

## COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS IN CAPOEIRA: TRADITION AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION AS MEANS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN GENERATIONS

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### Abstract

The Afro-Brazilian cultural institution and martial art *capoeira* as well its functions and role in inter-personal, inter-institutional, and inter-generational communication are discussed in this paper. Presented data was collected during the eighteen months anthropological fieldwork in Brazilian city Salvador between the years 2004 and 2007. The main purpose of the research was to obtain information about connections between *capoeira*, depression, aggression and violence. The social role of *capoeira* was analysed during the research so the researcher has also studied the means and importance of communication within the institution of *capoeira*. Some of main focuses were how traditions are recreated in *capoeira* in order to achieve competent inter- and intra- institutional communication and how important is the role of inter-generational dialog in reestablishment of hierarchies within the institution of *capoeira*.

*Keywords:* capoeira, non-verbal communication, inter-generational dialog, equal terms communication, elder people identification, inter-generational respect, creation and recreation of traditions

### Introduction

Evolutional theories explain the development and changes of human's physical and psychological characteristics as the consequence of evolutionary adaptations /1/, /2/, /3/. Therefore, as humans always exist as part of certain society, it is reasonable to presume that also cultural elements and traditions are influenced by evolutionary adaptations to environmental and social changes. For example in the case of diaspora, as Johnson /4/ writes, when certain social group is relocated in completely new natural and social environment, new cultural patterns that would enable survival of the relocated group in unknown environment have to be developed. Cultural set is changed in learning processes which are, as Bateson /5/ writes, the result of evaluation and memorisation of certain actions and reactions according to their efficacy in given situation.

Enslaved Africans brought to Brazil have found themselves in completely different natural and social environment from the one back home. On the sugar plantations the Portuguese

have mixed together members of the different African language and culture groups that were even in war or conflict in homeland. With such strategy of disabled communication they were trying to prevent revolts. Also the social status was taken away from the enslaved population and all cultural manifestations were forbidden in the first period of Portuguese slave economy /6/. These marginal individuals lived together in slave cottages called *senzalas*, and if we suppose that the need to gather and belong - for which interpersonal communication is required - is one of the basic human needs, we can make inference that enslaved have developed new modes of communication. Ignorance of each others verbal language in newly originated groups was one of the reasons that the group members started to communicate using non-verbal communication expressed through the dance, rhythm and even martial arts. *Skilled performances*, as such activities are described by Rozzelle at. /7/ , enabled personal expression and restoration of social hierarchy. Aikins de-Graft /8/ writes that non-verbal communication is a means of emotional ex-

pression, self-presentation, concealment or uncovering of manners and intentions, and least but not the last the technique to regulate inter-personal interactions. Aspirations of enslaved to express and self-present themselves have surpass the language ignorance, and new communication channels and manners were applied to restore the communication. Hanna /9/ writes that dance is a kind of non-verbal communication that appears when verbal communication is aggravated, and we may assert that dance was the first means of basic communication among enslaved Africans in Brazil. However, the manners of expressions and self-presentations are not only different between members of the different cultural groups, but also as Campbell /10/ writes, between men and women. Fight dances are part of male tradition among West African people from which most Brazilian slaves were brought. Surely the men have expressed their dancing-fight skills on *senzals* once the leisure activities were allowed. For example in Salvador *capoeiristas* are learning dance named *maqulele*, which is demonstration of fight with poles and swords. Surely such dance was not performed on *senzalas* but rather slow and concealed version of fight dance. The rhetoric of the dance had to be incomprehensible to the outsiders and harmless in its semantic. *Capoeira* consists of many such "unnecessary moves" performed by the players during the play-fight. Elements of martial art are integrated in such, for the outsider incomprehensible movement. We propose that *capoeira* was developed as means of non-verbal communication through which men have expressed their fight skills and cunning in order to prove their social value and establish new social hierarchy. Yet such communication of physical strength and domination of martial arts had to be concealed at least for two reasons. Firstly, every martial art practice could be noticed and prohibited by slave owners. Secondly, direct and uncompromising struggle for social position can be harmful for group members which for the enslaved in given situation was undesired outcome, namely they were already explored and marginalised by the Portuguese. Within these artificially originated groups new kin-relationships had to be established. Thus the

fight-dance was not only the power game but also leisure and amusement. In Western-African societies dances and some rituals are performed in circle, therefore also *capoeira* was no exception. Such dance-fight of two men in circle accompanied by music - we suggest that at the beginning also more than two players might be involved in the play as it is the case by the dance *samba de pé* - was amusement for those in the circle and also for those outside the circle. So the play-fight represented the means of communication on inter-personal and also group level. On the first level individuals were trying to win the opponent using concealment and mind reading. Gaining or losing reputation they have climb up and down the social hierarchy ladder. With new cultural performances also the new society and its consciousness were developed. The notion of new society of enslaved people in Brazil was established. Mastering and practicing of proper martial art disguised in dance has surely raised self-respect of enslaved which has co-create such circumstances where emancipation could be brought to light. In such context the new method of non-verbal communication has re-established social circumstances in which specific segment of population has survived as physical as also psychical oppression.

#### *Short presentation of capoeira*

*Capoeira* is interrelated in social life of Salvadorian society. It is perceived as sport activity, as educational institution, and as folklore activity. The institution promotes Afro-Brazilian culture and represents a part of Salvador's tourist promotion. *Capoeira's* historical development is the consequence of colonization processes and slave economy. However, even if other parts of Americas had similar slave economy systems, *capoeira* was developed only in Brazil. We suggest that *capoeira* was developed among enslaved African population in Brazil as communication technique and means of hierarchy reestablishment. As such it was also an important means of inter-generational communication where experience is important factor in reestablishment of inter-generational respect and readiness for equal terms communication between different generations. Talmon-Chvaicer /11/ writes that *capoeira* was devel-

oped as leisure activity, once the Portuguese allowed cultural manifestations on the *senzalas* in order to improve slaves' psychic condition. According to Dal Lago and Katsari /12/, the early Portuguese slave system was different than the ones of other colonizers like for example Spanish. African diaspora was mixed and Portuguese used this ethnic pluralism in their advantage. They have even further mixed the slaves from different cultural and ethnic groups to prevent communication and potential revolts. So enslaved had to develop new communication techniques and re-establish social hierarchy. Language barrier and lack of social hierarchy were important factors in establishment of circumstances where alternative communication techniques were developed. Communication in *capoeira* was enabled through body language, music, and rhythm that accompany the play-fight in so called *roda de capoeira* (circle of *capoeira*). Through play-fight, amusement and corporal interaction the inter-personal respect and hierarchies were established. During the centuries institutional traditions and rules were developed so today the formal and informal hierarchical system is strongly empowered within the institution. Older *capoeiristas* and masters are admired and respected as role models by the younger ones. Their reputation is acquired through years of practice, instructing and playing in *rodas*. Younger ones are respected according to their motivation and wish to learn. Older *capoeiristas* are also masters of instruments and singing. In performed *rodas* they would be the ones playing the main *berimbau* (central *capoeira* instrument) that dictates the speed and the manner of play-fight. With the main *berimbau* also the start and finish of the play-fight is marked. Those present in the *roda* are expected to sing and clap the hands when two of *capoeiristas* are playing. Through the music they communicate with others present in the *roda*. Communication is performed through verbal and non-verbal channels and serves to create and recreate *capoeira* traditions of inter-personal and inter-generational dialog.

#### *Capoeira as means of political communication*

There are at least three theories regarding historical development of *capoeira* prior to 19<sup>th</sup>

century. First theory explains that the art was developed on *senzalas*, the second one defends the idea that *capoeira* is the product of defensive tactics in *quilombos* (escaped slaves enclaves), and the third one that it was already brought as such from Africa. However, most literature and also *capoeira* discourse emphasize its development from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From that period on *capoeira* already existed as consolidated institution, on the one side representing the means of street fighting, and on the other side an Afro-Brazilian political institution. Further development of the institution in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century has had an important impact on today's *capoeira* role in inter-institutional and inter-generational communication. Hanna /13/ writes that dance is a forum to express political convictions, aspirations and values. Enslaved population was excluded from Brazilian political life even being an important contributor to its economy, so it had to search for alternative methods of political expression. Besides playing *capoeira* on the streets, *capoeiristas* from the 19<sup>th</sup> century were frequently hired as bodyguards for the politicians, so *capoeira* got the reputation being dangerous and effective martial art. Even if it was stigmatised being the art of robbers, violent and idlers, on the other hand it was respected among some members of the higher social class as serious martial art. Such perceptions surely contributed to the positive reputation of the institution. *Capoeiristas* were also involved in Afro-Brazilian political movement called *Flor da Gente*. During the war with Paraguay in 1860s some of the *capoeiristas* joined the Brazilian army, so stories about brave and effective bare-foot *capoeira* fighters appeared among Afro-Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro, even if there is no written evidence for that /14/, /15/. Such discourse brought the institution of *capoeira* on the political level as herald of emancipation of enslaved and marginalised Brazilian population. After the first Brazilian republic was founded in 1889 *capoeira* - supporting the old government - was persecuted as dangerous street martial art so the institution got under-cover. In Salvador masters of *capoeira* started to represent the art as the part of the Afro-

Brazilian folklore and dance. Such method of political and cultural communication enabled survival of the art. The change in the rhetoric also caused the organisational changes of the institution. In accordance to overall africanisation of black population culture from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, also some *capoeira* rituals and traditions were recreated. Africanisation followed the principles of the Yoruba cultural renaissance that according to Johnson /16/ appeared in all Afro-American societies. There are several reasons for choosing Yoruba cultural set as the identification object of the Afro-Brazilians, however, they are not of great importance for our discussion. It is important to mention that unification of Afro-Brazilian cultural set, the Afro-Brazilian's political power and involvement in Brazilian political life have increased. That lead to the official recognition of the art as national martial art and sport activity in 1937 /17/,/18/.

*Capoeira the tool of relationships harmonisation and promotion*

*Capoeira* today is enforced as part of Afro-Brazilian folklore and culture. It is perceived as sport, martial art, as education method and even as therapeutic technique. In Salvador it represents the means of individual and cultural identification. To be *capoeirista* means to follow the norms, customs and values of certain *capoeira* group. Oliveira Cruz /19/ describes the processes of *capoeira* identity enforcement in *capoeira angola*. Their clothes, behaviour, appearance *locus*, play style in *roda*, and their attitude toward other *capoeiristas*, communicate to which *capoeira* lineage they belong. Some of them - mostly older *capoeiristas* - still use special protection techniques for the body and spirit before they enter or organize the *roda*. As they mentioned such techniques were commonly used by their *capoeira* ancestors and are learned through secret rituals to those who gained the trust of the older masters. Regardless to which *capoeira* style they belong, *capoeiristas* would sing the songs that emphasize the importance of older masters from the clan, and use particular group play-fight once they enter the *roda*. Even if all included in the research assert that each individual has his particular style, they agree

that such style always express the characteristics of specific *capoeira* school or group. Because the traditions in *capoeira* are passed orally from generation to generation, *sabedoria* (wisdom) - related to age and expertness - is an important notion in *capoeira*. One of my interlocutors, master of *capoeira* himself, described this informal hierarchy as following: "Even if I have the same level of formal graduation as the oldest master of our group, I wouldn't dare to pull him out of the *roda* when he is playing with someone. He has more than forty years of experiences in *capoeira* and me less than twenty five."

Older masters possess the knowledge and represent the bond between the living and the dead. Oliveira Cruz /20/ describes the tradition of *Mestre Pastinha's* clan, however, also other groups are using similar self-representation techniques and identifications. As he writes the main master of the group is the one that possesses the most *sabedoria* and is perceived as the present connection with the ancestors - even those in Africa. In the worlds of Čapo-Žmegač /21/, the elderly possess the wisdom that younger might lack, so they are the bond between tradition and modernity (ibid.). Even if they do not adapt to the changes in *capoeira* and broader society, they teach the younger generations how to maintain and incorporate traditions into modernity. As it was noticed during the research, such knowledge is passed to younger *capoeiristas* during the *capoeira* events and through constant communication with other members of the group. The main master transmits his learned values, beliefs and knowledge to other masters; meanwhile, they will pass those traditions to their instructors and students. Yet such communication is not performed only in *capoeira* schools. The public events like presentations, celebrations, and *capoeira* baptisms called *batizado* are of great importance for communication of beliefs, values and traditions. Public presentations are both, the promotion of particular school or group (each group may have at least as many schools as there are instructors in the group) and also the events where cultural elements of institution are presented to the lay, non-*capoeira* public. On individual level *capoeiristas* are presenting their knowledge of *capoeira* play-fight, and singing or playing instruments

on such *capoeira* events. On the institutional level they communicate the group's principles, values, beliefs and style through their song selection, through more or less dynamic play style, through the degree of aggression and violence involved in the play-fight, and through their attitude towards the older, the younger and peer *capoeiristas*. In such manner traditions are communicated to both, *capoeira* and lay public. Those attracted by the art are further encouraged to start practicing *capoeira*. Thus, each *capoeirista* is not promoting only the *capoeira* group or school but also him as personality. He tempts to make a good impression on the others which can increase his reputation within his own group and also in broader *capoeira* public. Those older and more experienced recreate the concept of experienced and wise masters with self-presentations in *rodas*. They prove to themselves and others that they should be respected as *sábio* (wise). Yet in many cases some older master would surprise his opponent and others in *roda* with his agility and uncommon play-fight style. Spectators would express their enthusiasm with applauding and exclamations - like it is the case in other cultural or sport performances. On one of the street *rodas* I have frequented occasionally during my research, two older masters presented the play for money, which in today's *capoeira* is almost extinct. It was practiced during the 19th and at the beginning of 20th century. Today is a funny presentation, however, it was rather a dangerous *jogo* in the past, because the razors and knives were used during the play. The objective of the player is to grab the bank note from the ground with his mouth during the play. To achieve that safely, he should play himself out the position in which his neck is not exposed to the opponent, which is not an easy task. The play is similar to chess, where the players have to predict several traits in advance. Such play may not be interrupted as long as one of the players manages to grab the bank note. It is played only occasionally to preserve and present the old traditions of *capoeira*.

*Capoeira* cultural elements are promoted through *roda* ritual. Already composition of the *roda* (circle formed by the participants) points out the mystic and the magic of the institution.

*Bateria* (composition of instruments), obligatory *roda*'s component, is in *capoeira angola* constituted of *atabaque* three *berimbaus* and two *pan-deiros*. There is a gape on each side of *bateria* that represents a *porta* (the door), through which the players enter the play-fight. Entering the *roda* players would usually perform an individual protection technique gesture, than first compliment the central *berimbau*, after the co-player, and then start with the play-fight. Music and songs' texts are those dictating the tempo and the style of the play. Ancestors and living masters are praised in some texts, but most of them would count day-by-day stories from *capoeiristas* life, or would emphasize some important historical events connected with the institution. Some texts are admonitions or play manner guidance. Not just those in *bateria* but rather all participants have to sing the *coro* (choir) and clap the hands in the rhythm of the music. Players would enter and exit the *roda* on the command of central *berimbau* or by individual decision of each on *porta* waiting *capoeirista*. In latter case they would have to respect the rule saying that younger or less experienced *capoeirista* should never pull out of the game the older more experienced one. Such hierarchy is in force also among co-masters and masters. However, many older *capoeiristas* are complaining that younger ones are not respecting the rules and traditions anymore. Such behaviour is supposed to be the consequence of wrong teaching. Regardless if player wants and knows how to respect all the rules and traditions, he is strongly involved in the *roda de capoeira* due to its circular form, and has to conform to the ritual. Rhythm, music and play-fight of the others agitate feelings and emotions of the participants which became receptive of the traditions, rules and *capoeira*'s cultural elements consolidated and recreated through *capoeira* rituals. Those still inexperienced or to the rules ignorant *capoeiristas* have to learn and obey the ritual rules if they want to participate in the *roda*. Any unaccepted behaviour is sanctioned already during the play or in speeches that as a rule would conclude every important *roda*. As the rules are passed and learned through participation on events and play in the *roda*, *capoeira* is easily accepted also outside Brazil, in different cultural set-

tings. In Europe for example it doesn't represent only the martial art but an important promoter of Brazil and Afro-Brazilian culture. Being accepted among Europeans as attractive sport art, *capoeira* is an important toll if individual and cultural promotion. Yet promotion is not the only function of *capoeira* rituals, also the harmonisation of social relationships is performed through them. *Batizado* is the most typical event in regards to harmonisation of social relationships. Initiation of new *capoeiristas* and change of *capoeira* girdles are just the most obvious functions of *batizado*. However, for anthropologist those hidden, not obvious functions are of greater interest. As I have noticed on *batizado* and other *capoeira* events traditions are recreated and social relationships are harmonised. Baptism and exams for higher girdle are performed in *roda*, which has a slight different ritual than on other events. The hierarchies are more obvious on *batizado*, where respect toward older and more experienced *capoeiristas* is emphasized. On one of such occasions one of the masters played disrespectful with the older master which agitated impetuous debates among participants about respect toward the older masters. Namely the younger, stronger master played with the force with the older one, demonstrating his physical supremacy regardless to the accepted rule that the older masters should be respected according to their experiences. Even if the player knows that he could beat his older opponent, he shouldn't do so not to offend the older master and discredit him in front of the other younger *capoeiristas*. However, I have witnessed only two such occurrences, meanwhile, on other *capoeira* events participants respected that unwritten rule of inter-generational respect.

When the *roda de batizado* starts only the masters and co-masters (sometimes also professors) are allowed to play. Their objective is to demonstrate to the younger ones the rules, traditions and techniques that are supposed to be applied in the play-fight of *capoeira*. By observation of the game, participants learn new techniques and tricks. Through such performance also the ideal image of mature *capoeirista* and the master is constructed. Master is not only respected according to his phys-

ical abilities but in the first place in regards to his *sabedoria* (wisdom), the mastering of instruments and singing, and experience in *capoeira* that can only be achieved through many years of practice. Therefore, the most experienced master would begin to *tocar a viola* (play on the central *berimbau* called *viola*) and sing *ladainha*. The play of the masters is followed by a short brake where some of the masters would perform the inauguration speeches. In such speeches the importance of tradition, respect and learning is emphasized. After that the baptism of new *capoeiristas* exams for the higher girdles are carried through. The exams are usually finished with another brake dedicated to the thanksgiving speeches followed by exams for instructors, professors and masters of *capoeira*. On the level of *contramestre* or *mestre* such exam is only a formality. *Contramestre* or *mestre* has already proved his knowledge and position with his work and participation on many *rodas*. Their preparation can last even ten or more years. The play in *roda de batizado* with most experienced and oldest masters represents inauguration of new *contramestre* or *mestre*. Such play is demonstration of *sabedoria* and *malandragem*. Another set of thanksgiving speeches is performed by invited masters and those who organised the *batizado* after the exams are finished. In the first place organising master would thank all those who came to *batizado* from abroad and also to all domestic masters who accept the invitation and appeared on the event. Then the invited would thank to organiser emphasizing the importance of his work. On most events masters were praising the importance of host master in the local society (*comunidade*). They would emphasize his role in education of local children and his social function in harmonisation of familiar relationships as well the relationships within the *comunidade*. Formal part of *batizado* is concluded with hosting master's speech, where he thanks to the sponsors, to those who helped to organise the event, to all participating masters, *capoeiristas* and to the parents of the children that are the most important joint of *capoeira* institution. Namely, they are the ones helping to organise the *capoeira* events and are encouraging their children to practice *capoeira*.

*Batizado* is mostly followed by the party in local bar where food and drinks are served. Members of the group, parents and also some invited *capoeiristas* participate on such parties where *capoeira* subjects are discussed. Such gatherings would mostly be finished till the late afternoon.

### Methodology

The in this article analysed topic was not the main research object of the fieldwork performed in Brazilian city Salvador. However the anthropological method of multi-sited fieldwork makes possible for anthropologist to collect also the important data which is not directly connected with his research subject. Comprehensive information set allows profound insight into the cultural institutions of studied society. Thus during the eighteen months fieldwork from 2004 to 2007, the *capoeira* institution was studied where observations, informal interviews and anthropologist's reflections were recorded and noted into two diaries. Beside the participating observation also the qualitative research method with in-depth interviews was applied. Information about the institutional structure of *capoeira* and about *capoeiristas* subjective views on the importance of institution were acquired through semi-structured interviews. I learned about the importance of formal and informal hierarchy in *capoeira* and manners of its creation and recreation. I also got the information about *capoeiristas*' attitudes towards health, illness and treatments, and least but not the last the important data about the *capoeira* traditions, the importance of the ancestors and experienced masters and the inter-generational relations were collected during the fieldwork. Latter data is discussed in this contribution.

### Sample

*Capoeiristas* from three different *capoeira* groups were included in the research. Some interviews were performed also with the masters from other *capoeira* groups. Participation of the researcher on important *capoeira* events all around Salvador and his notes, observations and talks with participants enabled collection of important data. It is also reasonable to men-

tion that the *capoeiristas* included in the sample were between 20 and 75 years old.

### Research conduction

The research was conducted in Bahian capitol Salvador, more precisely in city quarter Boca do Rio. Between the years 2004 and 2007 *capoeira* groups *Capoeira Angola Palmares* and *Nação Capoeira* were studied. Even if the groups are located in different city quarters and are different in play style, traditions and values, some masters - now members of the *Nação Capoeira* - originate from the group *Capoeira Angola Palmares*. Most of the data was collected on daily trainings and on *capoeira* events, yet some important information were gathered through informal conversations with masters and other *capoeiristas*. Also sixteen in-depth interviews with nine masters and seven students of *capoeira* were performed. The duration of interview varied between 40 minutes and two and a half hours according to available time and loquacity of the interviewees. The interviews were semi-structured so the questions were adjusted for each interviewee individually. Following sets of questions were employed in the conversations:

1. Attitudes towards *capoeira* (When and how you learned about the art? Why does he choose and practice it? Expectations? What makes him enthusiastic in regards to *capoeira*?),
2. historical and today's role of *capoeira*,
3. relationships within the *capoeira*,
4. *capoeira*'s role in the attitude towards health aggression and violence,
5. hierarchies and traditions of *capoeira*.

### Data analysis

Collected data was systemized through transcription of the conversations and repeated reading of the diaries. Further, the fieldwork results were compared with the already existing literature from the area.

### Findings

*Capoeira's role in establishment of inter-generational communication and relationships.*

As we have already shown, tradition and hierarchy are important concepts within *capoeira*. Hierarchy doesn't exist only as a formal struc-

ture but rather emerges from informal respect toward older and more experienced *capoeiristas*. Since *sabedoria* and *malandragem* are even more important *capoeirista's* features than physical agility and strength, *capoeirista* gets more respected in his old age. Elderly *capoeiristas* themselves are also proud on their experiences that according to Ryan /22/, is an important issue for their identification and construction of positive self-image. Sijuwade /23/ writes that positive self-image of the elderly is hindered by social isolation and negative changes in their social role. As older masters are gaining their *sabedoria* with age their task is to stay socially active, frequenting *capoeira* events in order to pass their knowledge to the younger ones. Such acting helps them also construct and preserve a positive self-image. Thus in *capoeira* public respect and positive self-image are achieved through the time spend in teaching *capoeira*, and frequency of appearing on public *rodas* and *capoeira* events. Older *capoeiristas* are by default group leaders or at least honourable members of the group. For those organising *capoeira* events it is a question of good social practice to invite at least one elder and respected master on his event. Namely, with the age the master transforms into ultimate *capoeira* product - the master of the masters. Older *capoeiristas* are also the ones that would narrate anecdotes and semi-mythological stories about the old times of *capoeira*. They would have the privilege to be the first to enter the *roda*, play the central *berimbau* and sing *ladainha*. If they continue to sing the songs, they would also have the right to dictate the manner and tempo of the game in *roda*. On symbolical level the older master represents the connection between ancestors and today's younger *capoeiristas*. Such older master - once student of already deceased master - is now the one who possesses knowledge about traditions of the clan. Even if rules and teaching techniques are already written in numerous handbooks of *capoeira*, all interlocutors agreed that real *capoeira* is learned out of experiences and direct communication and play with older *sábios capoeiristas*. Thus, *capoeiristas* are always interested in older masters' speeches and playing techniques. In masters' narrations (using semi-mythological

speech) certain actual thematic is discussed. Since they are *malandros* - in regards to their play-fight style and also regarding communication manners - their knowledge is passed *per partes*, which allows them to stay interesting for the younger ones. They are also the ones to decide to whom and when they will pass further knowledge and for who the whole *sabedoria* will be accessible. Older masters are mentors to *contramestres* and are the group leaders. However, communication and learning are not one-sided, going from the more experienced to the less experienced one. Such might be the first impression of external observer that would focus only on verbal levels of the communication within *capoeira*. On symbolical, ritual and non-verbal levels, communication flows in both directions. Older masters would for example let the younger *capoeiristas* play central *berimbau* that would give them the right to choose the songs and dictate the manner and tempo of the game. In such manner the development of younger *capoeiristas* identities is achieved, and creativity is promoted. With their individual style - influenced by constant social changes and the youngster's identity - younger *capoeiristas* contribute to creation and recreation of traditions and styles of certain group, so mutual respect, based on hierarchic system and multi-directional learning, between older and younger *capoeiristas* is achieved. Inter-personal and inter-generational communication is executed on physical level during the game of *capoeira*. As younger one is learning from the more experienced one, *vice versa* the older one is learning from less experienced but accurately informed one. To preserve his reputation, the more experienced one can not allow himself to be surprised by a kick or *rastera* from the less experienced one. Therefore, he has to adapt to new techniques and tricks of younger ones. Mutually younger and older ones are learning in the game of *capoeira*, teacher becomes a student and *vice versa*. Namely, younger *capoeiristas* practice several martial arts where they learn some, to *capoeira* alien techniques. The task of the master is to implement such techniques in the *capoeira* movement called *ginga* and to develop defensive techniques which would neutralise the former



ones. Most interlocutors mentioned that *capoeira* is the art in constant adaptation and transformation, however, changes have to follow the rules, values, ritual characteristics and established traditions of the institution. Therefore, to enable development and existence of the art and institution inter-generational communication is needed and promoted in *capoeira*.

### Discussion

Some existing researches on the field of *capoeira* are concerned with its social meanings and historical development, are phenomenological and ethnological analysis of rituals and institution, or represent historical analysis of different styles and rituals development. The field of inter-personal and inter-generational communication within *capoeira* is interesting notion that still needs to be studied. We have established during the research that inter-personal respect - created and recreated through corporal interaction and intra-institutional communication - is an important value of *capoeira* institution. Communication is performed through verbal and non-verbal channels, and might be direct or expressed through symbolism of rituals and traditions. The head master - mostly also the oldest one - being possessor of knowledge and a link between ancestors and living *capoeiristas*, is the one that decides how his *sabedoria* will be passed to the students. He decides to whom, when, and how much he will teach and to whom he will pass everything. For example, one of the masters included in the sample has instructed *capoeira*, exclusively as martial art to most of his students. Even if he has performed *roda de capoeira* once a week, he did not teach how to play the instruments or either has taught much about the rituals and history of *capoeira*. His school is more fitness or aerobic centre alike, where he offers also other sports activities. At the time of the research he had some three hundred members who have participated in various activities. Yet after I have frequented *capoeira* lessons for a longer period and did show a lot of interest for the art, master invited me on special lessons, organised only for most loyal and dedicated students. On such lessons instruments were played, songs were learned and

different *capoeira* styles analysed. While playing *capoeira angola* also the history of the art was discussed. Thus *sabedoria* was not available to everyone especially not to strangers, periodically visiting Salvador. Such practitioners are considered as *gringos* (strangers) and are, according to some *capoeiristas*, more interested in so called instant *capoeira* or *capoeira do gringo*. Since masters school was located in the university part of the town, in the vicinity of hotels and hostels, many times coincidental visitors have come to train in his school. He was aware that they will not stay longer and therefore, have to learn the effective attractive *capoeira* that is easily accepted also by those coming from different cultures. His students were aged between seventeen and forty years, when he at the time was fifty seven but incredibly fast, flexible and agile. Thus he was not respected only because of *sabedoria*, but primarily because of his dangerous and effective play-fight in the *roda*.

Other studied school is located in slam and rarely *gringo* would come and train there. Strangers practicing in this school are mostly members of the same group from abroad. Head master of the school passes his knowledge to everyone, yet *per partes*. He teaches through the analytical play in *roda*, meaning that play-fight techniques and tactics as well instruments playing and singing will be analysed and discussed on the trainings. His comments were in regards to style and respect of specific group traditions. After each lesson he had a lecture about history and present role of *capoeira*. Many times he told an anecdote about some older master. Students have perceived him as a father, yet he has always emphasized that the real father of the group is his master, the head master of *Capoeira Angola Palmares* group. Even if he is around 70 years old, he is always invited on the *capoeira* events all around Brazil Europe and USA. *Mestre Nó*, as his *apelido* (nickname) is, is believed to come out of *Mestre Pastinha's*, the founder of the *capoeira Angola*, lineage. He also mentioned that his master has taught him everything and he will pass to his student all the knowledge the way he has learned. Thus in this group knowledge was available for everyone yet learned gradually and the hierarchy

was at least superficially obvious and clear to everyone. As we see older masters are respected as the knowledge possessors, however, younger are not excluded from the discourse as they have to participate in the debates and have to prepare the folklore presentations of Afro-Brazilian culture on *capoeira* events.

### Conclusion

The historical development of *capoeira* is presented in this paper only because of better understanding of *capoeira's* social role. We emphasize the communicational function of the art. On the level of inter-personal and inter-institutional communication the role of *capoeira* in inter-generational communication is also of great interest for this contribution. According to Williams and Nussbaum /24/ such communication is frequently hindered because there is always a discrepancy in rules and communication resources between generations. Habits and convictions of both age groups influence the subjective individual perceptions (ibid.), which are different because of identification particularities and self-image differences. *Capoeira* as represents the common set of values, rules and communication resources for all participants regardless age, sex or culture, it also represents the common means of identification where roles and manners of identification are determined for younger and also more experienced *capoeiristas*. The older master identity in *capoeira* is reconstructed through traditions and semi-mythological narratives about *capoeira* ancestors. They are perceived as experienced fighters (*lutadores*) and those who were not victims of conspiracy have lived a long life. According to today's masters of *capoeira*, the masters of their masters were instructing till they died, however, they have all end up in poverty due to ignorant attitude of the state towards their life work. In such context *capoeira* discourse enters the problematic of state politics and attitudes toward cultural institutions, elder people and marginal groups. However, at this place we will not discuss *capoeira* role and influences on inter-institutional communication. The art is widespread around the globe and represents the economic opportunity for young Brazilian *capoeiristas*. Therefore its style, image and rep-

utation are different as they were decades ago when it was still predominantly *coisa do Brasileiro, coisa do negro* (Brazilian thing, the thing of the blacks). Older *capoeiristas* do oppose radical changes in *capoeira*, however, they are aware that the art has to be changed in order to win the global market, so their task is to integrate constant style changes into the valued traditions of *capoeira*. Communication system in *capoeira* offers means for reestablishment of qualitative inter-personal and inter-institutional dialog in modern society because *capoeira*, due to its historical and present social, political and economic influences, is strongly dynamic institution open for changes and adaptations. Thus, its systems can be applicable also in European inter-personal and inter-institutional communication systems.

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## KOMUNIKACIJSKI SUSTAV U CAPOEIRI: TRADICIJSKA I NEVERBALNA KOMUNIKACIJA KAO SREDSTVO MEĐUGENERACIJSKE KOMUNIKACIJE

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### Sažetak

Afro-brazilska kulturna institucija i borilačka vještina Capoeira kao i njezina funkcija i uloga u međuljudskoj, međuinstitucionalnoj i međugeneracijskoj komunikaciji tema je ovog rada. Predstavljani su podaci prikupljeni tijekom osamnaest mjeseci antropološkog terenskog rada u brazilskom gradu Salvadoru od 2004. do 2007. godine. Glavni cilj istraživanja bio je dobiti podatke o vezama između Capoeire, depresije, agresije i nasilja. Analizirana je društvena uloga capoeire na način da je istraživač proučavao sredstva i važnost komunikacije unutar institucije capoeire. Neki od ključnih zadataka u radu su opisati kako se tradicija ponovno uključuje u capoeiru kako bi se postigla inter- i intra institucionalna komunikacija i koliko je važna uloga međugeneracijskog dijaloga u ponovnom uspostavljanju hijerarhije unutar institucije capoeire.

*Ključne riječi:* Capoeira, neverbalna komunikacija, međugeneracijski dijalog, jednaki uvjeti komunikacije, stariji ljudi, međugeneracijsko poštovanje, stvaranje i rekreacija tradicije