

Capoeira Angola at Grupo Iuna: African Ancestral Knowledge and Counter-Colonial Relations¹²

ARTICLE

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Abstract

In this article, we discuss the African ancestral knowledge and counter-colonial ways of relationship based upon the experience of the Grupo Iuna de Capoeira Angola. We start from the idea that this school preserves the African ancestry in the research and teaching of Capoeira Angola. In accordance with contemporary Latin American philosophy, we address the meanings and dynamics of the Grupo Iuna, Capoeira Angola as an African ancestral knowledge, the impacts of the epistemicide of its understanding, the notion of the body as a territory, and Capoeira as a power for *aquilombamento*. We draw an analogy between the offense-defense dynamics intrinsic to the African fighting technique and the listening-and-speaking relationship. It concerns a narrative by research that happens through body movements and the practice of oral transmission. The main question guiding this work is: how does the African ancestral knowledge, nurtured at Iuna, teaches how to live together, promoting a counter-colonial way of being?

Keywords: Ancestry. Capoeira. Colonialism. Body. Quilombos (Maroons).

Capoeira Angola no Grupo Iuna: conhecimento ancestral africano e formas de relação contracolonial

Resumo

Neste artigo, discutimos o conhecimento ancestral africano e formas de relação contracolonial a partir da experiência do Grupo Iuna de Capoeira Angola. Partimos da ideia de que esta escola preserva a ancestralidade africana na pesquisa e no ensino da Capoeira Angola. Em diálogo com a filosofia latino-americana contemporânea, abordamos os sentidos e a dinâmica do Grupo Iuna,

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a Capoeira Angola como saber ancestral africano, os impactos do epistemicídio em sua compreensão, a noção de corpo como território e a capoeira como potência de aquilombamento. Traçamos uma analogia entre a dinâmica de defesa e ataque própria da técnica de luta africana e a relação escuta-fala. Trata-se de uma escrita narrativa sustentada por uma pesquisa que acontece no movimento do corpo e no exercício da oralidade. A questão central que orienta este trabalho é: como o conhecimento ancestral africano cultivado no luna ensina a conviver, promovendo um modo contracolonial de ser?

Palavras-chave: Ancestralidade. Capoeira. Colonialismo. Corpo. Quilombos.

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1 Introduction

The Grupo Iuna de Capoeira Angola began its activities on February 1983. Its meeting minutes document of foundation was registered in a Notary service in 1989. It is the first Capoeira Angola group of Belo Horizonte. The group is currently coordinated by Cássia Rita de Faria Silva and by Edson Moreira da Silva, also known as Mestre Primo (Master Primo). Its mission is to promote and value Capoeira Angola as a cultural heritage (Grupo Iuna de Capoeira Angola, 2023). To this end, it develops open training sessions for people of all ages, *rodas de capoeira* (capoeira circles), and discussion circles, in which are articulated the research and teaching of the African ancestral knowledge present in *capoeira*. In addition to preserving and disseminating this knowledge, the school also promotes complementary educational activities.

Cássia has dedicated herself for over 20 years to resource management, family and child care of Iuna, along with the creation of support networks for the community's sustainability. Mestre Primo, whose life is inseparable from *capoeira*, has been involved in its research and teaching for over 40 years, having been recognized in 2022 with the title of *Doutor por Notório Saber* (*doctorate by reason of distinguished merit*) issued by the Federal University of Minas Gerais.

This article arises from this context of dedication to *Capoeira Angola*, seeking to analyze and publicize dimensions of the African ancestral knowledge nurtured at this school, with the purpose of reflecting on a counter-colonial experience (Santos, 2022). This is research developed through “sweating out,” by the embodiment and repetition of the

African fighting technique that is intrinsic of *Capoeira Angola*, in the fostering of a preceding and resistant culture to colonization.

This write is in narrative style, and is a collaboration with Mestre Primo and Cássia Farias of the Grupo Iuna, where knowledge arises from *corpo-oralidade* (body-orality synergy) (Flor, 2020), intertwining body movement and words.

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We have organized this write into four sections: *Introduction, Methodology, Results and Discussion, and Final Considerations*. In *Results and Discussion*, we present three moments: “*In the spirit of welcoming*”: ways of “*aquilonbar-se*” (marooning), starting from the idea that the Grupo Iuna is a *quilombo*; *Capoeira Angola*: African *ancestral knowledge*, addressing *Capoeira Angola* as an ancestral knowledge and some of the impacts of its epistemicide; and in *Teachings of the technique: is the treasure in the defense and the listening?*, we examine the African fighting technique, establishing a comparison between defense/listening and offense/speaking, questioning the over-valuation of speaking/offense in Western society. Our hypothesis is that the embodiment of this technique and the strengthening of defense/listening, as practiced in the Grupo Iuna, are key to promoting counter-colonial relations.

2 Methodology

The word “method” comes from the Greek *meta*, also meaning beyond, and *hodos*, meaning path. In Ancient Greece, it was primarily understood as research (Dechile, 2025). It is only in the modern age that it acquired the sense of a “sure path” to achieve the truth (Lalande, 2013). With Descartes and Bacon, this conception is strengthened and consolidated as a scientific method, structured in stages and targeting the seeking of truth (Kohan, 2021). This model has disseminated globally as the legitimate and universal medium for knowledge production, predominating over other forms of knowing.

Walter Kohan (2021), by addressing the method issue in teaching, questions the notion of a single path to access the correct knowledge, and advocates for the

comprehension of the method as ways of walking the path, being open to possibilities and with ways created along the path itself, which he calls "the pedagogy method".

Dialoguing with this perspective and the word's etymology, we understand that thinking about the method is holding accountability for the path we choose to follow. The research within Grupo Iuna, under the guidance of Mestre Primo, from which this article comes to fruition, takes place through the body and the oral transmission, systematically revisiting and studying the African fighting technique that enables the game of *Capoeira*. It is a lively and recurring research, which seeks to deepen the understanding of the African ancestral knowledge preserved in *Capoeira Angola*.

This path of research and teaching, based upon *corpo-oralidade*, according to the philosopher Wanderson Flor do Nascimento (2020, p. 86), is permeated by two fundamental aspects: the "relational movement," which establishes proximity between the speaker and the listener, and the experience which makes what was lived to feeding with meaning what is said-heard. Therefore, the memory of the research developed within this school is being integrated in the continuous dialogue established from the embodied experience in the training sessions.

As Flor do Nascimento highlights in a dialogue with Hampaté Bâ (2010), this is a living culture, out of a knowledge process "radically distinct from the distancing or objectivity/neutralit y advocated by hegemonic Western perspectives" (Flor do Nascimento, 2020, p. 86). However, we understand that this way of researching, when brought into the academic context, widens the spectrum of what is understood as research. It creates an encounter between bodies that fight and find meaning in oral transmission and the academic world. This amplifies the discussion about non-colonial knowledge cultivated in Grupo Iuna de Capoeira Angola.

Coherently with the researching way that we establish, we write in a narrative style by choice. This write has been read, discussed, and modified within the heart of the school premises. It is anchored in the direct experience of the writer and, therefore, it lies outside the requirements of submitting it to the Comissão Nacional de Ética em Pesquisa (National Research Ethics Committee).

Similarly to what happens in the *rodas* (circles) of *Capoeira*, in addition to the people who give life to the school, we invited several other people to “play” with us. Hence, Wanderson Flor do Nascimento (2020) helps us thinking about *quilombo*, “*quilombar-se*”, and the identity of Black people; Aníbal Quijano (2005) helps on coloniality and race; Sueli Carneiro (2005) helps on epistemicide; Mestre Pastinha (1988) helps on *capoeira* as an African ancestral knowledge; Kiusam de Oliveira (2020) and Muniz Sodré (2023) helps on the body as territory; Lenkersdorf (2008) helps on listening from a non-colonial perspective; and Antônio Bispo dos Santos (2023) helps on the concept of counter-colonialism.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 “In the spirit of welcoming”: ways of “*quilombar-se*” (*marooning*)

The Grupo Iuna de Capoeira Angola is a *quilombo*, “*The Quilombo of Dona Luiza*”. It was Dona Luiza, mother of Mestre Primo, who authorized the construction of the capoeira school on the rooftop of her house. Dona Luiza was a healer/blesser; she always fostered a relationship of mutual support: blessing people, sharing food, and encouraging community organization. This form of relationship continues to be nurtured at the Grupo Iuna.

As per Wanderson Flor do Nascimento quote, a *quilombo* is

an ideological instrument against forms of oppression, nourishing a dream of ethical and political freedom, which appears as a way to offer support to the Black community, turning them toward a critical attitude regarding the social inequalities to which they are subjected (Flor do Nascimento, 2020, p. 69).

The territoriality of a *quilombo* is not limited to a point in time in history, but to a specific relationship with the territory. As we understand from Flor do Nascimento, the *quilombo* is a communal territory represented by the dream of freedom and resistance to the oppressions faced by the Black community, which can be in a rural settlement or in a building, as it is the case of Iuna.

Inaugurated in 2001, the part of the building ceded by Mestre Primo for the organization's use became the school's headquarters, with the sole purpose of maintaining itself as a space for the preservation of capoeira throughout time. Nowadays, the school-*quilombo* has three floors: the first has a large kitchen, a dining area, and a meeting room; the second, a room used exclusively for capoeira and a small classroom intended for mixed activities, such as English and music teaching; the top floor is the residence of Mestre Primo.

The place is beautiful and clean, made with high quality materials, something Cássia often emphasizes. To her, any space that welcomes people, especially from the periphery, must be of quality, embracing all who arrive.

At Iuna, the territory is fundamental. In the game of capoeira, which is a fight, it is essential to protect one's own territory. Having one's own territory allows the *quilombo* to be fostered, strengthening men, women, and children with the knowledge each one brings.

At Iuna, the *quilombo* is all about a way of life we have lost as mankind, of a knowledge that has not been taken into account.

(...) They erased the *quilombo*. We need to "aquilombar-se" again. But, in order to do that, we need to create welcoming processes. This knowledge that the system trampled on is what will give us the answers. To create another perspective, the perspective of aquilombamento (marronage), we have to be very conscious and strong. We have to believe in ourselves, ever more. And the body is the compass (Moreira; Gontijo, 2023).

It is through the sessions and practice of capoeira that the body is strengthened, allowing the listening of its potentials and limitations. We learn to respect our limits and the limits of the other person whom we play with. The game of capoeira is only possible because there is another person, a community to play with, to learn with. The African ancestral knowledge present in capoeira teaches us to relate with each other from a perspective of cooperation, mutual support, and no competition.

3.1.1 Welcoming among mercantilization

In alignment with this, we take that capoeira cannot function under the overall market parameters. The possibility of embodying this African ancestral knowledge must be available to all people, as Mestre Primo often asserts: "Black, white, or blue". Thus, at Iuna, all activities are free of charge and open to people from all walks of life. Payment is not accepted in order to participate in the training sessions, neither is required the use of a uniform, special attire, or any other presented condition. As it is constantly reiterated, capoeira is not a product and cannot be sold; it is a path to freedom that is taught, lived, and shared by our ancestors, it is a living culture.

At Iuna, we discuss the issues of charging a fee as a condition for accessing the knowledge. By charging for it, capoeira becomes inaccessible to people with fewer economic resources who, in Brazil and most parts of the world, are majorly non-white people. This hinders the access of Black people to a fighting knowledge originated in Africa, which is capable of supporting the rebuilding of their own identity.

From the colonization process, as Aníbal Quijano (2007) states, it has been generated new constructions and transformations of identity. People who were previously Tupinambás, Mayas, Zapotecs, Zenu, Muiscas, among thousands of other ethnicities, have been decreased in worth to just Indigenous people. Something similar occurs with the people kidnapped from the African continent: Bantu, Nagô, Jeje, and thousands of others, have been decreased in worth to just Black people. The image of Black people imposed by the colonization process, Black people were merely objects, commodities, and currency (Mbembe, 2014 apud Flor do Nascimento, 2020, p. 30). It is then built the identity of Black people as a collective, as it is also done to the Indigenous people and to the white people, defining, accordingly to this classifying matrix, who we should be, how to be, and how we understand ourselves and the ways we live our lives, our relationship with ourselves and with the others.

When we talk about identity recovery, we are not talking about identity as an essence or a subsistence method, but as a movement for the building of one's self-image (Flor do Nascimento, 2020, p. 26). Understanding identity as a construction (and not as essence)

is a counter-colonial gesture, as it allows self-reinvention beyond the image imposed by the colonial perspective.

Antônio Bispo dos Santos (2022) defines counter-coloniality as a non-colonial way of life, as follows:

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The counter-colonialism is simple: it is you wanting to colonize me and I don't accept that you colonize me; it is I defending my own self. Counter-colonialism is a way of life different from colonialism. The counter-colonialism practiced by Africans originates in Africa. It is a way of life that no one had named it. We can talk about the Indigenous way of life, the quilombola way of life, the Bantu way of life, the Yoruba way of life (Santos, 2022, p. 40).

Through the embodiment of the African ancestral knowledge present in Capoeira Angola, it is possible to build another self-image. To recognize, through the body, that Black people are descendants of African men and women with their own knowledge and technologies that allowed and still allows the safekeeping and the care for life, in a way of not just merely reproducing the imposition of colonial ways of life, thus becoming counter-colonial.

3.1.2 Politics, Sharing, and Articulations

Another fundamental gesture of *aquilombamento* at Luna is the sharing of food. Cássia, who once owned a natural food restaurant, takes care of the kitchen, and anyone who arrives is invited to have coffee, a snack, or some fruit. After every training session and roda, there is always a moment of social gathering, which in the sessions for adults it also becomes a space to discuss and reflect on capoeira. Even with Mestre Primo and Cássia in the front, it is common for some adults to bring food, and everyone (children and adults) take part in the care and cleaning of the space. Just like we sing in the roda: "*Maria Conga, this quilombo is ours, this quilombo is yours and it is mine, this quilombo is ours*".

For Luna's actions to remain ongoing and free of charge, there is a systematic care in financial organization and sustainability, carried out mainly by Cássia. This care allowed Luna to be approved and certified as a Ponto de Cultura (Cultural Point) by the Ministry of

Culture (MINC) in 2010, and to be included in other public funding calls. Thus, the school has been supported for years by the Latin America Group of Onlus Solidária Sant'Angelo, an NGO from Milan, Italy, which contributes to the basic servicing of the building.

In order to guarantee the sustainability of the territory and strengthening of the work being developed, it is necessary to expand the dialogue with other groups, communities, government entities, and the State, envisioning for organization and *aquilombamento* beyond the school borders. Mestre Primo is also an example of this. His trajectory in the Black Movement has been pivotal to the articulation between capoeira, politics, and education. He acts as a promoter of the Fórum da Capoeira (Capoeira Forum), and the creator of the *Encontro Nacional de Capoeira Angola* (National Capoeira Angola Gathering), which has had five editions so far, and the Caravana de Angola (Angola Procession), which has had two editions so far. Both events were held by the Grupo Iuna with public funding, free of charge, and open to all.

Mestre Primo's entitlement as a PhD by UFMG further expanded the school's dialogue, now including the university. In 2022 and 2024, Mestre Primo was a guest professor in the extension course titled *Saberes Tradicionais: Artes e Poéticas Ancestrais* (Traditional Knowledges: Ancestral Arts and Poetics). In the first year, his teaching subject addressed *Capoeiragem e Memória nas Gerais* (Capoeiragem and Memory in Minas Gerais state); in the second year it covered the Angola Procession, which included four visits to Capoeira Angola groups in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte and Ouro Preto.

3.2 Capoeira Angola: ancestral African knowledge

"We arrive. We enter the room, which is spacious, bright, and ventilated, with a hardwood floor. Mestre Primo positions himself at the back, with his back to the wall. We place ourselves at a certain distance in front of him, looking at him. He begins to do warm-up movements which we repeat; then, he starts to do movements specific to capoeira. Slowly, as we warm up. 'Negativa lateral (full-body side bending), negativa de frente (full-

body side bending with torso twist and opposite leg front extension), rabo de arraia (one-legged 360 back spin on a handstand) all the way, role (one-legged squat), pulo de deslocamento (handstand lateral jump) and rabo de arraia,’ he gives the drill performing it. We, with our corporalidade, follow the commands. These are the session’s first 30 minutes. They end up with Primo saying: ‘volta ao mundo’ (world turn). Everyone walks in circles around the room. It’s time to practice the bananeira (handstand), to work on physical and mental balance. Then, Primo calls a student to demonstrate the next sequence of the session. In pairs, we practice the given sequence. We ask a question, and the Mestre gives us a ‘hint’: ‘Keep this sequence in your pocket,’ he often says. Then we practice the game in full.

At some point, he asks us to form a circle. It is the time for studying. We all sit on the floor, and he does too. The pairs arranged either randomly or by Mestre Primo instruction play at the center of the previously formed circle. We observe the games. Comments and questions arise, which Mestre Primo always tries to answer with the body: ‘Let’s see it in practice,’ he says. The final half hour of the session is for music. Each person grabs an instrument, and we form the bateria (orchestra). We play, we sing. If necessary, Primo also makes a comment, teaching something specific about one of the instruments or about the singing: ‘The percussion cannot be played louder than the berimbau’; ‘The singer’s voice must be heard’; ‘When we play the instrument, it helps to work through our emotions,’ he says.

Over the years, Mestre Primo makes small variations in the training sessions. The repetition of the capoeira technique seems fundamental. ‘It is there, in the repetition of the ‘rabo de arraia’, in the ‘negativa’, that the knowledge rests’; ‘It’s sweaty work; it is with the body that you learn’; ‘There is no need to rush to learn’; ‘We are always learning.’”

*This text was initially introduced at the 11th International Colloquium on Philosophy and Education: *Estudar? (Studying?)*, promoted in 2022 by the Núcleo de Estudos de Filosofias e Infâncias (Center for Studies of Philosophies and Childhoods) at the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro. Based on the experience with capoeira, we proposed to reflect on what it means to study: what are we talking about when we talk about study?*

Where does it happen? How? What culture does it reinforce? In the university space, what practices are legitimized as legit ways of knowledge?

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Capoeira training can be understood as a study. Understanding study as a relationship of commitment, affection, dedication, and of fully engaging with a subject. Now, what place do we give to capoeira schools and masters in our society? In what fashion do the ways we think about and relate to capoeira schools can echo the epistemicide present in society?

Epistemicide, as conceptualized by Sueli Carneiro (2005, p. 97), goes beyond the mere disqualification of the knowledge of subjugated people. It involves the production of cultural indigence, through intellectual belittlement, the delegitimization of the Black people as producers of knowledge, the lowering of cognitive capacity due to material scarcity, and the compromising of self-esteem through discrimination processes institutionalized in the educational system.

The colonization has denied the knowledge of African people dragged by force, even when they hold fundamental knowledge for activities such as construction, mining, and cultivation, which sustained the wealth of Brazil and Europe. This knowledge transmitted by the body and not by books was systematically turned invisible, as it was the knowledge that constitutes the fight that here in Brazil we call “capoeira”.

As Mestre Primo reminds us: “Any intelligence different from the colonizer’s intelligence did not matter.” And yet: “Society was built upon the thought of conquest, and its atmosphere ended up coming through our pores” (Moreira; Gontijo, 2023). In the face of this reality, it becomes necessary to ask ourselves: what types of intelligence do we value? Which voices do we choose to listen to?

3.2.1 A non-colonizing fight

The African ancestral knowledge that constitutes capoeira as a fight, we believe, is a way to deconstruct the colonizing logic. In Mestre Primo’s words:

It is a fight for freedom and not to destroy the other. It is not the logic of competition; it is the logic of interaction with the other. It is not the logic of the colonizing process, which operates by destroying the other. The learning process is collective. We are talking about the fight for the strengthening of a people (Moreira; Gontijo, 2023).

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In capoeira, the presence of the community is essential, whether it is to play (jogar), assemble the bateria, or be part of the roda. The other person is not there to be dominated or defeated. Everyone is integrated. I need another person, not to be the same as them, but to find my own rhythm and, in doing so, to be able to play with them. In the game, by attacking and defending, I make the movement flow. I respect their difference by responding to it. Respecting the difference is justly allowing it to exist (Moreira; Gontijo, 2023).

This learning happens in the body, through the capoeira technique. The technique is expressed in the movements that structure the game. Among the defense movements are the *negativa lateral*, the *negativa de frente*, the *esquiva* (dodge), the *rolê*, and the *queda de rins* (elbow-supported kneecaps handstand). Among the attack movements are the *rabo de arraia*, the *chapa de frente* (front kick), the *chapa de costas* (spinning back kick), and the *tesoura* (scissor sliding). The articulation between defense and offense is fluid, as one is arisen out of the other. Adding to these movements is the “*ginga*” (swaying): “movements of the body that the capoeirista executes with the objective of distracting the opponent’s attention to make them vulnerable to the application of their strikes” (Mestre Pastinha, 1988, p. 50).

This knowledge is of African origin, as Mestre Pastinha (1988), who was one of the first to founding a Capoeira Angola school, also tells us. He learned this fighting technique from Benedito, an enslaved person brought from Angola. Benedito was just one of many people who carried in their bodies this knowledge from Africa.

It is important to remember this, as the prevailing discourse usually denies the African origin of capoeira, seeking to erase the power of the Black African people manifested in this fight. In these discourses, capoeira is merely “sport, folklore, or national culture” of Brazil. This reminds us of what Ellen Lima de Souza and Alexandre Filordi

Carvalho write, in dialogue with Nobles Wade, which states: “slavery took the Black people out of Africa, but colonization tried to take Africa out of the Black people” (Carvalho; Souza, 2021, p. 11).

We argue in defense of what enables the game of capoeira is a way of moving, acting, and being in the world that precedes the colony and, therefore, does not respond to the colonial model marked by oppression and competition. The embodied technique would be a gateway to history, a way to deconstruct, through the body, the image of the Black people told under the logic of coloniality, which asserts that Black people had no knowledge.

Through the technique, the body accesses ancestral knowledge that offers another understanding of life, for example, through its embodiment, “we understand that intelligence is in the body as a whole, not just in the head” (Moreira; Gontijo, 2023).

3.2.2 Ancestry and tradition, the body as territory

It is important to distinguish between ancestry and tradition. At Iuna, tradition is only valid when it brings us teachings about movement and propels life forward. When a tradition stagnates, it is associated with the colonizing system that seeks to transform everything into a product, something that is ready to be sold.

The ancestral knowledge, on the other hand, brings the movement that activates the body. Ancestry is always in motion; it has no end, and there is no way to sell it. The capoeira we seek is infinite, as it teaches about liberation and life. It re-signifies the behavior and the vision of the world (Moreira; Gontijo, 2023).

This is in dialogue with the Pedagogy of Ancestry (or Eco-Ancestral Pedagogy) proposed by Kiusam de Oliveira (2020), in which ancestral knowledge are key elements of learning and in which the body is the temple. The body-temple is “(...) a sacred territory, conscious that it needs to be restructured as a body-temple-resistance to be capable of combating institutional racism and everyday necropolitics, from a socio-cosmo-political perspective” (Oliveira, 2020, p. 5).

"You have to practice, you have to practice, there is no other way". "Health is a treasure". "The system wants to see us unhealthy, it wants us dead". These words from Mestre Primo express the importance of caring for the body. At luna, the training, the way of training, and the way of practicing capoeira must keep the person prepared for the fight and, at the same time, promote self-care. Likewise, taking care of nutrition is vital, as it means looking after the body-temple (Oliveira, 2020). Therefore, violence within the roda is unacceptable, such is the perpetuation of training practices that lead to exhaustion and physical wear and tear.

The body is a territory that must be cared for, and capoeira enables a way of body care through *aquilombar-se*. This relationship between body and territory can be considered from the perspective of Muniz Sodré (2019) when he states that:

(...) Bantu people from Southwest Africa for whom "the conquest of space, of territory, is first and foremost a possession taking of the person." On the occasion of the first initiation ritual, the young person is taught to treat the body as a world on a reduced scale. With the development of the process, it is the house that constitutes the macrocosm of the body. And thus, the individual's physical-spiritual space expands (Sodré, 2019, p. 63-64).

Henceforth, this African ancestral knowledge is taught and learned through the encounter between bodies, between these territories, worlds on a reduced scale. It is within it and through it, by increasing one's own strength, that with capoeira a *quilombo* is made.

3.3 Teachings of the technique: is the treasure in the defense and the listening?

In capoeira, one learns from one another, and everyone is responsible for the development of the circle. The master (a man or a woman) is part of this community, demonstrating this responsibility through continuous mutual learning.

It is a community constituted from a relationship of permanent listening with those who came before, with those who are present now, and with those who will come. The

capoeira that came from Africa is knowledge that is received by experiencing, in one's own body, what the African men and women taught to those who came before us.

In the *roda*, as in the game of capoeira, the movement is circular. At times, we are seated in the circle, forming the chorus; at others, playing; at others, participating in the orchestra; singing and playing instruments, be it the *agogô*, the *atabaque*, or the *berra boi*. Everyone is responsible for taking care of the circle's energy. If someone leaves, everyone else is attentive to "move aside" and close the gaps to maintain it a circle. If someone shows fatigue and wishes to stop playing an instrument, the person who notices and wishes to play stands up and takes the place.

Whoever is playing the *berra boi* or *gunga*, which is typically played by more experienced people, such as masters, gives some "cues" when they realize that the circle's energy is not being taken care of. They may ask to switch the player of a certain instrument, to close the circle gaps, to be careful with the children, or, if necessary, to interrupt the game if it is becoming violent.

Is it possible to maintain this circularity and energy of the *roda* without listening? How does listening manifest itself within it? What form of listening is taking place? What is the relationship or the relationships between this circular movement and the listening? Between the community and the listening? Is there any community without the listening? Is there any listening without the community?

3.3.1 Listening as a principle of community

Carlos Lenkersdorf, in his book *Aprender a escutar* (Learning to Listen, 2008), develops listening from the Mayan Tojolabal perspective. We believe that this indigenous culture can help us think about the relationship between listening and community. Listening in this perspective would be similar to feeling, receiving. Listening would be linked to receiving something that belongs to the other, that is not made or produced by us. Listening would imply receiving words that:

Take us from the center, from where our "me" prefers to be in order to command, direct, and occupy the top. By taking us out of the center, they neither marginalize nor push us to the side, but integrate our "me" into "we." We form a dialogical community. That is the secret work of welcoming. By listening to the words of those who speak to us, we enter a reality previously hidden (Lenkersdorf, 2008, p.18, our translation).

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Listening, according to the Tojolabal experience, exposes us to a reality that was previously inaccessible to us. It places us within a community with which we have a dialogical relationship, with which we have neither a relationship of command nor subordination. Listening makes the experience of the "we-others" possible, because it enables the dialogue.

The dialogue, whether it is carried out with the body as in the game of capoeira, or with words, is only possible if we believe that the other person can understand what we are communicating, and if we consider that what one'shave to communicate is relevant (Flor do Nascimento, 2020, p. 39). It is this movement, the legitimization of one's own voice and the voice of the other person, that enables the existence of community. Meaning , without listening there is no dialogue, and without dialogue there is no community.

Some details of the capoeira developed at luna make us reflect on listening, as a principle of dialogue and community, of *aquilombamento*. We refer to the capoeira developed at luna because each school has its own particularities and ways of experiencing this living culture. At the same time, we recognize that many of the elements we address can be considered proper to capoeira or Capoeira Angola, and not just of a specific school.

3.3.2 The dynamics of the technique

By highlighting the importance of defense in the technique that makes the game of capoeira possible, we reflect on listening. Defense is a movement we perform in response to the other person's offense. Every offense demands a defense, and it is from the defense that the offense emerges. This is how the roda rotates. We understand from the research we conducted while embodying the technique that when there is offense upon offense,

aggression and violence are installed in the game. On the other hand, the game does not happen if one person remains only on defense and the other only on offense. It is a recurring movement of question and answer.

The defense movement is a movement of receiving: the person recognizes that the other is making a movement that puts them in danger; dialoguing with the other's movement, they protect themselves by moving out of the risk they are placed in, and from this place of protection, they make the offense movement. When a strike lands—that is, when the defense was not sufficiently effective—the other person is helping to show where attention is lacking. It is a dialogue made with the whole body, where one helps the other to perceive themselves, by being perceived—and vice-versa.

“The treasure is in the defense”, “be calm, be calm”, Mestre Primo says repeatedly. In the Grupo Iuna view, due to the influence of the market, the defense movement in capoeira has been lost, with the offense one prevailing and making the roda more violent and aggressive. In many games, the defense is ignored, and the offense focuses on showing-off. In these cases, the game moves away from the connection with the other person and the community, becoming a spectacle for an audience.

At Iuna, the focus on defense occurs not only in the game of capoeira but also in life. For example, in conversations at Iuna, when, in excitement, Mestre Primo and another person start speaking at the same time, it is noticeable how Mestre Primo is the first to stop speaking, then pay attention to what the other person is saying, and, as soon as they finish, share his ideas, most often already having considered what has been said.

What happens if we think of listening as "defense" and speaking as "offense"? If we focus only on speaking, overlapping, speech upon speech, we could say that this is where aggression and violence arise. But what if only one person speaks while the other only listens, can we still call that dialogue?

Associating listening with defense within the capoeira technique makes us think that if we focus more on listening, allowing our speech to emerge from it, we can establish a game with the other person, in which one learns from the other and vice-versa, generating a common movement, also marked by a certain circularity.

It is the inseparable dynamics between defense-offense that makes the fight possible, the dialogue, possible. From the practice of capoeira, we understand that defense-offense, speech-listening, are not separate if we want to maintain ourselves in the fight, in the dialogue. It is a recurring movement: from defense comes the offense; from offense comes the defense. From listening comes speaking; from speaking comes listening.

This counterpoints to the culture we live in, which is marked by the Western heritage of colonization, where speaking and listening are separated and more importance is given to speaking than it is to listening (Lenkersdorf, 2008), to offense than to defense. In this culture, there seems to be a longing for not approaching the other, creating a community feeling, but to overcome them, in a movement of competitiveness. In this context, giving more attention to defense/listening may be a key to escaping from reproducing this system.

3.3.3 Corporal perception and musicality

“*You play for me, and I'll play for you*”, says another *corrido* (capoeira song). For Mestre Primo, capoeira awakens an intelligence that happens in the whole body, or in the words of Luiz Rufino (2019), an “undivided intelligence.” This undivided intelligence is directly linked to the expansion of our perception.

An example of this is the sensation that arises, after years of training, of perceiving the body in its totality. In a game, by being attentive, even without using the eyes to look, the person can sense where the strike is coming from. This does not mean that seeing is not important, but rather that it is only one of the elements that comprises perception. Mestre Primo, aware of this, does not insist that it is necessary to constantly look at the other person during the game. This is because it is understood that the perception of the other does not occur only through seeing, but through a sensitive listening of the body capable of capturing presences, rhythms, and intentions.

This seems fundamental for us to think about listening-speaking dynamics. If we think that listening involves receiving, involves sensing, we do not listen only with our ears.

The ear is only one of the reception channels of the world we have, but our entire body is receptive, and sensitive. In other words, if we listen only with our ears, we would be failing to listen, to receive other perceptions that are also important for the progress of the dialogue, because we feel/think with the whole body, not just with a part of it. We can think the same about speaking; we do not speak only with words; our entire body communicates and manifests our way of existing and interacting. The listening and the speaking are body.

The musicality of *capoeira* is another component that makes us reflect on listening. During the session, when each person picks up an instrument, it is perceptible through the sound coming from the instrument how the person is in terms of their emotions. Upon hearing the *atabaque* sound kind of droopy or down, or when the *berimbau* is played too fast, Mestre Primo calls attention to the sound that is coming out. He pleads for calmness. He says that the instrument helps to work the emotions. That there must be a certain harmony among the instruments, so that the sounds of the *berimbau*s and the voice of the singer, male or female, can be heard.

Both while playing an instrument and in the dialogue with the person one is playing with in a *roda*, it is as if they were ways of (self) listening. It is as if the emotional state were reflected and expressed in the sound that one extracts from the played instrument and in the way one is playing it. Also, by listening to the sound other people extract from their instrument or by playing with another person, it is as if it were possible to perceive their emotional state. In order to receive, to feel the emotional state of the other person, we need, as in the game of *capoeira*, to make room for difference. The other is not me.

The practice of *capoeira* at Grupo luna demonstrates that the research of the African fighting technique extends itself to the constitution of relationships of care, listening, and shared responsibility. The roundness of the circle and the inseparable articulation between defense and offense, listening and speaking, reveal that African ancestral knowledge is simultaneously a bodily fighting knowledge and an instrument of community construction. The perception of one's self and the other person with one's entire body, combined with the attention to musicality, allows the connection to the collective movement and to the experience of the "we-others". Thus, the articulation between defense/listening and

offense/speaking makes fighting and life possible, configuring a coexistence that counterpoints the colonial logics of separation, competition, and hierarchy.

4 Final Considerations: acknowledgments to those who make this school possible

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We understood that the methodology we adopted does not follow a pre-established model like the "scientific method," being a research path in movement where body and spoken-listened word intertwine, affirming a non-hegemonic perspective of a relationship with the knowledge. The Grupo Iuna de Capoeira Angola is thus assumed as a place where counter-colonial knowledge is nurtured, capable of critically dialoguing with scholars, extending the understanding of what research is.

Anchored in *aquilombamento* and the African ancestral knowledge present in the technique that makes the game of *capoeira* possible, the Grupo Iuna is embraced as a *quilombo*, an "ideological instrument against forms of oppression." This fighting practice fortifies listening and care for one's own body and for others. It promotes a counter-colonial way of living together and establishes the *aquilombar-se* in the territoriality of the body. Yet, it emphasizes the importance of conquering and caring for the territory as a common ground to embody this way of living together.

We thank the African men and women who brought, nurtured, and shared this knowledge, researched and taught in the spirit of the welcoming at the Grupo Iuna de Capoeira Angola. Keeping the school on this path is possible thanks to the commitment of Mestre Primo and Cássia to this culture that resists colonization. This commitment, combined with the power of ancestral knowledge, inspires other people and organizations to support its cultivation.

We must also thank Dona Luiza, Mestre Primo's mother, who believed in him and made the rooftop of her house available to make this *capoeira* school dream come true, as well as many other people who, in many ways, allowed and still allows its existence. A place that is a safe haven for those who arrive and, above all, for an ancestral culture that came from Africa. A culture that, by giving it shelter, it also shelters us all in return.

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