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## BRAZILIAN WOMEN, BOTH WHITE AND AFRO-DESCENDANTS, INSPIRE SAMBAS-ENREDO OF SÃO PAULO CARNIVAL ASSOCIATIONS (1974 – 1988)

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### ABSTRACT

The focus of this text reflections is on some sambas-enredo (samba theme-songs) of Samba Schools that had women as inspiring muses to structure the parades displayed on the official catwalks of São Paulo carnivals from 1974 to 1988. These sambas-enredo were published in the Portal of SASP – Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista (Society of São Paulo Samba Lovers), a fact that enabled the research. The period marks the first years of carnivals formalization (which took place in 1968) in the city of São Paulo, guaranteeing the participation of popular segments in these celebrations, among them black people. The new format, financially supported by the government, demarcated a theme focused on folklore and other elements of Brazilian culture for carnival parades of the revelers associations. The scenario is predominantly discriminatory between gender relations of all social segments, which are expressed among revelers during these festivities. Furthermore, the analysis focuses on understanding and knowing these women who were chosen for sambas-enredo that bear the marks of Luso-Brazilian and African cultural traditions.

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## INTRODUCTION

The bustling crowds on the streets caused by feminist protests were finally recognized in 1975 with the United Nations (UN) proclaiming that year as the International Women's Year and March 8 as the International Women's Day. The purpose of UN was to make room for the promotion of a worldwide debate on the appreciation of the fighting against all forms of prejudice against women. It is clear that Brazil ignored the issue, as numerous women who engaged in politics were arrested, and many were killed under torture in the basements of a military dictatorship. This was the treatment given to their opponents, regardless of gender. In the midst of this process, there were tributes paid by samba schools to Brazilian women in the city of São Paulo, whose life stories were shown in sambas-enredo aiming at setting up their parades. However, there is no evidence to associate such initiatives with feminist claims occurring abroad or even in the country.

In this context of 1974-1988, unlike what happened abroad, the mobilizations of Brazilian women's and feminist movements were modest. During the 1970s, they were limited to the so-called "Grupo de Conscientização Feminina" [Women's Awareness Group]<sup>1</sup>(from 1972-1975/São Paulo) and "Grupos de Reflexão" [Reflection Groups] (in RJ-/lasted from 1972-1973), structured by intellectualized young women from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (who had traveled to the US and France and who, in some way, had contact with their movements). On the opposite pole to these initiatives, the left-wing of the middle-class youth radicalized their protests by engaging in clandestine political organizations with the objective of combating the military dictatorship and confronting the country's political and social problems. Many of them were arrested, tortured and killed in the

<sup>1</sup>The aforementioned group emerged in São Paulo in 1972 and operated until 1975. It was attended by names such as Maria Odila da Silva Dias, Célia Sampaio, Beth Mendes, Walnice Nogueira Galvão, Albertina Costa, Marta Suplicy, among others. Grupo Reflexão was created in Rio de Janeiro by Branca Moreira Alves and lasted until 1973 (Pedro, et. al.,2012).

basements of that government. Some managed to be exiled, others served sentences for their political engagement (Ridenti, 1993). At the same time, there is also a movement of women on the outskirts of the industrial cities of São Paulo, connected to the union movement of the period and the Catholic Church, who fought for day care centers and against the famine (the Movement of Empty Pots). The black movement in general and the women movement were also limited. After 1985, a period of political redemocratization in the country, the black movement achieved greater visibility by questioning the myth of “racial democracy”, criticizing structural racism in the country. Black women, on the other hand, had, at this juncture, limited engagement considering that their agendas were still focused on the survival of the group and the confrontation of racial prejudice. Even their participation in carnival associations was still restricted since they were excluded from the positions of their boards of directors, even though they had significant projections in the functions of dancers and flag bearers. There were other women in these associations who became invisible figures, such as the seamstresses and the women responsible for the infrastructure of these associations. It appears from this context that the problems of women in Brazil were connected in part to the current situation in the country resulting from the military dictatorship that inhibited any political manifestation, reducing the possibilities of alignment with struggles defended by women in other parts of the world (Pinto, 2010); and, in another dimension, one can attribute the intermittence of this participation, over time, showing two types of militancy: the women's movement that did not question their submission to the patriarchal system and the feminist movement that adopted guidelines aimed at their civil (Pinto 2003) and gender rights.

Studies on women and Brazilian feminism had not yet incorporated the issue of gender equality in their reflections, which only occurred after 1995, with the translation of Joan Scott's article “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis”, published in the US in 1986 and in Brazil nine years later. It can be noticed that the reception by Brazilian intellectuals of the works of the most visible American authors was slow, considering the late translation of the articles by Scott (cited) and Linda Nicholson (2000), and the books by Bell Hooks (2019) and Judith Butler (2003), which displaced the axis of reflections for theoretical approaches, with a focus on “feminisms” and their specific agendas. In this context, aspects of the political agendas around civil rights, defended by women and African-Americans from the 1950s onwards and which had intensified in subsequent decades — with the political radicalization of the Black Panther Party in 1966 and the Black Power Movement connected to it, with the objective of fighting for civil rights and combating police violence against black people —, had an impact on the Brazilian black movement, despite existing distinctions in their trajectories. George Andrews, in the article “O negro no Brasil e nos Estados Unidos” [Black people in Brazil and the United States], published in 1985 (Andrews, 1985), demarcated differences in political options of black people and their struggles in both countries. In Andrews' analysis (although the black population in Brazil approached more than 50% of the population while the US population reached only 12%), racial issues were neglected by Afro-Brazilians. The failure to confront racial prejudice by Afro-Brazilians left them on the margins of society. This stance was supported by the ideology of “racial democracy” and its mainstay, the “myth of whitening”, which blocked their most incisive political action in combating color prejudice and social exclusion to which they were subjected.

In 2017, in another text, Andrews (2017) approached from a different perspective the point of view of Afro-Americans in relation to the situation of black people in Brazil, detecting two distinct moments, at the beginning and at the end of the 20th century. Black American travelers (especially journalists) from the beginning of that century saw a “spark of hope” in the racial issue, while black researchers (and journalists) from that country, from the end of the 20th century, detected a delay in the Brazilian black movement. By turning to the African matrix culture, dissociated from the issue of civil rights, according to these observers, black Brazilians left aside agendas, such as the identification of color prejudice and social exclusion, which

affected the majority of black people in the country and placed them in a situation of extreme poverty, subjected to all kinds of violence. Regardless of these issues highlighted by Andrews, the struggle of Afro-Americans had resonance in Brazil, notably among members of the Movimento Negro Unificado [Unified Black Movement] (MNU), although the adoption of their agendas was more subtle. MNU, despite criticizing the myth of racial democracy, defended the option of Afro-Brazilians for the cultural field, which had been one of the forms of identity construction of the group, a process that existed long before slave abolition, in 1888, which continued in the Republic (1889). Such interactions were manifested in events of the Christian religious calendar or linked to other hybrid Luso-African cultural traditions, in the participation of carnival festivities, in the “festas do Boi” [Bull festivities], among many others. In the field of carnival revels, black people created street parties and groups for their organization and, later, samba schools. With this, they strengthened the identity of the group itself and ensured different spaces of sociability for their experiences. This process took place in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and in other regions of the country, based on the specific cultural practices of these locations.

Therefore, this context does not seem to have influenced the choosing of tributes to women by samba schools. The tributes have their own trajectory considering that there are sambas-enredo (samba theme-songs) dedicated to women since the 1950s. In the 1980s, however, there was a greater number of sambas-enredo about female themes, without any interrelation with the ending of the military dictatorship in 1985, whereas there were few samba schools of the main group, of greater visibility and prestige, that brought such theme. Entering the female world with the carnivalization of some women lives requires shrewdness to approach the subject, not only by the object itself, but by the period, part of it marked by the suppression of expression and political freedoms in the country. Apparently such characteristics did not affect carnival creations of samba schools. However, it should be noted that the associations had to conform to the rules required by the official carnivals, whose themes should focus on folklore (legends, myths, etc.) and the history of Brazil in order to give them the desired Brazilian profile by the official circuits. Regardless of its relevance displayed in the country, the carnival is a transnational theme with reference to the works of authors such as Mikhail Bakhtin (1987) and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladourie (2002) that constituted paradigms for Brazilian researchers, for an analysis of the event. Despite this, research on the subject developed slowly. In Brazil, until recently, the interest of humanities researchers about these festivities was irrelevant, which cannot be said today, with the emergence of recurring research on the Brazilian carnival.

Olga von Simson, after analyzing and evaluating the initial studies of this phenomenon, clarified that these analyzes were carried out first by journalists, then by revelers, and only later were they brought to the academy, initially with research by sociologists and anthropologists. Subsequently, she would add, there were investigations by professionals in the fine arts and, finally, by historians, geographers, etc. who were interested in the subject. Brazilian studies were based on the reflections of Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz (1992) and Roberto da Matta (1997), both focusing on Rio de Janeiro's carnivals that have been (and still are) widely researched. Their reflections became paradigms for later investigations, sometimes aligned to one interpretation, sometimes to another, considering the divergent positions of the authors on such phenomenon. São Paulo carnivals were analyzed following this paradigm, considering that the first studies on the subject were by Ieda Marques Britto (1986) and Olga von Simson (2007), both under Queiroz's guidance. In the mid-1980s, researches on carnivals in São Paulo city were quite restricted. The highlights were surveys by Ieda Marques Britto and Olga von Simson, mentioned earlier. In addition to these studies, Maria Isaura P. Queiroz addressed the subject in the book *Carnaval brasileiro: o vivido e o mito* [Brazilian Carnival: the lived and the myth], from 1992, which brought together texts published in France and Brazil.

**Table 1. Tributes to women through sambas-enredo Group 1 and Special Group (1974-1988)**

School name	President of the association	Themes of the sambas-enredo	Year of the parade	Ranking	Group
Camisa Verde e Branco (Founded in 1953)	Carlos Alberto Tobias	Uma certa Nega Fulô [A Certain Nega Fulô]	1974	1st place	G1
Camisa Verde e Branco	Carlos Alberto Tobias	Acima de tudo mulher (Most of all, woman)	1980	2nd place	G1
Acadêmicos do Ipiranga (Founded in 1967)	Betão (1967/2000)	Dona Beja, feiteira do Araxá (Dona Beja, the witch of Araxá)	1980	12th place	G1
União Independente de Vila Prudente (Founded in 1982)	Arcílio Antunes	Elis Regina – O som da festa eterna desta musa (Elis Regina – The sound of this muse's eternal party)	1984	8th place	G1
Imperador do Ipiranga (Founded in 1968)	Laerte Toporcov	Festa para uma rainha negra (Party for a Black Queen)	1986	7th place	G1
Unidos do Peruche (Founded in 1956)	Carlos Alberto Caetano – (1956 - 1985) Walter Guariglio (1985/1995)	Filhos da Mãe Preta (The Children of the Black Mother)	1988	5th place	Special Group

Source: SASP - Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista. (All sambas-enredo have audio files on the SASP website). [http://www.sasp.com.br/A\\_CARNAVAIS.asp#.WejskGhSyUk](http://www.sasp.com.br/A_CARNAVAIS.asp#.WejskGhSyUk) Accessed on October 19, 2017; I Vucovich. 'O Carnaval cada vez mais difícil'. *O Estado de S. Paulo*, January 23, 1983.

The first chapter of the book was published in France in 1985 and the second was published in the journal SBPC – Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência (Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science) in 1984. In the same magazine, the third chapter was published in 1986. Queiroz's interpretations also extended to carnivals from other regions, including São Paulo. Currently, other studies have surfaced about carnivals in São Paulo, whether or not centered on samba schools. Also noteworthy is the publication of Leila Blass (2007), *Desfile na avenida, trabalho na escola de samba: a dupla face do carnaval* [Parade on the Avenue, work at the samba school: the two-sided carnival]; the books of Alessandro Dozena (2011), under the title *A Geografia do Samba na cidade de São Paulo* [The Geography of Samba in the São Paulo city], in the study area of urban geography. And finally, the book *Transformações na Avenida: História das escolas de samba da cidade de São Paulo (1968-1996)* [Transformations on the Avenue: History of Samba Schools in São Paulo City], by Bruno Sanches Baronetti (2015), was published. Dozena and Baronetti's researches focused on the trajectory of the Vai-Vai association, in the modalities of carnival group and samba school<sup>2</sup>.

#### The tributes to women in sambas-enredo of São Paulo carnivals

The studies of the tributes to women in sambas-enredo come up against some difficulties that involve the fragmentation and precariousness of sources, which translate into the existence of little research on the participation of women, without distinction of color, in these celebrations. The scope about the production of the subject is discouraging. Research studies on such protagonists are greatly reduced, whether related to Rio de Janeiro's or São Paulo's carnivals. Although São Paulo revelers were recurrent participants of the city carnivals, few researches were devoted to the so-called revelers. Olga von Simson (1991/1992) wrote a broad article on the subject, and she makes references to São Paulo revelers. Recently, two texts were published about these partygoers, one about black women revelers and the other focusing on women who were honored in sambas-enredo, regardless of skin color. These same research limitations affect black women, although they are protagonists of the catwalks and have played important roles within the group, in the past and in the present. In this rhythm, it is convenient to present the cartography of the themes dedicated to the female gender, from the 1950s, date of the first record on the subject, to the 1991, the final milestone of this text, which records the inauguration of the Grande Otelo Sambadrome in Anhembi Convention Center. This spatiality establishes another moment for samba school parades, with emphasis on the luxury carnival-show, following the paradigm of Rio de Janeiro's carnival festivities. From 1950 to 1991 there were only thirty-eight sambas-enredo dedicated to women by samba schools of Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, Special Group and Open Space. These indications were based on criteria that surpassed the skin color (white or black) signaling that the visibility of these women achieved in the past were

projected to the present or that their involvement with samba in contemporary times were fundamental. The data are as follows: in the 1950s there is only one samba-enredo; in the following decade there are four themes; during the 1970s there are ten sambas-enredo; in the 1980s this number rises to nineteen, and in 1990 and 1991 four sambas-enredo honor women (SASP, 2018; Simson, 1991/1992). The requirement of a samba-enredo (theme) was defined in 1968, with the formalization of the carnival, generalizing samba-enredo in the parades of carnival groups of black people. But what is a samba-enredo? It is a musical subgenre of samba that was forged in the yards, through the drummers of black people, throughout its existence in the country. The text *Dossiê das Matrizes do samba do Rio de Janeiro* [Dossier of the African matrixes of samba in Rio de Janeiro], from 2006, under the responsibility of Centro Cultural Cartola [Cartola Cultural Center] and Iphan/MINC [National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage], discusses the modalities that constitute the matrixes of samba in Rio de Janeiro, based on the variations identified by samba de partido-alto (specialist samba), samba de terreiro (yard samba) and samba-enredo. The purpose of such research was to distinguish the differentiations of these samba modalities that were part of the cultural repertoire of Afro-descendants. Therefore, the samba-enredo, of more recent origin, brings the basic elements of other subgenres to structure its configuration. At the beginning of the text mentioned before, the following translated definition of samba-enredo is displayed<sup>3</sup>:

*“From the progressive structuring of samba schools, in the late 1920s, samba-enredo was created, one in which the composer elaborates its verses for presentation in the parade. Over time, it acquired its own characteristics, such as the narrative capacity to describe in a melodic and poetic way a “story” – the enredo (theme) – that unfolds during the parade. The whole ensemble of the association depends on its liveliness and cadence, in terms of evolution and harmonic involvement. The samba-enredo aggregates characteristics of the first two subgenres (samba de terreiro and samba de partido-alto) described as, for example, the striking presence of the chorus (characteristic of samba de partido-alto) and the inclusion, almost always between the lines, of the experiences and feelings of the samba dancers, (originating from samba de terreiro) challenging the cold objectivity of some samba-enredo” (Centro Cultural Cartola/IPHAN/MINC, 2006).*

Monique Augras (1998) also analyzed the trajectory of samba-enredo in Rio de Janeiro. The author pointed out that, in 1933, Unidos da Tijuca was the first samba school that used such type of samba-

<sup>3</sup> The other subgenres analyzed in the quoted text refer to the samba de terreiro, that sang about life experiences, love, parties, etc., and samba de partido-alto, “born from drummers' circles, in which the group kept the rhythm by clapping hands and repeating engaging verses that constituted the chorus. In samba de partido-alto the chorus is repeated and the following verses, improvised, normally (but not necessarily) follow the proposed theme”. The chorus is the signal for a participant to call a partner to the center of the circle to dance and swing (Centro Cultural Cartola/IPHAN/MINC, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> I published two books about the São Paulo carnivals (Silva, 2008, 2015).

enredo in its parades. This musical subgenre of samba only became widespread among other associations in subsequent years. Augras clarifies the following aspects on the subject:

*“Although the formalization of the samba-enredo was expressed for the first time in the regulations of the 1952 parade (in Rio de Janeiro) — which also started to demand the “wings” to present themselves in costumes, something that big schools had already been doing —, the fact is that, on a date between 1946 and 1948, the samba-enredo had become unanimous” (Augras, 1998, p. 78/79).*

In São Paulo, this generalization of samba-enredo for structuring parades only occurred in 1968, although *Nenê da Vila Matilde* Samba School has produced since 1956 this modality of samba for its parades. And, also, it was the pioneer in bringing women as mottos of its sambas-enredo. Therefore, the participation of women in carnival associations goes beyond their role as dancers, flag bearers, dressmakers, among other insertions. They were also the inspiring muses of the poets for the elaboration of sambas-enredo for the associations parades. But before this year there were some women who were the source of inspiration for sambas-enredo. Among the groups, *Nenê da Vila Matilde* Samba School stood out, which brought in 1959, 1961 and 1962 women as themes of their sambas-enredo, moving forward in relation to their counterparts. The mottos of the tributes were female figures that had been launched into the collective imagination for their singular and loving exploits, such as the slave Chica da Silva (Furtado, 2001) who won the heart of the judge and contractor of Diamonds from Minas Gerais, the Portuguese João Fernandes de Oliveira, not only conquering her freedom but also forming a large family with him, regardless of the opposing positions of the Catholic Church and the Portuguese Crown; the Marchioness of Santos (Domitila de Castro Canto e Melo)<sup>4</sup>, a woman of the nobility who scandalized the court of Emperor Dom Pedro I, for her loving relationship with the Monarch, with whom she had five children; and the character Isaura, from a Bernardo Guimarães' novel, who suffered all kinds of barbarism at the hands of her lord, until being rescued from his clutches by her savior and future husband.

After 1968, sambas-enredo about women brought back the Marchioness of Santos (Domitila de Castro Canto e Melo), chosen in 1969 by Acadêmicos do Peruche samba school (a school founded on August 6, 1965), classified in Group 2. In 1972, Escola Primeira de Santo Estevão (founded on May 13, 1954) discussed in its samba-enredo *Maria Quitéria – O Rio faz festa para um soldado* [Maria Quitéria – Rio throws a party for a soldier], a singular protagonist who dressed as a man and led troops (until she was discovered) in defense of Brazil's independence.

During this period, of this research (1974-1988), the samba schools (of Group 1 and Special Group), which had greater visibility on the samba catwalks and in the media, only honored six women with sambas-enredo, with one of them being a fictional character. Table 1, shown below, contains the name of the school, the name of the President of the association, the title of the samba-enredo, the year of the parade, the final ranking and the groups that brought these schools together in accordance with the evaluation of their parades, decided by the official jury, instituted by the Official Commission of the City Hall, in common agreement with UESP – União das Escolas de Samba Paulistas [Union of São Paulo Samba Schools]. The themes of sambas-enredo focused on six female figures, one being a character in a novel and another being an African mythical entity. The other women lived from time immemorial to the present time.

4 Domitila de Castro Canto e Melo, known by the codename Marquesa de Santos (1797-1867), was born in São Paulo (SP). She was the daughter of Viscount João de Castro Canto e Melo. She had maintained a loving relationship with Emperor Pedro I since 1822, with whom she had five recognized children, two of whom survived. After breaking off with the Emperor, she returned to São Paulo in 1842, marrying the rich and influential brigadier Tobias de Aguiar with whom she had five children (Schumacher, S., et al., 2000, pp. 424-425).

The personalities who inspired sambas-enredo lived at different times of the country: the beautiful indigenous woman Paraguaçu lived in Brazil during the colonial period<sup>5</sup>; Dona Beja was a 19th century courtesan from Minas Gerais who enchanted elite men, with her beauty and her seductive power. The analysis of the sambas-enredo mentioned above demonstrates the dimension of these proposals. Camisa Verde e Branco Samba School, in 1980 (2nd place), addresses in the verses of the samba-enredo “*Acima de tudo mulher*” [Most of all, woman], by the composer Ideval Anselmo, the legend of the indigenous woman Paraguaçu. The translated and adapted samba-enredo is as follows:

*“The star king has risen/I don't know how the new day will be like/It's still early/a girl dreams about the firebird/Oh! Beautiful indigenous girl/you are a maiden/A bud of forget-me-not/who gave herself with fervor/To Diogo her love/most of all, a woman/Where are you going, Caramuru?/I'm going to France/I'm going to take Paraguaçu/a lady, across the ocean/She was treated like a madam/with a sovereign name/Here is Catarina, this is her name, now/Ave Maria/ave Catarina that has returned/Ave Maria/ave land of São Salvador” (SASP - Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista. Accessed on Jan 10, 2018).*

The samba-enredo sang through verses the exploits of Paraguaçu who had fallen in love with the Portuguese Diogo, the caramuru or “fire bird”, with whom she went to Europe. There, she received the name Catarina, becoming a sovereign of the high nobility. The approach is idyllic to characterize the romance between the young native girl and the Portuguese navigator. This edifying trajectory of Paraguaçu and other young indigenous women, daughters of chiefs, cannot serve as a reference for the relations between Portuguese colonizers and indigenous women which were not always consensual. Over the centuries, these women have suffered all kinds of violence, ranging from kidnapping, rape, followed by enslavement and the death of their relatives, in different disputes for the occupation of their lands. On certain occasions their objective was the enslavement of men and women, for other purposes, regardless of the land issue<sup>6</sup>.

In the same year of 1980, Acadêmicos do Ipiranga Samba School brought the samba-enredo *Dona Beja, a feiticeira de Araxá* [Dona Beja, the witch of Araxá], by the composers who were part of the “Grupo Afoxé”. The poets sang in their verses “*The little witch princess of Araxá, a beautiful young indigenous woman*”, with blue eyes that seduced men with her beauty and sensuality. The verses below wove odes to the young courtesan, treated with fine delicacy: “*Make way, guys, for Ipiranga to parade/Presenting a spectacular theme/Hail, hurray, Dona Beja/The little witch princess of Araxá/Young beautiful indigenous woman/She was born to be admired by the people/Brown skin, hair with the sun color/Blue eyes that excited the listener/And that was how her fame spread out/Jatobá, the place/That she created to be loved/With a lot of luxury and wealth/For the nobility who was going to court her/She was the finest lady/That the court have ever met/Until the end of her days/Her girlish face/Never disappeared/Seduction, friendliness and beauty/It's Ipiranga portraying Dona Beja” (SASP. Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista Accessed on Jan 10, 2018). Despite this “delicacy” of the poets, Beja's story was marked by trials and breaches of the norms of the time, reluctantly, considering that she was kidnapped as a teenager by a Portuguese authority located in the region of Minas Gerais. The young woman was transformed into a concubine, a destination that was reserved at that time for beautiful young women with no resources to arrange a wedding. In 1984, women returned to the streets.*

5 The *Dicionário Mulheres do Brasil* book does not contain a specific entry on indigenous women. However, there is a general entry under the title Indigenous Women that exposes the difficulties to individualize their profile, even those who have become recognized, such as Arco-Verde, Bartira and Paraguaçu, who married illustrious Portuguese men. It is only emphasized that they were the daughters of important warriors and that they secured alliances between the Portuguese and their tribes (Schumacher, S., et al., 2000, pp. 270-272).

6 On this subject, there is already documented research in relation to the past and contemporaneity that clarifies the tense and violent relationships resulting from the contacts between indigenous and non-indigenous people (Cunha, 1994).

And, again, they were the inspiration of sambas-enredo of some schools, in 1986 and, also, in the following years (1987, 1988, 1990 and 1991). This sequence was interrupted in 1989. The honorees were women of different spectra, who in one way or another were known and who would give prominence to samba schools, considering that some of them had been recognized due to their specific interventions in Brazilian society. Samba schools have followed the movement of valuing women around the world and also in Brazil. They highlighted their value by bringing sambas-enredo to the streets as an inspiring element for their allegories and other elements required in the parades of the samba catwalk.

In 1984, the inspiration for União Independente de Vila Prudente samba school was Elis Regina. The focus was on her professional career with emphasis on the singer's Rio Grande do Sul origin, her habits, the places she visited, her successes on stages with pieces that became her signature songs (Upa neguinho). And the shows, like Falso Brillhante (Fake Diamond), that marked her career. The verses of the samba-enredo covered the places that defined her professional trajectory in Rio Grande do Sul and her subsequent successful trajectories, such as the show Falso Brillhante. The composers Nelson Coelho, Roberto Lindolfo and Ditão also used stanzas of song lyrics which had made her a renowned artist, like Upa neguinho, etc., to profile her. The translated lyrics of the samba-enredo *Elis Regina – O som da festa eternadesta musa* [Elis Regina – The sound of this muse's eternal party], from União Independente de Vila Prudente Samba School, are as follows:

*“In the land of the barbecue/and chimarrão/I swayed in poetry/where the revelation sprouted/Elis, the light that radiates/my village comes to show/Why shed tears/come with me to the revelry/To wake up/let's jump/It's only three days/oh, oh, oh, today there is a trawler/I am going/ Jump little black girl on the road/excited girl/Oh how we miss you/It was the helix/of so many current values/In the false brightness of life/they were never forgotten/Her immortal works/it was a muse that appeared/Forever, who would say/among so many Marias/Blue train/little hot pepper/brought from the South/Alley of bottles/kid's club/Radio, circus/theater and tv/Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh/Elis, the party is yours/Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh/come and dance samba in the street”* (SASP. Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista. Accessed on Jan 10, 2018).

Sambas-enredo presented by the samba schools of Camisa Verde e Branco, Imperador do Ipiranga<sup>7</sup> and Unidos do Peruche<sup>8</sup>, about black women, focused on mythical personalities that transit between rebellion, the power of seduction and the divine power, the latter being capable of ensuring the emergence of strong and enlightened children, who are able to fight prejudice and oppression, in the period of slavery and in contemporary times. It is these sambas-enredo that will be discussed from now on.

**Black women on catwalks: identity symbols?:** Before proceeding with this discussion, it is important to clarify the studies regarding the participation of black women in São Paulo carnivals. Evidence of this presence appears in some pictures of the parades, in videos of a Brazilian public television network called TV Cultura, in the records of samba school memorialists, and in testimonials of some of them for individual or institutional research projects, such as the Projeto Carnaval Paulistano do MIS – Museu da Imagem e do Som [São Paulo Carnival Project – Museum of Image and Sound]. Highlights are turned to the standard bearer, flag bearer, or dancer. Eventually, the participation of some women who dedicated themselves to the school's infrastructure was mentioned, such as the seamstresses who transformed the fabrics into diverse characters or the cooks, who were dedicated to the elaboration of the famous *feijoada* that was part of the group's identity and granted prestige to the group itself. The

festive gatherings that were part of these groups, such as dances, rehearsals and *feijoadas*, guaranteed moments of sociability for the group and were also occasions to receive external guests, notably the press, politicians, among others. It also served to raise funds for the association to carry out its daily activities and to help organize its parades, considering that the official funds were insufficient, according to the boards of different schools.

The presence of these black women on the catwalks, as muses inspiring their parades, were also confirmed, although in a much smaller number. In the period analyzed in this text, we have, for example, the samba-enredo *Uma Certa Nega Fulô* (1974) [A Certain Nega Fulô], that features a novel character of the same name. With this theme by composers Ideval, Zelão and Miro (1974), *Camisa Verde e Branco Samba School* became the champion, a fact unheard of in these sambas-enredo dedicated to women. The composers were successful by singing in their verses the prowess of a house slave who became madam, thus breaking the fetters of slavery, by getting married to the white lord. The translated verses are as follows:

*“From the slave quarters to the nobility/Her love, her beauty/The lullabies/She came to the dance hall/Oh, make room, because Nega Fulô arrived/And she arrived in green and white/Spreading her charm/A daughter of Nagô/Lull Erê, the Grauna/You can lull/In the hands of Catambú/This black man will work/This house slave/Who became a great madam/Could not imagine/New break of dawn/Shackles fell/And the black man then smiled/With the white man by his side/Under this indigo sky/Under this indigo sky/Let's sing, my people/La la laue/Dunga tará/Tará sinherê”* (SASP - Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista. Accessed on Jan 10, 2018).

Despite being a fictional character, the house slave, in the Brazilian slave system, was a young and beautiful slave who shared the daily life with her masters, performing various tasks inside the house, such as: breastfeeding her mistress's children, sewing, cooking, doing hairstyles and dressing the mistresses, as well as accompanying their mistresses and young mistresses on their walks, etc. and, therefore, she held certain privileges (Monteleone, 2019). She became a character who aroused different feelings among the other slaves and populated a certain social imaginary of the following times, regarding a possible conformism and also, the possibilities of breaking the bonds of slavery, through affectional bonds with their masters. In 1986, Imperador do Ipiranga Samba School presented on the streets the samba-enredo *Festa para uma Rainha Negra* [Party for a Black Queen], prepared by composers Mestre Lagrilla and Ideval who honored Luiza Mahin, who belonged to the nagô-jeje nation of the Mahi tribe. Luiza used to say she was an African queen who had been sold into slavery. She obtained her freedom in 1812 and made her home “the headquarters of slave rebellions of Bahia” (Schumacher, S., Brazil, E. V. 2000, p. 346). She became the protagonist of the Malês revolt that occurred in Bahia in 1835, which was not an exception, since other enslaved women also participated in the previous revolts, such as the one of 1814, which was analyzed by João José Reis.

This revolt can be understood, as noted by Reis, in the context of the black rebellions that shook Bahia since the early nineteenth century in successive uprisings (1807, 1809, 1813, 1814, 1826, 1828 and 1830), involving diverse ethnicities and groups. The author emphasizes on this process the most general aspects of these rebellions:

*“Bahia was the scene of a cycle of slave revolts and conspiracies during the first half of the nineteenth century, the most known of which would be the Malês Revolt of 1835. The historiography of these movements states that until the 1820s they were wiped out by Haussás slaves, and later they were replaced by Nagôs, Yoruba-speaking Africans, including Malês, namely Islamized Nagôs. Haussás and Nagôs were shipped as captives in ports along Costa da Mina — the coast of the Gulf of Benin —, as it was called by the Portuguese and Brazilians, but was known to other Europeans as the Slave Coast, meaning that human trafficking represented its main activity until the mid-nineteenth century”* (Reis, 2014, p. 69). The tribute to Luiza is part of the exaltation to the memory of the slave uprisings among Afro-descendants. The conjuncture of the 1980s was marked by the greater political participation of this community, bringing out its

<sup>7</sup> Imperador do Ipiranga samba school was created in 1968 and paraded in 1969. It is located in Heliópolis, the largest favela in São Paulo. It was created by the lawyer Laerte Torpocov, along with other members of Vila Carioca and Vila Independência neighborhoods. (SASP – Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista Accessed on Feb 8, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Unidos do Peruche Samba School was created in the 1950s, out of militant friends from the Lavapés samba school (SASP – Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista. Accessed on Feb 8, 2020).



heroes and heroines who fought to break the fetters of slavery. Luiza is known to have participated in the Malês rebellion, which was stifled even before its outbreak with rampant violence. There were many deaths, torture and exiles of many rebels to Africa. The protagonist fled to Rio de Janeiro continuing her rebel militancy. She was arrested and her whereabouts were lost in the mists of oppression, considering that her son, Luiz Gama (who was then ten years old), went looking for her after buying his own freedom. Gama, though born free, had been sold by his own father, a Portuguese man, who refused to decline his name, even after becoming a recognized poet and lawyer, notably for his engagement in the struggle for the abolition of slavery. His attempts to locate his mother were unsuccessful, failing to know if she died in prison or was deported. Sambas-enredo dedicated to the protagonist brings an epic tone to its narrative. This is not an allegory or metaphor, but the praise to the warrior Luiza who fought to free black people from captivity. The fast-paced samba was aimed at tracking the tension of the plot. Therefore, the translated verses express:

*“A distant time, sir/around Bahia/It was the law of captivity, sir/to black people who suffered/The reason came stronger because/The Malês revolt/Nega “Luiza”, the woman who suffered/Step into the fight, daughter of Gegê/Ole ola lala/Light the fire, the drumming can't stop/Ole ola lala/Hold on to the skirt hem, otherwise it will burn/A boy plays the ganze or ganzá/Tonight it is time to sing/Here there is only joy and love/Today there is a party in Congar/The decked yard and in the sky/The moon shines/ Do not cry, run to see/Queen Luiza, daughter of Gegê/Ole ola lala/Light the fire, the drumming can't stop/Ole ola lala/hold on to the skirt hem, otherwise it will burn/Knock your head on the ground, my lord/She just arrived/In the time of slavery, what did you do?/Did you go to war to save us?/To the bronze goddess, what?/We will give offerings/ And tonight they are for you/Our queen, daughter of Gegê/Ole ola lala/Light the fire, the drumming can't stop/Ole ola lala/Hold on to the skirt hem, otherwise it can burn”* (SASP - Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista. Accessed on Jan 10, 2018).

The third theme discussed the centenary of slavery abolition in Brazil. The composers Joaquim and Benê of Unidos do Peruche Samba School opted, in the samba-enredo *Filhos de Mãe Preta* (1988), for a transoceanic perspective to talk about the struggle for black people to achieve freedom. The symbolic elements (the protector deities of Afro matrix) were triggered to provoke thoughts of those events, opting Unidos do Peruche Samba School to evoke the great black leaders around the world who fought for the freedom of their own people at different times, such as: Zumbi (rebel leader in Colonial Brazil), Luther King (USA) and Mandella (South Africa). They were seen as enlightened by advocated causes demonstrating that they were the sons of Mãe Preta and grandchildren of Yoruba, maximum cultural symbols and memorials for the group. The rhythm of the samba-enredo followed the plot's theme and was marked densely, with accelerated drumming to set the bar according to the plot's content.

**The following translated verses set out the motto of the samba-enredo:** *“Atôô Oabaluaê/Atôô Oabaluaê/Come oh clarity/Peruche sings for freedom/Ê! Mother Africa/spreading her children around the world/This hollow is so deep/that they awaken in a second/When walking happily/So many stars shining brightly/It's not Isabel's toy/Pixinguinha and Clementina/A force that dominates/a light that comes from the sky/Oiã, ieo/from the root to the most beautiful flower/Oiã, ieo/it is Zumbi it is Luther King and Mandella/Black gemstones/lead the boat to row/These beautiful people/make my singing go bright/Quilombo/a free song echoed/Malê Gegê son of Zumbi/Anuanas from Nagô/Children of Mãe Preta/grandchildren of Yoruba/Affecting the world/extolling the Orixás”* (SASP - Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista. Accessed on Jan 10, 2018). It is noteworthy that the samba-enredo *Os Filhos de Mãe Preta* [The Children of the Black Mother] bears no analogy to the Mãe Preta<sup>9</sup>

monument, which originated from negotiations by black people from São Paulo for its insertion in the memorials of the IV Centenary of São Paulo city, in 1954. The monument is inscribed in post-memory disputes of the group in the state of São Paulo and other Brazilian states to establish their role in the nation's construct. In this sense, such quarrels present other issues, such as the recognition of their participation in forging the Brazilianness and richness of the country, unlike the verses of the composers who discussed the centenary meanings of the abolition of slavery in Brazil, being articulated to those who gave their lives for the sake of freedom

Their leaders defended that: “In these celebrations the black people were forgotten”. All the wealth produced by them, under captivity, was simply banned, considering that they were excluded from the great events that would take place in the city, except in topical, generic and “exotic” situations, such as the exhibition at carnival celebrations, and at the exposition of typical foods during the festivities. This exclusion generated much criticism and the movement of its leaders who proposed the creation of an Afro-Brazilian museum in Ibirapuera Park, showing the instruments of torture that were used to subdue them and also their sculptural cultural manifestations, of all kinds. “The proposal was refused and in the back and forth of negotiations and pressure, the figure of conciliation came out: the sculpture of Mãe Preta [Black Mother] (the black slave maid breastfeeding a white child) that supposedly united the two worlds” (Silva, 2018, p. 18). On the contrary, the verses of the composers brought to the center of the reflections the black leaders who fought for freedom, in different historical moments and spatialities. Some examples were the struggles for the liberation of black people from slavery by Zumbi dos Palmares<sup>10</sup> who confronted the Portuguese Empire for several years; Luther King and Mandella who, in contemporary times, continued to fight to secure civil and political rights for black people who were surrounded by such claims in the US and South Africa. It is an emblematic samba-enredo for debating the centenary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil, making it clear that the old issues of freedom were still in evidence for black people, whose social marginality was (and remains) a reality in the country.

Looking at these sambas-enredo about black female figures from a broader perspective, you can see that they discussed distinct dimensions of the universe of African descent. That is, they show their heroes and heroines who fought for their freedom, the deities that bestowed protection on and illuminated the ways of their warriors, and also other forms of breaking the fetters that passed through the power of seduction and affection between the slave and her master.

Finally, we highlight the choices of protagonists who inspired sambas-enredo. The options fell on women who inscribed their names in the history of the country, either by their heroic traits or by the boldness to confront the society of that time that demanded behaved attitudes, modesty and submission to prevailing standards, under male dominance.

## CONCLUSION

In this epilogue, it is worth recalling the limits in the approach of the themes of sambas-enredo about women in the 1980s in relation to the previous one that was marked by censorship and lack of freedom of expression. I would say that some conformist and alienated views present in these artistic elaborations suggest a line of continuity of their contents between these decades. I cite as an example the samba-

Paissandu/SP. (Catalog of works of art in public places in São Paulo: Regional Sé, 1987; Lopes, 2007).

<sup>10</sup>From Quilombo dos Palmares, located in the Province of Pernambuco, Zumbi (dos Palmares) led the fight against slavery, imposing defeats on Portuguese troops, from 1675 to November 20, 1695, when he was captured and killed by the bandeirantes summoned by the Portuguese empire. (Gomes, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> The monument Mãe Preta was inaugurated on January 25, 1955 at Largo do

enredo *Uma Certa Nega Fulô* and those that dealt with the lives of indigenous woman Paraguaçu, Dona Beja and Elis Regina whose approaches showed no ruptures or signs indicative of critical elements. The carnivalized exposure of the lives of these women on the catwalks from a lightweight theme reinforced the prospect of sanctifying an idyllic world without conflict or tension. This did not, however, prevent ambiguous elements from becoming evident in these representations that relied on women who were free and independent, but their profiles were defined at the same time by their picturesque features, by the angelic beauty / sensuality of some of them and by their singing, sonority and contagious joy. In other words, what is left to the senses of such anodyne representations is the mismatch between the experiences of these women and the reading made about them by the composers who disregarded the confrontation of values that the protagonists imposed on the (Brazilian) patriarchal and sexist society of their time. Sambas-enredo related to black women assume another contribution because it is the search for demarcation of the group's identity, according to the cultural values originating in mother Africa. These sambas-enredo valued their Afro-based cultural traits and the different ways women fought for the abolition of slavery, whether they were on the battlefield or breaking the shackles of prejudice, with interracial marriages prohibited by the elites and institutions that supported the slave regime over the centuries.

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