

# LOGICA

## CHOREOLOGICA

The Journal  
of European Association of Dance Historians

eaDH European Association of Dance Historians

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ISSN 1746-5737  
Edizioni Joker

Vol. 7 no. 1 - Winter 2014

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Volume 7 Number 1

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**Volume 7 No. 1 Winter 2014**  
**ISSN 1746-5737**

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**Published by Edizioni Joker**  
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I-15067 Novi Ligure (AL) - ITALY  
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**Printed by Digital Print Service**  
Segrate (MI) - ITALY

# European roots of Brazilian Carnival parade

By Ricardo Barros

## Overview of the history of Carnival celebrations in Brazil

The contemporary 'Carnaval' celebrations and parade of the so-called 'Schools of Samba' have been linked to ritualistic freedom of expression and a vivid demonstration of the African roots in Brazilian culture. The competitive parade enthuses audiences and gathers admirers drawn from all over the World for its flamboyancy, panache and debauchery. However, not much research has been done regarding the roots and historic nature of such public events.

This paper does not aim to question the influence of black slave culture in the formation of the socio-cultural phenomenon of contemporary 'Carnaval'. Instead, it aims to explore a rich European cultural heritage that, in my view, contributed to create the intricate fabric of social acceptance, cultural and religious miscegenation witnessed every year in the world-famous street parade all over Brazil.

## The *entrudo* in Portugal and in Brazil

In Portugal, Carnival was celebrated in as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries by the name of *entrudo* (meaning 'entering' Lent period). The

popular celebration was gradually established in Brazil during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, being taken across the Ocean by the increasing number of Portuguese migrants to the New Continent. Its crudest main popular manifestation was in the form of street 'battles', with people throwing water, scented wax 'bombs', flour or even mud on each other. This lasted until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, new fashions were imported to Brazil throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries with more colonisers migrating to that country. This trend culminated in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with the establishment of the Portuguese court in the colony. The court and newly arrived Portuguese bourgeoisie set the trends in Brazilian society, importing from Paris and Italy the habit of elegantly parading in adorned chariots and wearing masks and fancy dresses. This promenade was followed by evening balls in sophisticated exclusive clubs attended by the court and the *élite*. Meanwhile, the lower classes – while still pursuing the *entrudo* way of enjoying carnival – were gradually encouraged to attend rather simple balls instead. This way the lower classes gradually got interested in the more lavish celebrations, abandoning altogether the *entrudo* in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Blocos, societies and foliões***

But the latent fire could not be tamed, so in the first few years of the Republic (end of 19<sup>th</sup> century) Brazilians resorted once again to go out to the streets, this time in a more organised manner in what was called 'carnival societies': they danced and sang, accompanied by wind and percussion instruments. Little 'carnival marches' were chanted to ridicule politicians, and soon tunes were being especially composed for the carnival. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with street parades being firmly established in Rio and featuring masked *foliões* (revellers) in fancy dress, the lower classes were once again marginalized, and had to restrict their parties to suburban areas of the city. They fought back and got organised in 'Schools of Samba', adopting a structure pretty much similar to what is seen today in Rio: each school would choose a new

theme every year, and this would regulate the whole parade (including music composition, costumes and floats). They gradually acquired recognition from the society, intellectual groups and artists, who in that period developed an increasing interest in popular culture, following political scandals and unequal distribution of funds. It was only in the 1950s that president Getúlio Vargas – yearning for public acceptance and trust following decades of military ruling – officially recognised the parade and provided infra-structure for its development.

This very brief overview paints a scene in which two separate streams of social classes run concurrently, sometimes overlapping each other and some other times taking quite distinct directions. But what is the linking element between popular contemporary celebrations and the noble and elitist parades in bygone eras? As we shall see, this element is the search for form, structure and compliance (in this particular case, of an unprivileged mass aiming to reach for an European elitist standard).

## Historic roots

### The court of d. João VI

Tracing back to early 19<sup>th</sup> century we see a turning point in Brazilian history: the establishment of the Portuguese court in Brazil between 1808 and 1821. The Portuguese royal family fled from Napoleonic invasion of Lisbon and set court in the Tropics, in Rio de Janeiro. They brought with them not only a large entourage of between ten and fifteen thousand people (numbers are not precise), but also many European traditions. The family itself was very peculiar, with a mad queen (D. Maria), a weak prince (D. João) and his nymphomaniac, power-hungry wife (Carlota Joaquina).

On a positive note, they loved their celebrations. Balls were very common in Rio, and there is quite detailed information about the

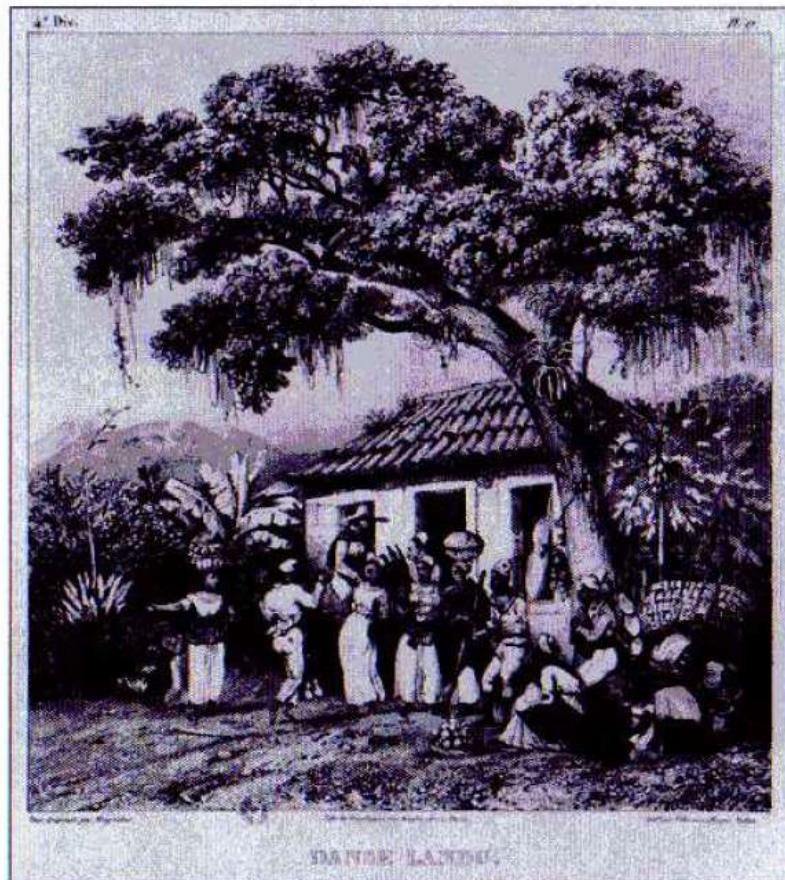
running of these, including some personal letters, bills and ceremonial records at the National Library of Rio de Janeiro.

During this period the quadrilles were the most popular dance form performed in such lavish balls. These quadrilles – like the *Quadrilha Princesa Imperial* (a late example, dated around 1890-1910) by dancing master J.A. Piacentini – adopt the typical French choreographic style of the period with steps such as *demi-ronde les quatre*, *balance et tour*, *grand chaine*, *chaine anglaise*, *moulinet*, *tour des mains*, and others. It is interesting to note that the index to this edition lists over 320 ‘of the most popular’ quadrilles of that period, pointing to the wide dissemination of European formal dances in the tropical Brazilian society of that period – but this will be the subject for a future paper.

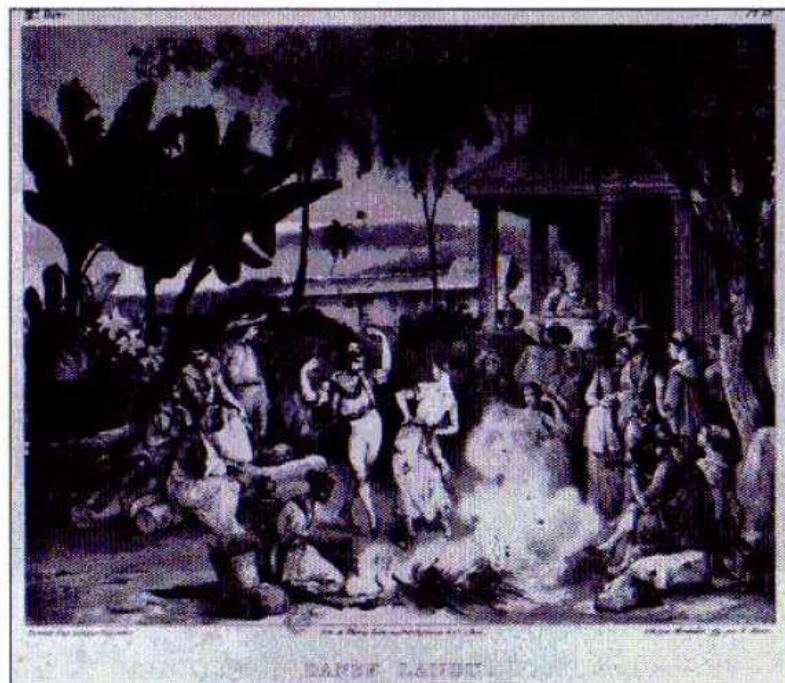
Despite this edition being a very late primary source, there is plenty of evidence about dancing in the earlier years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century confirming the practice of European-style quadrilles in the balls, and some little snippets on that of dance practice during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Amongst these it is worth noting the acceptance and gradual insertion of African traits in dances like the *Lundu*, which was danced by noblemen and slaves alike.

The plates by Johann Moritz Rugendas – a German illustrator who visited colonial Brazil in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century – display the same dance being performed by a group of Negroes, and also by white ‘colonisers’. Of importance is to note the Iberian folk arm stance and use of castanets in the second example, setting an interesting counterpoint to the exaggerated hip movement performed by the ladies (with hands on hips) on both plates. A fascinating insight of the mixed reactions to the *Lundu* reaching the ballrooms (and stage) – denoting a varying degree of acceptance and indeed willingness to foster the social mixing – can be seen in the career of Italian born Marietta Baderna. She migrated to Rio in the late 1840s, where she was well-received after successful performances in the Teatro Alla Scala and Covent Garden. Her colourful character, curiosity and love for freedom of expression

*Danse Landu*  
(IV, fl.17),  
in Johann Moritz  
Rugendas,  
*Voyage pittoresque*  
*dans le Bresil* (1835);  
Biblioteca Nacional,  
Rio de Janeiro



*Danse Landu*  
(III, fl.18),  
in Johann Moritz  
Rugendas,  
*Voyage pittoresque*  
*dans le Bresil* (1835);  
Biblioteca Nacional,  
Rio de Janeiro



soon had Marietta mingling with slaves in the less-favoured neighbourhoods of Rio. Fascinated with the *Lundu*, she attempted to take it to the stages, at great costs: the elitist high-society, once appreciative of her fine dancing, now (seemingly less receptive of changes) frowned upon her behaviour; and ever since to this day, the term 'Baderna' – which at first was used to refer to the finer and exquisite things in life – now denotes fracas and bad taste.

The cross absorption of influences can also be noticed the other way round, in the two watercolours by Carlos Julião (1776) depicting the 'Crowning of a Black King' and the 'Procession of the Black Queen'.



*Coroação de um Rei nos festejos de Reis* in Carlos Julião, *Riscos Illuminados de figurinhos de brancos e negros dos uzos do Rio de Janeiro e Serro do Frio* (1776); Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro

The highly Europeanised costumes and the adoption of European instruments and castanets are evidence of such cultural crossover.

The court of D. João VI highly valued opulence, and this could clearly be seen in the many events organised for them. As pointed by Brazilian historian Niza da Silva, in addition to balls and regular *saraus*



Cortejo da Rainha Negra na festa de Reis in Carlos Julião, *Riscos Illuminados de figurinhos de brancos e negros dos uzos do Rio de Janeiro e Serro do Frio* (1776); Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro

(sort of informal *jours-d'appartments*) these involved fireworks, cavalry, bull-fighting, parades and processions, all minutely detailed by the *Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro*, the first periodic in Rio. The first dancing masters to have arrived in Rio, with the court, were Pedro Colona (in 1810) and Joseph Antoine Louis Lacombe. The latter arrived in 1811 and – together with musician Marcos Portugal – took with him a large number of manuscripts, as pointed by António Jorge Marques. Would this shipment have included the only extant copy in Rio's National Library of Ferriol's 1745 *Reglas Utiles* and Jacome Bonem's 1767 *Tratado dos principaes fundamentos da dança*?

## Portugal

The innate Portuguese taste for public festivities is manifested not only in secular events. Primarily it has its roots in religious feasts and processions, a natural expression of such a devout nation. Processions

are, to this day, part of Portuguese culture, and have been so for many centuries. The procession of Corpus Christi, for instance, has been happening every June since the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. The popularity of such processions in Portugal was such that it guaranteed descriptions of these being published abroad. An early example of this is Ménestrier's description of the procession in honour of St Charles of Borromeu, which happened in 1610. His accounts are a testimony of the wealth employed and indeed of the general sense of devotion with which these processions were carried out, despite its celebratory character.

'The Portuguese have their ambulatory Ballets which are danced in the town streets, and move into various places, with movable machinery and representations. These are performed in the feasts of the Saints and in their larger ceremonies. Following St Carlos Borromeu's canonisation [...] [the Portuguese] wished to pay him public honours. They put his image on a boat, as if he was returning once again to protect the Portuguese Kingdom. All the vessels in the port went three miles into the sea in order to escort the image. [...] As soon as the image [of St Carlos] disembarked, it was welcomed by all the religious people, [...] who walked in procession ahead of it, together with four large chariots carrying many representations. In addition to these, each religious company carried their respective saints on top of rich platforms. In between each chariot there was a troupe of dancers representing many things. Octavio Coromboni, Bishop of Fossombrone, who wrote the description of this feast [...] mentioned that the Italians – and mainly the Romans – were astonished to read that there were dances and ballets in such a sacred ceremony; because in Portugal the procession and feasts do not seem to have enough of a noble and grave character if they are not accompanied by these little '*attioni di Giubilo e d'Allegrezza*'.

[...] On the days preceding these occasions large masts are usually erected outside the churches where the ceremony will take place, and in other places where the procession and representations will pass by. These masts are [...] adorned with

wreaths, ribbons and banners of many colours [...]. These mark the places for the acted representations, where the march stops and where the dancers perform the main ‘entrées de ballets’.<sup>1</sup>

Ménestrier makes it clear that the sacred parade was punctuated by dancing. There was also some attention to the theatricality of the parade, with vessels and chariots or floats doubling as ‘moving stages’. Such chariots carried ‘representations’: would these be pantomimic elaborations on a theme? Another element in prominence is the decoration of streets, venues, chariots and costumes.

## Spain

We can find parallels between the above description and another procession that took place in Spain one year before that (in 1609). Ménestrier describes this in great detail too.

‘The Jesuits performed, in Spain, an ambulatory ballet for the beatification of St Ignace of Loyola, their founder: the theme of this ballet represented the main events from the Siege of Troy. The first act was performed outside the doors of the Church of Our Lady of Lorette, where a wooden machine of great proportions appeared first, representing the horse of troy. This horse started to move, surrounded by a Ballet representing the battle of Troy and accompanied by a large band of musicians. The procession would move to the Square of St Roch, which was partially decorated to imitate the City of Troy, with towers and outer walls. With the arrival of the horse, part of this wall fell down, the Greek soldiers jumped out of the machine and the Trojans came out of their City – all carrying fireworks – and they

<sup>1</sup> Claude-François Ménestrier, *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les regles du theatre* (Paris, 1682), pp. 98-102.

performed a marvellous danced battle. Both the horse and the city fired fireworks towards each other, but what were most admirable were eighteen trees all covered in fireworks, which created in the sky the most extraordinary figures.

After dinner next day, four brigantines richly adorned, painted and gilded, with many flags and carrying a large group of musicians appeared in the sea. Four ambassadors of the four corners of the World [...] came to pay respect to [St Ignace]. [...] All ships and galleys in the port saluted these brigantines with artillery. When they arrived on the shore the ambassadors disembarked and immediately climbed aboard a chariot superbly adorned, and were accompanied by three hundred Cavaliers all dressed 'à la Grecque'. They marched towards the College, preceded by many trumpets and kettledrums, after which people of many nations – all dressed in their typical costumes, danced a very pleasing ballet, composed of four groups for each of the four parts of the World.

The kingdoms and provinces represented by genies marched with these nations in front of chariots which carried the ambassadors from Europe, Asia, Africa and America, each of them being escorted by sixty-six Cavaliers. [...] Amongst the dances seen there was one performed by young children disguised as monkeys and parrots; leading the [American] chariot there were twelve dwarfs riding little hackneys. The African chariot was pulled by a dragon, the Asian one by two elephants harnessed 'à la Persienne', and the European one by six beautiful horses superbly harnessed. The diversity and richness of costumes were equally important ornaments in the singularity of this ambulatory ballet'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Michel Bonnet, *Histoire generale de la danse sacrée et prophane* (Paris, 1724), pp. 89-93, and Claude-François Ménestrier, *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre* (Paris, 1682), pp. 103-06.

The theatricality here is even more so evident, with suggestions of pantomimic dances being performed to represent a ‘battle’. Interestingly, both descriptions mention a maritime procession. We also note the wealth of floats, the incredibly large number of ‘cavaliers dressed *à la Grecque*’, and the grand-finale with fireworks. Undoubtedly the church was set in a quest to impress, please and at the same time to exert power over the public and rulers alike.

### French *carroussels*

The use of floats and vessels in the descriptions above bring to mind one of the many etymological interpretations of the word ‘Carnivale’: one in which it stems from ‘carrus navalis’, or ‘naval car’. One cannot help but compare such events with the Caroussels, as described by De Pure in 1668:

‘One must attentively advise the organization of a *Carrousel*, be it regarding the construction or number of chariots employed. Opulence defines magnificence, but the precepts give meaning to opulence.[...] A perfect *Carrousel* has a design both amorous and martial, and must parade groups of people, a procession of chariots and the operation of machines all with a continuous relation to their plot and design. For instance, the ‘abduction of Helen’, performed as a *Carrousel*, will present lovers on a chariot, accompanied by an infantry and cavalry. The Greeks, on foot, running to rescue their Beauty, clash with the army. The Trojans go back to their city. The enemies surround the city and, after many well-planned and choreographed attempts, break into its walls and set it alight with fireworks. Everything follows in this way, all subject to the action’.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Michel de Pure, *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux* (Paris, 1668), pp. 193-95.

As we have observed, mounted horses were employed not only to pull the floats, but also to form an impressive *cortège* of three hundred horsemen in the Spanish procession. This would be too good an opportunity not to insert an impressive choreographed equestrian evolution. We shall see later in this paper that equestrian displays were also adopted in Brazilian processions in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century.

## Brazil

Following the 'discovery' of Brazil in 1500 the Portuguese quickly established an administrative structure in the new colony, through which extractive culture would flourish. Initially benefiting from Brazil's abundant vegetation (with the 'sugar cane cycle' in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century, only possible by means of the forced influx of African slaves), the Portuguese ventured further inland with the purpose of establishing settlements and to enslave Brazilian indigenous population. Such expeditions were propelled by the Dutch occupation of Angola, which caused the traffic of slaves between Africa and Brazil to scarce. Once these settlements were established it did not take long before mining expeditions finally discovered gold and precious stones, particularly in *Capitania of Minas do Ouro* ('capitanias' were hereditary transferred strips of land of huge proportions, a system adopted by Portuguese colonisers), a region today known as *triangulo mineiro* ('mining triangle') in the state of Minas Gerais.

The gold rush, allied to the decline of sugar cane trade, originated the extended 'Gold cycle' or 'Golden Age', which was the basis for economical, social and political development in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Brazil. Thus, the main economical axis shifted from the agrarian centres in the North-East to the mining centres in the South-East. New towns quickly flourished and attracted an unprecedented number of Portuguese migrants. Above all, the *Vila Rica do Ouro Preto* (or literally translated as 'Rich village of Black Gold') was drastically and quickly transformed from a settlement into the region's capital within just twenty-two years of its foundation in 1698. The city witnessed

luxurious gold clad churches and majestic villas being erected. Part of the gold was also sent to the Brazilian capital of that time, Salvador, where it was equally employed to decorate churches.

The increasingly wealthy population of Vila Rica put on memorable festivities – most of which had religious connotations – as the population wished to express their thankfulness to God for all the gold so abundantly found virtually everywhere around that region.

### **Triunfo Eucarístico**

Amongst these festivities, processions with combined religious and secular characteristics were major events during the 18<sup>th</sup> century: a tradition inherited from the pious Portuguese coloniser, cultivated and cherished in the colony. Such an institution reached its epitome in 1733 with the *Triunfo Eucarístico*. The church put on a magnificent display of grandeur in order to celebrate the inauguration of a new parish church, and to mark the relocation of the Eucharistic Sacrament to its new abode – a real ‘Eucharistic triumph’. The festivities lasted thirteen days and were meticulously depicted by Simão Ferreira Machado, and published in Lisbon the following year.

The profusion of details described, ranging from the fabrics used to make the costumes, the order of the procession, street ornaments and the presence of honour guests exemplify the splendour witnessed by the locals. Here are just some succinct excerpts in a simplified translation taken from the highly ornamented and poetic writings of Ferreira Machado:

‘This is the solemn relocation of the Eucharistic Sacrament from the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary to the new temple of Our Lady of Pillar.

In preparation, several masked characters were responsible for announcing the impending festivity [...] from late April until the

3<sup>rd</sup> of May. On this day two flags were taken to the streets. Two luxuriously dressed people took them to stand outside the two churches – which they represented – marking the beginning and end of the procession.

On the Ascension Day [ed. Thurs 14 May] the new church was blessed, followed by dancing and masquerades, with all participants richly dressed. They carried on their varied and much pleasing performance during daytime, while in the evening one could hear a pleasant harmony of music. These lasted until the 24<sup>th</sup> May, the day of the procession.

In the six days preceding [the procession] all the inhabitants of Ouro Preto kept the city constantly illuminated. Given the city's high location, this gave the impression the lights shone from Heaven itself.

In the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> May one could see – on the streets where the procession was scheduled to go by – a magnificent scene: silk and damask throws hanging from the windows, offering a varied and pleasing view in perspective. [...]

On the streets there were five tall arches, well spaced from each other: a triumph in gold and diamonds. [...] In addition to these arches there was an altar in which the Divine Sacrament would rest: its design was a graceful imitation of the street arches.

Before the procession left a Mass was said in the church of Rosário. Once the Mass finished, the procession ensued in the following order:

An opening dance with thirty-two 'Turks and Christians' dressed in military fashion, leading two finely painted chariots, carrying singers and many instrumentalists. This was followed by another dance of pilgrims, richly dressed and offering great variety and evolutions through their solemn gestures.

After this one could perceive yet another dance, composed of musicians dressed in gold and silver embroidered silk: these were accompanied by two floats with unique decorations: a small one carrying a serpent, an a larger one with a very high dome in which a knight was concealed. Once the dome was opened the knight promptly sprang out and jumped on top of the serpent.

Immediately behind there were four characters on horseback, representing the four winds: North, South, East and West, all dressed in dramatic costumes 'à trágica': the West wind carried a headdress of white fabric covered with silver, gold and diamonds, and circled with a white plumage with dark accents. This was finished with a bow on the back of the head made of silver and pink ribbons; covered with a diamond encrusted diadem and a tall white *plumage*. The chest [-plate] was covered in tiny white feathers, adorned with silver lace. The cape was made of white silk with green flowers, adorned with trimmings of silver. The sleeves were made of fine mesh and lace. Petticoat breeches had three layers of white silk with green and pink flowers, with a silver fringe. The high boots were covered in feathers. On his back two wings and a letter with his initial. On his left hand a trumpet, from which hanged a transparent banner, hand embroidered, adorned with silver, pink and red ribbons.

[...] these figures were followed by the most majestic characters of the procession, all dressed 'à tragica' and on horseback. They were led by 'Fame' [...] She was surrounded by two lackeys dressed as Mercury. 'Fame' declaimed several elegant poems throughout the procession.

The next group followed [on with] a figure on horseback representing the village of Ouro Preto: this figure was dressed in gold and wearing a turban. Her horse was the best and most beautiful in the parade, and had the finest saddle seen in the

whole of Brazil, made of gold embroidered green velvet; the harness covered in ribbons, gold, flowers [...] and diamonds.

The following group represented the seven planets offering a judicious memory of antiquity.

[...] Yet another platform carried the image of the martyr St Sebastian, portraying arrows made of silver and a diamond encrusted pin gathering his garment. The platform itself was made up as a triumphant chariot, covered in red silk and gold fringes.<sup>4</sup>

The incredibly detailed text goes on to mention many other groups of people, most of which theatrically dressed – one can note the resemblance of those descriptions with the intricate work of the Cuzco tradition of religious painting in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador.

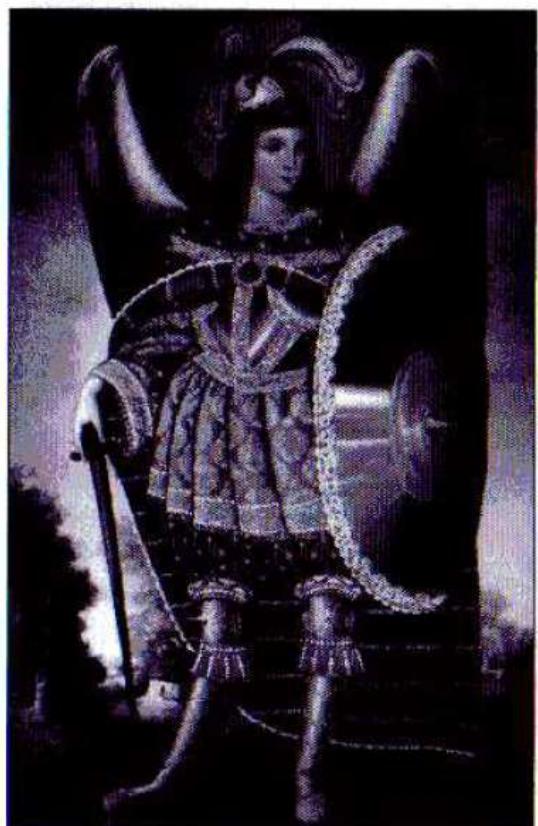
The overall procession lasted three days. On the evening of the fourth day a huge fireworks display illuminated the skies. All of these were followed by nine days of non-stop partying, alternating horse parades, *comédies* and bull fighting. Every night a huge banquet was served to ‘people of distinction’, and accompanied by music concerts. Ferreira Machado concludes his description adding:

‘There is no recollection in the whole of Brazil or indeed in the Americas of such a majestic event, which the generous Brazilians have performed, receiving admiration from the whole World.’<sup>5</sup>

The level of organization and effort put in the *Triunfo Eucarístico* is unprecedented and unquestionable. It bears incredible similarities to the processions described by Ménestrier, in the following aspects:

<sup>4</sup> Translated extract of Ferreira Machado’s original text in Affonso Ávila, *O lúdico e as projeções do mundo barroco II – Áurea idade da áurea terra*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (São Paulo 1994), pp. 63-77.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



*Arcangel Miguel* (Elizabeth Alvarez) and *Arcangel Miguel* (Angel Gutierrez), n.d., after Cuzco school 1650s; private collection Ricardo Barros

- The marking of main spots along the route, with either arches or 'ribbon trees';
- The presence of banners with images of saints or of the churches;
- Dancers dressed in theatrical manner;
- 'Moving machines': a serpent, a wooden horse, a dragon;
- Cavaliers dressed 'à la Grécque' or 'à trágica';
- 'Ambassadors and troupes of dancers from the 4 corners of the World' as in the Spanish procession, or 'four winds' as in the *Triunfo Eucarístico*.

We can appreciate that the sense of structure contained in 18<sup>th</sup>-century processions such as the *Triunfo Eucarístico* was carried through the centuries and preserved in the contemporary carnival celebrations. This, together with the sense of collective escapism, the general contrast of extreme socio-economic levels and the yearning for

social acceptance by the lower classes are indelible ties between past and present.

### Parallels between past and present celebrations

One of the earliest detailed descriptions of the high level of organisation and care with the structure of events of this calibre can be found in St Hubert's *La manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*.<sup>6</sup> One can ascertain that such model was implicitly present in all sorts of public spectacles, from Ballets to Masques, from Carroussels to Joustes, and crucially, as one can note, in processions and street festivities throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Similarly, we can trace striking parallels between the elements in the contemporary Carnival parade and St Hubert's listed 'items' in the making of a Ballet, which suggest that high degree of organisation and striving for structure and form sieved down – possibly inadvertently – over the centuries, permeating elitist and popular celebrations alike, and producing a highly organised event such as the contemporary Carnaval:

- *Enredo*:  
Similar to the theme or *sujet* in the Ballet, it defines the whole development of the parade. It's expressed in words by the *samba-enredo*, an equivalent to the sung *récits*.
- *Comissão de frente*:  
Opening committee, a group of people that introduces the *enredo* through evolutions on the avenue having a similar function to the *prologue*.
- *Alas*:  
The numerous groups of people, each dressed in a particular way in order to represent a historical fact, a character or an aspect related to the theme. Similar to the '*Entrées de Ballet*' which, at a first glimpse did not bear direct relation to each other, but in fact all

<sup>6</sup> Michel de St Hubert, *La manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets* (Paris, 1641)

related to the *sujet*. In the same way the *Entrées de ballets* depended on the *récits* in order to elucidate the *sujet*, the *Alas* depend on the *Samba-enredo* to make the threading of the theme evident. In this sense, both *Alas* and *Entrées de ballet* have more of an illustrative rather than narrative function.

- *Harmonia & Bateria*:

Literally translated ‘harmony’ (with harmonic instruments such as *cavaquinhos* and guitars) and ‘drums’, together these correspond to the *musique*, basis for the representation and indispensable in the threading of the theme.

- *Passistas & destiques*:

These are prominent individuals in the procession. ‘*Passistas*’ perform the *Samba-no-pé* (virtuoso samba steps) and are relatively low in numbers. ‘*Destiques*’ stand on privileged spots, usually high up on floats, and display exquisitely elaborated costumes, with their roles being delineated by a very clear hierarchy. They relate to the *corps de ballets*, which also maintained a hierarchical system in the distribution of *roles*.

- *Mestre-sala & Porta-bandeira*:

Usually dressed as nobleman, the *Mestre-Sala* can be compared to the *Maître*. He is the faithful partner to the *Porta-bandeira* throughout the parade, performing evolutions in which he protects her all the time. The *Porta-Bandeiras* carries the school’s flag. She is seen as the personification of the school of samba. In this sense she relates to the *essence of ballet*, which had the *Maître* as her faithful guardian, protecting her from vices and ensuring the smooth conduct and order during a performance.

- *Floats (Carros alegóricos)*:

The most entrancing and awesome ‘*machines*’ that can represent eagles, lions, beasts, monsters, grottos, cascades, fireworks or whatever the imagination suggests.

- *Costumes (Fantasias)*:

The most varied, surprising and dream-like costumes, making use of a profusion of feathers, golden and silver fabrics, sparkling jewels and other accessories that highlight the hierarchy amongst participants.

- *Evolução:*

It is the way in which the parade develops. A good evolution is similar to a ‘*bonne ordre*’ in the Ballet. The school must perform within established standards, observing time, number of participants in each section, creativity and association to theme, quality of costumes, floats, performance and dancing.

## Conclusion

This paper exposed the roots of public festivities – mainly through the inheritance of Iberian processions in the Brazilian colonial culture – in order to establish structural and sociological parallels between the contemporary carnival parade and the germ of ballet in 17<sup>th</sup>-century France. By superimposing what could initially be seen as completely incompatible artistic forms, we can unveil a strong European influence as a formative factor in the history of public events that originated the Brazilian carnival celebration. More importantly we can apprehend, through the cross absorption of influences and adaptation between colonisers and the working force, early signs of cultural integration and ethnic miscegenation that permeate Brazilian culture to this day.

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**ISSN 1746-5737**



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