

Cantar é Capoeira, Camará

PART IV: Maculelê

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Cantar é Capoeira, Camará

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INTRODUCTION:

Cantar é Capoeira is a seven-part series intended to give English-speaking readers an indication of the historical significance of the culture of Capoeira, with primary focus on its music and oral history.

The scope of the series as well as the author's understanding is admittedly limited, and I take full responsibility for errors and omissions in the translation and explanation of the text.

Special thanks for their openness and guidance to my family, especially my parents, Patrick and Ernesta, to Instructor Fred Bendongué and Co. of Compagnie Azanie, Mestre Márcio Mendes and Co. of Grupo Muiraquitã/Escola de Capoeira Angola, Mestre Bezerra, Instructor Azulão and Co. of Grupo Axé Capoeira (Trinidad) for their pioneering work in the Caribbean, and to the many other capoeiristas who have contributed to my understanding and appreciation of the artform.

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Trenel, Instituto Palmeiras

CAPOEIRA É CANTAR, CAMARÁ

PART IV: MACULELÊ

Sou Eu Maculelê (Maculelê is me)

Sou eu, sou eu
Sou eu, Maculelê, sou eu

Sou eu, sou eu
Sou eu, Maculelê, sou eu



Maculelê is a dance performed in perfect 4/4 time with sticks, machetes or even (sticks on) fire. As Caribbean dance researcher Molly Ahye in her 1978 classic Golden Heritage suggests, failure to keep in time can have very painful consequences (see Warner-Lewis, 2003).

This martial or military dance includes tripping, kicking and butting movements, as well as rhythmic dueling. The Maculelê form originated in Santo Amaro da Purificação, a city located in the Recôncavo Baiano, a region in the state of Bahia in Brazil). Santo Amaro, in addition to its very famous musicians and singers, is characterized by a rich African heritage which manifests in its various popular cultural and religious celebrations.

The golden era of Maculelê can be considered to be the immediate post-slavery era in Brazil (1888-). However, with the death of the great mestres of Maculelê in Santo Amaro in the early 20th century, there was an abrupt drop in the practice. In 1943, Paulino Aluísio de Andrade, now known as Popó de Maculelê, emerged to resuscitate the artform. Considered by many as the Father of Maculelê in Brazil, Mestre Popó brought together elders who had known Maculelê at its height and reconstructed the dance from his and their recollections. Mestre Popó then formed relatives and friends into the "Conjunto de Maculelê de Santo Amaro", whose fame served to rekindle the Maculelê form throughout Brazil and beyond.

UMA CANÇÃO DE MACULELÊ: Tindolelê Auê Cauiza

Tindolelê auê Cauiza
Tindolelê é sangue real
Meu pai é filho

Eu sou neto de Aruanda
Tindolelê auê Cauiza

*Tindolelê auê Cauiza
Tindolelê é sangue real
Meu pai é filho,
Eu sou neto de Aruanda
Tindolelê auê Cauiza*

Cauiza, de onde é que veio

Veio de Angola ê

Maculelê, de onde é que veio

Veio de Angola ê

E o atabaque, de onde é que veio

Veio de Angola ê

E o agogô, de onde é que veio

Veio de Angola ê

The cultural and historical origins of Maculelê are said to be controversial. Some say that Maculelê was originated in the sugar-cane plantation by the Africans who used to practice the dance to relieve their anger against slavery. Others say that the slaves used sticks and machetes to defend themselves against the slavemasters' punishments, and this was later sublimated into dance as Maculelê. Another source points to the harvest celebration of *Maculelê de Cana*, a ritual held in the canefields of Santo Amaro where sugarcane was cut to the Maculelê rhythms such as Nego and Congo and cut cane-stalks were used as sticks in the dance.

In the traditions that were brought to the Americas by Central African peoples, the word for the movements in the Maculelê roda was 'Sanga'/'Sanguar'. The term/verb 'Sanga' is translated as 'the sword dance performed by the chief' in Northern Koongo and in Southern Koongo as the 'cry of joy' or 'war-cry during the sword dance' (See Warner-Lewis, 2003). This attitude fits in nicely with the content of the song, with its reference to '*sangue real*' (royal blood). This very well-known song in Maculelê also reminds the listener of some of the key elements of the Maculelê bateria, the atabaque drum(s) and the agogô or cowbell. Other instruments used are the pandeiro, and of course the two maculelê sticks or machetes- facão (facões), that are used by those forming the roda in which the central duels are danced to keep the rhythm dictated by the atabaque(s), which have taken over from Mestre Popó's favoured hand drums.

In studies by Manoel Querino (1851-1923), there are suggestions that the Cucumbi dramatic dance is a precursor to Maculelê, while Luís da Câmara Cascudo in his "*Dicionário do Folclore Brasileiro*" notes a link between the Maculelê and the dances of the 'Congos and Mozambiques'. According to other sources, Maculelê has steps similar to other Brazilian dances such as "Frevo" from Pernambuco (itself a cousin of Capoeira), "Moçambique" from São Paulo, "Cana-verde" from Vassouras-RJ, "Bate-pau" from Mato Grosso and "Tudundun" from Pará, as well as further north in the Caribbean, resemblance to the Caribbean's "Kalinda" or "Mousondi/Nsundi" of Trinidad, Dominica and Haiti among others, and the Baile de Maní in Cuba.

While some sources note ambiguity in the cultural origins of the Maculelê, the song seems to insist on a Congo-Angola origin. However, do we necessarily agree with the Central African origins of the agogô, as claimed by the song above? Some Nagô or Yorubá descendents might beg to differ, but this is a war (dance) after all! *Sauve-qui-peut* and *vale-tudo!*

Sources:

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CAPOEIRA É CANTAR, CAMARÁ

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