

Rite and the Passage of Time: The Evolution of Carnival in Rio de Janeiro

*“In a new era/ we do not know what awaits/
come, my love, for a new day/ to celebrate in the paradise of revelry”*[1]

Note: () All terms followed by this sign are explained in a glossary at the end of this article.*

Writing about the Carioca* Carnival in 1959, the Brazilian journalist Eneida satirized the disgruntled citizens who claimed: “the good carnival is gone” or “it was part of the good old days” (those times that we do not know when they occurred, but like paradise lost, they were the best!). With each change and innovation, they declared carnival’s decadence. Rain, police and pessimists were, according to Eneida, the worst enemies of Carnival.

In the following years, the samba schools’ parade was established as the principal celebration of the Carioca Carnival, spreading as a model to many Brazilian cities.[2] It developed and expanded with a capacity to reinvent itself that challenged the negative predictions of the earlier purists. Today, the numbers attest to undeniable success: The Passarela do Samba (Samba Parade Grounds)*, known popularly as the “Sambódromo”, contains nearly 60,000 seats, and each of the schools in the so-called Special Group (currently sixteen) parade with three to five thousand components. In just two nights, 200,000 people are brought together by the presentation of this fantastic group.[3]

Like many Cariocas (and non-Cariocas), I learned to love the parades and to anticipate their return “next year.” As an anthropologist, I understood their quirks, their strong relation with the city’s life and history, their broad range of aspects: order and marginality, solemnity and spontaneity, repetition and innovation, samba and visual, competition and celebration. I wrote about them, scrutinized their social and symbolic organization, and the whole cycle of their annual confection. Their beauty and complexity have never ceased to captivate me. Nevertheless, I have many times questioned the seamy side: decline. I would argue that the very intense and repetitive relationships of the spectacle with life and with the flow of time make us think of their opposites: decline, finality, and death.

This notion of decline occurred to me during the 1991 Carnival, as the last samba school entered as dawn was breaking. Generally speaking, performing last would be undesirable, regardless of the fact that there have been winners in the past who have paraded in this position.[4] Usually, after many hours of spectacle, the grandstands are almost empty, and the remaining audience left exhausted. That year, aggravating the public’s disinterest, the theme of the school was about truckers, and the “allegorical floats”[5] were actual trucks! The school was cut-off for another group, and its innovation was lampooned in the carnival media as “the invention of the non-allegorical float”.

This episode revealed the delicate interaction between permanence and change in the history of the parades and the very selective nature of the innovation process that has fueled the evolution of the spectacle over the years. To be successful with the public and accepted immediately by other samba-schools, an innovation must be compatible with some sort of precedent — a type of basic structure, an elementary matrix of meaning, without which the parade is no longer a parade. But, this matrix of meaning has a beginning in time, and it has been transformed throughout the history of the city. Could it be inexhaustible?

In *Carnaval carioca: dos bastidores ao desfile* [Carnival in Rio de Janeiro: from the backstage to the parade (1994)], I proposed an understanding of the event based on three main ideas:

1) Throughout history, since the Middle Ages, Carnival has displayed many different forms: masquerades, battles, disguise, competitions. More or less formalized and structured, all of them are part of carnival's western tradition. The samba-school parade, a highly original Brazilian creation, can be related to structured Carnival forms that display important agonistic dimension. The parade is a great contemporary urban ritual, a championship in which the samba schools control the rivalry through shared rules (the requirements of the judging) renewed by consensus every year. The winner enjoys much prestige, as its neighborhood, participants and protagonists become famous to the public-at-large and renowned for their skills in the Carnival milieu.

2) The parade displays a highly elaborate artistic form. Each year the schools choose a different theme to be developed as its script in the parade. These Carnival stories, which comprise a wide variety of subjects, are the basic artistic element of the parade.[6] They are transformed throughout the year to samba-enredo (samba-theme)*, floats and costumes. There are many rehearsals throughout the year, but there is never a full dress rehearsal in Carnival. The countless components of a parade only coalesce at the time of performance. Thus, the success of their integration is relatively unknown before the actual event. This uncertainty is part of the show, as there is always strong anticipation and room for many surprises and improvisations at each school's parade. Thus, the parade maintains its spontaneity and an important degree of creativity and freedom at its heart. The script narration is organized around two main codes that have a complementary and tense relationship to the performance. The colorful costumes and elaborate floats bring an extraordinary visual quality to the parade. In popular jargon this quality is referred to as 'the visual'. The samba sung by the puxador* accompanied by the chorus of all the dancing alas* and the powerful percussion of bateria* constitutes the musical dimension. This quality is referred to as 'the samba'. The linear movement of the school with the dance evolution of the alas* integrates the visual with the rhythm and the music, uniting the festive and spectacular dimensions of a parade.

3) The pageant provided a channel for expression and mediation of important processes that occurred throughout the Twentieth Century in urban areas. The growth of the city towards the periphery, the expansion of the popular and middle classes, the growing

importance of the jogo do bicho [7] among the popular classes are at the basis of the sociological significance of the parade.

These are the roots of the parade's richness, the very source of its grace and vitality. The construction of the Samba Parade Grounds in 1984 signaled the official recognition of the touristic potential of the event in city life. This stadium not only brought, for the first time in the parade's history, financial profit, but also it defined special spatial conditions to the festival.[8] In addition, the building of the stadium had important political and organizational consequences. The most significant one was the creation in the same year of the Independent League of Samba Schools, the legal and official representative body of the samba-schools that parade in the first group (called the special group) of the championship. The League is a civil association founded by the presidents of the main samba-schools who also serves as the principal "bankers" of the jogo do bicho in Rio de Janeiro.[9]

Since then, the League has administered the parade, together with the municipal tourist agency, Riotur, seeking to augment the commercialization of Carnival, a growing trend since 1960. This process included the direct negotiation of television rights, the creation of its own recording label for albums and CDs of the samba-themes and the collection of at least 50% of admissions sales.

I do not agree with the commonly expressed romantic vision that equates this success (measured in terms of media interests and the amount of money involved) with the loss of Carnival's original purity and authenticity. It can be argued that money flows in cultural systems and culture is difference, movement, and, to a certain extent, contagion. Cultural processes are, and always have been, tense and dynamic. In the samba schools' parade, the spectacular and commercial dimensions go alongside (certainly not always on good terms) with the more traditional and community aspects: patronage and intimate relationships coexist face-to-face with computers, publicity, money, cosmopolitanism and laser effects.

Nevertheless, I take up the debate about the parade's vitality from a comprehensive point of view. The Carnival of the great samba schools of Rio de Janeiro seems to have become, to a certain extent, a prisoner of its own success. It has crystallized as an institution. Does unbridled success translate into inevitable decline? In a history fed by innovations and by an extraordinary dynamism, this crystallization is, at the very least, a challenge. Would this be a symptom of decline? Or would this simply indicate a change in the parade's relationship with the city and the country? I propose a discourse between the parade and the passage of time from an anthropological viewpoint.

I. Structural Time and History

Time is a rich subject for anthropological reflection since human societies and cultures differ radically in their way of conceiving and understanding its passage. In the book *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Émile Durkheim (1968) described the relationship between the forms of marking time and human symbolic activities. The construction of a

calendar, in addition to referring to natural processes, like day and night and the seasons of the year, also conveys the periodicity of rituals, festivals, and public ceremonies that express the rhythm of collective life and assure its regularity. The notion of time supposes the possibility of differentiating, and one of the sources of this differentiation is concrete social activity.^[10]

Thus, one type of time is defined by a strong symbolic content. Subsequently anthropologists would call this concept structural time, differing from the abstract notion of time in mathematics or physics, as well as from time we refer to as historical. Historical or diachronic time values the succession of events. Structural time is synchronic, repetitive, with characteristic cognitive and affective contents. It is this social time, that is strongly linked to vital experience and the worldview of a society or civilization.

The Spanish folklorist, Julio Caro Baroja (1979) called attention to the relationship of Carnival with this kind of time. In his view, Carnival can only be understood in the context of the Christian world.^[11] The Christian calendar, which expanded in European territory with the decline of the Roman Empire, gave a passionate order to the unfolding of the year, repeated throughout the centuries. Carnival and Lent are in opposition with one another in this annual cycle, since its social and religious content implies conflicting individual and collective behaviors.

Carnival emerges as part of a civilization in a structured timeframe, as socially defined experiences and acts return every year with Carnival. The flesh, the body, and finality are celebrated with masks, costumes and inversions to create a festive critique and satire of the daily social order, which, temporarily suspended, will return later. The structural dimension of Carnival time coexists with other temporal dimensions. Among these, diachronic and historical time is also crucial; since Carnival possesses its own history; it exists in different sociological contexts and includes different festive forms, each with its own particular history.

The well-known Russian literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, in his book (1987) on popular sources of the work of François Rabelais, has discussed these two dimensions of Carnival. The cosmic sense of non-official medieval culture of merriment and the public square, with its exceptionality and potential for symbolic renovation of the world were prevalent in Carnival rituals at the end of the European Middle Ages and Renaissance.^[12]

In Brazil, two important authors have explored this set of questions: Roberto Da Matta and Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz.

In Da Matta's *Carnaval, malandros e heróis* (1979) develops, in a very original and perceptive way, the classic anthropological idea that rituals, as a form of collective action, provide privileged means of entry to grasp and to understand the central and enduring values of a people's social life. Da Matta's analysis takes the synchronic, cosmic and ritual dimension of Carnival as one of the ways of understanding Brazilian core values, which emerge in fact as a dilemma. Brazilian society would be strongly

divided between the holistic and hierarchical worldview governed by the code of “patronage” and “jeitinho” [13], and the democratic and fragmented worldview governed by individualistic values.

From a different perspective, Pereira de Queiroz makes accurate historical-sociological analyses in *Carnaval Brasileiro: o vivo e o mito* (1992). [14] She recognizes Carnival as an ancient European festival that arrived in the tropics via the Iberian Peninsula and describes the decisive role the city of Rio de Janeiro played as the core disseminator within Brazil. She also examines the historical changes in the form of the festivals. Initiated in the nineteenth century with pre-Lenten festivities, the celebration was transformed with the arrival of the “grand Carnival” (dances and balls) and “small Carnival” (street revelers and dancers) at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Finally, the popular Carnival was born with the samba schools, and became dominant beginning in the middle of the twentieth century.

These different viewpoints can be complementary. Recent anthropological studies on symbolic rituals and processes appropriately focus on the relationship between history and structure.[15] The notion of “long duration” proposed by the branch of French historiography known as the New History is similarly based on such an intention.

Brazil has one of the most important carnivals in the world. The cosmic meanings of this Christian and western tradition are kept alive there. In present-day Brazil, Carnival and Lent continue their secular “quarrel” as shown in the well-known Brueghel painting. Each year, the Catholic Church in Brazil attempts to keep Carnival within its limits. In 1996, the Archbishop of Bahia, D. Lucas Moreira Neves, condemned the extension of Carnival to Ash Wednesday, more common every year in the Northeastern capitals, and defended ending the festivities at midnight on Tuesday, “in defense of the sacred right of Catholics” to penitence and religious celebrations.

Despite the religious protest, Carnival in Brazil tries to extend its duration beyond the conventional limits. Olinda (Pernambuco), after lasting fifteen days, the celebration officially ends on the first Saturday of Lent, when the dance groups *Eu Quero Mais* (I Want More) and *Parou Por Que?* (Why Did It End?) bring thousands of celebrants to the streets with the sound of the *frevo** orchestras, the typical rhythm of the region. In Rio de Janeiro, the outcome of the competition among the great samba-schools in the afternoon of Ash Wednesday inspires dances that last until dawn. On the first Saturday of Lent, the Parade of Champions[16] closes the festivities, celebrating the double happiness of enjoying Carnival and commemorating victory.

But, even taking into account this deep level of meaning, without which ritual is not ritual, the question of the continuity of ritual practices across history imposes itself.

Caro Baroja (op. cit. 306, 307) posed this question and suggested the necessity of considering the aesthetic dimension and the strong appeal to sentimentality to understand the resistance of rituals to the “greed of time”. The analytical articulation between aesthetic form and cultural content is a fascinating challenge for analysis. Stanley

Tambiah (1985, p. 125) emphasized that this duality was constitutive of rituals in general. There are repetitive and stereotypical sequences; and together with this invariable dimension that standardizes the ritual there are variable components open to contextual meanings. Thus, all ritual has many levels of meaning superimposed, and requires multiple planes of analysis. By valuing the formal standardized dimension, articulating its cultural and historical contexts, this formulation is provocative. I retain it in this reflection on rite and time in the context of the evolution of the samba school parades — this specific form of celebrating carnival, which accompanies the history of Rio de Janeiro for a period that is now almost secular.

II. The Parade and the Calendar

The relationship between the carnival parade and the calendar provides a good starting point for the question of the parade's vitality.[17] This relationship reveals how the ritual and historical dimensions of time are reconciled at the core of the parade's organization.

Several calendar units – year, month, week and day - are significant for the festivity, beginning with the opposition between day and night. Despite the transformation brought by the cold and harsh lighting of the Sambódromo, the celebration is nocturnal: it begins at six in the evening and ends between five and seven in the morning. The week is also involved, since Carnival in the city is officially inaugurated on Saturday, with ancient tradition of the symbolic delivery of the key to the city to the fat and joyful King Momo. It will end the following Saturday with the parade of champions. The month is always February or March, in function of the mobility of the Christian Easter holiday, which marks the ascension of the resurrected Christ to the heavens, closing Lent. In Rio de Janeiro, these are months of scorching heat interspersed with torrential and frequently catastrophic rains. It is a time of naturally caused excesses to which the excesses of Carnival are added.

The reference to the year is the most clarifying one, since the year of the parade is simultaneously, the ordered Christian year of work, leisure and holidays; a complete cycle of death and rebirth; and a dated year, a point of reference for historical facts. A deeper analysis reveals that the two dimensions of time — successive and cyclical — are suggested and confront one another at the center of the parade.

Continuities and innovations can be observed throughout the parades' chronology. The schools are parade winners in a specific year, but in popular memory the cyclical time of the festivity predominates. In popular speech the date is substituted with the reference to the themes, in a way that links the passage of time to its cultural and highly emotional contents. This happens because a parade is not merely a spectacular celebration, but also an arduous work process that makes the year interval from one Carnival to another a time that is culturally complete and full of meaning. During this time, the script is transformed into samba-theme, floats and costumes, bringing together a growing number of people until the culmination in the school parade in the Sambódromo. As the diehard carnival celebrants know, the preparation for a parade begins with the previous Carnival barely over, and thus, the carnival year is always a year ahead of the current calendar, since

everything will converge in the next year performance. Popular memory, in adopting the reference to the theme of the parade and not to its annual date, alludes to this concrete and culturally full dimension of time. This displacement, which places cultural time ahead of the historical calendar, is profoundly significant. The symbolic and effective work of the rite is suggested there: as if the parade, through its formal mechanisms, always projected ahead to a group of successive events that compels future time and social action to conform to a defined course.

The choice of the theme to signify this temporal dimension is important. The parade is, in essence, the staging of a story narrated by multiple media in linear succession. The other formal elements — the wings with their costumes, the other samba-school's components, floats and samba-theme — transform and amplify meanings already suggested by the script. The theme and its development as a script are also the key element in the aesthetic and cultural formation of the parade: without them there could be no parade. At the same time, the theme is that element by which the standardized aesthetic form of the parade opens up to the historical and cultural context, since the annual renewing of the themes assure currency and diversity to the school's narration. Orienting the spectacle, the plots stimulate extensive urban debates over a wide variety of subjects. Thus, they guarantee continuity and renovation in the parade, turning it into a reference for the constant construction, reiteration and alteration of identities (Carioca, Brazilian, Salgueiran, Mangueiran, Carnival celebrant, anti-Carnival, etc.).

We can understand the parade as a ritual device that is both standardized and flexible. Nonetheless, this ritual form has its own history, and it is important to understand it in relationship to the city's life.

III. The Parade and the City

Samba schools emerged in Rio de Janeiro around 1920.^[18] The archives on Carnival record describe the urban scenario at the time as highly stratified: a particular form of celebration corresponded with each social class. The “Great Societies”, created in the second half of the nineteenth century, were organized by the wealthiest, and paraded with themes of social and political critique to the sound of operas with luxurious costumes and floats. The “Ranchos”, created at the end of the nineteenth century by the urban petite bourgeoisie, also paraded with theme, costumes and floats to the sound of their characteristic music, the “rancho”. Finally, the “Blocos”, a highly spontaneous carnival group, covered the poorest classes of the population, inhabitants of the favelas situated in the hills and poor areas at the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, including the blacks and mulattoes who inherited the afro-Brazilian cultural traditions.

The emergence of samba schools blurred these distinctions.^[19] The “blocos” became the center of their social formation, to which elements of other social groups and carnival forms were added, so that by the first decades of the century, the samba schools had already arisen as the characteristic expression of urban carnival. The samba school is in this way a product of the encounter between the hills and the city, of the interaction of different social classes. Even the musical genre known as samba was born in this way, in

the context of a wide interaction of popular and middle classes in Rio de Janeiro. Putting it into the words of Pereira de Queiroz, we would say that popular Carnival is the result of broad interaction between the “grand” and the “small” carnivals that accompanied the modernization and growth of the city.

The samba-schools were created and organized between 1920 and 1950, defining the parade as a specific event within Carnival and eventually conquering the carnival favoritism in the city. Once famous in the city, the samba schools spread throughout the country. The parade of the samba schools in Rio de Janeiro’s carnival were the most famous carnival celebration in Brazil between 1950 and 1980. In his well-known and aforementioned book Da Matta (1979) analyzes the samba-schools’ parade in Rio de Janeiro as a metaphor for Brazilian carnival. It is important to note that this was done in a historical context in which Carnival in Rio de Janeiro really occupied national carnival hegemony and symbolized Brazil’s self-image.

There is another relevant aspect to be considered in the emergence of the samba schools. In addition to integrating different social classes in its formation, the aesthetic structure of the parade also combined different artistic forms: the visual arts, music and dance. In popular jargon, these different forms are generically called “visual” and “samba”. The notion of “samba” includes the inclusive and open forms of expression, such as song, music, percussion and dance. The drum rhythm is contagious and the samba-theme is ideally sung by both the paraders and audience. The evolution of the dance in the wings will ideally also energize the audience. At the same time, the visual appeal of the lavish floats, colorful costumes, intricate choreography of the lead group, the duet of the mestre-sala* (master of ceremonies) and porta-bandeira* (standard bearer), together serve as an invitation to another form of participation: admiration. The notion of the “visual” refers to this aspect of the parade which as fundamental as the samba.

The basis for the sociological and artistic richness of the parade is this heterogeneity which identified with the city since the second half of the twentieth century. In contrast to what a romantic approach might envision, there was always a great affinity between the schools and mass communication, or the so-called culture industry. Its nascent social environment brought together radio and the samba composers of popular origin. As several researchers have demonstrated, the expansion of samba accompanied the extraordinary expansion of radio beginning in the 1930's.[20] Radio, samba and samba schools fed each other reciprocally. In the same decade, the connection between the samba and the theme of the parade arose. Hence the term “samba-enredo” (samba theme), which dates only from the 1950s and indicates the generalization of this link.[21] This defined the parade’s formal evolution in the sense of integration of its diverse expressive components in one dramatic unity. With the strength of this artistic form, the samba schools gained dominance in the carnival in Rio de Janeiro and throughout the country in the second half of the twentieth century.

Beginning in the 1960s, the most notable artistic innovation in the parades was the growth of the allegorical floats, a development that kept pace with the popular interest reflected in the growth of the public stands. Television also played a crucial role, serving

as a “popularity index” and ultimately a factor in carnival’s popularization. Finally, in 1984, permanent stands were built. With the Passarela do Samba, the official parade grounds, already large floats became enormous. Significantly, a new social actor emerged in this context: the “carnavalesco” - a word that currently means not only everyone who likes carnival and participates in it, but mainly the principal artist in the parade’s confection. The “carnavalesco” is, ideally, the artist who conceives the annual theme, develops it as a script, conceives and draws all the costumes, conceives the allegorical floats and coordinates their building in a special warehouse named “barracão”. Due to this central role, the “carnavalesco” has become the most important artist of the parade’s backstage. The enhancement of this role, the growth of the floats in size and artistic importance, the patronage of the jogo do bicho in the celebration, together, define the main tendency of recent decades: the conception of the parade as an integrated artistic totality, both visual and spectacular.

I believe that, beginning in the mid-1980s, Rio’s parade began to lose its national dominance. The carnivals of Salvador (Bahia) and Olinda and Recife (Pernambuco), although each very different and displaying an equal carnival quality, are now attracting similar levels of interest among carnival-goers, on-lookers and the press. The very form of representation of national identity in Brazil has been transformed, increasingly valuing cultural differences in a society that conceives itself more and more sharply as plural. Even so, none of these carnivals can claim the level of aesthetic and formal sophistication that the samba schools parade of Rio de Janeiro can.

Popular celebrations nevertheless cross-pollinate, influencing each other reciprocally. The spectacular trend of the parade appears here and there in the context of other festivities. It is present in the effervescence of the June quadrilles*, with elaborate dances, dresses and stage settings; in the splendor of the processions of the festival of the Divine Holy Spirit in Diamantina (Minas Gerais) or in Parati (Rio de Janeiro); in the extraordinary Bumbá (Ox Dance) Festival of Parintins (Amazonas).

From a more strictly sociological perspective, the conflicts and tensions created by the open presence of the jogo do bicho in the Carioca Carnival are clear, both in artistic patronage and control by the Independent League of fundamental aspects of the parades’ organization. Could the organization of the parades assume more democratic forms in the future? Will new neighborhoods in the city continue finding an outlet for expression in the samba schools? These are questions for future researchers. However, it can be pointed that the strong emphasis in visuality that synthesizes the main artistic trend of the last decades cannot stand alone, and requires the enchantment of a good samba. Due to the fact that a school must “passar bem”(flow well), it must be able to motivate the crowd not only to admire it, but also to start dancing and singing during the 80 minutes prescribed for its performance. Samba is a rich musical tradition in Rio de Janeiro and Brazil and there seems to be still room for innovation on the musical side of the parade.

The artistic, cultural and popular strength of the samba schools remains enormous — as evidenced by the thousands of talented individuals who gather annually for the creation of the parade and later revel in the festival. How can one not be moved by the powerful

percussion of the drums, the magnificent ballet of the master of ceremonies and the flag bearer, the voices of the puxadores (leaders) of the samba-theme, the skill of the composers, creativity of the participants, colorful allegorical floats, joyfulness of the wings, inviting swirl of the Baianas' skirts and, finally, the spectacular scene of the entire school seen from atop the grandstands? Undoubtedly, with its elaborate aesthetic form the samba schools parade still encompasses many possibilities for evolution and enchantment.

Situated between festival and spectacle and uniting around the sophisticated requirements of presentation, the pleasure of performing with the pleasure of watching, the parade maintains much vitality. This rich artistic form constructed over the XX Century is a solid one. Thus, in response to the question of its exhaustion, it resists and emerges as a kind of custodian guarding future continuity. Re-wakening every year from its own ashes, the parade celebrates its own mortality as the inexorable passage of time that flows together with a performance. With its pure carnival joy it fuels the view of its own death reinstated every year and projected onto the unknown horizon of history.

Glossary

Alas — (Wings) Basic unit of organization of a samba school. Each wing presents different costumes, singing and dancing throughout the parade.

Ala das Baianas — A special wing, composed of women dressed in the typical “baiana” costume. They perform a characteristic and highly appreciated choreography, turning on the beat in a way that causes their wide skirts to swirl.

Barracão de Escola de Samba — (Samba School Warehouse) Art studio where the floats and some of the costumes for special wings of the school are created — such as Baianas, mestre-sala and porta-bandeira, and bateria.

Bateria — (Drum corps) An orchestra of percussion instruments, directed by a Mestre (Master), who is supported by assistant directors, which accompanies the entire performance of a school in the Passarela.

Boi-Bumbá (Ox Dance) — Folkloric festival which takes place the three last nights in June, in the city of Parintins/Amazonas. It involves the performance of a popular traditional drama about the death and resurrection of an ox, incorporating the mythic universe of the northern region of the Brazil, as well as ecological and nativist themes.

Compositores de samba-enredo — The Samba-theme composers. After the definition of the annual theme for the school, and its development as a script, the composers elaborate different musical versions of it. An internal winner will then be chosen as the samba-enredo for the school in that year.

Divino Espirito Santo — The Divine Holy Spirit. A festivity in homage to the Holy Spirit comprising of a music mass, procession, sale of favors and bazaar, and exhibition of traditional dramas and dances.

Frevo — Following Cascudo (1984) “(...) the great hallucination of Carnival in Pernambuco. It involves a syncopated, persistent, violent and frenetic rhythm (...). And the undulating multitude, in the tremors of the dance, reach a boiling fervor (ferver). It was this idea of “fervura” (ebullience) — in popular pronunciation frevura, frever that gave rise to the name frevo.

Mestre-sala and Porta-Bandeira — Master of ceremonies and Standard Bearer. Luxuriously costumed couple that performs characteristic choreography in the Passarela. She carries the sacred symbol of the school, its flag; he leads and courts, protecting and revering the flag and the public.

Passarela do Samba or Sambódromo — The Samba Parade Grounds, popularly called the Sambódromo, is an immense architectonic structure of reinforced concrete that spans nearly 700 meters along the street (Marques de Sapucaí, situated at the central area of the city) with grandstands and box seats.

Puxadores de samba-enredo — Interpreters of the samba-theme in the parade. They are popularly called puxadores, since their song “puxa” (pulls), i.e., commands and invites the choral singing of all the wings and, if possible, of the entire audience.

Quadrilhas — (Quadrilles) The quadrille is a palace dance from the nineteenth century in five parts, that was popularized in Brazil during the cycle of June festivals. Today there are several variants that are presented throughout the year in different regions of the country.

Trio elétrico — Movable stage with powerful sound equipment mounted on a truck bed where popular singers and composers sing, followed on their course through the city streets by the multitude of celebrants.

Foot Notes.

1. Fragment of the samba-theme of Mocidade Independente de Padre Miguel, winner of 1996's Carnival.
2. Guterres, Liliane Stanisquaski, 1996; Pereira de Queiroz, 1992.
3. There are five rankings of samba-schools groups in Rio de Janeiro's carnival. The first one, called the Special Group, is represented by its own association and

parades on Sunday and Monday evenings. The other four groups parade in the other carnival evenings, some of them in the "sambódromo", some in another central avenue (Rio Branco Avenue). They are represented by the Association of the Samba-schools of Rio de Janeiro. There are more or less sixty samba-schools in the city, new samba-schools are always emerging, while others disappear. The championship is an open one, so the two first winners of each group are promoted to the immediate upper level for the next annual parade, and the two last schools go back down to the inferior ranking.

4. I would point out two very successful paraders who won in this position: Mangueira, a samba-school located in "Morro da Mangueira", a neighborhood close to Rio's center, in 1984; and Mocidade Independente de Padre Miguel, located in the western region of the city, in 1986.
5. The allegorical floats ["carros alegóricos" ou "alegorias" as they are called in Portuguese] are an important artistic item in the samba-school's performance over the last decades. Nowadays each samba-school claims more or less thirteen floats in its parade, illustrating different aspects of their annual theme. They are lavishly constructed, comprising a fascinating process of collective art. I have analyzed their confection and meaning in 1995, chapter 4, and in 1999, chapter 3. The notion of allegory, as I understand it, alludes to a baroque way of expression and a world-view as defined by Hauser (1969) and Benjamin (1984).
6. Let me give an example to clarify this point. In 1992, the theme of the parade of Mocidade Independente de Padre Miguel was the popular proverb "To dream costs nothing... or almost nothing". This proposed theme, once accepted by the board of directors, will be developed as a synopsis. Then, with the help of a lot of research, which frequently includes the reading and loose reinterpretation of academic books, this synopsis will be developed as a script, or a story (enredo is the Portuguese word). Mocidade's script developed different approaches of the subject, psychoanalytic, popular, biological, cybernetical and so on.
7. The "jogo do bicho" is a clandestine betting game that correlates a numeric series to an animal series. Its apparent innocence extends to a vast violent criminal network, as well as to a probable connection to drug trafficking.
8. Before the building of this stadium, a major amount of the profits and financing of Carnival were destined to the firms contracted for the building and thrown down of the already huge temporary stands.
9. The founders of the League were: Mocidade Independente de Padre Miguel, Beija-Flor de Nilópolis, Unidos de Vila Isabel, Portela, Império Serrano, Imperatriz Leopoldinense, Caprichosos de Pilares, Salgueiro, União da Ilha do Governador, Mangueira.

10. Evans-Pritchard (1969) provided an excellent reflection on this subject. "Time" to the Nuer was not simply a way of organizing events, but above all a way of coordinating relationships. See also E. Leach (1974) whose essays develop the mythical idea of time as transformation and emphasize the function of time organization displayed by festivities.
11. Caro Baroja analyzes ethnographic material from the XVI to XX Century Iberian Peninsula. He calls our attention to the standardizing of behaviors brought by the European Christianization during the Middle Ages. He also emphasizes the dissemination of popular festivities in the area that would later become Germany, Spain, Portugal and Italy.
12. See also Burke, 1989.
13. The "jeitinho" could be defined as a way of coping with difficult or unexpected situations with creativity. It may also include the appeal to personal feelings and one's own relationships.
14. She explains the reasons for her interest on this subject as follows: "The Carnival knowledge that rested in the back of my mind suddenly awoke when, in 1973, I read the first interpretations of Brazilian Carnival by an national author [she is referring to Da Matta, 1973]; in this text I could find what had been part of my earlier experience, but some very important aspects of the facts were missing in the analysis. The experienced feelings, the gaiety that takes hold of the people, inducing them to sing and to dance, all this was told there. But all the other aspects that rendered the festivity possible, such as its organization, as well as the identity of those that worked on it and participated in it as its actors, were kept apart. It seemed important to complement the study, transforming into data what had lain until then in the archives of memory" (op. cit. p.21).
15. See Kelly J.D. e Kaplan, Martha's (1990) review on ritual studies during the 1980's.
16. This parade includes the first six ranked schools of the special group and the winner of the group immediately below.
17. See Le Goff (1984) for the examination of the entangled origins of our calendar.
18. The history of the samba schools is told by the voluminous bibliography of carnival writers, with plenty of interesting details about each school, its transformations and innovations.

19. See Carneiro: 1965; Moura:1980; Barbosa e Santos:1980; Valença:1981; Costa:1984; Tupy:1985.
20. See Tupy (op.cit:73, and also Vianna (1995) e Pereira de Sá (1996).
21. Tinhorão, 1974.

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