

# *Samba de roda*, supernal heritage of humanity

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IN 2004 I worked for Brazil's Ministry of Culture, specifically for IPHAN (The Brazilian Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage), as coordinator of the candidacy of the *samba de roda* musical tradition from the Recôncavo region (State of Bahia) for the Third Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity (established by UNESCO). In this article I propose to reflect on that experience, placing it, initially, within the framework of public policies for intangible heritage, and then concentrating on the problems raised by the *samba de roda*'s 'safeguarding plan' (required by the international institution) and its implementation.

'Safeguard', a term whose meaning I hope to clarify throughout the text, is one of the keywords in international policies for intangible heritage (in Portuguese "*salvaguarda*"; in French "*sauvegarde*"); therefore, the case discussed here may have a broader relevance.

## **Samba de roda**

*Samba de roda* is a type of music and dance performed mainly by African-Brazilians in the state of Bahia. It is particularly important in the Recôncavo region, the strip of land lying around Todos os Santos Bay, at the entrance of which the state capital, São Salvador, is located. I cannot provide here a detailed description of the *samba de roda* genre; it will suffice to emphasize two aspects in which it differs from the samba of Rio de Janeiro (which is typically generalized as 'Brazilian samba').

The first aspect is the organization of the dance, in which the circular position is not circumstantial, as in the '*rodas de samba*' (samba circles) commonly found in many Brazilian capitals, but rather inherent in the definition of the genre: the *samba de roda*, or circular samba. The second aspect is the type of song, which more closely adheres to the 'responsorial' model of collective singing often associated with traditional African and Afro-Diaspora music. *Samba de roda* dancers are called '*sambadores*' (men) and '*sambadeiras*' (women) and not '*sambistas*' as in other parts of the country.<sup>1</sup>

## **Intangible heritage in Brazil, *avant la lettre***

To understand the process by which the *samba de roda* was included as heritage, it might be useful to recall basic facts of the history of heritage policies in Brazil. UNESCO policies for intangible heritage did not come to Brazil like

lightning in a clear blue sky, but are instead linked to local ideas and policies regarding popular culture, or folklore, dating back at least to the 1930s. The first bill for the establishment of a public institution to protect cultural heritage (authored by Mario de Andrade) was drafted in 1936 and included aspects of what today would be called ‘tangible’ heritage and ‘intangible’ heritage. The bill was not adopted nationally, but its ideas partially guided the experience of the Department of Culture of the city of São Paulo in the period during which it was directed by the writer and musicologist Mário de Andrade (1936-1938). Later, in the 1970s, the designer and cultural administrator Aloísio Magalhães was responsible for the development of a National Inventory of Cultural References, which proposed a broad view of cultural heritage, connecting aspects of ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ heritage (without using those exact words). Magalhães died in 1982, but in the late 1990s many of those who worked with him spearheaded the process of drafting Decree-Law No. 3551, which established the intangible heritage registry in the country.

This decree was signed by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso in August 2000, creating the legal instrument of the ‘Registry’ of Intangible Cultural Assets, organized into four ‘Books’: ‘Forms of Expression’, ‘Knowledge’, ‘Celebrations’ and ‘Places’. The decree does not provide an explicit definition of intangible heritage. However, it contains an implicit definition established in two ways: four lists of types of assets which may be included, organized according to the different ledgers; and the definition, as a general inclusion criterion, of the “historical continuity of the asset and its national relevance to the memory, identity and shaping of Brazilian society”. The inclusion of a particular asset in one of the four books depends on the submission of a formal proposal by public or private institutions. This proposal must contain a “detailed description of the asset to be registered, together with the corresponding documentation, and should mention all the elements that are culturally relevant to the asset.” The idea of ‘endangered’ heritage, which played an important role in UNESCO documents on the subject, is entirely absent from this legal text. Also, there is no mention of the participation of asset-holders in the registration process, another issue that became dear to UNESCO in the mid 1990s.

Between August 2000 and early 2004, only two assets were registered as intangible heritage of Brazil: the craft of the potters from Goiabeiras (in Espírito Santo), registered in the Book of Knowledge, and the Kusiwa Art - Wajãpi Corporal Paintings and Graphic Arts (Amapá), registered in the Book of Forms of Expression (the winning Brazilian candidate for the Second UNESCO Proclamation of Masterpieces of Intangible Heritage in 2003). No action was taken during that period to prepare, much less put into place, a National Intangible Heritage Program, as provided for in Decree-Law No. 3551 (Article 8).

In early 2003, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva took office as the new president of Brazil and invited the musician Gilberto Gil to be Minister of Culture. In

early 2004, the anthropologist Antonio Augusto Arantes - who had worked for IPHAN as a consultant in the development of a research methodology for creating intangible heritage inventories - was invited to assume the presidency of IPHAN. Since its creation, the position had been predominantly held by architects. One of Arantes's first actions was to establish the Intangible Heritage Department, whose creation within IPHAN had been provided for as a result of the entity's new duties concerning intangible heritage. He also brought to IPHAN the only entity in the federal administration responsible for matters related to folklore and popular culture, namely the Coordination of Folklore and Popular Culture, in Rio de Janeiro.

### **The Third Proclamation of Masterpieces of Intangible Heritage**

In April 2004 UNESCO issued to its member states a call for proposals to fund the preparation of candidature dossiers for the Third Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity, to take place in 2005. Brazil had not submitted a candidate for the first declaration (2001) and in the second (2003), as already mentioned, the winning Brazilian candidate was the Kusiwa art of the Wajãpi people. When Minister Gilberto Gil learned of the UNESCO call, he immediately proposed samba as the Brazilian candidate for the new proclamation. Gil is, first and foremost, a musician, and music is often regarded as one of Brazil's strongest cultural 'trademarks', and even more frequently, it is samba which is regarded as the most Brazilian of all musical genres.

It should be noted that the Brazilian candidate was not yet *samba de roda*: it was 'Brazilian samba' in general, reflecting a 'representative' conception - or, we might say, self-congratulatory conception - of what should be public recognition of intangible heritage. But UNESCO's Proclamation was driven by a conception that was quite different from this recognition, as soon became clear to all those involved.

I have addressed elsewhere the discussions that led, in June 2004, to the decision to replace the 'Brazilian samba' with the '*samba de roda* from the Bahian Recôncavo region' as the Brazilian candidate for UNESCO's Third Declaration of Masterpieces of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity (Sandroni, 2005). For the purposes of this article, it will suffice to remember that intangible heritage, as conceptualized by UNESCO's Proclamation, is necessarily rooted in geographically well-defined communities or ethnicities (in the style of classic ethnographies), and allegedly endangered by the contemporary growth of commoditization and globalization. Clearly, this is not the case with the Rio de Janeiro samba, which commands vast media presence and is part of carnival parades broadcast to millions of people worldwide. On the other hand, the *samba de roda* of the Bahian Recôncavo, despite all the controversy surrounding it (ibid.), fit much more adequately in the proposed model. Thus, the replacement of the candidate was due to pragmatic criteria: Rio de Janeiro's samba simply was not a viable candidate. (It may be helpful to add that to the contrary of what was suggested at the time, the "*baianidade*" (Bahian identity) of the Minister of Culture had absolutely nothing to do with the decision; it was quite the reverse).

## How to draft an Action Plan

*Samba de roda* was registered as intangible Brazilian heritage in the Book of Forms of Expression in September 2004, a few weeks before the submission of the candidature dossier to UNESCO (October 2004). The documentation for registration at the national level did not provide for any concrete measures to support *samba de roda*. However, in addition to the detailed description of the cultural asset proposed, UNESCO required, as absolutely essential, that the candidature dossier contained a five-year action plan for the safeguarding and valuing of the candidate.

How to structure this ‘Action Plan’? Of course, it would be necessary to take into account, as strictly as possible, the aspirations - who knows how contradictory - of the *sambadores* and *sambadeiras*. From the outset, this duty put us before the full political dimension of the problem. In 2004, “*samba de roda* of the Bahian Recôncavo” did not have a recognized representative voice. Although in some cities of the region, the *sambadores* had gathered into associations, these served cultural purposes rather than acting as representative entities in the corporate or labor union sense. Moreover, when in a single city a number of officially established *samba de roda* groups coexisted, they tended to engage in rivalries. And since the Recôncavo is a large region, it is the cradle of very different *samba de roda* traditions, whose legitimacy was not always recognized by *sambadores* from areas distant from one another. In addition to the difficulties, the time we had to design and draft the Action Plan was limited. The dossier began to be prepared in July and had to be on UNESCO’s desk no later than October 15. It was only on September 18 that we managed to organize a meeting which one could actually describe as “representative of the *samba de roda* of the Recôncavo”. After all, it was attended by about seventy performers of the genre, including men and women, young and old, and from most of the twenty municipalities of the region. The main objective of that meeting was to discuss precisely the contents of the Action Plan.

After several hours of discussion in individual groups as well as during a plenary session, we established that the Plan would be divided into four areas: organization, transmission, dissemination and documentation. ‘Organization’ would attend to the steps required in the creation of mechanisms for collective decision-making and representation of all *sambadores* and *sambadeiras* in the Recôncavo region. ‘Transmission’ would address the means of stimulating the involvement of new generations in *samba de roda* through formal and informal education. ‘Dissemination’ would focus on supporting the presence of *samba de roda* in the media through CDs, DVDs, the Internet and professional shows. Finally, ‘documentation’ would deal with the access of *sambadores* to the collections resulting from research on the topic.

At the end of the meeting, a large circle was formed for participants to relax and for the ratification of the collective commitments that had just been established. Musicians and ‘*tiradores de samba*’ (lead singers) from different locations followed one another on the microphones, and in the middle of the

circle *sambadeiras* and *sambadores* took turns dancing. I could also hear comments such as: “Look at how they dance the samba, the people from X place! It’s so different from the way we do it!”

In the end, on a wing and a prayer, the dossier submitted to UNESCO on October 15 contained, as required, an Action Plan developed through dialogue with and among the *sambadores*. Given the circumstances, this dialogue had been much briefer than desirable; but the Action Plan was also quite generalized in its final version (for which I was responsible under the supervision of Marcia Sant’Anna, director of Intangible Heritage at IPHAN). Indeed, most of the substantial decisions were left to the future.<sup>2</sup>

An important issue, which in hindsight seems not to have been sufficiently discussed with the *sambadores*, was the funding of the Plan. It was clear in the regulations of the Proclamation that the inclusion of a candidate would guarantee no funding from UNESCO or any other party. The Plan should thus have foreseen funding possibilities, particularly from domestic sources. On the one hand, it should have relied (within reason) on the commitment we had secured from various public and private institutions. On the other hand, it should have anticipated the power that the future endorsement of UNESCO would have in helping convince - if we in fact did our job properly - new patrons encountered along the way.

Later in this article I will address each of the four areas selected in the safeguarding of *samba de roda* in addition to covering several aspects of the implementation of the Action Plan up to 2009. I must say that I followed this implementation only to a limited extent. After 2004 I had no professional relationship with IPHAN or the *sambadores*.

But I took several two- and three-day trips to Bahia to attend seminars or meetings related to *samba de roda* (at least twice in 2005, three times in 2006, and once in both 2007 and 2009). I also stayed in touch by phone and email with *sambadores*, researchers and cultural policy agents in Bahia.

### **Organization**

If the time available to design the Plan was brief, the time for its implementation was much more flexible. But to take advantage of this flexibility, we needed first of all to establish more permanent mechanisms of *sambador* representation. The starting point of the Plan was therefore to support the organization of *sambadores*. For this, IPHAN hired a lawyer and financed the organization of new assembly meetings. In April 2005 the association of *sambadeiras e sambadores* of the state of Bahia (ASSEBA) was created, and its first board elected.

The creation of a representative association and the election of its board appropriately dramatize the essentially political character of any patrimonialization process. And if politics always includes risks of manipulation, this is even truer in the case of the historically clientelist relations between popular (or “traditional”) culture and the Brazilian State.

Perhaps we could consider that in the case discussed here these risks were



minimized by the attention paid to the expectations of the *sambadores* and by supporting their autonomous organization. (But we must not forget that such reckless concession would be based on information that I myself am presenting, and it is information which in this text should - given my involvement in the process - be considered highly suspect).

We might also ask whether the very act of supporting an autonomous organization of *sambadores*, a type of 'general' and 'representative' organization which the *sambadores* themselves had apparently never considered on their own, would not be tied to an even more Machiavellian manipulation. This is what Nikolas Rose, quoted by Valdimar Hafstein (2004, p.142), seems to suggest for the case of 'community' policies, among which are those related to Intangible Heritage: "*This delegation of responsibility to the citizenry is an integral aspect of the neoliberal political project, integrating individuals into their own government and giving to them the responsibility for conducting themselves individually and each other in communities.*"

The inspiration comes from Foucault, but with 'neoliberal project' replacing 'power'. In this vein, we could say that IPHAN did not 'support' the organization of *sambadores* but rather 'imposed' it (with due complicity on the victims' part).

This is, in my opinion, an empirical question. (After all, as Paul Veyne (2008, p. 8) aptly recalls, Foucault's books are 'filled with facts'. The philosopher even called himself a 'happy positivist', '*un positiviste heureux*'! (Foucault 2008:172)).

While it is true that the initiative and funds to create ASSEBA came from IPHAN, it is also true that all *sambadores* contacted in 2004 by the team I coordinated expressed their agreement with the idea of creating the association, and many of them actively engaged in the process. On the occasion of the founding of the association of *sambadores* in April 2005, those present adopted a name and scope that contradicted not only the proposal prevalent among IPHAN technicians, but also the geographically restricted interpretation of the notion of 'community' adopted by the 2003 Convention. Thus, the founded association embraces the entire state of Bahia, and not just the Recôncavo region. Its board has always maintained, as far as I know, a lofty position before the government institution. Whether or not there is some 'neoliberal project' being implemented in the Bahian Recôncavo, the fact is that we should follow the performance of ASSEBA with interest, in the sense of finding out whether its actions will empower and contribute to increasing the autonomy of the *sambadores* and *sambadeiras*.

### **Transmission**

The *sambadores* insisted on the need to support by all means the transmission of samba to new generations. The Action Plan presented some suggestions in this regard, but as far as I know only one of them was solidly backed by IPHAN and ASSEBA in 2005 and 2006, namely the safeguarding of the musical instrument called 'machete', a small ten-string (five-course) handmade 'viola' typical of the northern part of the Recôncavo and unknown in the rest of Brazil.

IPHAN invested US\$20,000 in 2005, first for the manufacture of new

machetes by a local luthier; second to pay a machete player from the Recôncavo to teach a group of young people from the region; and third for an ethnomusicologist to monitor and register both activities.

The last known machete craftsman was Clarindo dos Santos, who died in 1980 (Wadley, personal communication). In our research twenty years later, we found five or six machetes in the hands of *sambadores*, most of which were in very poor condition, and with no one capable of playing them properly. In the city of São Francisco do Conde, however, a musician had a machete in good condition and was able to play it well. His name was José Vitorino dos Santos, known locally as “Zé da Lelinha”, and was a member of the musical ensemble “Samba Chula Filhos da Pitangueira”.

Zé de Lelinha was paid by IPHAN during 2005 to teach a group of young people from São Francisco do Conde how to play the machete. As the classes began, a local craftsman was commissioned to make copies of his machete. At the beginning, the students practiced on regular guitars; weeks later they were using the new machetes.

In 2006, even without supplemental remuneration, Zé de Lelinha continued to teach. He fell ill in 2007 and passed away in September 2008. He was replaced in “Filhos da Pitangueira” by one of the young men who had been his student. His repertoire and instrumental technique were recorded on video and mini-CD by Jean-Joubert de Freitas Mendes, who at the time was a doctoral candidate in ethnomusicology at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).

### **Dissemination**

In the period between 2004-2005 *samba de roda* was little known outside the region of the Bahian Recôncavo. At best, it was recognized as an ancestor of the samba from Rio de Janeiro, but not as a living expression with a value of its own. In 2006 IPHAN funded the production of a CD with a booklet featuring a selection of recordings made in 2004 to be included in the candidature dossier, accompanied by texts and photos (Sandroni & Pires, 2006). A year later, a beautiful hardcover book illustrated with numerous color photographs was published by IPHAN, containing the text of the candidature dossier submitted to UNESCO (Sandroni & Sant’Anna, 2007). This book comes with a DVD containing audiovisual recordings of *samba de roda* songs. The CD and the book/DVD were distributed to cultural institutions and libraries. A large number of copies were delivered to ASSEBA for local distribution. These publications have helped to disseminate *samba de roda* to a non-Bahian population. They also reached a number of cultural diffusion network promoters who had an interest in ‘traditional music’. One of these promoters was from “Sonora Brasil”, an annual schedule of shows/concerts with a huge network of theaters across the country. That promoter decided to invite a *samba de roda* group to perform with “Sonora Brasil” in 2006. But he could not invite more than one group, as one of the goals of the program is to provide an overview as diverse as possible of the richness of music all over Brazil. To compensate, the selected group would go on an extended tour lasting over two months, which consisted of over fifty shows performed in locations spanning the country’s north to its south.

Photo by Jean Joubert de Freitas Mendes







*José Vitorino dos Santos, a.k.a Zé da Lelinha, with  
a machete student at his house in 2005.*

The group chosen was “Samba Chula Filhos da Pitangueira”, from São Francisco do Conde. It was actually one of the strongest groups among those featured on the 2006 CD. Moreover, it was the only group on the CD featuring a machete (played by Zé de Lelinha).

The “Samba Chula Filhos da Pitangueira” tour was a success, but it caused problems with the other groups. The question was simple: “There were thirteen groups on the CD. If there were fifty shows to be staged, why not divide them up among the groups?” Well, that would be impossible due to the organization of “Sonora Brasil”, which had nothing to do with *samba de roda* or with intangible heritage policies. The project was organized in such a way that the groups had to follow a tight schedule of shows; the procedure has nothing to do with ‘democracy’ and could not be changed just because *samba de roda* was now officially part of intangible heritage. As we know, the showbiz world, in which *samba de roda* was gradually partaking, does not work like that. (Although it was, in this case, a very soft showbiz, operating within an associative and subsidized context).

There was an obvious injustice in the circumstances: one group with fifty shows (which in turn means fifty paychecks, fifty cheering audiences and just under fifty cities to be visited); thirteen groups (noting only those who participated on the 2006 CD) with zero shows (at least as regards “Sonora Brasil”). This injustice was in some ways ‘created’ by the recognition of *samba de roda* as intangible heritage, as it was partly because of this recognition that “Filhos da Pitangueira” was chosen for “Sonora Brasil” in 2006. After the tour, surely *samba de roda* would be better known outside the Reconcavo region. But that would happen at the expense of ‘privileging’ that group and not through an equitable distribution of the shows among all the groups. The event contributed to dramatize a paradox that affects public policy in general: one thing is to ensure a right or benefit to any one social group - a category of musicians, a city or a nation; another is to know whether this benefit will be concretely distributed within this group in the ‘fairest’ way.

That said, the only way to be ‘fairer’ in this particular case would be to deny, or otherwise prohibit “Filhos da Pitangueira” from accepting the proposal of “Sonora Brasil”. Perhaps the opinions are divergent here, but mine is unequivocal: it would be a foolish thing to do.

### **Documentation**

Many *sambadores* knew that *samba de roda* had already been, at other times, the subject of more or less in-depth academic and folklore research. Those projects by the ethnomusicologists Ralph C. Wadley, in the 1970s, and Tiago de Oliveira Pinto, in the 1980s, were the most important.<sup>3</sup> The then president of ASSEBA himself, Rosildo Moreira do Rosário, is from a family that Wadley had researched, and he thus remembered Wadley perfectly. Now, the documentation resulting from that (and other) research was not accessible to

the *sambadores*. Waddey's was at his home in the United States and Pinto's was in Germany, where he had studied and subsequently began working.

The repatriation of the documents (or of copies thereof) on *samba de roda* existing outside of Brazil and the collection of similar documents existing in Brazilian institutions became an important goal. The Action Plan foresaw the transfer of these documents to the Recôncavo so that their use could be regulated by the *sambadores* within the framework of a space created for that end, namely the "Casa do Samba" (House of Samba). In addition to the numerous logistical problems posed by this project, there was a fundamental question, in this case linked to local politics: where in the Recôncavo should Casa do Samba be established? What municipality would have the honor and privilege of housing that facility? One must remember that the Reconcavo's geopolitics are dominated by two main cities: Santo Amaro da Purificação and Cachoeira. The first is closer to Salvador (70 km) and better known nationally, mostly because of the notoriety of songwriter Caetano Veloso and his sister, singer Maria Bethania, who were born there. Cachoeira is located 50 kilometers south of the first and is less rich in celebrities, but benefits from a better-preserved architectural heritage and the beauty of the Paraguassu River, which runs through it. During the association meetings, a consensus began emerging that *neither* of the two proposed cities would be chosen, for both were considered as already being 'overexposed'. The city of São Félix, near Cachoeira, suggested the possibility of allowing the association to use a vacant railway station, but such a choice would require overcoming a series of legal obstacles whose resistance was still unknown. Despite this uncertainty, the option for São Félix began to gain strength in the association meetings.

In early 2006, however, news from IPHAN completely revolutionized the terms of the debate. In Santo Amaro, a huge nineteenth-century mansion, which had belonged to the wealthy land and slave owner Count of Subaé and had been listed as national heritage, was going to be remodeled. IPHAN proposed to ASSEBA that the Casa do Samba be established there. The reform would take into account the needs of that institution, and the management of the facilities would be entrusted to the *sambadores* as soon as the works were completed, which had been scheduled to happen in late 2007.

This was ideal for many *sambadores* ... if only it were not in Santo Amaro. The fact that IPHAN had gotten the association such a property, as well as the money for remodeling precisely in that city, seemed to them a coup orchestrated to leave once again the lion's share with Santo Amaro, to sell to the world once again the idea that there is no other city in the geography of *samba de roda*. Why not use the money to solve the bureaucratic problems of the railway station in São Félix? Or else to remodel one of the other hundreds of old extant houses in the Reconcavo? After all, everyone knew that the Minister of Culture, Gilberto Gil, was a close friend of Caetano Veloso and his family's, which still lived in Santo Amaro.



But that was not it. The money in question had nothing to do with *samba de roda* or intangible heritage. It had been ‘allocated’ (as they say), earmarked for, and long expected specifically for, *that* property, the “Subaé Mansion”. The proposal only reflected a general IPHAN policy which associated the ‘two assets’ whenever possible. There was nothing which could be done: to ASSEBA it was ‘take it or leave it’. The proposal was finally accepted, but at the cost of the defection of many *sambadores* from São Félix and Cachoeira, who felt they had been betrayed.

The works began in August 2006 and Casa Samba was delivered to ASSEBA in September 2007. It now houses a permanent *samba de roda* exhibition, a small library specializing in African-Brazilian culture, several work rooms (one with several computers), a recording studio, two bedrooms with bunk beds (for the *sambadores* who wish to sleep after their activities) and a kitchen. It does not have, however, a specialized team nor appropriate facilities for the storage and preservation of documentary collections, as had originally been planned.

### Final considerations

It is quite clear that the attribution of the term ‘intangible heritage’ to *samba de roda* came from ‘the outside-in’. The term ‘intangible heritage’ was adopted by UNESCO in the 1990s and although mentioned in the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 (Article 116 speaks of ‘cultural assets of an intangible nature’), it has only been used systematically in Brazil since 1997. None of the *sambadores* with whom I spoke in 2004 had heard of it.

The first initiative to include *samba de roda* as heritage came from the Ministry of Culture, not from the *sambadores*. But even the first stages of the materialization of said initiative involved the mobilization of resources, including economic resources, far beyond the reach of the *sambadores* at that time (such as intercity transportation, food and lodging while in transit, phone calls, physical space for meetings, etc.). The establishment of the ‘*samba de roda* of the Recôncavo’ as a social actor (as Latour puts it [2006]) required an invest-







*Samba de roda in a celebration in honor of Saints Cosme and Damian in the Recôncavo of Bahia, 2004.*

ment which, facilitated by the action of the Ministry, could also be made by the *sambadores*. It is not that no ‘samba de roda of the Recôncavo’ had existed hitherto: it existed in the (heterogeneous) practices and (varied) discourses of the *sambadores* (scattered) throughout the region; and also in the writings of folklorists like Edison Carneiro, writers like Jorge Amado and musicians like Dorival Caymmi - people who have influenced and continue to influence the way many people from Bahia (and other Brazilians) feel and think about themselves. However, this existence did not alone have the strength required to submit a candidature to UNESCO. It gained such strength, as is usually the case, along the way: in the mobilization of the *sambadores* and their partners to prepare the dossier and then to implement the Action Plan. So if *samba de roda* already existed before it was listed as national heritage, its visibility increased consider-

ably afterwards. In this regard, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) would be right in asserting that it is UNESCO itself which creates the intangible heritage, which creates the objects to be declared as heritage, in the very process of declaring them as such.

UNESCO, however, even with all its power as an international institution, mobilizing millions of dollars annually, is only one end of a chain of mediations in which, in a fair assessment, the contribution of the loneliest *sambador* from the furthest corners of the Recôncavo should not be neglected. Between these two extremes, the list of those who contributed to the inclusion of *samba de roda* as heritage is not short: it includes government institutions and agents at the federal, state and municipal level, researchers from different universities, sound and image recording technicians, and last but not least, those whom we should be able to call the ‘proprietors’ of the *samba de roda* tradition. Thus, the postulate of the 2003 Convention, according to which it is the ‘community’ that defines the intangible heritage, is no less true if it is understood that it does not do so alone (but what does a community do ‘alone’?). And this is all the more true if we are patient enough to unfold, fiber by fiber, the extensive network of mediations through which such a community is established and strengthened.

Therefore, what I would like us to do in future research on intangible heritage policies is ‘fill the gaps’, so to speak, between two antagonistic points of view. One, which we could call ‘too naïve’, assumes that the intangible heritage already exists, fully created by local groups before the arrival of any public policy agents or researchers, and subsequent inclusion on national and international lists, inventories and proclamations. The other, which would perhaps be ‘too shrewd’, states that the intangible heritage was imposed, as a trap of governmentality, on communities that would never have known a similar chimera: a live, intimate and revered past.

#### Notes

- 1 For a classic description of *samba de roda* see Waddey (1980, 1981). In Portuguese, see Sandroni & Sant’Anna (2007).
- 2 The full text in Portuguese of the candidature dossier was published in Sandroni & Sant’Anna (2007).
- 3 The results of these research projects were published by Waddey (1980, 1981). In Portuguese, see Waddey (2007) and Pinto (1990).

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*ABSTRACT* – In 2005, samba de roda, a music-dance form from the Recôncavo region of Bahia, Brazil, was included in UNESCO’s Third Proclamation of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity. This award was the result of a twenty month-long journey in which public policy makers, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists and, especially, samba practitioners from the Recôncavo were brought together. This included the writing of a Plan of Action, scheduled to span five years, to safeguard samba de roda. In this paper, after a brief introduction about the process leading to UNESCO’s award, I will address several questions raised by the implementation of the Plan, which was built around four main themes: the organization of the sambadores; the transmission; diffusion and documentation of samba de roda.

*KEYWORDS*: Samba, Samba de roda, Intangible heritage, Cultural policy, Folk music from Bahia (Brazil).

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Received on 24 Feb. 2010 and accepted on 27 Feb. 2010.