

# To the Beat of the Tambor de Crioula: Echoing Afro-Brazilian Knowledge in Education

Zayda Cristina Rocha Costa

Secretaria Municipal de Educação, Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovação de Codó, MA<sup>1</sup>

Jhonatan Wendell Tavares Ferreira

Universidade de Pernambuco (UPE)

Kelly Almeida de Oliveira

Universidade Federal do Maranhão (UFMA)

## Abstract

This article analyzes the Tambor de Crioula dance as a pedagogical tool for teaching and learning and artistic creations with 8th grade students, focusing on Afro-Brazilian contributions to society and the arts. The methodology used was action research, promoting collaborative participation to achieve the proposed objectives. It was observed that the contents of the Tambor de Crioula are rarely worked on in the classroom and are practically absent from the PNLD arts textbooks. The results show that Tambor de Crioula is a popular practice in the state of Maranhão, representing great ancestry, Black resistance and cultural richness. When inserted into the educational context, Tambor de Crioula contributes to the recognition of Afro-Brazilian heritage, the construction of identities and the promotion of representation. It is necessary to broaden the dialogue on pedagogical practices, artistic creation and the inclusion of cultural content in teaching materials, highlighting the potential of Tambor de Crioula to enrich education and value Afro-Brazilian history and culture.

**Palavras-chave:** tambor de crioula; antiracist education; pedagogical practices; education and the arts; cultural inclusion.

## Ê coreira! Let's go to tambor de crioula.

This work presents some of the results of a Master's research thesis titled *Ê coreira! Tambor de Crioula in the classroom* (Costa, 2023), which is linked to the research line: Teaching Process, Learning and Arts Creation, from the Postgraduate Program in Arts at the Federal University of Maranhão (Universidade Federal do Maranhão, UFMA).

Maranhão, the eighth largest state in Brazil in terms of territorial extension, is notable for the rich miscegenation of its population, which is mainly the result of the interaction between

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<sup>1</sup> Municipal Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, city of Codó, state of Maranhão, Brazil.

indigenous and black people. According to 2022 data from IBGE (The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), only 20% of the Maranhense population identifies as white, reflecting the strong presence and contribution of Afro-indigenous people in the social and cultural formation of the state. This diversity manifests itself in dances, music, legends, theater and culinary, expressing the stories, values and way of life of these people.

During the colonial period, Brazil received a large number of Africans who, when forced into the diaspora, brought with them a cultural legacy that had a profound influence on the formation of national identity. However, for centuries, African people were made invisible and were excluded from official historical records, which perpetuated inequalities and erasure. An essential step towards historical reparations is to recognize and document the impact of this legacy in every sector of society. In this context, incorporating cultural expressions such as Tambor de Crioula in the school environment represents a reparative and indispensable action for Brazilian education, promoting appreciation of African heritage and strengthening of multicultural identity.

This research focuses specifically on the integration of art into education, investigating the possibilities of incorporating Tambor de Crioula into the classroom as part of the Arts curriculum. The aim is to understand the educational, cultural and social impacts of this approach by analyzing how contact with this cultural manifestation can enrich students' education, strengthen the self-esteem of Black communities and broaden understanding of Brazilian cultural diversity. By bringing Tambor de Crioula into the school curriculum, the aim is not only to honor an ancestral tradition, but also to foster a space for dialogue, belonging and resistance within the school environment.

In the memorable book *Tambor de Crioula: ritual e espetáculo*, organized by Professor Sergio Ferretti (2002), we can find detailed research on various aspects of this manifestation. His research explains that:

[...] the Tambor de Crioula dance. Although it is similar to other umbigada dances found in Africa and Brazil, it is only known by this name in Maranhão. It is a dance of amusement, with African origin without a fixed presentation time and which is incorporated in practices of traditional Catholicism and Afromaranhense religiosity (Ferretti, 2002, p. 15).<sup>2</sup>

To experience the Tambor de Crioula – or Tambor Crioulo, as it is referred to in older historical records – is to immerse yourself in a practice that integrates science, culture, spirituality and tradition. Each stage in the drums-manufacturing process reflects a connection

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<sup>2</sup> “[...] a dança Tambor de Crioula. Embora se aproxime de outras danças de umbigadas existentes na África e no Brasil, somente no Maranhão ela é conhecida com essa denominação. É uma dança de divertimento, de origem africana, sem época fixa de apresentação, e que se incorpora às práticas do catolicismo tradicional e da religiosidade afro-maranhense” (Ferretti, 2002, p. 15).

with nature and ancestral knowledge. From the knowledge about the different types of wood which are suitable for drums, to the selection and preparation of animal leather to cover them and the moment of lighting a fire to tune the instruments, every step is filled with meanings that transcend material production and are rooted in cultural and spiritual experience.

The manufacturing of instruments is not an immediate process. It is a process that can take days or even months, respecting nature's timing for things such as the appropriate lunar phase for wood extraction. Each step follows a ritual, and lighting the bonfire becomes a moment of celebration. Around this fire, people gather to warm their drums, share memories, and renew their faith in the invisible. The fire not only warms the instruments but also strengthens emotional bonds, rekindles feelings, and fuels the creation of something new. It is, at once, a symbol of resistance, tradition, and renewal.

During the Brazilian June festivals (Festas Juninas), the Tambor de Crioula is a prominent feature in Maranhão, filling spaces with rhythm, energy and ancestry. Although this cultural manifestation is not confined to a specific time of the year, the fire that kindles the drums remains lit throughout the year, as a link between past, present and future. Semerene (2007) observes that the June festivals carry a deep meaning that can reach beyond entertainment, revealing the symbolic wealth of traditions that resist and reinvent themselves continuously. Such is the Tambor de Crioula: a cultural flame that never goes out.

[...] the parties happen in June because in Europe this is the month of the Summer solstice (time when the sun passes through its greatest boreal declination – June 22nd or 23rd), and the pagan people celebrated the arrival of this season with rituals that invoked fertility to guarantee the growth of vegetation, abundance, harvest, and clamoring for more rain. They believed to depend on these demonstrations to avert a calamity. They used to light bonfires and torches because it was believed that this would rid the plants and crops of evil spirits that could impede fertility. The fire also represents creation, birth, original light, happiness and element that was deified by man. The principle of life, revelation, illumination, purification (Semerene, 2007, p. 02).<sup>3</sup>

Tambor de Crioula is a freestyle dance, developed by Africans and their descendants in Brazil. It was started by Black men and women from Maranhão. Traditionally, only men participated in it, singing, dancing and playing musical instruments. At an unspecified point in time, women begin to participate in the practice as dancers, bringing more lightness and softness to it, thus enabling society to accept the dance more easily (Ferretti, 2002).

Like many other Black cultural manifestations in Brazil such as samba, capoeira and bumba-meu-boi, Tambor de Crioula has traveled a long path of resistance. It has gone from

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<sup>3</sup> “[...] as festas ocorrem em junho porque na Europa este é o mês do Solstício de Verão (época em que o sol passa por sua maior declinação boreal – dias 22 ou 23 de junho), e os povos pagãos comemoravam a chegada desta estação com rituais que invocavam a fertilidade para garantir o crescimento da vegetação, na fartura, na colheita, e clamar por mais chuva. Eles achavam de dependiam dessas manifestações para evitar uma calamidade. Costumavam acender fogueiras e tochas por acreditaram que assim livrariam as plantas e colheitas dos espíritos maus que poderiam impedir a fertilidade. O fogo também representa criação, nascimento, luz original, alegria e elemento que foi divinizado pelo homem. O princípio de vida, revelação, iluminação, purificação” (Semerene, 2007, p. 02).

marginalization, persecution, and even demonization to achieving recognition as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Brazil. More than an artistic expression, Tambor de Crioula symbolizes Black bodies in movement, bodies that are free to dance, vibrate and reconnect with their ancestry. It is dance, it is sound, it is gesture; it is a space for meetings, smiles and living memories. Thinking and speaking about Tambor de Crioula is to evoke the history of Black people in the diaspora: their pain, the marks of slavery, but also their strength, their culture, and capacity for reinvention. It is, above all, an opportunity for dialogue about racism, resistance and the construction of narratives that celebrate freedom and Afro-Brazilian identity.

These various steps reveal the awareness of racism not as a moral issue, but rather as a psychological process that requires work. In that regard, instead of asking a moral question “Am I racist?” and expecting a comfortable answer, the white subject should ask himself: “How can I dismantle my own racism?” such a question, then, in itself, already begins this process’ (Kilomba, 2019, p. 54).<sup>4</sup>

Contextualizing Black people's experiences beyond mere entertainment allows us to look at them in depth, beyond the ordinary. What it says and conveys between the lines is that as long as society is comfortable not talking, thinking about, or questioning racism, all the consequences of the slavery period are normalized, in which Black people are placed at the base of the social pyramid, in underemployment, incarceration, on the streets, in favelas, without even basic sanitation, and are never in positions of power and decision-making, without significant purchasing power, lacking the right to their aesthetics and the title of beauty. Therefore, we can understand why Tambor de Crioula is essential in basic education classrooms, addressed as a dance language and as an important subject for human development.

Therefore, we have structured this article as follows: First, we present the theme and relevance of Tambor de Crioula in the educational context in the introduction. In the second section, “Tuning the Drums: Methodological Beats”, we detail the methodology used, highlighting the procedures and approaches that guided the research. In the third section, “In the Rhythm of the Drum”, we present Tambor de Crioula, emphasizing its origin, cultural significance, its intertwining with religiosity, and its trajectory of resistance until its recognition as Intangible Heritage of Brazilian Culture. In the fourth section, “Between the Sound of Drums and the Whirling of Skirts: Field Research”, we present the Tambor de Crioula as an antiracist pedagogical tool, describing the practices developed and the results observed in the teaching and learning process at a school. Finally, we conclude with a reflection on the impacts and contributions of Tambor de Crioula in education, pointing out possibilities for expanding the use of Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestations into the school environment.

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<sup>4</sup> “Esses diversos passos revelam a consciência sobre o racismo não como uma questão moral, mas sim como um processo psicológico que exige trabalho. Nesse sentido, em vez de fazer a clássica pergunta moral ‘Eu sou racista?’ e esperar uma resposta confortável, o sujeito branco deveria se perguntar: ‘Como posso desmantelar meu próprio racismo? Tal pergunta, então, por si só, já inicia esse processo’” (Kilomba, 2019, 54).

## **Tuning the drums: methodological beats**

The research performed in this study employed an action research methodology, an investigative process which is characterized by active participation of those involved and by the search for practical solutions for real problems. Action research is a method that aims not only to understand reality, but also to transform it, promoting concrete changes in the investigated context (Thiollent, 1985; Pinto, 1989). In this case, the aim was to integrate Tambor de Crioula into the school environment not as an object of study, but as a pedagogical tool capable of provoking reflection and action in the daily lives of students and teachers.

Action research was chosen due to the need for a more dynamic and participatory approach to the implementation of Tambor de Crioula as a pedagogical practice. By directly involving the students in the process, the research enabled educational practices to be (re)configured based on real interactions within the classroom. Rather than being a distant, theoretical investigation, the action research provided a space for continuous and collaborative learning, where everyone involved actively contributed to constructing and adapting pedagogical strategies (Thiollent, 1985; Pinto, 1989).

Throughout the research, data collection was continuous and reflective, through direct observation and recording of the activities performed. Each intervention with Tambor de Crioula was evaluated and adjusted, allowing the process to develop flexibly and adapt responsively to the group's needs. This cycle of action and reflection provided a deeper understanding of pedagogical practices and enabled the drum to be integrated more effectively and meaningfully into the school curriculum.

Action research was also fundamental in strengthening the school's commitment to a more inclusive and representative education. Constant dialogue between researchers and students made it possible for Tambor de Crioula to be understood as not only a cultural tool, but as a medium for reflection on identity, racism and resistance. This collaborative and transformative approach highlighted that education must be a dynamic and collective process, capable of adapting to students' cultural and social realities.

Ultimately, choosing action research strengthened the pragmatic and applicable nature of the research, as the results were not limited to theoretical knowledge, but were translated into concrete practices that can be replicated and adapted into different educational contexts. By integrating theory and practice, action research proved to be an effective approach for promoting meaningful and sustainable changes in education, especially regarding the appreciation and promotion of Afro-Brazilian culture. Thus, the research was conducted in the classroom through two major stages: "Paths of Knowledge: From Discovery to Protagonism" and "Rhythms and Colors: From Practice to Presentation".

## STAGE I: "PATHS OF KNOWLEDGE: FROM DISCOVERY TO PROTAGONISM"

At this stage, we aim to promote an ongoing and interactive learning process about Tambor de Crioula that engages students in various areas of study and reflection. We begin with a **self-formative cycle** in which the students share their prior knowledge and experiences with popular culture, allowing for a dialogue-rich class in the exchange of knowledge. Next, we continue with targeted readings of authors such as Ferretti (2002), Kilomba (2019), Braga (2007) and others, followed by application of **survey questionnaires** and exhibition of a documentary (No fiel da balança, by Francisco Colombo), to deepen the understanding of the cultural and pedagogical importance of Tambor de Crioula. From this foundation, the students wrote essays about the documentaries they watched, considering the role of culture in society. This stage also included **debates in the classroom** in which they had the opportunity to expose and defend their opinions, promoting youth engagement.

## STAGE II: "RHYTHMS AND COLORS: FROM PRACTICE TO PRESENTATION"

At this stage, the focus was the practical immersion of students in the world of Tambor de Crioula, from preparation to culmination of the presentation. We began with a symbolic moment of **making a bonfire**, a preparation for practical singing lessons, drumming and dance held outdoors, around the bonfire, where students connected with the 'spirit' of popular culture. Next, we started the collective production of toadas, with researchers teaching the students popular toadas and then encouraging them to create their own songs in groups.

Musical learning was achieved through **singing lessons**, in which the teams presented their creations. The **African aesthetics** gained emphasis in classes through garments and colors, with the students exploring symbolism of fabrics, turbans and typical accessories. The work extended to the **formation of the dance group**, where it was decided who would be the player, coreira or singer, and was followed by the **rehearsal and exercise** phase, dedicated to refining the performances. The stage culminated in the **presentation of the project**, where the entire school was invited to honor the collective expression of the knowledge acquired.

Meetings (stages I and II) occurred over the course of four months, from August to November 2022, with weekly sessions. The schedule consisted of four meetings per month, except in October, when only three meetings were held due to scheduling adjustments.

## To the rhythm of the drum

In 2007, Tambor de Crioula received the title of Intangible Heritage of Brazilian Culture by IPHAN (Instituto de Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional). June 18 was designated as Municipal Day of Tambor de Crioula. Seventy-four Tambor de Crioula groups from São Luís,

Maranhão, were inventoried, and a museum entitled The House of Tambor de Crioula was created. In the book “Coreiras: performance e jogo no tambor de crioula”, the teacher and researcher Cassia Pires investigates the Tambor de Crioula dance, the coreira, and their relationship with the field of performance. According to her, “the city of São Luís has been recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site for twelve years and the Tambor was consecrated as an intangible heritage site on June 18, 2007. The ceremony was performed by the then Minister of Culture Gilberto Gil” (Pires, 2019, p. 47).<sup>5</sup>

Despite the milestones and recognition achieved, there are no records indicating concrete benefits for those who practice this cultural tradition. A clear neglect of Tambor de Crioula is evident in the cultural programs promoted by the State and municipal departments. It is often relegated to the opening hours of official circuits, with few attendees, inadequate sound infrastructure, and in spaces unsuitable for performances.

Groups are often directed in large numbers to rural areas and peripheral neighborhoods, creating a dilemma: whether to serve tourists in the Historic Center or perform elsewhere. This situation reflects a structural prejudice in society, while the demands of revelers for better conditions remain unmet. Although Tambor de Crioula was recognized as an Intangible Heritage of Brazilian Culture, its practical appreciation remains limited. These challenges are especially evident during the June festivals and Carnival periods, although this cultural manifestation can occur freely throughout the year. But what about the revelers? Who are the people who have maintained this game and devotion for centuries? How can we care for, support, and provide some kind of sustainability for its maintainers? Regarding this reality, Ferretti (2002) offers the following insights:

Folklore is thus seen as a commodity for artistic consumption and not as a function for the needs of its producers. Among the leaders of Tambor de Crioula groups, we found an awareness of being exploited due to this appreciation for tourism [...] the Tambor de Crioula dance became yet another attempt to increase the budget of economically disadvantaged sectors of society (Ferretti, 2002, p. 166).<sup>6</sup>

In its primordial essence, Tambor de Crioula transcends any function attributed to it by modernity. It is an expression in which, through dance, people create a space for affective, cultural, and symbolic exchange. It was a manifestation of healthy competition, whether to prove who was the best player, rhymer, or who possessed the greatest physical agility. In the dynamic of the dance-challenge, individual skill was tested and the poetic tunes allowed for the portrayal

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<sup>5</sup> “A cidade de São Luís já é reconhecida há doze anos pela UNESCO como patrimônio da humanidade e o Tambor foi consagrado como patrimônio imaterial no dia 18 de junho de 2007. A Cerimônia foi realizada pelo então Ministro da Cultura Gilberto Gil” (Pires, 2019, p. 47).

<sup>6</sup> “O folclore passa a ser assim encarado como uma mercadoria de consumo artístico e não em função da necessidade de seus produtores. Entre chefes de grupos de Tambor de Crioula verificamos a consciência de estarem sendo explorados em virtude desta valorização pelo turismo [...] a dança do Tambor de Crioula torna-se mais uma tentativa de ampliação do orçamento de setores economicamente menos favorecidos da sociedade” (Ferretti, 2002, p. 166).

of everyday reality. This moment represented a singular space for the full experience of Black humanity, a place where belonging was affirmed and forged (Ferretti, 2002; Pires, 2019).

Regardless of the reason that brings them together – be it family heritage, academic curiosity, or religious reasons – Participants of Tambor de Crioula establish a deep connection with this cultural manifestation. This bond, often invisible, leads to commitments that go beyond the simple act of playing. From taking their first steps as a dancer to the decision to pass on traditional knowledge to future generations, there is a continuous process of engagement that ensures the perpetuation and vitality of the culture. This dedication reveals a commitment to keeping tradition alive, transforming Tambor de Crioula into a symbol of resistance and continuity.

In the interior of Maranhão and other regions, Tambor de Crioula has survived as a legacy that is passed down from generation to generation. In many places, the practice takes place without the formality of artistic performances. Its essence still resides in the spontaneous act of people gathering to celebrate, exchange knowledge and affection, and strengthen community ties. For many, the practice is linked to devotion to Saint Benedict and spiritual entities, especially when associated with fulfilling promises. In these blessings, the players play a fundamental role by helping to fulfill a vow, often sharing the faith and symbolism of the moment.

Tambor de Crioula, however, is not limited to the borders of the state of Maranhão. Driven by migration and devotion to Saint Benedict, it has spread to other states such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Pará, and Amazonas. Migrant performers carry the tradition with them, expanding the reach of this cultural expression and helping it survive in new contexts. Thus, Tambor de Crioula reaffirms its relevance as a cultural, religious, and community manifestation, remaining a bridge between past, present, and future (Pires, 2019).

## **In the swirling of the skirt**

All people dance, and their dances demonstrate their beliefs, their stories, their victories, and their transformations. Dance is the expression of feelings in an intense and authentic way, and the Tambor de Crioula dance is no different. It is a dance in which the drums pulse and take over the bodies of the performers. For Black people and their descendants, a *banzo*<sup>7</sup> is a sadness carried in the memory of DNA, an explained longing, a vigor, a cadenced rhythm in which the *tambozeiro* seeks the dancer, and the dancer goes in search of the *punga*! what a ceaseless interplay between drums and bodies! *Punga*, or *umbigada*, is a characteristic body dance movement of African origin, in which a woman approaches the navel of another, or even that of a man.

The dance in popular culture is inserted in a broad context, going beyond what we consider the choreographic framework. The languages are different among

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<sup>7</sup> “Saudade da aldeia” refers to a deep feeling of sadness that afflicted enslaved Black people, driving some to suicide due to their intense longing for their homeland and lost community life (Oda, 2007; Haag, 2010).



themselves, however, the manner in which the body is arranged and structured within the Brazilian popular manifestations, are very similar (Rodrigues, 2005, p. 51).<sup>8</sup>



Image 1 – Drums (source: field research, 2023)

Tambor de Crioula is played with a set of three drums called a pair, consisting of three drums: a large drum, a half-drum, and a crivador. Other instruments vary from place to place, including a pair of rattles, a maraca, a bottle played with a piece of iron, and others.

Their names, as well as their manipulation and dimensions, both in length and diameter, are what will define the sound obtained by the percussionist musician designating their names.

The three drums are usually called: large drum, half drum, and crivador, and are made from the same quality wood: mangrove, sororó, pau d'arco, Angelim, faveira, and mixed. Initially, three trunks of different diameters are chosen, and then they are cut more or less according to the height determined for each drum (Ferretti, 2002, p. 78).<sup>9</sup>

In the Tambor de Crioula circles in São Luís, Maranhão, the most common choreography begins with the drummers and singers already in position (these are usually men). The dancers then enter in a single line, taking small steps, swaying their hips, while some spin. They form a circle in front of the drums, spin twice, then the first dancer enters, either saluting the drums or going directly to the large drum. From there, the choreographic ritual follows, with another dancer leaving the circle to perform the *pungada* or *umbigada*, considered the highlight of the dance, which is repeated successively.

In other municipalities in Maranhão, the dance has variations. In Codó, for example, the *punga* is used as an invitation for another dancer to join the circle. Specific songs also influence the dancers' gestures, such as simulating the motion of washing clothes when the lyrics suggest it.

The dance can also be an invitation to play; however, being “*coreira*”<sup>10</sup> goes beyond dancing. A *coreira* of Saint Benedict is a woman who, along with dancing, is devoted and has a spiritual commitment. She participates in circles fulfilling promises or in honor of the patron saint.

<sup>8</sup> “A dança na cultura popular está inserida num amplo contexto, indo além do que consideramos o enquadramento coreográfico. As linguagens se distinguem, porém, a maneira como o corpo se dispõe e se estrutura dentro das manifestações populares brasileiras muito se assemelham” (Rodrigues, 2005, p. 51).

<sup>9</sup> “Os três tambores recebem normalmente as denominações de: tambor grande, meio e crivador, os quais são feitos da mesma qualidade de madeira, mangue, sororó, pau d'arco, Angelim, faveira e mescla. Inicialmente são escolhidos três troncos de diâmetros diferentes, em seguida são cortados mais ou menos de acordo com a altura determinada a cada tambor” (Ferretti, 2002, p. 78).

<sup>10</sup> Practitioners of Tambor de Crioula often refer to women who have been dancing for a long time and who are also devotees of the saint as “*coreira de São Benedito*” (Saint Benedict's dancer).



Image 2 – Tambor de Crioula circle (source: field research, 2023)

We present below a descriptive chart of Tambor de Crioula movements, based on our experiences as dancers and researchers.

Table 1 – Movements of Tambor de Crioula

Parts of the body	Movements
Head/torso	Various turns are performed on different planes: high, medium and low. The rhythm is marked by continuous swaying, and at times, forehead-to-forehead contact occurs, either between the coreira and the large drum drummer or between two coreiras, symbolizing friendship and closeness.
Arms	Kept open, with forearms folded and hands on the hips, in a position similar to “cuchila” in capoeira, evoking movements of defense and attack, besides marking the punga.
Hips	They make lateral movements of up and down, circular turns, besides the marking of punga, with actions of engagement and disengagement of the hip.
Legs and Feet	Women: Side by side, feet remain completely supported on the ground taking steps of different amplitudes – small, medium and large. The movements are harmonious, seeking circular paths that mark and draw shapes on the floor. Some dancers stand out with balanced turns solely on their heels. Men: Practiced by men, where one man stands still and another man tries to knock him down or trip him, one body going towards the other.
Abdomen, navel area	A body goes against the other, umbigada ou punga.

Source: elaborated by the researchers, 2023

## THE RELIGIOSITY IN TAMBOR DE CRIOULA

When researching Tambor de Crioula, it is impossible not to notice the recurring presence of Saint Benedict, both in bibliographical references and in the testimonies of participants and scholars. Saint Benedict is a Catholic saint of African origin, the son of

enslaved people, born in Italy. Known for his humility and dedication to the poor, he became a figure of deep devotion, especially among Black communities. In Maranhão, this devotion is particularly significant, with a large number of believers confirming Saint Benedict as a symbol of resistance, faith and cultural belonging.

According to Ferretti (2002), the link between Saint Benedict and Tambor de Crioula is not only religious, it is also cultural. The saint is often celebrated in festivities that combine spirituality with the contagious rhythm of the drum, representing a bridge between popular Catholic tradition and African heritage. This connection reflects the religious syncretism characteristic of Maranhão culture, where African, indigenous and European elements intertwine, creating unique practices that redefine religiosity and ancestry.

In Maranhão, it is commonly assumed that Tambor de Crioula was invented by Saint Benedict. We asked the same question to people associated with templos of Tambor de Mina. Pai de Santo Euclides, from Cruzeiro do Anil, believes that Tambor de Crioula is linked to slavery, brought from Africa with Saint Benedict, the protector of slaves (Ferretti, 2002, p. 121).<sup>11</sup>

In Maranhão, celebrations honoring Saint Benedict are marked by expressions of faith that go beyond traditional prayers and generally take place in August. The Tambor de Crioula, with its vibrant dance, toadas and collective celebration, is a way to praise the saint and, at the same time, reaffirm the cultural identity of people who resisted oppression and kept their traditions alive. Thus, research about Tambor de Crioula is also a way to delve into the history of Saint Benedict that, as a cultural manifestation, carries the legacy of struggle, resistance and the celebration of Blackness.

The religiosity of Tambor de Crioula is one of the factors that causes curiosity in people, including the rituals it contains and the devotional style of those who fulfill their promises. When attending the festivities for Saint Benedict, considered the patron saint of Tambor de Crioula by its participants, we can observe the play in a more natural way, with the rituals passed down orally and lived by participants and devotees with each new generation.

The passing on of traditions is a right to knowledge, knowledge that is valid in the community and has the meaning of identity; I say that 'it is what it is for others, and that we are what we are and what we think of ourselves'. A cultural right that allows us to overcome the idea of hierarchical knowledge, the condition of being subjugated as a so-called "lesser" culture (Sousa, 2010, p. 133).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> "No Maranhão, é comum a suposição de que o Tambor de Crioula foi inventado por São Benedito. Fizemos a mesma pergunta a pessoas relacionadas com terreiros de Tambor de Mina. O Pai de Santo Euclides, do Cruzeiro do Anil, acha que Tambor de Crioula é uma coisa ligada a escravidão que veio da África com São Benedito, protetor dos escravos" (Ferretti, 2002, p. 121).

<sup>12</sup> "O repasse das tradições é um direito ao conhecimento, um conhecimento válido na comunidade e com significado identitário; digo que 'é aquilo que é para os outros, o que nós somos e aquilo que somos e pensamos de nós mesmos'. Direito cultural que permite a superação da visão do saber hierarquizado, da condição de estar subjugado, de uma cultura dita 'menor'" (Sousa, 2010, p. 133).

The person who fulfills the promise is a central figure in the organization of parties and festivities dedicated to Saint Benedict or another entity to which they made a vow. The person is responsible for planning and conducting every aspect of the celebration, from the invitation to the participants of Tambor de Crioula and to the devotees to arranging food and beverages for participants, the invitation can be made in a variety of ways: in person, through letters, radio announcements, or even with sound trucks that tour the community.

The ritual begins with prayers and praises to the patron saint, often led by the person making the vow. A symbolic moment of this act is the lighting of a candle on the floor at the foot of the altar, as a form of reverence and spiritual connection. After the prayers, the Tambor de Crioula begins, usually with the person making the vow dancing while holding the saint on their head. Food is offered, such as coffee or chocolate, accompanied by tapioca cake, or other types of cake, symbolizing hospitality and welcome.



Image 3 – Religiosity in Tambor de Crioula (source: field research, 2023)



During the promised fulfillment, beverages such as soft drinks, brandy, wine, and cachaça are distributed to participants. At the end of the Tambor de Crioula circle, a more substantial meal is served. This meal can include feijoada, pork, chicken, or other dishes depending on the pledge payer's financial means. The abundance of food and drink is a hallmark of the festival, reflecting the abundance and generosity associated with Saint Benedict, who is known for feeding the poor.

To form a Tambor de Crioula circle means to gather, welcome people, and congregate. It can be a tribute, a moment of gratitude, but it can also be a moment of farewell, a 'drum of tears'. It is common, when a drummer passes away, for a circle to be formed in their honor during the wake, as a way to say goodbye to their fellow player, as other reasons have faded according to Braga (2007, p. 122):

There is evidence of a "tambor de derrubada" in the past, made after the entire field was cleared and ready for planting, usually after September or October. It was made at home, in honor of the clearing of the field. This has not been the case for many years.<sup>13</sup>

As a spectacle, Tambor de Crioula is one of the dances that most closely resembles the costumes of Afro-Brazilian religions in terms of aesthetics: the drums, the full skirts, the semicircle dance, the ruffled blouses, and the chants. It is always important to emphasize that the Tambor de Crioula is not a religion, but rather a dance, which can be performed in devotion or homage to saints, such as Saint Benedict, Saint Cosme and Damião, and to entities such as Preto Velho, *Toy Verekete*, and others. We can also observe that this approximation of Afro-Brazilian religions leads to religious racism and prejudice against Tambor de Crioula (Ferretti, 2002).

In religious syncretism, Saint Benedict corresponds to *Verekete*, an entity worshipped in Tambor de Mina<sup>14</sup>. We can, therefore, determine the common points that connect practitioners of Tambor de Mina with Tambor de Crioula, which are well clarified according to Sergio Ferretti (2002).

Considering, as Octávio Eduardo says, that Verekete (Saint Benedict) in Maranhão, is the head of the ceremonies of the Mina terreiros, we sought to analyze relations between the Tambor de Crioula, Saint Benedict and Tambor de Mina. We initially noted that some Tambor de Crioula participants, men and women, participate as players or dancers in Tambor de Mina cults (Ferretti, 2002, p. 122).

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<sup>13</sup> "Registra-se a existência no passado de um "tambor de derrubada", feito depois que toda a roça estava limpa e pronta para o plantio, geralmente depois de setembro ou outubro, era feito em casa mesmo, em louvor da derrubada da roça. Há muitos anos isso não ocorre." (Braga, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Tambor de Mina, also referred to as "simply Mina," as pointed out by anthropologist Mundicarmo Ferretti (2006, p. 90), is a religious expression of Afro-indigenous origin that began in the city of São Luís, in Maranhão, around the second half of the 19th century.

It is possible to observe that the ritualistic ways of fulfilling a promise or making a “vow” are diverse, reflecting the symbolic exchange between the devotee and the saint. Vows are made based on the devotee’s personal needs, which may involve health issues, whether their own or that of a family member, or other blessings, such as the acquisition of a home, a vehicle, access to education, or even marriage, among other desires. Once the requested grace is obtained, the devotee fulfills their promise as a way of thanking divine intervention, performing the ritual with due reverence and devotion.

### **Between the sound of drums and the swirling of skirts: field research**

Tambor de Crioula, used in the classroom as content, can enable students to develop their potential, fostering knowledge of their African and Afro-Brazilian heritage, building a sense of identity and representation, and contributing to the development of ways to include content related to these artistic creations in art textbooks. In this section, we present the process and results of our research conducted at a public school in the state of Maranhão. We detail the stages developed, from planning to interaction with the academic community.

#### **AUGUST – 1ST SESSION**

The meetings held throughout August had the following structure: Each session lasted one hour and forty minutes and involved thirty-five students, and the focus was the presentation of the project. The session was marked by a friendly atmosphere; the students already knew us from the June lecture<sup>15</sup>. We began by formally introducing ourselves and explaining the research objectives and its importance to the school community. We emphasized how it not only brings dance, singing and percussion into the educational environment, but it also provides an opportunity to discuss important issues such as prejudice, racism, and racial inequalities.

#### **2ND SESSION – AUGUST**

During the session, we discussed the history of Tambor de Crioula and explored why this cultural practice, so rich and representative of Black culture, was associated with macumba. We raised questions such as: What characterizes “macumba”? Why are cultural manifestations of Black origin, performed by Black people, often demonized? We also discussed whether they had ever experienced prejudice in their own lives. This reflection opened the way for spontaneous testimonies, where some shared their experiences with prejudice, sparking an important debate on the topic.

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<sup>15</sup> Lecture held at the school addressing the importance of Afro-Brazilian culture and its contribution to the formation of national identity.

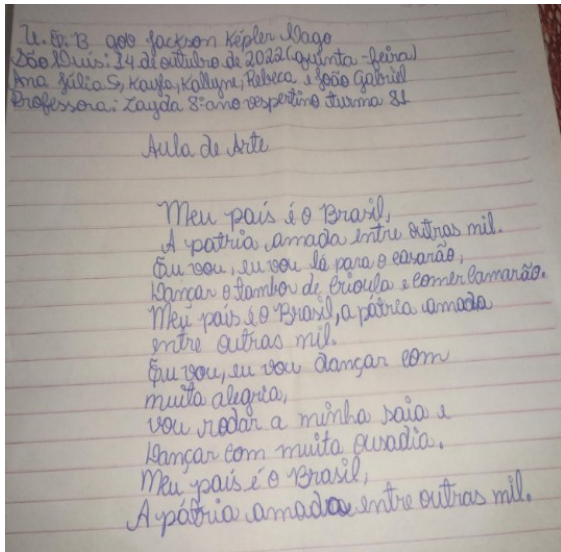
## 3RD SESSION – AUGUST

In the third session, the discussion revolved around the concept of prejudice. We sought to understand what leads a person to be prejudiced and the potential consequences of this behavior. We asked: “Can prejudice lead to death?” We reflected on how Black cultural expressions, such as dance, continue to be the target of discrimination and misunderstanding, and why, even in the 21st century, some people still harbor prejudices against these cultural expressions. It was a profound moment of questioning and awareness about the roots of prejudice and its repercussions on society.

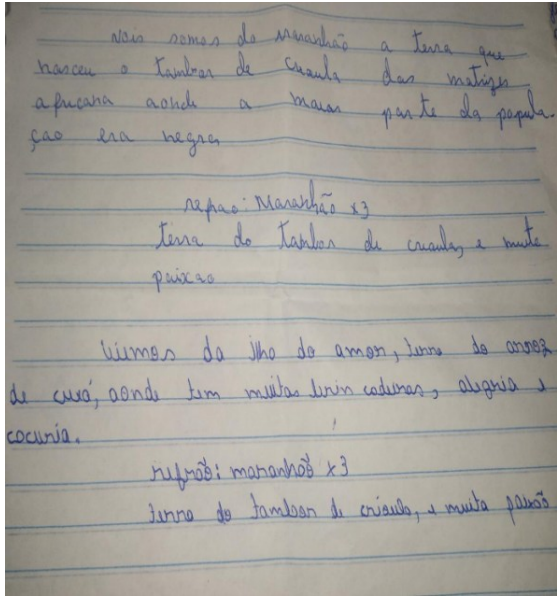
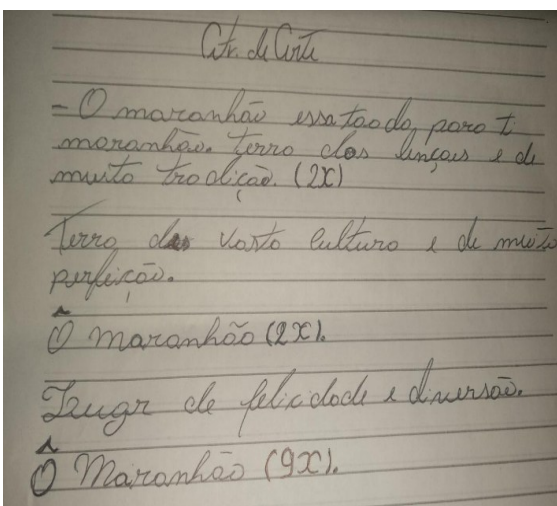
## 4TH SESSION – AUGUST

In the fourth session, the focus was on studying the Tambor de Crioula toadas. After presenting some of the traditional toadas, we proposed a collective composition task, where the students were divided into six groups, each with six members, to create their own toada. This exercise aimed not only to explore the creative process but also to strengthen teamwork and the appreciation of Afro-Brazilian culture. Creating the toadas was a moment of intense cultural expression, and the results reflect their originality and engagement with the project. Below, we present some of the toadas produced by the groups.

Table 2 – Toadas created by the students

Students registers	Transcription
 <p>U. E. B. 000 Jackson Képler Lago 260 Alunos: 24 de outubro de 2022 (quinta-feira) Ana, Jélica, S. Kayla, Kallum, Rebecca, João Gabriel Professora: Zayda 3º ano repetição turma 31</p> <p>Aula de Arte</p> <p>Meu país é o Brasil, A pátria amada entre outras mil. Eu vou, eu vou lá para o casarão, Dançar o tambor de crioula e comer camarão. Meu país é o Brasil, a pátria amada entre outras mil. Eu vou, eu vou dançar com muita alegria, Vou rodar a minha saia e Dançar com muita ousadia. Meu país é o Brasil, A pátria amada entre outras mil.</p>	<p><i>My country is Brazil Beloved homeland among a thousand others I'm going, I'm going to the big house To dance to the tambor de crioula and eat shrimp My country is Brazil, beloved homeland Among a thousand others I'm going, I'm going to dance with so much joy I'm going to twirl my skirt and Dance with so much boldness My country is Brazil Beloved homeland among a thousand others.<sup>16</sup></i></p>

<sup>16</sup> “Meu país é o Brasil / A pátria amada entre outras mil / Eu vou, eu vou lá para o casarão / Dançar o tambor de crioula e comer camarão / Meu país é o Brasil, a pátria amada / Entre outras mil / Eu vou, eu vou dançar com muita alegria / Vou rodar a minha saia e / Dançar com muita ousadia / Meu país é o Brasil / A pátria amada entre outras mil”.

 <p>         nós somos do Maranhão a terra que          nasceu o tambor de crioula das matizes          africanas aonde a maior parte da popula-          ção era negra            Refrão: Maranhão x3          Terra do Tambor de crioula, e muita          paixão            Viemos da ilha do amor, terra do arroz          de cuxá, onde tem muitas brincadeiras, alegria e          cacuriá.          Refrão: Maranhão x3          Terra do tambor de crioula, e muita paixão       </p>	<p> <i>We are from Maranhão, the land where          the tambor de crioula was born.          From African roots, where most of the          population was black.          Chorus: Maranhão (3X)          Land of the tambor de crioula and so          much passion          We come from the island of love, land of          cuxá rice          Where there is lots of fun, joy, and          cacuriá          Chorus: Maranhão (3X)          Land of the tambor de crioula and so          much of passion<sup>17</sup></i> </p>
 <p>         Oh Maranhão          - O Maranhão essa toada é pra ti          Maranhão. Terra dos lençóis e de          muita tradição. (2X)          Terra de vasta cultura e de muita          perfeição.          Ô Maranhão (2X)          Lugar de felicidade e diversão.          Ô Maranhão (9X)       </p>	<p> <i>Oh Maranhão, this song is for you,          Maranhão          Land of the lençóis and rich tradition          (2X)          Land of vast culture and great perfection          Oh Maranhão (2X)          Place of happiness and fun          Oh Maranhão (9X)<sup>18</sup></i> </p>

Source: elaborated by the researchers, 2023

## SEPTEMBER

In September, the meetings followed this structure: the first session focused on reviewing and administering a survey on Tambor de Crioula. In the second session, we discussed racism and antiracist education, addressing the importance of reflecting on these topics in the school environment. The third session was dedicated to Tambor de Crioula rhythms, allowing students to experience the musicality of this manifestation. The fourth session focused on dance practices, continuing the work with cultural manifestations.

<sup>17</sup> “Nós somos do Maranhão a terra que nasceu o tambor de crioula / Das matrizes africanas aonde a maior parte da população era negra / Refrão: Maranhão (3X) / Terra do tambor de crioula e muita paixão / Viemos da ilha do amor, terra do arroz de cuxá / Aonde tem muitas brincadeiras, alegria e cacuriá / Refrão: Maranhão (3X) / Terra do tambor de crioula e muita paixão”.

<sup>18</sup> “Ô Maranhão essa toada é pra ti Maranhão / Terra dos lençóis e de muita tradição (2X) / Terra de vasta cultura e de muita perfeição / Ô Maranhão (2X) / Lugar de felicidade e diversão / Ô Maranhão (9X)”.



## 1ST SESSION – SEPTEMBER

In this session, we reviewed the content covered in previous month's classes, and during the second session we administered a questionnaire with the following questions:

- 1 – Before the lessons on Tambor de Crioula what was your knowledge of this manifestation?
- 2 – Now, what can you say about this popular manifestation?
- 3 – Do you consider it important for this project to be implemented in the classroom? Why?
- 4 – In what ways did you feel the project benefited you?
- 5 – Leave a suggestion for the improvement of the project at schools.

## 2ND SESSION – SEPTEMBER

In this session, we explained the concept of racism, the various kinds of racism and noted that racism is so inherent to our society that it often goes unnoticed. The following question was asked: Who here has experienced racism and how can we create an education that is antiracist? If racism is understood to have occurred, it can also be identified and confronted. This response was requested in writing. These are some of the results:

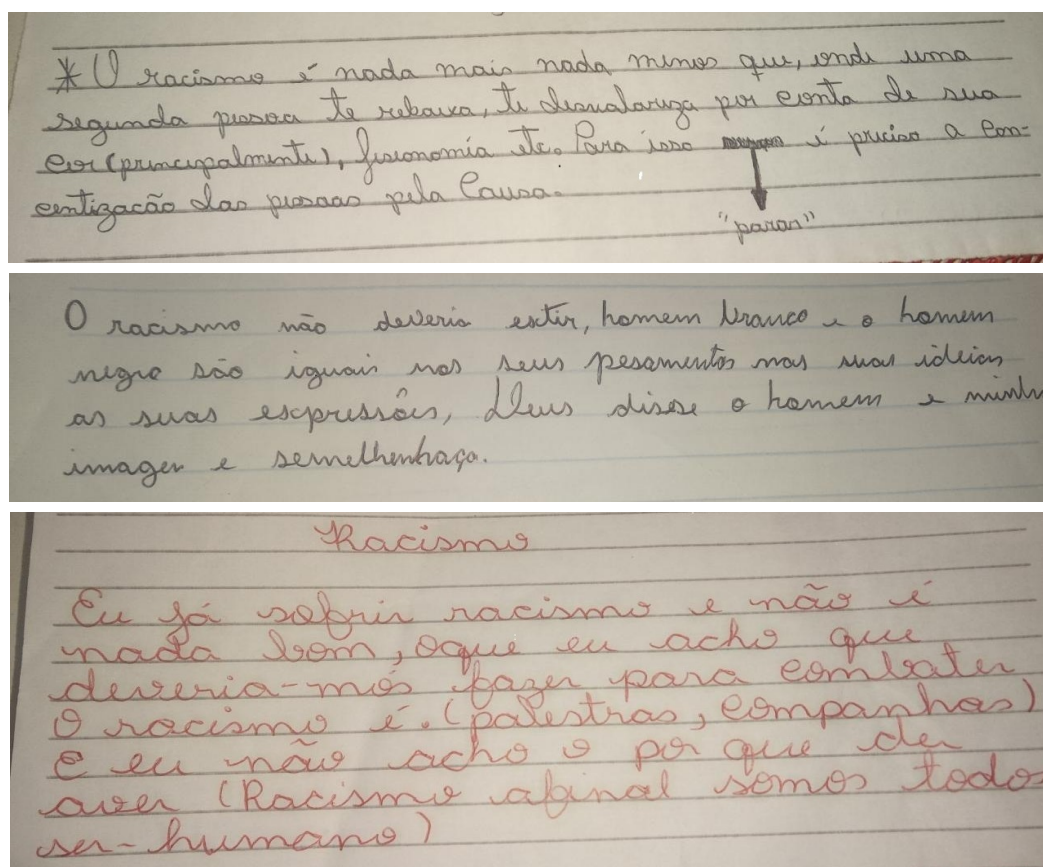


Image 4 – Students registers (source: field research, 2023)

### 3RD SESSION – SEPTEMBER

During this session, we presented the musical rhythms performed by the three Tambor de Crioula drums, highlighting the richness and complexity of this cultural manifestation. Each drum has a unique and complementary function: the large drum, with its improvisation, is responsible for creating variations and embellishing the rhythms, while the medium drum, known as the *meiã*, establishes the main beat, determining the rhythm that guides the entire activity. The small drum interacts with the *meiã*, creating a harmonious counter-beat that further enriches the ensemble's sound. The interaction between the three drums demonstrates the importance of rhythmic dialogue and collectivity in this cultural practice.

### 4TH SESSION – SEPTEMBER

In the fourth session, the focus was on the practice of dance, exploring aspects such as body awareness, spatial perception, and harmonic body movement. Participants worked on foot, arm, and hip movements, integrating them with the rhythm of the drums. Furthermore, special attention was paid to the *umbigada* gesture, a symbol of connection and celebration, which is a central element in *tambor de crioula*. The practice sought to align technique and expression, encouraging participants to experience dance as a dialogue between body, music, and cultural tradition.



Image 5 – Drum percussion lessons (source: field research, 2023)

### OCTOBER

In October, during the first session, we watched the documentary “No fiel da balança” (The faithful balance), by Francisco Colombo, followed by a conversation circle. The second

session was about Tambor de Crioula as an Intangible Heritage, to deepen the comprehension about the importance of this cultural practice. In the third session, we discussed the religiosity in Tambor de Crioula and the religious racism, reflecting about the relationship between cultural practice and religious issues.

#### 1ST SESSION – OCTOBER

At this meeting, participants watched the documentary “No fiel da balança”<sup>19</sup> (The faithful balance), about the Tambor de Crioula, to deepen their understanding of the history, meanings, and cultural practices associated with this traditional manifestation. After the videos were shown, a reflective discussion circle was held, where participants could share their impressions and discuss the aspects presented, such as the origins, the dynamics of the rhythms, the dances, and the challenges faced in keeping this cultural expression alive. The exchange of ideas enriched the collective understanding of the importance of the Tambor de Crioula as a symbol of resistance and cultural identity.

#### 2ND SESSION – OCTOBER

In this session, the focus was on the recognition of the Tambor de Crioula as Intangible Cultural Heritage by the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (IPHAN). The significance of this title was discussed, not just as an official recognition, but as a commitment to valuing and preserving this cultural heritage. The students discussed the importance of this recognition in guaranteeing the continuity of this practice, as well as the challenges of maintaining a balance between tradition and innovation. The debate also highlighted the importance of community involvement in the transmission of knowledge and in the fight against cultural de-characterization.

#### 3RD SESSION – OCTOBER

The theme of this meeting was the relationship between Tambor de Crioula and religiosity, with an emphasis on the challenges of religious racism in Brazil. Based on the fact that Brazil is constitutionally a secular country, questions were raised about how religious intolerance manifests itself, especially when it comes to practices of African origin. The students read texts that contextualized religious racism, analyzing how it affects the cultural and spiritual expression of Tambor de Crioula. The activity culminated in a dynamic debate in which strategies to combat prejudice and celebrate religious diversity were discussed, highlighting the role of education in building a more inclusive and respectful society.

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<sup>19</sup> Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZwu\\_k9PYLk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZwu_k9PYLk).

## NOVEMBER

In November, we began with a session on African aesthetics and beauty, we discussed the aesthetic aspects of garments and accessories of African culture. It was followed by a second session where we addressed the question of gender in Tambor de Crioula, with the focus on the participation of men and women in this cultural practice. The third session was dedicated to learning about the manufacturing of Tambor de Crioula *parelha* (drums). The cycle of meetings ended with the fourth session, marked by the culmination project in which the students participated in a Tambor de Crioula circle, bringing together all the learning acquired throughout the research.

### 1ST SESSION – NOVEMBER

The theme of this meeting was Black beauty and ethnic diversity in Africa, with a focus on traditional fabrics and their meanings. We explored the aesthetics and cultural richness of African fabrics, comparing them with Brazilian fabrics to highlight the similarities, influences, and specificities of each. We brought three types of authentic African fabrics and other Brazilian fabrics for observation and handling, allowing the students to delve deeper into the history and symbolism present in these materials. During the session, we conducted a hands-on activity in which the students learned to create turbans and headscarves, reviving ancestral traditions and promoting empowerment through the appreciation of Black aesthetics.

### 2ND SESSION – NOVEMBER

In this meeting, we promoted a discussion about social roles in Tambor de Crioula, with a special focus on gender. We analyzed how the division of roles in Tambor de Crioula reflects broader social constructions, questioning which places are traditionally occupied by men and women in society. The activity provoked reflections on the specific functions attributed to each gender within this cultural manifestation, such as the role of men in making and playing the drums and the leading role of women in dancing and celebrating. The discussion also addressed how these divisions can be reframed in order to value the equal participation of all genders

### 3RD SESSION – NOVEMBER

The focus of this meeting was the making of the musical instruments used in Tambor de Crioula, highlighting the science and technology involved in this handmade process. The students learned about the types of wood used, the techniques for carving and shaping the drums, and the care needed to preserve the sound quality and durability of the instruments. We also discussed the importance of passing on this technical and cultural knowledge to new

generations, ensuring the continuity and authenticity of this tradition. The practical activity involved manipulating materials and tools, providing an enriching and integrating experience.

#### 4TH SESSION – NOVEMBER

At the last meeting, we held the culmination of the project in the school community, a special moment to celebrate the lessons learned throughout the activities. The event included testimonies from the students, an exhibition of photos, texts, essays and songs created during the project. The class took part in a Tambor de Crioula circle, in which they were able to apply and demonstrate the knowledge they had acquired, engaging the whole school community in a moment of celebration and sharing. In addition, we re-applied the initial questionnaire to assess the students' growth in relation to the topic, both in terms of engagement and knowledge acquisition. This conclusion consolidated the results of the project and reinforced the importance of continuing actions that promote the appreciation of Afro-Brazilian culture in the school environment. The questions were as follows:

- 1 – Before the lessons on Tambor de Crioula, what was your knowledge of this practice?
- 2 – What can you say about this popular manifestation now?
- 3 – Do you consider it important for this project to be implemented in the classroom? Why?
- 4 – In what ways did you feel the project benefited you?
- 5 – Leave a suggestion for the improvement of the project “Eh coreira!! Tambor de Crioula in the classroom”.



Figura 6 – Dance lessons (source: field research, 2023)

It is important to note that cultural manifestations such as capoeira, tambor de crioula, bumba-meu-boi, as well as many other dances of Black origin, although welcomed in the school environment from the perspective of folklore, are often reduced to something merely light and fun. This framing perpetuates the fallacy of “racial harmony” and the “miscegenation of the three races”, which has historically silenced conflicts and erased the profound

inequalities caused by structural racism. However, when these cultural expressions are approached more critically, and bring up discussions about racism, inequality and exclusion, the climate within schools can become tense and even divisive. This scenario reflects the role of schools as microcosms of society, where structural and institutional racism still manifest in visible and profound ways.

Dance, when present in schools' curriculum and textbook content, must be experienced in practice in order to guarantee students' right to cultural and artistic expression. When the dance which is worked on in the classroom is a cultural expression, such as the Tambor de Crioula, the impact is even more significant. Including this cultural manifestation in the school space removes it from the marginalization and historical silencing to which it has been subjected, breaking with the prejudice that confines it to the "place of the other" - the place assigned to Black populations in our racist society. Recognizing and valuing Tambor de Crioula in the school environment validates the right to cultural diversity and contributes to the formation of a fairer and more inclusive society that celebrates the richness of its Afro-Brazilian cultural heritage.

Knowledge of the history, forms and styles of dance (jazz, modern, classical ballet, tap, etc.), ethnic studies (including the study of folkloric and popular dances) can enable students to draw direct links between the times, styles and locations in which dances were and are (re)created, thus establishing relationships with the socio-political and cultural dimensions of dance (Brasil, 1997, p. 75).<sup>20</sup>

The dance of and in the Tambor de Crioula begins its journey toward legitimization from the moment it is incorporated into the school environment. This inclusion overcomes the historical prejudices that have associated the dance with pejorative terms such as "macumba dance" and other names designed to diminish its cultural and spiritual relevance. Inside the school, students find strength and empowerment in wearing the big skirts – which symbolize tradition and resistance – along with their school uniforms, a gesture that unites their cultural and educational identities. With this visibility, nothing else is hidden or silenced. Issues related to Black cultures in Brazil are starting to be treated with the seriousness and respect they deserve. During lessons, students begin to spontaneously share stories about family members who participate in dances and religions of African origin, as well as sharing experiences of prejudice in the community. These testimonies become catalysts for reflection and promote an environment of dialogue and acceptance, strengthening students' sense of belonging and self-esteem.

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<sup>20</sup> "O conhecimento da história da dança, formas e estilos (jazz, moderna, balé clássico, sapateado etc), estudos étnicos (inclui-se o estudo das danças folclóricas e populares) poderá possibilitar ao aluno traçar relações diretas entre épocas, estilos e localidades em que danças foram e são (re)criadas, podendo, assim, estabelecer relações com as dimensões sociopolíticas e culturais da dança" (Brasil, 1997, p. 75).

At the same time, it is necessary to take a critical look at the role of the State and its institutions in controlling cultural expressions. Historically, popular expressions such as the Tambor de Crioula have been either repressed or exalted, depending on the political and economic interests at stake. Traditional practices are often instrumentalized, transformed into tourist products or simulacra of authenticity, which serve more for the consumption of visitors than to preserve their roots. This commercialization misrepresents the essence of these manifestations and exacerbates inequalities by centralizing profits outside the communities that keep these traditions alive.

These educational meetings, however, go beyond the aesthetic and musical appreciation of the Tambor de Crioula. They provide an opportunity to reflect on identity, culture and the challenges faced by Black people in Brazil. By experiencing and discussing this cultural manifestation, participants are able to understand the complex relationships between culture, history and resistance, while promoting recognition of the richness and relevance of Afro-Brazilian heritage in shaping national identity.

## **Final considerations**

Throughout this article, we have emphasized the relevance of Tambor de Crioula as an antiracist pedagogical tool, and highlighted its power as an Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestation of resistance and identity. This research revealed that this ancestral practice, when inserted into the educational context, rescues Afro-Brazilian memory and knowledge and enables students to actively experience Black culture, strengthening their understanding of the history of resistance and freedom that spans the centuries.

It is clear that including Tambor de Crioula in teaching practices is more than a mere cultural approach; it is a way to build a more inclusive and representative education. Through the dance, music and theatricality of the drum, students connect with their African heritage and place themselves as protagonists of a narrative that has historically been silenced. This process of recognition allows for the development of a positive identity and strengthens self-esteem, as well as contributes to the development of a school environment that is more welcoming and less permeated by racial discrimination.

However, when reflecting on the presence of Tambor de Crioula in the school curriculum, it is essential to consider that, despite its cultural importance, it remains a marginalized practice in formal education. The absence of this content in textbooks and the scarcity of teaching materials that address Afro-Brazilian culture in depth reflect an educational system that still bears the marks of a colonial education. It is, therefore, essential that public policies and educational initiatives seek to integrate these cultural manifestations into school curriculum in a systematic and organic way, not just as an “extra” activity at the end of the school year, but as a central part of the students' education process.



Our experience using Tambor de Crioula as a teaching tool at the school shows that the students' involvement was immediate and profound. By coming into contact with this cultural practice, the students learned about the history of Maranhão and Brazil, and also experienced the transformative power of art as an instrument of resistance and education. The drum, as a metaphor for Black strength and resistance, proved to be a powerful tool for discussing issues such as structural racism, Black identity and the importance of teaching that values the country's cultural diversity. The positive impact on the participating classes suggests that this type of approach can be expanded to reach more schools and students, thus contributing to the development of a more equitable and plural education.

In conclusion, it is necessary to emphasize that the path to an antiracist and truly inclusive education involves valuing Afro-Brazilian cultures in their entirety. Tambor de Crioula, when introduced into the school environment, (re)affirms the protagonism of Black culture and challenges the educational system to compensate for its practices and representations. We hope that this work can inspire new pedagogical approaches and that schools will become spaces where all cultures, especially Afro-Brazilian culture, can be experienced and taught with dignity, respect and the strength of their traditions.

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