

Samba: symbol of national culture?

Samba: símbolo da cultura nacional?

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Abstract: This article discusses samba and considers its denotations as presented in recent academic publications. Bibliographic research was conducted through a survey of the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (Biblioteca Digital de Teses e Dissertações, BDTD) on the subject. The research indicates that the statement that samba is a musical genre symbolic of national culture, and not of African-Brazilian culture, conspires with the violent erasure of references to an African culture that was reinvented in Brazil by the diaspora, and that it is functional to the myth of racial democracy in the country. Samba stands out as one of the main expressions of inventiveness and Black resistance of African roots in Brazil, whose contributions were decisive in the conformation of Brazilian society in its social, economic, political, and cultural aspects.

Keywords: Samba. African-Brazilian roots. African-Brazilian Culture.

Resumo: Este artigo traz uma discussão sobre samba considerando suas principais acepções apresentadas na produção acadêmica recente. Realizou-se pesquisa bibliográfica com levantamento de produções na Biblioteca Digital de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD) sobre o tema. A partir da pesquisa, reflete-se que o enunciado de samba como gênero musical símbolo da cultura nacional – e não como cultura afro-brasileira – colabora para o violento apagamento das referências da cultura africana reinventada no Brasil a partir da diáspora e é funcional ao mito da democracia racial no país. Destaca-se o samba como uma das principais expressões de inventividade e resistência negra de raiz africana no Brasil, cujas contribuições foram determinantes na conformação da sociedade brasileira em seus aspectos sociais, econômicos, políticos e culturais.

Palavras-chave: Samba. Raízes afro-brasileiras. Cultura Afro-brasileira.

INTRODUCTION

This article focusses on the theme of samba. The so-called nationalisation of samba, in which, according to Hermano Vianna in *The Mystery of Samba* (2002), the Rio de Janeiro scene played a central role, proclaims it as a symbol of national culture, a genuinely Brazilian music. With Afro-Brazilian roots and persecuted by the police in the early 20th century as a symbol of vagrancy, samba underwent transformations and, especially from the late 1930s onward in Rio de Janeiro, was used to construct the notion of nationality expounded during the Vargas era. This transformation highlighted the pressures of urbanisation, the impact of capitalist

industrialisation on popular music, and the development of broadcasting in Brazil. As a result, samba became widely recognised as a musical genre that expresses ‘Brazilianess’, and as a symbol of national culture.

From this perspective, samba is frequently highlighted as an attraction to strengthen international tourism, especially during Carnival, when Rio de Janeiro is showcased as a Brazilian landmark. Legally recognised as national cultural heritage, Law 14,991 of September 27, 2024 (Brazil, 2024) recognises the production of samba musical instruments and the practices associated with them as manifestations of national culture. These include: tambourine, cuíca, surdo, tamborim, rebolo, fritanga, tam-tam, timba, and repique de mão.

When we talk about samba, however, what are we referring to? The music? The dance? Can we treat it in the singular, given its various expressions across the country? What is samba’s relationship to what is commonly called Brazilian national culture? Can we understand samba as a symbol of national culture? We do not intend to answer these questions definitively, but they present themselves as important matters that inform our studies.

According to the Dictionary of the Social History of Samba (Dicionário da História Social do Samba, 2022), compiled by Nei Lopes and Luiz Antônio Simas, “[...] in colonial and imperial Brazil, the various dances of African origin, in which the ‘belly bump’ (Umbigada) was the main characteristic, were referred to as ‘batuque’ or ‘samba’, a word of Bantu-African origin” (Lopes; Simas, 2022, p. 247).

Some studies on samba have focused on its historiography, debating, among other aspects, its origins and transformations. Authors such as Roberto Moura (2004), Nei Lopes (2005), Marcos Napolitano and Maria Clara Wasserman (2000), Ana Maria Rodrigues (1984), and Muniz Sodré (1998) problematise the origins of samba. Studies by Muniz Sodré (1998) consider samba as much more than a musical genre, explaining that its musical aspects have established, inseparable relationships with religiosity and dance, characteristics of its fundamental African roots. Considering these and other studies leads us to samba as an expression of complex relationships that have shaped Brazilian social formation, permeated, among other essential determinants, by references to African culture recreated in Brazil by the Black diaspora and their descendants, and in which samba finds its source.

In this article we address samba, an Afro-Brazilian cultural expression, and consider its varied meanings as presented in recent academic literature. Taking samba as an object of study and presenting a systematisation of its treatment in recent theoretical works is principally a way to raise the visibility to one of the main expressions of Black inventiveness and resistance with African roots in Brazil, the contributions of which have been decisive in shaping Brazilian society in its social, economic, political, and cultural aspects.

As Lélia Gonzalez highlights, “[...] Brazilian culture is a Black culture par excellence, even the Portuguese we speak here is different from the Portuguese of Portugal. Our Portuguese [...] is ‘Pretuguês’” (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 269). Here, she highlights the important role of Black women, of “[...] the so-called Black mother [...]” (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 269), in shaping Brazilian culture at its foundations, since, by breastfeeding white children and speaking “[...] Pretuguês, [...] it is she who will pass on to Brazilians in general, this type of pronunciation, a way of being, feeling, and thinking” (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 269).

Samba, therefore, presents itself as a relevant mediation for reflecting on Brazilian social reality and its contradictions, and as a relevant topic of study for Social Work, this being our area of expertise and core professional practice. Although the output on samba in Social Work are quantitatively limited, we have recently identified some works that address the topic, including articles (such as those written by Aretha Pestana, 2013; César Maranhão, 2014; Graziela Scheffer, 2016), final coursework (such as those authored by Andressa de Moraes, 2022; and Nery Moraes, 2023), and books such as those edited by Marcelo Braz (2013) and Marcelo Braz and Luiz Leitão (2022).

In *Samba, between the 'social question' and the cultural issue in Brazil*, Marcelo Braz (2013) draws attention to the understanding of samba as a form of artistic creation, "[...] a modality of praxis through which men seek to modify the social relations that exist between themselves, objectifying themselves in specific products characteristic of artistic-cultural activity" (Braz, 2013, p. 77). And "[...] artistic-cultural praxis is also an expression of a 'cultural question' inserted within the scope of social relations that shape the Brazilian social formation" (Braz, 2013, p. 77). He highlights that samba is a product of Brazilian social formation, in a specific historical period and linked to specific class strata and, thus, considers that it "[...] expresses a dialectical synthesis [...]" (Braz, 2013, p. 78) between the 'social question' and the 'cultural question' in Brazil, which "[...] maintain a relationship of complementarity and reciprocal determination" (Braz, 2013, p. 78).

In this dialectical relationship we need to raise the issue of race, which we consider fundamental to understanding any constitutive aspect of the dynamics of Brazilian reality which have been, and continue to be, produced within it historically. This includes samba. It is noteworthy that Brazil was one of the last countries to abolish slavery and, "[...] within the new institutionality of the post-abolition period, the way of treating the former slaves is structurally reconfigured in the form of racism" (Madeira, 2022, p. 79). It is worth noting that the abolition of slavery in Brazil has not been completed, that is,

[...] it did not cause profound changes in the land structure, nor did it alter property law: on the contrary, it prevented institutional advances that left gaps to the present day in economic, social, political and cultural life responsible for the persistent naturalised racial hierarchies and inequalities engendered by structural and institutional racism that impede the rise and mobility of minority ethnic groups (Madeira, 2022, p. 79).

Within this Brazilian societal dynamic, marked by the racism that structures it, Black women are those who often suffer the most from discrimination, oppression, exploitation, and violence. This expresses an inseparable relationship between racism and patriarchy (Barroso, 2018). In the words of Abdias Nascimento (2016):

Brazil inherited its patriarchal family structure from Portugal, and the price of this legacy was paid by Black women, and not only during slavery. Even today, Black women, because of their poverty, lack of social status, and complete helplessness, remain easy victims, vulnerable to any sexual assault from white men (Nascimento, 2016, p. 54).

The foundations of this social formation – colonial-slavery-racist-patriarchal-sexist (Clóvis Moura, 1984; 1988; Beatriz Nascimento, 2006a; 2006b; 2006c; Abdias Nascimento, 2016; Lélia Gonzalez, 2020) – were central to the process of structuring a class based society and the formation of the working class in Brazil, forging particular contours for the development of

Brazilian dependent capitalism (Marini, 2011). The racism and patriarchy that structured Brazilian social, and which are functional to dependent capitalism (Mauriel, 2023), continue to update their expressions, recreating themselves and operating with direct implications for the contemporary class struggle dynamics of the country.

By exposing structural aspects of this society, samba enables a relevant debate on social, racial, and cultural issues in Brazil, expressing itself as much more than a musical genre or a dance-form. But to what extent has the concept of samba as a relevant mediation for reflecting on structural aspects of Brazilian society been present in academic writing? How is samba highlighted in these works?

To understand the main denotations of samba that appear in recent theoretical publications, we conducted bibliographical research through a survey of scientific publications on the subject (theses and dissertations), published between 2002 and 2022, held by the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations. It is worth mentioning that this bibliographical survey, which resulted in the development of this article, was part of broader research on the participation of women in samba, carried out during a postdoctoral internship, from 2023 to 2024, at the State University of Ceará (UECE), alongside a Master's degree in Social Service, Work and Social Issues (MASS) and the Laboratory of Studies and Research on Afro-Brazilianness, Gender and Family (NUAFRO)/UECE.

In this article we present a part of the results of this research, specifically those on the approaches to samba in the academic works studied. Firstly, we present a general characterisation of the sampled works, and then, based on the results obtained, we highlight samba as a relevant expression of Afro-Brazilian culture and problematise the recurring statements that present it as a musical genre symbolic of Brazilian culture.

METHODOLOGY AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS RESEARCHED

In sharing our results we recognise the importance of highlighting our methodology and characterising the scientific publications researched.

Our bibliographic research surveyed scientific works available on the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (Biblioteca Digital de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD) digital platform, published between 2002 and 2022 on the theme of women in samba. We applied descriptors and defined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Using the selected descriptors: samba; women; women in samba; samba 'raiz'; samba 'de roda'; samba 'de coco'; sambadeiras; samba 'roda', we identified forty-three academic papers. The research sample consisted of papers selected according to inclusion and exclusion criteria designed to meet the proposed objectives. The inclusion criteria were theses and dissertations published between 2012 and 2022, and theses and dissertations focussed on the participation of women in samba in Brazil and/or the Brazilian Northeast. The exclusion criteria were theses and dissertations that were not published within the defined period and theses and dissertations that did not directly address the topic of women's participation in samba in Brazil and/or the Brazilian Northeast.

To further refine the selection of academic papers identified, we also read the title, summary, abstract, introduction, and concluding remarks of each publication. This led us to select ten papers (two theses and eight dissertations). We then identified the interpretations of samba, which lead to the reflections shared in this article. These papers are linked to various fields of knowledge, as listed below:

Scientific publications selected from the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations, 2012 to 2022

THESES				
Title	Author	Institute and State	Year	Area
Aprendendo a ler com minhas camaradas: seres, cenas, cenários e difusão do samba de roda através das sambadeiras do Recôncavo baiano	Queiroz, Clécia Maria de Aquino	UFBA/BA	2019	Education/ Dissemination of knowledge
Agora é samba! Saberes afro-passistagógicos de mulheres gaúchas	Pires, Karen de Tolentino	UFSM/RS	2022	Education/ Education and arts
DISSERTATIONS				
Title	Author	Institute and State	Year	Area/Programme
Vai dar samba: o discurso amoroso do samba e a posição-sujeito mulher	Alves, Tássia Gimenes	UFF/RJ	2014	Philosophy and Human Sciences/Cultural History
A filha da Dona Lecy: estudo da trajetória de Leci Brandão	Sousa, Fernanda Kalianny Martins	USP/SP	2016	Social Anthropology/ Anthropology
Trânsitos Musicais e Comunicação Popular: Experiências de protagonismo de Mulheres Negras em Cachoeira, BA.	Gomes, Francimária Ribeiro	UFBA/BA	2017	Philosophy and Human Sciences/ Interdisciplinary Studies on Women, Gender, and Feminism
“Samba de coco de Arcoverde – mudança na regulação de espaço de homens e mulheres ou de estrutura simbólica?”	Jales, Danielly Amorim de Queiroz	UFPE/PE	2018	Philosophy and Human Sciences/ Anthropology
Samba de Pareia pelos saberes do corpo que samba	Silva, Jonathan Rodrigues	UFS/SE	2019	Popular Culture
“Sempre fui obediente, mas não pude resistir”: narrativas de mulheres musicistas em rodas de samba do Rio de Janeiro	Mostaro, Milene Gomes Ferreira	FGV/RJ	2021	Social Sciences/ Postgraduate Studies in History, Politics, and Cultural Heritage
Elas compõem, elas cantam: uma pesquisa sobre a autoria feminina de samba	Pacheco, Ana Laura Furtado	UFJF/MG	2021	Literature – Literary Studies/Theories of Literature and

				Cultural Representations	Source: Author's
A cor e o corpo: uma história feminista do samba e do carnaval no Rio de Janeiro	Cavalcanti, Maria Clara Martins	Unicamp/ SP	2021	Philosophy and Human Sciences/History – Cultural History	

production, 2024.

In the sample, two theses with a focus on Education stand out, one related directly to the Dissemination of Knowledge and the other to Education and the Arts. This was the field with the second highest concentration of researched works, following Philosophy and Human Sciences, which contained four of the eight selected dissertations. The remaining works (four dissertations) are linked to the fields of Anthropology, Popular Culture, Social Sciences, and Literature. There were no works linked to the field of Social Work.

We found that all the publications were between 2014 and 2022, with the highest concentration in 2021 (three works) and 2019 (two works). With four works, the Northeast region had the largest number of publications, of which two were published in Bahia, one in Pernambuco, and one in Sergipe. The Southeast region follows closely behind, with Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, each with two works, and Minas Gerais with one. The South region had one work.

Field research with interviews appeared in seven papers, five of them mentioning the use of observation and documentary research. In three papers, we also verified the use of documentary research, totalling its use in eight of the ten selected papers. Bibliographic research, which supports all papers, is explicitly cited as part of the methodology used in only two of them.

Most of the works studied lacked a detailed systematisation of their methodology. This demanded special attention throughout our research to enable us to characterise, even minimally, the types of research adopted. The same applied to the identification of research methods and approaches. We identified: mention of a qualitative approach and principles of Ethnoscenology and Multi-referentiality (one study); Ethnomusicology (one study); Discourse Analysis (one study); an experience-focused approach and Ethno-research (one study); Ethnography (one study); Oral History (one study). One study reported in its abstract that a research method focused on Black women was developed for the study, based on four stages: knowing, listening, seeing, and learning, which led us to the notion of “Escrivivência” (introduced by Conceição Evaristo), although this was not specifically mentioned. The other three studies do not explicitly mention the methodological approach used.

The following lays out the interpretations of samba found in the researched works.

SAMBA IN RECENT SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS AND THE NECESSARY VISIBILITY OF ITS AFRO-BRAZILIAN ROOTS

We found several characterisations of samba within the researched publications, including musical genre or style, musical and artistic discourse, cultural manifestation or expression, cultural heritage, dance and as an expression of Black resistance.

Of the three works that refer to samba as a musical genre or style, Ana Pacheco's dissertation (2021) stands out. Characterising it as a quintessentially Brazilian musical genre, she revisits historical aspects of its origins in rural Brazil and its relationship with Candomblé and its practice in backyards during religious celebrations. Addressing these historical aspects, she refers to samba's roots as "[...] intercontinental [...]" (Pacheco, 2021, p. 13), African and European. She also highlights the transformations samba underwent throughout the 20th century during the process of urbanisation and the so-called era of cultural industry, through which it became the quintessential Brazilian musical genre. Tassia Alves's dissertation (2014) also draws attention to samba's popular and African origins, and its relationship to European and Brazilian references:

Samba is a musical genre of expression in Brazil, especially in the Rio de Janeiro-São Paulo axis. It has popular origins, as it was inherited from the slaves brought to Brazil, and is thus a mixture of African, European, and Brazilian musical styles, which began to gain strength in society around the 1920s (Alves, 2014, p. 16).

It is important to note that this "[...] mixture of musical styles [...]" (Alves, 2014, p. 16) resulted from the violent process of European colonisation that marks Brazilian social formation. This was a process of expropriation, inseparable from the mechanisms of oppression and exploitation that characterise Brazilian society as patriarchal, racist, and capitalist (Barroso, 2018; Cisne; Santos, 2018).

The notion of miscegenation (between Indigenous, Black and White people) as a characteristic of the Brazilian population, commonly promoted as an indication of the harmony and homogenisation of social relations in Brazil, essentially expresses the "[...] crimes of rape and sexual subjugation committed against Black women by White men [...]" (Nascimento, 2016, p. 61) which has endured "[...] as a normal practice throughout generations" (Nascimento, 2016, p. 61).

The assertion of miscegenation is repeatedly used to support the idea of a racial democracy in Brazil. Abdias Nascimento (2016) warns:

[...] based on intellectual speculation, often with the support of the so-called historical sciences, the concept of racial democracy was built in Brazil; according to this, such an expression supposedly reflects a certain concrete relationship in the dynamics of Brazilian society: that Blacks and Whites live together harmoniously, enjoying equal opportunities for existence, without any interference, in this game of social parity, from their respective racial or ethnic origins (Nascimento, 2016, p. 35).

Nascimento explains that this so-called racial democracy is a metaphor that expresses a "[...] Brazilian-style racism [...]" (Nascimento, 2016, p. 82) that is not manifest in an obvious way as happens in the United States, nor in a legalised way like apartheid in South Africa. It has, however, been institutionalised "[...] effectively at official levels of government, as well as diffusely and deeply penetrating into the social, psychological, economic, political and cultural fabric of the country's society" (Nascimento, 2016, p. 82).

His studies evidence racism in the Brazilian reality, highlighting what he perceives as the genocide of Black people in Brazil under various strategies:

From the crude classification of Black people as savages and inferior, to the extolling of the virtues of mixed blood as an attempt to eradicate the 'Black stain'; from the effectiveness of religious 'syncretism' to the legal abolition of the Black question through the National Security Law and census omission—manipulating all these methods and resources—Brazil's unofficial history records the long and ancient genocide perpetrated against Afro-Brazilians. A monstrous machine ironically called 'racial democracy' that grants Black people only a single 'privilege': that of becoming white, inside and out. The watchword of this imperialism of whiteness, and of the capitalism inherent to it, responds to bastardised nicknames like assimilation, acculturation, and miscegenation; but we know that beneath the theoretical surface remains untouched the belief in the inferiority of Africans and their descendants (Nascimento, 2016, p. 82).

Beatriz Nascimento emphasises: "[...] [the] Black culture, which managed to amalgamate with the Indian culture, is really the Brazilian culture, [...] which remained at the level of a subculture [...] because another culture dominated it to that level" (Nascimento, 2018, p. 125).

These analyses certainly help to reveal the intentional erasure of the significant sociocultural heritage of Black Africans and their descendants in the construction of Brazilian society in its diverse aspects (social, economic, political, and cultural). It also reveals the contributions of Indigenous peoples. We maintain that the recurring characterisation of samba as an expression of *national culture* or *Brazilian culture* colludes with the genocidal strategies toward Black culture.

Among publications that addressed samba in the Brazilian Northeast, we found a convergence of analyses characterising it as a cultural manifestation or practice and an expression of Black resistance. In her dissertation, Francimária Gomes (2017), in addition to considering samba as a musical genre or Black music, and noting that it is also a popular cultural manifestation, draws attention to its characterisation as an expression of Black resistance and highlights the importance of samba 'de roda', with its characteristic traits of African diaspora culture, in the formation of the cultural identity of the Recôncavo Baiano region.

The process of patrimonialisation not only allowed the genre's recognition as a musical element but also brought visibility to an ancestral folklore. It strengthened existing groups and influenced the emergence of others, marking its importance in the formation of the cultural identity of the Recôncavo Baiano region, as well as expanding the dynamics of musical spaces. Emerging within the context of colonisation, a marginalised musical and aesthetic expression, and later appropriated by mainstream culture (Hall, 2008; Sandroni, 2001), samba 'de roda' becomes representative primarily because it maintains traces of diaspora culture in its characteristics (Gomes, 2017, pp. 19-20).

In her thesis, Clécia Queiroz (2019), when identifying samba 'de roda' as a cultural manifestation, highlights the relevant place of dance and calls it a participatory choreographic-literary-musical, understanding that "[...] its raw material is produced by the body and, once transformed into music and poetry, is materialised again in the body through dance, informed by the participation of all those present" (Queiroz, 2019, p. 24). When characterising samba 'de roda' as a dance and popular cultural expression, she highlights its predominantly African roots:

Among all the cultural translations produced in the Recôncavo Baiano region, samba 'de roda' is perhaps the greatest and the one that gives it unity. Its origins are unclear, but travellers and writers report similar cultural forms dating back to the 17th century.

These forms feature a circular choreographic arrangement, where one woman at a time moves to the centre of the circle, sensually swaying her hips, and then withdraws, inviting another woman into the centre of the circle with a belly-bump (SODRÉ, 1998). However, references to a type of performance closer that currently produced as samba 'de roda' date back to the 19th century. The structures of the past, both dance and music, characteristic of the culture of the peoples of West-Central Africa (Bantu), who were transplanted to Brazil in large numbers in the early centuries of the colony, gradually evolved, taking on new shapes as they encountered the diverse matrices present in the country, until they reached what is recognised today as samba 'de roda'. I draw attention, however, to the predominance of African contributions to this cultural expression, which has always been practiced predominantly by Black people (Queiroz, 2019, p. 36-37).

Jonathan Silva's dissertation (2019), when referring to Samba 'de pareia' from Mussuca, in Sergipe, characterised it as a cultural manifestation and highlights its character of Black resistance, recognising it as 'quilombola':

I argue that samba can thus be seen as a quilombo, as this is how it presents in all its forms. From the celebration of a child's birth in the village to performances outside its place of origin. Everyone must be together for the circle to occur, either directly (sambadeiras, players, and rhyme-starters) or indirectly (listening/dancing bodies who remain close to the group, further out on the periphery). This is how it is understood. A circle made of parts. This reminds me that quilombo is also a way for Black people to re-understand themselves socially and culturally here in Brazil, very similar to a form of organisation originating from Africa (ORÍ, 1989) (Silva, 2019, p. 39).

This meaning of samba as 'quilombola' (a type of quilombo) reminds us of Beatriz Nascimento, when she states what makes quilombos unique: "[...] it is a grouping of Black people, which Black people undertake, which accepts Indigenous people within this structure but which have never been accepted within Brazilian society, and are still not accepted today" (Nascimento, 2018, p. 126). She also argues that colonialism was responsible for the disaggregation of Black people.

[...] as a man, as a culture, as a society, the moment it comes together it is always repeating [...] the essence of what the quilombo would have been, you know? Because there are many thousands of quilombos in Brazil and all over the world, with their own characteristics. So, the 'official order', the 'repression', is what is called 'quilombo', which is a Black name and means union. So, the moment the Black person unifies, comes together, he is always forming a quilombo, he is eternally forming a quilombo, the name in African is union (Nascimento, 2018, p. 126).

In addition to the perspectives above, Jonathan Silva (2019) observes the artistic character of samba 'de pareia' (in pairs) which is performed on stage and takes on the form of a spectacle in cultural events that occur outside the community. The artistic dimension of samba is also highlighted by Tássia Alves (2014) in her dissertation when, in addition to corroborating the perspectives of its characterisation as a musical genre, a demonstration or a cultural expression, she also highlights it as cultural heritage and artistic discourse, emphasising "[...] that samba, as artistic discourse and cultural heritage, is historically inserted in society" (Alves, 2014, p. 56), and that samba lyrics indicate socially constructed meanings and ideological positions. Following this theme, Alves (2014) relies on studies by Magalhães (2011), where he reiterates that "[...] art presents itself as the highest expression of human thought, the only one capable of reflecting its time and foreseeing, in an artistic way, future possibilities for society" (Magalhães, 2011, p. 11-12).

Danielly Jales (2018), when accessing the results of other studies on samba 'de coco' from Arcoverde (PE), highlights in her dissertation that she found "[...] that 'de coco' has become an important empirical indicator for understanding the processes of identity affirmation; of constructing the concept of Blackness; as well as of legitimising Afro-Brazilian heritage" (Jales, 2018, p. 15). She adds that studies that take another viewpoint refer to "[...] samba 'de coco' starting from a discussion focused on its origins and developments in the cultural existence of the manifestation and the different types of coconuts found in the Northeast" (Jales, 2018, p. 15). She also highlights indigenous matrices associated with the forms of dancing samba 'de coco', "[...] basically the 'roda' (circle) and the 'fila' (row), which seem to have been directly influenced by Toré and other indigenous dances (Pereira, 2005; Machado, 2001)" (Jales, 2018, p. 16). According to this researcher, there is no consensus among samba 'de coco' masters in Arcoverde about its origin. Some masters recognise the origin of 'coco' in African culture, while others only believe it is related, and there are those who report the existence of 'coco' in Arcoverde as a result of the migration of 'coco' samba dancers to that city (Jales, 2018).

Milene Mostaro (2021), in her dissertation – *A study of women's samba circles in Rio de Janeiro* – and Karen Pires (2022) in her thesis – *On dance pedagogies of 'passistas' in Rio Grande do Sul* – corroborate the characterisation of samba as a cultural expression or manifestation of African origin. The former also draws attention to samba as "[...] a striking cultural phenomenon and [as being] associated with an element of national culture and identity" (Mostaro, 2021, p. 38). The latter highlights that "[...] samba is a space of Black identity and resistance and is inserted into the lives of a large part of the Black Brazilian population [...]" (Pires, 2022, p. 23), thus highlighting Black identity.

The question of associating the notion of national identity with samba fulfils an economic and political function by converting it into a commodity and using it as a symbol of a national cohesion. This process cannot be analysed without considering the erasure of its African and Afro-Brazilian roots, the genocide of Black people in Brazil, according to Abdias Nascimento (2016), and the dominating actions of another culture that designated the social, political, economic, and cultural development of the Black population and Indigenous peoples as a subculture, as Beatriz Nascimento (2018) warns.

We observed diversity in the approaches to samba in the academic works studied across eight of the ten publications within our research sample. Of these eight works, seven demonstrate agreement by directly highlighting their viewpoints with references to African culture and their Black roots (both African and Afro-Brazilian roots), rather than a reductionism to a musical genre. Specific aspects caught our attention when we observed that two publications refer to samba as a cultural manifestation of African origin and one defines it as Afro-Brazilian cultural heritage, and two other productions that approach samba from the perspective of Black resistance and quilombola communities.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our investigative pathway has employed a relevant approach to the academic knowledge published regarding samba in Brazil and to the different approaches to it in recent scientific productions.

This leads us to reaffirm the understanding of samba as an Afro-Brazilian cultural expression and that it should not be reduced to the notion of a musical genre. As Muniz Sodré (1998)

reminds us, in traditional African culture there is a unity in the relationship between music, dance, legends, and myths. Recognising the roots of samba, therefore, requires understanding it considering the inseparable relationship between music, dance, and religiosity. As it developed from the African diaspora, it denotes an affirmation of Black identity and resistance in Brazil.

Following this analytical thread, addressing samba in a theoretical-conceptual sense suggests that we must demand recognition of all its dimensions, which form an inseparable unity, otherwise we risk reducing it solely to its musical dimension, fragmenting it according to Cartesian logic. Such a reduction lends support to the much-vaunted romantic-pamphlet discourse regarding the beauty of mixed-race Brazil, which further corroborates the myth of Brazilian racial democracy.

Our analytical perspective clashes with a treatment of samba, as a product of a national identity, that hides its African origins and its fundamental characteristics as an Afro-Brazilian, and not just Brazilian, cultural expression.

With its African and Afro-Brazilian roots, its historical development in Brazil, its content, and its forms of performance, samba expresses the social relations that shape the complex Brazilian reality, marked by profound sex, gender, ethnic-racial, and class inequalities. At the same time, it presents itself as a strategy for confronting these inequalities, reaffirming Black resistance (and its African roots) within a patriarchal and racialised Brazilian society.

We reaffirm our understanding that studying and debating samba is an important mediation for dealing with the social, racial, and cultural issues in Brazil and, in these terms, it is a topic that is not only pertinent, but also requires addressing within the scope of Social Service. This motivates us to continue deepening our studies regarding this discussion.

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