



ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Video Transcript

Capoeira – Memory in Motion

ZAINABU JALLO: Capoeira began as resistance. It was born among enslaved Africans in Brazil – many of them from the Mbundu population of what is now Angola.

Through generations, these communities exchanged songs, movements, rituals, and strategies. Capoeira emerged from this shared knowledge: a form of combat, disguised as dance. A way to fight for freedom, hidden in rhythm.

Its practice was always collective – and perceived by the authorities as a threat. After Brazil's independence from Portugal in 1822, and even more so after slavery was abolished in 1888, Capoeira was banned. By 1892, it was legally criminalised, and those who practiced it faced police violence and social exclusion. Still, it survived – underground, in backyards, on the margins.

In the early 20th century, change came with Mestre Bimba – Manuel dos Reis Machado. A brilliant Capoeirista, teacher, and reformer. He reintroduced Capoeira to the public, giving it structure, discipline, and recognition. In 1932, he opened the first official school in Bahia. By 1937, Capoeira was acknowledged as a national sport.

But Capoeira is more than sport. It is movement shaped by memory – and spirit. A ritual form, with music, call-and-response singing, and ancestral energies. It carries the history of resistance, and the rhythm of survival.

It is still practiced around the world – but in Brazil, many Capoeiristas say: «This is not just a performance. It is how the body remembers those who came before.»

Today, Capoeira lives on – as sport, as ritual, and as memory in motion.