

Transcript of the Audio Recording by Tião Carvalho (Cupuaçu Group) 🗣️

__The Cupuaçu Group was formed in 1986. Actually, it came together gradually, because traditional cultural groups are never formed in just an afternoon or anything like that. We started thinking about it in 1986, when I returned from a traditional culture festival in southeastern France—I already had my disciples here in São Paulo—and I came back very inspired, and those disciples who had stayed here continued the work.

__I came back inspired, and we decided to actually stay and form a group and give it a name, which is the Cupuaçu Group. And the name “Cupuaçu” was chosen precisely with something traditional and rare in mind—it was a fruit. Cupuaçu

is well-known in São Paulo today, but back then it wasn't, just as açai wasn't either. So, that's it—we already wanted to take care of this forgotten side of Brazil, to rediscover a bit of that Brazil. So, I was talking about the fruit, but now we're talking about the cultural expressions, the dances, the music, Brazilian art—and a specific form of Brazilian art that remains somewhat on the margins. So, our role is, in a way, to bring this to light so that Brazilians can get to know Brazil—or a certain aspect of Brazil.

—I'm the founder of the group—one of the founders. The group calls me "Amo" or "Master"—that older, more experienced leader—but I've also ended up becoming a community leader, not just within the group. I'm from the city of Cururupu, in northern Maranhão, and I've been working hard ever since I arrived in

São Paulo. Actually, I left there to go to Rio de Janeiro to work with the Vento Forte Theatre Group. The group also traveled abroad to various places; they went to the United States for a tour and a college circuit, and then we traveled to some countries in Europe. And wherever I went, I was always doing research as well, studying the cultures of other places and other continents, while always focusing on my own culture—Brazilian culture—believing that this heritage left by our ancestors wasn't a coincidence, believing that we would need it—especially us, the descendants of Africans—and that we need this culture here in Brazil today to engage with other ethnic groups.

__I really like this contemporary vibe of the street; when I talk about contemporaneity, we're out there creating traditional culture

and engaging with the people on the street—not just those living on the streets, but everyone in all kinds of situations who... People passing by—sometimes people from other states, like Maranhão; there’s always someone from Maranhão who identifies with it... “Oh, Maranhão, I used to see it, I don’t know what”—there’s always someone like that. Other places that have Bumba-meu-boi, too. Everyone, in a way, identifies with Bumba-meu-boi right there on the street. It has this magic, this charm.

__In the photo are the characters: the main prince, the ox, with a central figure dancing beneath the ox, who is called the “miolo” there. The cowboys—here they’re depicted with sashes—the cowboys and cowgirls, who are the ranch caretakers. Here is Father Francisco, right in the spotlight, wearing a

pink shirt under his ornate jacket and a black mask. The indigenous men and women, representing the indigenous peoples here. Mother Catirina, who is Father Francisco's wife, also... doesn't appear here—in the photo, that is—but she's in the show. The musicians in the back with the large tambourine. Basically that—the audience and the beautiful Sé Cathedral in the background.