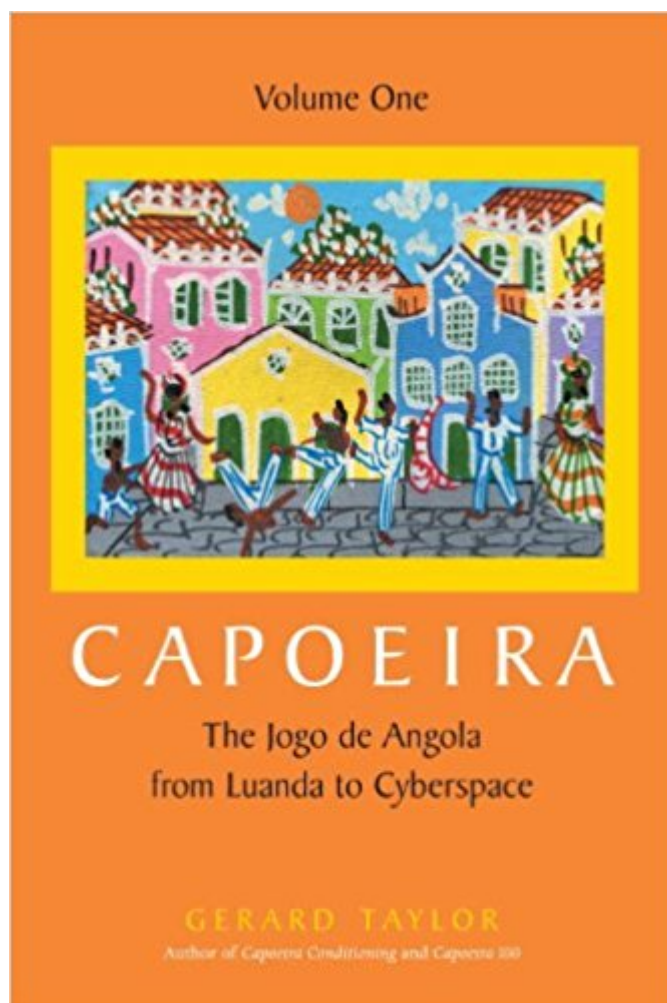


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Capoeira: The Jogo De Angola From Luanda To Cyberspace



Synopsis

The first in a two-volume series on capoeira, Volume One traces the origins of the popular martial art and dance form from the beginning of the slave trade in the Americas in the 1500s to the early years of the Brazilian Republic in the 20th century. Focusing on the people and events that shaped the art form in Brazil prior to the "academy" period of the last century, *Capoeira: The Jogo de Angola from Luanda to Cyberspace* explores the subject from many vantage points. Author Gerard Taylor explains how the fighting techniques of African forces laid the groundwork for capoeira movements. He shows how work songs, religion, and various percussive traditions and instruments shaped capoeira music over the years. Drawing on archival sources and historical accounts, the book paints a vivid picture of capoeira's dramatic evolution from the sugar plantations of Pernambuco through the brutal backstreets of Rio and the Minas Gerais goldmines on its way to becoming a world-class practice.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Read [this book] carefully, because I see that the writer did not have the pretension to be just a manufacturer of capoeira books. He has made this book because he felt the need, and carried out the research, so that he is able to convey some things related to the history of capoeira. It is not fiction. This book is for real."-Mestre Sombra, Associacao de Capoeira Senzala de Santos
"The Jogo de Angola is fresh, original, well-balanced, and very thoroughly researched. A fascinating must-read for all interested in capoeira and African-Brazilian history."- Mestre Sylvia Bazzarelli, The London

School of Capoeira Heranca "I recommend Gerard Taylor's work. I think his research is important for capoeira and will interest capoeira readers."- Nestor Capoeira, author of The Little Capoeira Book and Capoeira: Roots of the Dance-Fight Game

Gerard Taylor studied capoeira in the 1980s and 1990s with Master Sylvia Bazzarelli and Contra Master Marcos Dos Santos of the London School of Capoeira Herança. After graduating as an instructor, he co-founded the Oslo Capoeira Klubb Herança with Professora Agnes Folkestad. This organization now has 200 members. Gerard has previously worked as a journalist and copywriter. He has written and edited numerous publications, mainly in the publishing field. He was a PR copy writer for the Foundation for African Arts in London in the late 1980s, and Northern Ireland Editor for the Black Voice newspaper in London. He has also written scripts for various theatre companies. Recently Gerard was employed by Apple Records to write publicity and text for their award-winning Beatles website.

Amazing author and practitioner

This volume is NOT a physical instructional manual. It is a dedicated examination of how Capoeira came to be, from the Continent of Africa from which the root of this combative art hied, to its development in Brazil. The author examines a variety of sources (which he lists). Rather than stopping at the usual cursory description of the original slaves imported to Brazil from Africa, Taylor provides documentary evidence concerning the existence, treatment, and conditions encountered by slaves imported to Brazil from Angola and other regions of Africa. Taylor's descriptions and historical references make the experiences of these peoples very real, and does more than any work I have read thus far to explain the spiritual, cultural and physical reasons behind the development and propagation of Capoeira, at once both a method of personal defense and strength training, and a physical mode of expression. For those with a dedicated interest in the history of Capoeira specifically, or anyone with an interest in the anthropological side of combative arts generally, this first volume in a planned two-volume set is a must. I look forward to reading a continuation of this history.

This first part of two by Gerard Taylor is less about capoeira per se than it is about helping the reader understand the environment in which capoeira evolved. The author's stated intent for the second half is to invest much more narrative to the subject of capoeira itself in the modern world.

Given this, I'm not terribly disappointed that Volume One is mostly about the histories of Brazil and Portuguese Africa as they relate to the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the evolution of capoeira in Brazil. However, prospective readers should bear in mind that Volume One really is a book on history, albeit one worthy of inclusion in the syllabus of a collegiate Portuguese history class. Taylor covers a great deal of time and space in 450 pages of text, from the Portuguese exploration of West Africa in the 1400's to the mid-Twentieth Century in Brazil. His focus is on the people who would give birth to capoeira: slaves from West and Central Africa. The Portuguese of Brazil play a key role in that they created the conditions under which Africans were brought to Brazil as slaves. According to Taylor, many of the slaves who were transported to Brazil from Central Africa between 1500 and the late 1800's were prisoners of war who were sold to the Portuguese. As a result, large numbers of fighting men schooled and experienced in the way of Central African war were included in the body of slaves. Some of the slaves who escaped and fled to the edges of Brazilian society were military men. These warriors brought experience with the Central African fighting techniques to villages called quilombos where escaped slaves formed new communities. Quilombos often were protected by extensive earthworks and obstacles, which presented real challenges for Portuguese attempting to recapture slaves and wipe out the quilombos. Central African warfare was almost exclusively fought by infantry. The infantry used swords and spears, but they almost never carried shields. Instead of blocking attacks, the Central African infantry used a fluid, mobile technique of avoiding blows altogether. This style of moving, twisting, and dodging defense finds an expression in capoeira. Taylor also covers areas such as the growth of the Brazilian economy from its earliest stages, the patterns of the slave trade, and life in the quilombos. Overall, this first book of two is an enjoyable, accessible work of history as it relates to the evolution of capoeira. I'm looking forward to reading Volume Two.

I have been training capoeira for 13 years and have read many books on the subject. This is the first book I have read that provides a detailed, well referenced history of capoeira from pre-slave trade in Africa to the establishment of recognized schools for the art in Brazil. I highly recommend this book for those wanting to know the roots and history of capoeira. My only criticisms are: the book does not present the information in a definitive chronological order but jumps forward and backward in time within a presented era, making it a bit difficult to follow at times; and Taylor could have used a few (even one or two) maps to illustrate the locations he discusses. The reader can always use an atlas.

As far as history of capoeira goes, the author makes so many assumptions, jumps to so many conclusions and shows so many inconsistencies that this book cannot be taken seriously. For example, he assumes that capoeira was already played to the rhythm of the berimbau in 19th century Bahia, based on nothing but a guess. He goes even further (without citing one source whatsoever), stating that capoeira in the 19th century was played to the "bateria" as we know it today: berimbau, atabaque, pandeiro, reco-reco e agogo. That assumption is completely crazy, besides making no sense, of course. Capoeira was played in the streets and capoeiras were often chased by the police. Right now, I can close my eyes and see one of them running from the cops with an atabaque on its back... Then he makes other assumptions based on one of M. Pastinha's interviews and on his ghost-written book. Many people are aware that it is naive to take Mestre Pastinha's interviews literally as he was known for speaking in highly metaphorical words. And many capoeira researchers also find it very likely that a few people other than the Mestre and the ghostwriter were actually involved in the writing of his book. Finally, if anyone is interested in serious, detailed, backed-up, complete research about the history of capoeira, to this day I've only come across one book who lives up to its promise: Capoeira- the history of an Afro-Brazilian martial art, by Matthias Rohrig Assuncao.

An interesting read

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