), tradition, just like memory, always relates to the past and, at the same time, creates a space for it in the present (Assmann 1999: 88) –through cultural performance (Taylor 2003). Both tradition and memory are means of communication and interaction between humans that go beyond death and synchronicity (Assmann 1999: 89): they are means of communicating values not only synchronically, from a living person to another, but diachronically, from generation to generation.

Furthermore, Assmann differentiates individual memory from cultural memory. While the first exists only in the individual imagination and perception, regardless of its communication to the outside world, cultural memory is shared and as such always needs a medium, which may also be the human body:

Whereas individual memory may arise spontaneously, uncontrolled, arbitrarily, cultural memory is always conditioned to media and thereby also dependent of political interests of securing authority or of social needs for identity construction (Assmann 1999: 88)<sup>16</sup>.

According to this statement, Pierre Nora's differentiation between sites and environments of memory seems to lose force, because the human bodies implicit in the “environment” are themselves sites of memory. Memories are neither in the environment nor in physical places and devices, but in the body, and in order to transcend their individuality, to be communicated and shared, these memories need a medium which can be the body itself –as in dance– or a video, for

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<sup>16</sup> „Während individuelle Erinnerung sich spontan, unkontrolliert, unwillkürlich melden kann, ist kulturelle Erinnerung stets auf Medien angewiesen und damit auch abhängig von politischen Interessen der Herrschaftssicherung oder sozialen Bedürfnissen der Identitätskonstruktion“.

instance. Although Nora's theory is pioneering in pointing out the growing importance for Western culture of memory devices external and independent of the presence of the human body, the differentiation he aims to remark between ways of remembering seems to be better conceptualized by Paul Connerton (1989), who coined the terms *incorporating* and *inscribing practices* of remembering.

Moreover, Nora assumes that the environments of memory –the environments of sharing memories from human body to human body– are vanishing. Is it true for music? Does a song need to be recorded somewhere in order to be remembered? A recording or a score may be an aid for remembering some music one already knows, but, to be evoked, the remembrance must be first located in the body.

Although recordings enable musical experiences in the absence of musicians, they are the result of bodily knowledge enacted in performance and represent only a limited portrait of a much wider musical practice, as Schieffelin argues, referring to performances in general:

While they refer to the past and plunge towards the future, they exist only in the present. Texts are changeless and enduring. One may return to the same text for a new reading, but a performance which one goes to see again is not the same as yesterday's. While texts and performances may be produced out of one another, this is very different from saying they are reducible to one another (Schieffelin 1997: 203).

Even if material objects like musical instruments, scores and recordings may be essential components of musical traditions, they are the products of practices and as such they do not condition the emergence of musical phenomena. Or, as Taylor (2003) puts it, in more general terms, they may “shape embodied practice in innumerable ways, yet never totally dictate embodiment” (21). They may work as didactic tools, but learning an instrument and a musical practice always implies the use of the body, repetition and mimesis, even if the model to imitate is not in the presence of the apprentice –but represented in a video, for instance. For the process of knowledge acquisition results from the above-mentioned incorporating practices, in opposition to *inscribing practices* like writing (Connerton 1989). Later on, inscribed devices may help in arousing such knowledge.

Taylor (2003) suggests another differentiation between the (more) enduring inscribing practices and the ephemeral incorporating practices, respectively represented by the “archive” and the “repertoire” (Taylor 2003). By doing so, Taylor argues that memory is in the body, and criticizes the fact that cultures mainly orally –or bodily– transmitted are still seen as possessing no memory, no history and even no culture, for they have not documented their history in “archives”, but in “repertoires” their barriers carry within their bodies. This is especially true for Afro-Brazilian traditions, which having been violently oppressed on the one hand, and scarcely documented on the other, did not cease to live and to be transmitted. Their repertoires did not vanish, even though they are constantly changing.

### **Music documentation = preservation of music?**

The genesis and the development of anthropology were accompanied by a major concern about the extinction of cultures (Sahlins 2000). The same concern motivated the foundation of

the field of ethnomusicology, as well as many efforts to preserve, rescue, and safeguard musical cultures throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which were translated on written and audio documentation of music (e.g. Nettl 1964, Seeger 1986 and 1996, Schüller 1991, Berlin and Simon 2002, Chaudhuri and Seeger 2004). Often such efforts have served the purposes of researchers in discussing methods for the material preservation of recordings (Chaudhuri 1992) as well as ethical and legal issues on “repatriation” of sound recordings (e.g. Lancefield 1998, Kahunde 2012). Research that discusses the actual interest of and the use of documentation for the communities in question is rarer and more recent (e.g. Nannyonga and Weintraub 2012), a fact criticized by Marian-Balasa (2005), by Fargion (2009), and by Landau and Fargion (2012), concerning, respectively, the purposes of musical transcription and the archiving of audio data.

According to such approaches to music preservation through documentation, it is rather the knowledge about a music style, in a very limited way, than it is the musical practice itself that is to be preserved. How the tradition bearers may creatively use historical and contemporary audiovisual recordings, archives and technologies that fix music, remain hitherto little explored (e.g. Hilder 2012). If the mere material preservation of expression forms was guaranteed, while their actual users and transmitters had disappeared, it “would be judged a failure” (Brown 2005: 233) as an effort to preserve cultural diversity. Documentation can and should be used for and by the cultural bearers, for they have the right to their own memory (Fonseca 2003), but not only by being accessible; documentation can become a source of renewing identities and creativity (Tokumaru 1991, Turner 1995, Graham 2009).

If the human body stores knowledge about musical practices in a very flexible way, since this knowledge expresses and transforms itself during each performance, one may question in how far processes of inventory-making, cataloguing, documenting, and archiving, that is, of “inscribing” knowledge in so-called sites of memory, represent useful methods of cultural preservation. Such processes turn cultural practices into objects that can be stored, scrutinized, evaluated and which seem to have geographical and historical boundaries. However, in opposition to material goods that appear with their date and place of production, cultural practices, because of their dynamic and ever-changing nature, cannot be circumscribed in such terms.

Even though *samba de roda* has been “materialized”, “inscribed”, that is, documented in books, CDs, DVDs and scores, its immateriality was transformed. Being a cultural practice, it is expected to change, as has already been argued, but in this case the changes neither happened organically, according to the own cultural dynamics, nor have satisfied the actual samba masters. The changes were imposed (Sandroni 2010) by an external power, even if with the consent of communities, and took place so fast that it sounds more appropriate to refer them as ruptures: generational transmission, which was already broken, was substituted with the emergence of young musicians with little knowledge of *samba de roda*, with their own musical backgrounds and preferences. These musicians generally have wanted to take advantage of the new opportunities offered for *Samba de Roda* groups, a fact that is regretted by the actual masters, who have dedicated their lives to the tradition (Graeff 2012).

Nevertheless, inscribing practices are crucial for the transmission of *candomblé* in Berlin.

In the absence of an appropriate cultural context for its practice<sup>17</sup>, which would offer, among others, cultural references for those outside the Candomblé house, practitioners cannot learn the huge repertoire of songs solely by practicing them arbitrarily once a week –which is the frequency of the private rituals. After weeks of unsystematically handwriting lyrics in Yoruba language, of embarrassment for the initiates and of frustration for the babalorixá, the new house's *ogã* (sacred drummer and assistant) began to record the songs sung by the priest, to learn them himself and to teach them to the practitioners weekly, apart from the ritual, while allowing them to record his singing during the lessons. With *candomblé*, another issue on documentation comes up: the songs should not be recorded and disseminated so easily, since they are sacred and because initiates should learn them according to their willingness in getting in contact with their *orixás*, instead of receiving this knowledge without further efforts<sup>18</sup>.

Hence, the inscribed knowledge<sup>19</sup> is not the practice itself, but it may turn into a meaningful tool for the transmission of cultural practices. In classical music, scores function as *authorities*<sup>20</sup> in the transmission of music, together with teachers of music, concerts and recordings. In popular music, the importance given to recordings often overcome that of the live performance (Turino 2007), however, the transmission of knowledge involves also its practice and evaluation inside schools, bands, and other cultural groups. I was able to learn Nelson Cavaquinho's song by listening to sound recordings –and by singing it publicly I was evaluated by musicians and spectators. Thus, documents function as mnemonic devices, as creativity sources, as *models* or *authorities* to imitate.

Since cultural practices are learned through repetition and imitation of models, of authorities, who states and transmits values in a social group,

one could say that in music as in all art, tradition implies the presence of an authority guaranteeing the persistence of pre-existing norms. But, when the internal authority which assured respect for the norms [...] starts to decrease and disappear, it can be replenished by an authority that is external to the ethnic or artistic group in question (Aubert 2007: 24).

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<sup>17</sup> Many aspects have worked to adapt the *candomblé* to the context of Berlin. For instance, there are many tropical plants, which are not available in Germany; the weather makes it also difficult to cultivate them; German noise ordinances do not allow rituals to be frequent and at night, etc.

<sup>18</sup> “A ideia não é fazer uma apostila, porque é tradição. Tudo bem que é tradição e tem a contemporaneidade, mas, daqui a pouco, você quer ir no *candomblé*, aprende a apostila, decora tudo e no fim vai sair com ‘diploma de *candomblé*’” (“the idea is not to create a syllabus, because it's tradition. Ok, it's tradition and there is contemporaneity too, but then later you will want to go to *candomblé*, you'll learn from the syllabus, memorize everything and at the end you will get a ‘*candomblé* diploma’”). Paulo, the house's new *ogã*, 14<sup>th</sup> october 2013, Berlin.

<sup>19</sup> Although Connerton (1989) speaks exclusively about incorporating and inscribing practices, the idea of knowledge being transmitted through these practices –an incorporated, i.e., bodily, and an inscribed transmitted knowledge– seems to be implicit.

<sup>20</sup> Not only persons may act as authorities, having the power to influence others and dictate values, but cultural artifacts too: for instance, within the field of classical music, Beethoven's piano sonatas have nowadays greater authority than Hummel's piano sonatas. Consequently, most piano students aim to learn Beethoven, listening to his music and learning his scores. Of course, this kind of authority is not immanent to the artifacts, but is attributed to them by the social actors and practices they are part of.

The dissemination of new authorities in a social group means the dissemination of new social values and the transformation of cultural practices. The industrialization of Recôncavo Baiano has disseminated values and products linked to the modern Western society. Today, the greatest musical authorities of the region are not the samba and *candomblé* masters, but the musical recordings, videos and musicians shown in media, which are constantly and massively stating the dominant values of society. As a result, the disseminated authorities are valorized and imitated by *samba de roda* groups, a fact that brings the consequence of changing and homogenizing the musical practice.

While the tradition of *samba de roda*, which is for the most part orally transmitted, has been oppressed by the “inscribed knowledge” informed by media, *candomblé* in Berlin profit from inscribing practices. Counting on a very few persons with a knowledge of the tradition and the authority to transmit its values and costumes, *candomblé* requires, in a different cultural environment, the use of “documented authorities” in order to be efficiently repeated, practiced and learned. Then, as Babalorixá Muralesimbe constantly affirms, the transmission of a practice succeeds exclusively by practicing. But, to be practiced by apprentices, it needs “sites of memory” other than the own priest's body.

## Conclusions

Now I shall come back to my singing performance: at that time, the audience of the conference and I were far away from in Rio de Janeiro –and, myself, I had only been twice in the Brazilian city. Still I performed, re-enacted a memory, or a heritage commonly linked to Rio de Janeiro and Brazil –the samba– but also to Africa, Portugal, and to my own personal experiences. Hence, this heritage is in my body and in the body of those who practice and valorize it –and not in Rio de Janeiro or in Recôncavo Baiano. This heritage only exists in the world, that is, outside of my body and of its other cultural carriers, at the moment of its performance, at the moment of being practiced and experienced by human beings.

The video of João da Viola represents a portrait of a heritage that lived in the 80s, one which is no longer incorporated in any guitar player nowadays. In addition, no one besides me, Tiago de Oliveira Pinto and some other researchers know this video. The video itself hardly conveys a social meaning, since it has been rarely experienced. Nevertheless, by being an inscribed knowledge, it may be viewed, reviewed and experienced at any time and any place, without being changed. What may change, however, are the values and practices associated to it. There, in the maintenance and respect for different cultural values, may lie the secret for fostering cultural practices, since “practices thrive as long as people find them meaningful. Nothing else will assure their sustainability” (Taylor 2008: 101).

Musical traditions, being bond to human bodies, may be better understood as transcultural<sup>21</sup> heritage, especially in times of great mobility fostered by globalization. They do not exist in a geographical place, but in the bodies of its practitioners, being able to be carried and transmitted anywhere. That is why *candomblé* is not simply being practiced in Berlin, but

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<sup>21</sup> I use the term transcultural referring to Wolfgang Welsch's definition of transculturality (1991).

the process of acculturation by Brazilian immigrants and foreigners is so effective, such that they feel possessed by African deities and fall into trance during the ceremonies. Germans, besides learning dance steps, percussion rhythms, ritual sequences, have embodied an Afro-Brazilian belief outside of its traditional context<sup>22</sup>.

Hence, it seems important for ethnomusicologists to broaden their approaches to musical cultures, especially when it comes to issues of their preservation, safeguarding and promotion, by becoming more and more aware of the centrality of body experience in the making of music. We are not dealing with notes inscribed on a score or with sounds recorded in a CD, we are dealing with music: with something humans for different reasons recognize, through their bodies, as being meaningful. A music culture becomes only truly lost when it loses its values, its significance, and no one experiences it anymore.

Having all this in mind, perhaps efforts to safeguard musical traditions should focus on the promotion and dissemination of musical authorities. If there were a pluralism of authorities in everyday life –and this means, nowadays, in the streets but also in television, radio and internet– cultural particularities and differences, that is, cultural diversity would be valorized rather than suppressed. Then, we would not have to elect which tradition is worth of safeguarding, while excluding thousands of others, or even reflect upon preservation methods that do not objectify, freeze or commodify them: cultures and individuals would be free to choose the values, practices and objects they wish to cultivate and pass through, whether tangible or intangible.

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<sup>22</sup> Researchers have often expressed to me in conferences their skepticism about the "authenticity" of such an acculturation, not believing that the way *candomblé* is being practiced in Germany is comparable to the Brazilian practices. It is not my point to convince anyone that a practice is authentic or not; the practitioners, including myself, be they originally from Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Germany or Cuba, believe in the special moments we are sharing through our collective experiences. No theory or critique is able, by proving or rejecting any claim of authenticity, to suppress the emotions enacted by such experiences. For a critique on the discursive character of authenticity claims in the context of heritage conservation, see Bruner (1994).



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### **Biography / Biografía / Biografia**

Nina Graeff, born in Porto Alegre (Brazil), studied Communication Sciences, Piano and Ethnomusicology in her hometown, in Strasbourg (France) and in Weimar (Germany). From 2011 to 2012 she worked as research fellow at the project “Global Music Database” of the Institute of Musicology Weimar-Jena, financed by the European Union. Nina Graeff is associate lecturer at the same institution and at the Humboldt University of Berlin and works as freelance event moderator at the intercultural center Forum Brasil in Berlin. Since 2013 she is PhD candidate at the Free University of Berlin with a fellowship of the international research training group “Inter Art”.

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