



Music and ceremonial in Fernão Cardim's Jesuit letters (1583-90)

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Abstract

This paper addresses Fernão Cardim's letters to his Portuguese employer, in which he provides details on the missions of the Society of Jesus throughout Northeastern Brazil in late sixteenth century. This study dwells on the historical context of these letters and focuses on reports of ceremonial music, with special attention to themes such as Jesuit inculturation and adaptability. In analyzing the Jesuits' peculiar musical engagement and interaction with the natives and their ceremonial practices, this paper evaluates the significance of this interrelationship for Jesuit Catholic ritual. This research also explores Cardim's accounts on the intersection between Christian ceremonies and local rituals as one of the earliest documented signs of religious syncretism on Brazilian territory.

Keywords

Music and ritual – ceremonial music – inculturation – Jesuit missionaries – religious syncretism – Fernão Cardim.

Resumo

Este artigo aborda as cartas de Fernão Cardim ao seu empregador português, em que ele fornece detalhes sobre as missões da Companhia de Jesus no nordeste brasileiro ao fim do século XVI. Este estudo enfatiza o contexto histórico dessas cartas e concentra-se nos relatos de música cerimonial, com atenção especial a temas como inculturação jesuítica e adaptabilidade. Ao analisar o engajamento e interação musical peculiar dos jesuítas com os nativos e suas práticas cerimoniais, este artigo avalia as implicações dessa integração no ritual católico jesuíta. Esta pesquisa também explora o relato de Cardim sobre a interseção entre cerimônias cristãs e rituais locais como sendo um dos primeiros sinais documentados de sincretismo religioso em território brasileiro.

Palavras-chave

Música e ritual – música cerimonial – enculturação – sincretismo religioso – missionários jesuítas – música ibérica – Fernão Cardim.

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The letters written by Fernão Cardim contemplate a prosperous period for the Society of Jesus in the history of South American Jesuit missions. Having joined the Company in 1556, he sailed to Brazil in 1583 to work in one of the Portuguese colonies along the north-eastern coast. He was continuously active as a Jesuit on Brazilian soil until the year of his death, 1625, only leaving that country between 1598 and 1604, when summoned to Rome. While in Italy, Cardim was elected Prosecutor of the Brazilian Province at the provincial congregation (Cardim, 1997, p. 12). His prolific Jesuit work yielded two treatises on the land of Brazil and two epistolary narratives.

Despite the rich detail and recurrence with which he describes music and other ceremonial events during his missionary trips throughout Bahia (1583-90), Cardim's letters are overlooked in musicological and ethnomusicological scholarship. That is partially due to the fact that they may have been overshadowed by longer and even more elaborated accounts in other contemporary reports, as well as their specific focus on the musical practices of the natives. The average European reader was certainly more interested in learning about the characteristics of indigenous musical practices, rather than reading descriptions of well-known Catholic rituals. Cardim's letters are not only shorter and more modest than these other sources, but they are also mainly concerned with the ordinary practice of music in the Catholic ceremony in the context of the Jesuit mission – in themselves topics of less interest at the time.

His two treatises were originally published in English at the time (London, 1625), but his two Jesuit letters were edited more than two centuries later and only then published in the original Portuguese for the first time (Lisbon, 1847). Since musical evidence in support of Cardim's accounts of ceremonies such as manuscripts, early editions, and instruments do not survive, the limited access to primary sources constitutes another stumbling block for musicology. In avoiding to inevitably rely on analogous contemporary accounts, or to depend on subsequent reports of Jesuit work from the eighteenth century, musicology has often overlooked Cardim's letters along with important aspects of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century music. If his name is mentioned in publications on Brazilian music history, it is usually only in passing and his writings do not enjoy prominence as a central source of information.

I will argue presently, however, that due to the plethora of reports on ceremonial music in Cardim's first letter, his account is certainly worth revisiting as a historical document. Furthermore, I advocate for Cardim's letters in this study exactly because it dwells on ordinary ceremonies of the Catholic church, as it allows for examples of interaction between native Brazilians and European Jesuits. In this sense, Cardim's letters are unique in that they are a significant primary source for the *intersection* of European and native South American musical practices. In no other socio-cultural context at the time does Roman Catholic European music undergo a more dramatic transformation and adaptation as in the context of the Jesuit mission.



This paper explores aspects of Jesuit evangelistic techniques, dwelling on the concepts of inculturation and adaptability, as well as their implications for their missionary work. More specifically, it analyzes Jesuit musical engagements with the indigenous 'other.' It also considers the nature and role of the Jesuit letter as a means of communication between the New World missions and the European audience of readers. In later portions of this paper I turn to instances in Cardim's first letter that exemplify three essentially distinct settings in which ceremonial music is at play, namely: (1) Christian ceremonies, (2) pagan indigenous rites, and, finally, (3) ceremonial intersections featuring elements from these two settings. In focusing on these different ceremonial spheres, I touch upon issues such as collaborations of native Brazilians, gender-specific participation, and pagan incorporations to Catholic ceremonies. I also dedicate some space to discussing how these early signs of ceremonial amalgamation may have informed the development of syncretic religious movements in Brazilian history. This study argues that the establishment of syncretic religious systems in the nineteenth century may have been initiated and encouraged earlier in history by means of Jesuit incorporations of pagan ritualistic elements into Catholic ceremonial practices such as the ones described in Cardim's letters.

MUSIC AND CEREMONIAL IN THE JESUIT MISSION

Some of the main characteristics of the Society of Jesus are its restriction to male members and its missionary goals. As an institution, it is chiefly destined to convert the world and perform social charitable work by means of missionary activity. Thus, by engaging with other cultures, Jesuit missions are marked by a unique interaction with the locals, as evidenced in themes such as *inculturation*, *defense of native peoples* and other marginalized groups and *creative adaptability* to changing times. Magnus Mörner (1999), in addressing early missions, says: "Jesuit missionaries from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries have been characterized as showing a high degree of cultural relativism for their vocation and their times" (Mörner, 1999, p. 305). Jeffrey L. Klaiber (2009), in describing Jesuits in the introduction to his book on Latin American missions, also states:

[The Jesuits were] critical-minded, modern men who attempted to keep abreast of all the latest developments in Europe. In this sense, they lived a tension between these two worlds—newly discovered cultures in Asia or America, on the one hand, and modern thought shaped by the Renaissance and humanism on the other. (Klaiber, 2009, p. 2)

They constituted a peculiar group of well-educated men, who also excelled in their teaching system and instruction methods, building and instituting colleges as



they went and disseminating elements of contemporary Western European thought.

The early missions to the New World are doubtlessly the most notorious historical accomplishment of the Society of Jesus. More specifically, Jesuits were responsible for a thorough study of other cultures, trying to reach native Indians using codes they could understand. Of all the techniques employed by the Society, inculturation stands out as the most prominent in literature and became an aspect of particular interest in my present analysis of ceremonial music.¹ Inculturation sought the incarnation of Christian doctrines into the essence of a given cultural context, as Jesuits strived to bring out the best in the culture they encountered without destroying it. Rather, they were to find new meaning in that culture, save they introduced Christianity as its doctrinal basis. Jesuits believed that in so doing, that cultural context would be purified and purged of its otherwise pagan roots.

Basing their work on Ignatius of Loyola's (ca. 1491-1556) *Spiritual Exercises*, they were instructed to search and 'find God in all things,' whether or not they pertained directly to Christianity (Klaiber, 2009, p. 4). Hence, the missions allowed a certain degree of tolerance and adaptability when it comes to ceremonial variations in Catholic rituals. The incorporation of some elements of 'otherness' into religious ceremonies was not only permitted, but was welcomed as a fundamental tool for evangelism. In mingling with the cultural environment of the society they aimed to convert, Jesuits tried to reach out for the native without conflict or use of force. This approach has enormous implications for ritual music and musical activity in colonies in the New World, as flexibility and adaptability become characteristics of the Jesuit mission (Wittmann, 2011, p. 49).

During the Council of Trent (1545-63), the Catholic Church had demonstrated a certain degree of apprehension in regards to the use of music in ceremonies, emphasizing the need to shun pagan elements from composition (Dyer, 2014). In spite of the restrictive character of this clear guideline, Jesuit inculturation relativizes the line between sacred and secular in ceremonial music. In fact, the process of inculturation welcomes secular and even utterly pagan elements into the Christian ceremony. This was to be permitted, however, only when the objective is to evangelize, convert, and convince the other.

Since music and ritual are inevitably affected in this process, the concept of inculturation challenges the urge for ceremonial universality expressed by the Church in the Council of Trent a few decades back. While in Europe we can see an endeavour for ceremonial universality, this notion is very much lost in the Jesuit mission in the New World. The Society of Jesus' position when it comes to the line between sacred and

¹ Inculturation is also alternatively defined as *acculturation* in Zupanov's (1999) analysis, generally denoting Jesuit adaptability and flexibility in adjusting to foreign cultural contexts. It is important to note, however, that the term *acculturation* is also used in literature to designate an adaptation process to cultural change that is different from inculturation in the Jesuit context.



secular is very flexible as long as evangelism be the objective in question. Although the Jesuit Order swears total and complete allegiance to the pope and to Catholicism (Klaiber, 2009, p. 4), their very spirituality and missionary techniques attest to a significant deviation from the guidelines the Roman Church had promulgated at the time. Thus, the Jesuit mission has a unique and independent approach to sacred music and its use in liturgy. Frank Kennedy (2014) summarizes this idea, stating:

Even though Jesuits in mission territories shared the same vision as their European brothers, the missionary context often dictated a more flexible, less cautious approach to the use of music in support of the order's apostolic enterprise. The musical tradition that developed in a large number of mission countries was, in fact, so successful that it is now possible to identify 'mission music' as a genre distinct from the cathedral music that existed in those countries. (Kennedy, 2014)

As I will suggest below, this musical intersection is especially noticeable in South American missions and particularly salient in some of Fernão Cardim's reports.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that music plays a central role in the Society of Jesus itself as an organization and has an especially significant purpose in the Jesuit mission. Kennedy (2014), in remarking on the function of music in European Jesuit activity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, also mentions its centrality in liturgical and paraliturgical services as well as college theatrical productions.² This is to say that acknowledging the prominence of music in European Jesuit colleges also helps us estimate its significance for the missions in the New World and understand how it is portrayed in travel accounts and letters at the time.

FERNÃO CARDIM'S NARRATIVA EPISTOLAR

Ines G. Zupanov (1999, p. 6) suggests that Jesuit letters were generally expected to follow the instructions of classical rhetoric, although deviations from pre-established models of written discourse are not rare. As for larger documents such as treatises on the land, people, and ceremonies, digressions and expansions were allowed in the form of detailed narrative. Moreover, according to Ignatius of Loyola's instructions on Jesuit narrative, the missionary author should turn to details such as a thorough description of the place's nobility and ruling class, the 'common' people, the Company's activities, and the author *himself* (Zupanov, 1999, p. 7). Loyola suggests that the epistolary narrative was ultimately a self-reflective document and above all a personal overview of one's individual experiences. Nevertheless, it was to be read

² Jesuit theatrical productions in the various colleges generally involved musical dramas and plays.



by the recipient as an official report of the mission's progress as a *collective* accomplishment, and expected to generally contain information on the entire company as a social group. Therefore, the Jesuit letter, though an individual and personal memoir, was understood to apply to a wider social spectrum. In fact, the Company of Jesus was primarily founded as a social institution and the individual missionary can arguably be regarded in isolation from the collective system in which he is inserted.

In contrast, in an article on Fernão Cardim's letters, Eunícia Barros Fernandes (2009, p. 176) argues that written sources from the Renaissance are examples of the emancipation of the man as an individual. She especially develops the idea that it was through written documents that the individual begins to be perceived as such; and in which the author is able to express personal opinions and perspectives. Thus, while taken as an account of a collective perception, Jesuit letters were perhaps expected to entail a certain detachment of the individual from the Society. This dynamic between the 'individual' and the 'collective' in Jesuit letters brings about tremendous implications for the Brazilian mission and to how this dialogue may have potentially played out in Cardim's written reports on music.

Fernandes (2009, p. 179) acknowledges the collective nature of the personal account, arguing that Cardim as an individual is key to understanding the Brazilian mission as a cooperative accomplishment. To be sure, Cardim's letters differ from other contemporary documents in that they introduce singular and innovative personal opinions (as I will discuss in more detail below). His individualized accounts of ceremonial moments are also particularly helpful to musicological and ethnomusicological studies. On the other hand, it is difficult to assume the extent to which Fernão Cardim's perspectives were distinctively 'his;' or, to which extent it was Cardim 'the man' who was communicating through his writings. He produced his two letters while working as secretary to Father Cristóvão de Gouveia, during the period of 1583 to 1590, reporting on the Jesuit company's missionary activities along the coast. Cardim's individual and 'original' perspectives may have been informed by the social milieu in which he was inserted. This professional relationship between Cardim and his employers and superiors certainly helped shape his accounts.

Fernandes also introduces another salient attribute of the Jesuit letter: its potential to convey a "construction of the other" (Fernandes, 2009, p. 176). Cardim's perspectives on native Brazilian society and their practices offer a European reading of 'otherness' that aligns with various contemporary accounts, albeit in a more amicable and welcoming manner. But his letters are unique in that they dwell mostly on the positive interrelationships between native and Jesuit parties. This approach differs from some of the other contemporary reports, such as the treatises by Hans Staden (1557), André Thevet (1558), and Jean de Léry (1585), which focus on the bellicose contact between the indigenous groups and their European colonizers, as well as



between the indigenous groups themselves. Cardim's letters portray a generally positive overview of Jesuit missions in Colonial Brazil. Yet, his 'construction' of the indigenous Brazilian is still likely to be a reflection of the perspectives of this entire Jesuit company as a social group, rather than an individual perspective.

Another fundamental aspect of the Jesuit letter is its potential to communicate to a specific reading audience. As Zupanov (1999) points out, Jesuit epistolography ultimately became an "ethnographic description," suggesting that the European audience read these reports as "ethnographers, theatre audiences, trial witnesses, or even juries and judges and confessors" (Zupanov, 1999, p. 7). Cardim's letters were specifically addressed to the Provincial Father in Portugal (Cardim, 1997, p. 18), and it is uncertain how widely these documents were read in the community. Yet, regardless of their diffusion, it is paramount to consider Cardim's letters and their ability to communicate in light of their target audience in sixteenth-century Portugal.

When it comes to music, particularly, his personal choice of terminology and nomenclatures can be somewhat difficult to disentangle from his writings. To be sure, they were a common code between himself and his Portuguese readers. Arriving at a hermeneutic framework for music and ceremony in his letters is something this present study only begins to work towards, due to the challenges often encountered in defining and translating music terms. This investigation can greatly benefit from future research on music terminology in sixteenth-century Portuguese and, more specifically, on its role in the communication between Portuguese Jesuits and the ruling classes.

Fernão Cardim's other two treatises on the land, fauna, flora and people of native Brazil, follow the usual format of travel accounts. The travel account document had by this time already become an independent and distinctive writing genre. Therefore, as it is expected, these two treatises have little to do with the mission and can hardly be identified as strictly Jesuit documents, in that they share similarities with several other accounts, such as the aforementioned travel reports by Staden, Thevet, Léry. Cardim's *Narrativa Epistolar* (epistolary narrative, or letters), in contrast to his treatises, is by definition a collection of official reports specifically on Jesuit activity. As I indicated in the introduction, his letters are original and differ from most of the other contemporary sources in that they focus primarily on Jesuit ceremonial music, rather than the musical practices of native groups. Cardim's first letter dispenses with some of the strict guidelines of classical rhetoric. Instead, it is in the format of a continuous flow of prose. He provides a chronological description of the company's events observed during his missionary excursions throughout Brazilian territory, occasionally giving detailed reports of the native ceremonies he witnessed along the way.

His letters also span over a unique period in the history of Jesuit mission in Brazil. His work in Bahia and other northeastern regions between 1583 and his death in 1625



contemplates relative peace and advancement in Jesuit activities. The east coast of Brazil was the first area on South American territory to be reached by the Society of Jesus in 1549, and its fast growth allowed for abundant contact with several native tribes. By the time Cardim arrives in Brazil in 1583, Jesuit colleges were already established and the missions were prosperous. The colleges rapidly became the main source of instruction in the colony, if not the only educational system available for both Portuguese colonizers and the natives the Jesuits sought to convert (Klaiber, 2009, p. 16). The colleges adopted the same academic curriculum used in Europe, and emphasized the humanities: Latin, rhetoric, poetry, literature and history—as an introduction to philosophy and theology (Klaiber, 2009, p. 11). In the years following Cardim's death, however, Jesuit activity was marked by continuous struggles with other colonizers. By the middle of the seventeenth century Jesuits were fighting against indigenous slavery and were forced to devise strategies to protect the oppressed tribes in the northeast. Naturally, although slavery was to some extent already an issue in late sixteenth-century, none of these problems figure prominently in Cardim's writings and were probably still unknown to him at the time.

Music appears in nearly every ceremony described by Cardim. Whether it is performed by the Jesuit priests, the students of the colleges, or the natives themselves, references to music are a recurrent feature in his epistolary narrative. I will focus presently on two occasions reported by Cardim. The first encompasses the multiple festivities connected to the Mass for the Day of Kings on 06 January 1584; and the second a Christmas celebration in December 1583. These instances shed light not only on the music performed in the missions, but also on other sonic characteristics of these ceremonies. They are excellent examples of how music appears in both Christian and non-Christian contexts, and especially how elements from these two distinct settings occasionally intersect in the Brazilian Jesuit mission. I also look at the musical implications of Jesuit inculturation, and how these early signs of ceremonial intersection may have informed later developments of religious syncretism in Brazil—until today a prominent aspect of Brazilian culture along the northeastern coast.

JESUIT CEREMONIES

In recounting the disciplines taught in the colleges, Cardim also mentions music lessons, making specific reference to voice, flute, harpsichord, and viol³ (Cardim, 1997, p. 241). He alludes to ways in which the natives were exposed to European musical practices within their educational system and states that they were trained to sing and officiate the Catholic mass. In his numerous accounts of ceremonies the natives

³ It is unclear from Cardim's text, however, what sort of stringed instrument he is specifically referring to. Marcos T. Holler (2006) accounts for the frequent allusion to viols in Jesuit documents in Portuguese America, (Holler, 2006, p. 105). Although Holler also points to the incidence of plucked *violas* at the time (Holler, 2006, p. 106), the terminology used in Cardim's epistle leaves room for some discussion as to its precise organology.



are often said to actively take part in the rituals promoted by the Jesuits, rather than being merely ministered to. He says, for example:

On Day of Kings some of the brethren renewed their vows. The visiting priest, before the mass, ... baptized some thirty adults. During the entire baptismal ceremony there were good music and motets, and the flutes were played every now and again. After that [the priest] said the solemn mass, officiated with polyphonic singing by the natives, with their flutes, harpsichord and discant; a male student sang a few psalms and motets at the mass, with extraordinary devotion. (Cardim, 1997, p. 233).

This account from 06 January 1584 shows the active participation of Jesuit college students, which was most likely restricted to male individuals and appears several times throughout his reports. The engagement of female natives, on the other hand, is frequently more passive and involves congregational aspects of the ceremony, such as participation in the communion, reception of the Eucharist, fasting, and lamenting.

An analogous instance showing the active cooperation of native Indians took place on 03 July 1583. Cardim describes the musical collaboration between the Jesuit priests and the natives:

On the following day, the day of the visitation of Saint Isabel, before the general confessions, the priests and brethren from the village renewed their vows... and the visiting Father sang the mass with the deacon and sub-deacon, presided in polyphonic singing by the natives and their flutes (Cardim, 1997, p. 223).

Although instances of engagement between Portuguese Jesuits and native music apprentices are recurrent throughout the first letter, they do not consist in the most significant accounts of ceremonials in Cardim's letters. In the following sections of this paper I will turn to reports of ritual music that are particularly important for this study's objective—to analyze non-Catholic practices and how they inform Jesuit ceremonial.

PAGAN RITUALS

While some of the musical instruments in Brazil found analogous forms among the ones brought to South America by the Jesuits and European colonizers—such as various types of flutes and percussion instruments—there were other instruments that remained unmatched when it comes to a European counterpart. Cardim mentions



two musical instruments in particular that were still foreign to European classification at the time: the *maracá* and the *berimbau*. Their sonic idiosyncrasies were not only new to the Jesuits, but their ritualistic purposes and implied religious context were also foreign to sixteenth-century Catholicism.

Although rituals taking place during Jesuit activities—that is, in a Catholic religious context—are the focus in Cardim's text, he does devote some attention to native rituals as well. These ceremonies are to some extent connected to the Jesuit mission since he witnesses them during his priestly visits to the tribes. In fact three out of his five accounts of native ceremonies feature a festival display whose purpose is to welcome the visiting priest. Nonetheless, they happen outside the Roman Catholic context per se.

Cardim reports his impressions of the native rituals that took place after the "spiritual feast" on Day of Kings, 06 January 1584:

They all walk very close together... with their bows and arrows in hand, some paint their bodies and decorate themselves with feathers. The women follow [in like manner], and the rest are bare; and together they go throughout the entire village, shouting out loud, dancing... and singing at the sound of a gourd full of little stones. They are so concentrated on the beat that they make no mistakes in their steps, stamping on the ground with such force that the earth shakes. [...] It is impossible to understand what they sing, but the [others] told me that they sang about the many accomplishments and wars of their ancestors (Cardim, 1997, p. 234).

Both Jean de Léry (1585) and Hans Staden (1557) wrote detailed first-hand accounts of similar celebrations among the anthropophagous *Tupinambá*—one of the main indigenous coastal tribes—and their ritualistic use of their rattle, the *maracá*. They also provide information on its crucial role in their religious system, festivities and war rituals throughout the year (Lima, 2015).

It is important to note that the native ceremony Cardim describes is very similar to the war celebrations addressed in these other contemporary accounts, featuring the *maracá* as a central element. Its anatomy as a musical instrument is fairly uncomplicated. The *maracá* (figures 1a and 1b) was made out of a hard, hollow fruit called *cabaça* in modern Brazilian Portuguese (calabash, in English).



Figure 1. a) Tupinambás dancing and playing the *maracá*. From Jean de Léry' *Historie d'un Voayege*, 1585. b) Tupinambá manufacturing leg-rattles and tupinambá dancing and playing the *maracá*. From André Thevet's *Les Singularitéz*, 1558.

According to Hans Staden's report of 1557, the natives "put a stick through it and cut a hole in it like a mouth, filling it with small stones so that it rattles" (Staden, 1928, p. 149). This procedure has been kept to present times among Brazilian natives living in Tupi-Guarani communities, and the rattle still functions as a religious object and musical instrument, although religious practices largely differ now from those of sixteenth-century tribes.

Among the Tupinambá the *maracá* was believed to carry a spirit that craved for the flesh of enemy tribes. The tribe's leaders also claimed that the rattle 'spoke' to them. Gary Thomlinson, in elaborating on this particular belief, argues that the rattling noise of the instrument was the "*maracá's* speaking voice" (Tomlinson, 2007, p. 111), although Staden clearly states that the sorcerers held the instrument in front of their faces and whispered words from behind it, thus making the natives believe it was actually speaking to them (Staden, 1928, p. 150). In this ceremony, the natives believed to be encouraged by the *maracá's* 'voice' to make war and capture the enemy, which culminated in ritual cannibalism. The anthropophagy of one representative of the adversary tribe is the highest point in Tupinambá ceremonial. By eating the enemy, they believed to assimilate and incorporate his/her strength, thus passing it on to future generations (Montaigne, 1811). Thus, the *maracá* is intrinsically connected to the ritual anthropophagy of the enemy, both as a musical instrument and as a religious token. In Cardim's account, as it is expected from such a friendly report, there is no evidence of cannibalism—thus suggesting that this particular instance of the festivity might have taken place outside its authentic native context. The ritualistic



adaptation in this specific occasion begins to show some evidence of ceremonial intersection between distinct socio-cultural spheres and their music.

Cardim also attests to the active participation of women in dances and singing. His description gives us some idea of the sonic qualities of their ritual. The terminological variation, changing from 'shout' to 'singing' in his text, suggests that Cardim may not have been able to decide between the terms, or satisfactorily classify this phenomenon according to the European musical and epistemological framework of his sphere. In 1585 Jean de Léry, in the third edition of his treatise on native Brazil, includes notated examples of these 'songs' (figures 2 and 3). Léry uses the contemporary Western notation system to convey native music to the curious European reader.

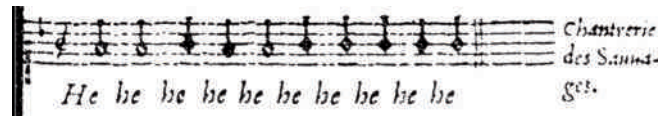


Figure 2. Notated Tupinambá song. From Jean de Léry's *Historie d'un Voayage*, 1585.

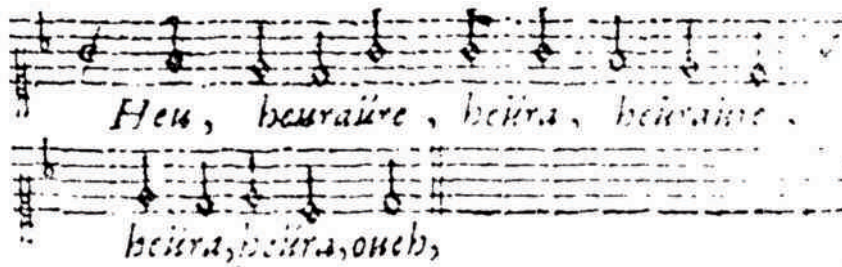


Figure 3. Notated Tupinambá song. From Jean de Léry's *Historie d'un Voayage*, 1585.

There is no indication whatsoever in Cardim's letter that the *maracá* (along with its music) was used in Jesuit ceremonies. The significance of this occasion is in that it takes place *outside* the Roman Catholic context. Yet, the other foreign instrument mentioned by Cardim—the berimbau—is described in his letters in close connection to the Jesuit ceremony. Both the *maracá* and berimbau embody similar ritualistic connotations and implications for the present discussion.

CEREMONIAL INTERSECTIONS

Fernão Cardim clearly states that the natives' feast on Day of Kings only took place *after* the mass and its correlated ceremonies have come to an end.⁴ Hence, as I have suggested above, although the natives do participate in Christian ceremonies,

⁴ Baptisms and weddings are often mentioned in connection to the mass ceremonies and feature the participation of the natives.



these two settings—one Catholic and one pagan—are usually very distinct. But there are instances in his writings that suggest the incorporation of pagan practices into Christian rituals and suggest a more evident and original contribution of the other to the Catholic religious ceremony.

The most compelling example of such ceremonies is Cardim's account of berimbau music. The berimbau is also a rather simple instrument, consisting of a wooden bow bent by a tense steel string, a resonating body usually made out of a hollow gourd (similar to the *maracá*), and a small *baqueta* with which to stroke the string with the right hand. The resonating gourd is placed against the player's abdomen and held with the left hand. The berimbau is accompanied by a *caxixi* (small basket rattle), which is also held with the left hand along with the *baqueta* and rattles when the instrument's one string is being stroked. A metal coin or stone (*moeda, dobrão* or *pedra*) is held between the left thumb and index, and used to raise the pitch or alter the sound of the string (Galm, 2010, p. 8).

Musical bows are not originally found in any other South-American indigenous cultures. The only feasible potential origin for what is now known as the 'Brazilian berimbau' is Central Africa. The massive diaspora of African slaves was the only possible channel by which the berimbau found its way into South America. As Eric Galm puts it: "as a result, musical bows in Brazil have become iconic representations of African-descended culture throughout the country" (Galm, 2010, p. 10). Yet Cardim's mentioning of the berimbau does not enjoy prominence in musicological or ethnomusicological literature, although it is potentially the earliest appearance of the instrument in written documents from the Colonial period.

The occasion is the Christmas celebration of 1583. Cardim's account reads: "We had the nativity scene at Christmas, where we used to gather together with the sound of good and devout (solemn) music, and brother Barnabé entertained us with his berimbau" (Cardim, 1928, p. 231). While this specific reference may be difficult to unpack due to its rather short nature and the limited detail available, it is perhaps one of the most significant musical moments in Cardim's letters. Usually, if there is a certain degree of ceremonial intersection, it is because the natives are depicted playing Jesuit music in Jesuit ceremonies. But this musician is no longer participating in the reproduction of music dictated by the Jesuits. Rather, brother Barnabé is bringing his berimbau and its music to the Jesuit ceremony, thus contributing to the Christmas entertainment in a more original, authentic way.

In discussing the origins of the berimbau, Richard Graham says: "in colonial Brazil, many Central African musical bows and their creole progenies fell by the wayside to create sociological conditions that eventually produced the pan-African berimbau" (Graham, 1991, p. 1). In this sense, the berimbau not only remounts to a fading African cultural background, but it is a crucial part in the development of an essentially



South American socio-cultural context. Graham also states: “in the cultural crucible of colonial Brazil, divergent cultural expressions of the African diaspora were reinterpreted to produce Brazilian national cultural institutions such as *the escolas de samba, terreiros de Cadomblé, and the academias de capoeira*” (Graham, 1991, p. 1). While to some extent these institutions are interconnected, the second and third—*terreiros de Candomblé* and *Capoeira*—specifically denote pagan-Christian religions that intersect freely with Catholic practices until today.⁵

As for the berimbau's sound and acoustical qualities, although the player can control the pitch to some extent, the nature of the instrument's musical idiom is largely percussive. Pitch is generally either high or low, and not necessarily precise in frequency, as most western European music would have required at the time. That being said, it is hard to assume that the berimbau was being played along with other music (especially western European music), but rather, enjoyed as an independent solo instrument. The music played could have been of African origin, as it is possible that brother Barnabé was of African descent. In any case, regardless of his socio-cultural background, he is contributing with a unique musical practice that is certainly foreign to the European Christmas celebration. Most importantly, this music remains intact when it comes to its idiomatic and sonic qualities: for the first time in Cardim's account Jesuit music is no longer strictly Christian.

Dance is another recurrent element witnessed in connection with church ceremonies. Cardim makes multiple references to dance, saying, for instance: “in this manner we were brought in procession to the church, with dances and good music of flutes and *Te Deum laudamus*” (Cardim, 1997, p. 222). He also states: “there was good music of voices, flutes, and dances and from there we went in procession to the church, with various inventions” (Cardim, 1997, p. 232); “at the heart of the mass there was preaching in the native tongue, and after that a solemn procession with dances and other such inventions” (Cardim, 1997, p. 234). Another reference is found elsewhere: “we went in procession to the church with a dance of men with swords, and yet another with the schoolboys; all walked on saying their vows to the holy relics” (Cardim, 1997, p. 277). The act of dancing seems to be mainly associated with church processions. Although Cardim does not specify, these dances are probably being performed exclusively by the natives, and possibly at the sound of *either* native or European music. Despite the implications of Jesuit inculturation, it is difficult to conceive of an amalgamation between these two seemingly antagonistic practices: the ritual solemnity typical of Catholic processions and the highly sensual dancing of the natives. Cardim (1997, p. 232) occasionally refers to these as *invenções* (“inventions” or “creations”), thus suggesting that they were indeed foreign elements

⁵ I explore these institutions in more detail below.



to Catholic ceremonials at first, but gradually appropriated by the Jesuits into their Christian rites.

Not only in Cardim, but also in the other contemporary accounts, the natives are often reported not to be wearing garments. The iconography available in Staden, Thevet, and Léry's travel journals (and especially the detailed engravings by Theodoro De Bry reproduced in figure 4) attests to their manner of minimal clothing (if any), body decoration and sensual dancing. The rich engraving, based on Staden's original description and iconography, shows a dance performed exclusively by bare women. The captive Hans Staden, who in this occasion was instructed to stamp his feet rhythmically, is portrayed in the middle, wearing rattling objects around his ankles.



Figure 4. Women dancing around the captive Hans Staden. From Theodoro De Bry's *America*, 1592.

Although the amalgamation of indigenous practices and Catholic rituals is allegedly typical of Jesuit inculturation and recurrent in Jesuit ceremonies, it is important to consider how the contemporary European mind would have perceived it. Other



European colonizers residing in Brazil, who were not necessarily associated with the Jesuits, were likely to have been occasionally exposed to some of these ceremonial intersections; and this ritual mixture was to gradually become more common in the following centuries. The average Catholic person in Portugal (as well as other Europeans) who had never set foot in the New World, as of the audiences to whom these letters were originally addressed, certainly read these accounts in awe and amazement. The degree to which inculturation immediately impacts religion and society at the time, however, are not at all mentioned in Cardim's letters, and is to a large extent left for recent anthropological studies to explore.

JESUIT INCULTURATION AND RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM

As these examples show, Jesuit inculturation in late sixteenth century allowed for early signs of syncretic intersections between the Roman Catholic religion and various local traditions. In fact, religious amalgams involving pan-African beliefs, indigenous Brazilian rituals, and Catholicism were to solidify in the centuries following Cardim's letters, thus resulting in entirely new hybrid religious forms. At this point, it is perhaps worth recapitulating the definition of Jesuit inculturation as an evangelistic experiment that goes *beyond* religious adaptability in the context of the missions. Pedro Arrupe defines this concept in a manner that very much aligns with the ensuing syncretic religious developments in Brazil. He says:

Inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation), but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about a "new creation". (Arrupe *apud* Schineller, 1990, p. 14)

The product of Jesuit inculturation is inevitably a "new creation" that, as a final product, may only faintly resemble Catholicism and its practices. In attempting to preserve elements from these pagan religious backgrounds, and introducing a certain amount of Christianity into their doctrinal basis, Jesuit inculturation provides the very ambient and locale where these three essentially distinct practices meet and coexist for the first time in the years following the discovery of Brazil. Thus, Cardim's description of the berimbau in connection to the Christmas celebrations of 1583 carries more global implications for our historical perspective of these religious developments.



With the Brazilian abolishment of slavery towards the end of the eighteenth century, groups of African origin spread throughout the country, thus disseminating the berimbau and the religious practices closely associated with it. As the beliefs and rituals in the *Candomblé* religion solidly syncretizes with Roman Catholicism, the playing of the berimbau becomes a fundamental ritualistic aspect. In analyzing the instrument's connections with *Capoeira*⁶ (Galm, 2010, p. 22) and *Candomblé*, Galm remarks on the allegedly supernatural attributes of the berimbau:

Some practitioners [of Capoeira] believe this musical bow connects the past with the present and the future, is interconnected with Afro-Brazilian spiritual belief systems, and has the power to make a dancer invincible. (Galm, 2010, p. 7)

He also comments on the religious implications connected to the instrument:

...there is a connection between African-derived religious beliefs, capoeira, and the berimbau. (...) In the introductory portion of a game of capoeira, the symbolism of the berimbau can be seen in both physical and spiritual realms. ...the berimbau is perceived as a musical instrument that brings spiritual forces of the past and future together in the present. (Galm, 2010, p. 29)

In this sense, the berimbau, much like the *maracá*, is assigned a dual ritual function. It can be regarded both as (1) an independent musical instrument and as (2) a religious symbol without which the ceremony in question is devoid of its integral meaning. It also embodies one of the amalgamated ritual products that derive from the syncretic union of European Catholicism, South American indigenous practices and pan-African religions.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Revisiting Fernão Cardim's letters not only proves to be useful for a musicological approach to ceremonial music, but also for a historiographical analysis of religion in early Colonial Brazil. In spite of the fact that these implications have been either ignored or overlooked in scholarship, the issues addressed throughout this study clearly attest to their importance and significance as a primary source. Besides, although Cardim's letters fall short of a rich iconography and clearer musical examples

⁶ *Capoeira*, although not a religious system in itself, is a fundamental component of African-descended religious traditions gradually incorporated into Brazilian culture. It is a type of game and martial art that features the berimbau in the introductory ceremonies and as its accompanying soundscape. Galm (2010), in discussing the berimbau's historical background and role in the establishment of *Capoeira* as a national symbol, explores in detail the relationship between the instrument and the game.



in comparison to other contemporary sources referred to throughout this paper, the information he provides is sufficient at least for a preliminary evaluation of ceremonial music in the Jesuit mission. Yet, given the abundance of material available in Cardim's account (which I could not possibly evaluate in total presently), the several other accounts of music in his letters remain for future research to gradually unpack across various disciplines and areas of inquiry.



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