

# In search of sound threshold: gestures, sounds and risks in folia<sup>1</sup> tuning

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## ABSTRACT

The article deals with the tuning of musical instruments in the religious and festive context of the folias [revelry] in Taboquinha, a rural locality in the city of São Francisco, northern Minas Gerais. The text draws attention to the dynamics involved in the tuning process, understanding the phenomenon as a collective practice that takes place in interactions between people through an expressive and communicative economy involving gestures, objects, body movements, looks, words and sounds. In this sense, the question that animates this exercise is not so much what the tuning is or what is tuning, but: how the instruments are tuned. What happens when the practice is performed? What effects does tuning produce? How does tuning relate to other situations and moments in the ritual cycle of folias? The article also suggests that tuning, on the one hand, creates a framework, a sense of collectivity and integration, on the other is permeated with dangers, risks and uncertainties, making it a constant search, a continuous movement, a threshold between tensions, heights and frequency

## KEYWORDS

Ritual, Popular Culture, Folia, Music, Tuning

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While the laws governing sound movement differ from melody to melody, from incantation for incantation, the laws have one thing in common: they are dynamic, referring to “states not objects, to relations between tensions, not to position between, to tendencies, not to magnitudes”

*Paul Stoller, apud Victor Zuckerkandl*

É que a música, sendo a mais coletivista de todas as artes, exigindo a coletividade para se realizar, quer com a coletividade dos intérpretes, quer com a coletividade dos ouvintes, está muito mais, e imediatamente, sujeita às condições da coletividade.

*Mário de Andrade*

[It is that music, being the most collectivist of all the arts, demanding the collectivity to perform, whether with the collectivity of performers or with the collectivity of listeners, is much more, and immediately, subject to the collectivity conditions.]

## PRELUDE

Once, as usual, I was following another folia *giro* [journey] when one of my interlocutors, explaining to me the folia's particularity in that place, surprised me with the following saying: “The folia here in Taboquinha is a *cordial* folia”. As I am familiar with readings on Brazilian social thought, the memory of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's famous “*cordial* man” was inevitable. At the time, a concern came to me that I said to myself: “But it would be the notion of cordiality so deeply rooted in our imagination that a *folião* [reveler] in northern of Minas Gerais, with little literacy, would trigger it to define the specifics of folias in that region?”

While the term *cordial* referred me to the concept developed by the author of *Raízes do Brasil*, I suspected that, for my interlocutor, the term did not have the same meaning proposed by the late historian. However, the question stay there: “In what sense was the term *cordial* being used in that situation?” It was not necessary to wait more than a few seconds for the *folião*, given my visible incomprehension, to complete the sentence: “*Cordial* because we use many string instruments here in the folia”.

This anecdote would be (and for me it was for some time) another one that we anthropologists have collected without really knowing what to do with it. But, now, it

1 | This article, the result of ethnographic research that I have been developing for nearly two decades in the north/northwest region of Minas Gerais, benefited greatly from the suggestions and encouragement of colleagues who on several occasions heard me talk about tuning in folias. I would especially like to thank João Miguel Sautchuk, Marco Antonio Gonçalves, Tatiana Bacal and Felipe Barros for their valuable contributions. I would also like to thank the reviewers of the journal who were willing to read and comment on the first version of the text.

seems that the “story” can collaborate with the prose direction that inspires this writing. I explain. When mentioning the existence of many string instruments as an important and defining characteristic of the folias’ region, my interlocutor was pointing out to me some important points:

1. The musical dimension is important in the identification and distinction of folias;
2. String instruments function as identifying signs of Taboquinha folias;
3. Comparatively, there are folias in the region that are not structured around the strings.

In fact, as I traveled through many places in the large territory of the north/northwest of Minas Gerais, I met countless folias in the municipalities of Januária, Chapada Gaúcha, Urucuaia and São Francisco. I could see that in many cases, unlike what I observed at Taboquinha, the group’s instrumentation is focused on the accordion and the incidence and meaning of string instruments is lower.<sup>2</sup>

From the orchestral ensemble of the folias at Taboquinha, among the string instruments are: three to four violas (ten strings each), two to three guitars (with six strings each) and a fiddle (with five strings). Adding the strings together, you get a total of over sixty. We should add to this set the *caixa* [party drums], which, although it is a percussion instrument, has a tuning system based on tensioning and loosening the strings. Starting from the observation that the strings are primordial in the identity and sound of the Taboquinha folias, how to relate this data with the phenomenon of tuning? Where, after all, can this conversation with (and through) the strings lead us?

### THE GIRO [JOURNEY] OF FOLIÕES

*Folias*, such as wandering, processions, marches, cortege, parades and pilgrimages are events (of and in) movement. With different meanings and purposes, all, in one way or another, are constituted through the displacement—of people, objects and symbols—through some spaces in a given temporality. In the folia case, the motivation for the walk and *giro* of *foliões* (a term that names the players and singers who are members of a folia group) is to complete a *giro* or *journey*, terms that well express the action dynamics and the characteristic rhythm of the process ritual.

In the upper-middle region of São Francisco, Minas Gerais, many are the saints worshiped in the *folias*. In addition to the Santos Reis folia, considered the first and, as we shall see, originating from the others, there are *folias* for many saints in the Catholic temple (São Sebastião, in January; São José, in March; Bom Jesus, in August; Nossa Senhora Aparecida, in October; Santa Luzia, in December; among others), configuring a true religious and festive calendar throughout the year.

2 | My contact with the universe of the São Francisco valley, especially in its middle course, between the north and northwest of Minas Gerais, dates back to the year 2002, when I started ethnographic research on the folias of Santos Reis, Bom Jesus, São José and Santa Lucia. This research resulted in my doctoral thesis, defended in 2009 (Chaves, 2009). Between 2004 and 2005, I was part of the team of “Celebrações e Saberes da Cultura Popular – Viola de 10 cordas”, [“Celebrations and Knowledge of Popular Culture – 10-String Viola”], a project that prepared an inventory of the viola based on ethnographic research focused on the processes of manufacturing, tuning and ways of playing the instrument, as well as for the ritual and playful narratives and contexts of its use. During the project, coordinated by the National Center for Folklore and Popular Culture (CNFCP/IPHAN), I had the opportunity to tour many locations in the municipalities of Januária, São Francisco, Chapada Gaúcha and Urucuaia, visiting guitar players, instrument builders and getting to know the folias of the region. As a result of this work, I participated in the organization of a presentation at Sala do Artista Popular (SAP/CNFCP), about musical instruments from San Francisco and carried out the research and production of the documentary film *Seu Minervino e a Viola Caipira*. The perception of differences and changes in the instrumental and musical structure of the folias was possible thanks to the participation in these projects, which, among other lessons, allowed me to establish contact with several groups in this region marked by an impressive vitality and diversity of folias.

A *folia giro* usually ends on the day of the saint in question. For example:

March 19, in the case of a São José *folia*; January 6, for the *folias* of Santos Reis. The beginning and period of the *folia* depends on the promise made terms. It can last three, six, nine or even twelve days. During this time, the *foliões* leave their daily chores and homes and, as they say, are “inside the world”, traveling (on foot, on horseback, by truck, bus or car) on trails, roads, streets, crossing villages, sites, farms, towns and cities.

In the researched region, the walk of *foliões* must obey some precepts such as: always follow from east to west (“on the right” as they say); do not cross a path that has already been covered (“not to loose the trail”); nor fail to visit a house placed on the chosen route under penalty of divine punishment and reprisals.

In this way, the movement of *foliões* creates a sacred space (a moral territory), whose beginning and end take place in the house of the *foliões* (emperor or empress). With this place as a spatial and symbolic reference, over the days and nights, other houses, as well as churches, chapels and cemeteries are visited and their residents (dead or alive) praised, blessed and revered. Such spaces are invested with sacredness as the share and exchange of goods and services takes place among *foliões*, residents, entities, the dead and ancestors.

When a family's house is visited, through the singing and movement of the flag (present in some *folias* as we will see later), the *foliões* not only announce the presence of the entity in that place but, in its name, they bless the home and who live there. In return, residents offer the group food and drinks (which are consumed during the visit), as well as several offers (money, groceries, donations) to help the owners of the promise to make the celebrations possible. This relational structure, as a growing literature on the subject points out (Brandão, 1981; Reily, 2002; Chaves, 2009; Bitter, 2010; Pereira, 2012, etc.), makes revelry a modality of the vast “system of total benefits” (Mauss, 2003 [1925])<sup>3</sup>.

How to walk, where to walk, which path to take, which houses to go (and which not to go), how to arrive and how to leave a house, all procedures are invested with rhythm, meaning and effectiveness in the *folia*. The *giro*, therefore, reveals and expresses a knowledge, which change according to regions, locations and “systems” (Pereira, 2014), but which always implies patterns of behavior, protocol, “hospitality laws” (Pitt-River, 2012), in addition to an intricate combination of expressive and communicative means (Tambiah, 1979) that produces “frames” and “contexts” (“frames” in the terms of Bateson, 2000 [1955]).

In Taboquinha, a rural location belonging to the municipality of São Francisco, where this research was carried out, an interesting “framework” transformation take place with each new visit. The transition from the casualness and informality

3 | Brandão, who to a large extent started the anthropological reflection on the theme, inspired by Marcel Mauss' theory of reciprocity, interprets folia as an expression of the phenomenon of gift: “a peasant space symbolically established during an equally ritualized period of time, for the purposes of share gifts – goods and services – between a precatory group and residents of the territory where it goes” (1981: 36). When mentioning to the contractual structure of the visits that the folia performs along the giro (replicated in several other moments of the ritual cycle), Brandão says: “Each stop of the folia in a giro it does once more the same sequence of acts: the owner of the house is obliged to receive the foliões who, in turn, are obliged to introduce themselves and ask to be received; the owner of the house is obliged to receive them and give thanks, blessing them for that; the owner, other residents and promesseiros [those who make promises] are obligated to give some of their goods as requested offerings, and foliões are obligated to reciprocate by giving blessings, proclaiming the deed, and updating promises to kings” (1981: 45).

of *foliões* when moving from one house to another to the formality and solemnity characteristic of the arrival and especially of the singing performed inside the houses is guided and experienced by a specific rite – the tuning of musical instruments.

A collective practice, carried out in the vicinity of the place to be visited, the tuning is a kind of “passage rite” (Van Gennep, 2011 [1908]), which establishes the link between the course carried out between the houses and the movement that takes place inside them. Strictly speaking, in this location, no new visit is initiated without the *foliões* having gathered and together as they say, *attuned* (lengthy) the violas, fiddles, guitars and *caixas*. Getting the instruments right or tuning means seeking a possible balance in the quality of communication and interaction between people. The singing (the most sacred and emotional moment of a visit, as it is when the presence of the saint is announced) does not start without this success being reached and recognized. At Taboquinha, unlike other places I've visited, the care, refinement and seriousness with which *foliões* tune their instruments always caught my attention<sup>4</sup>

Participating in the *giro* at Taboquinha, the feeling I had was that the intention (and effectiveness) of the practice was not limited to making the instruments suitable for singing performance. I felt that something else was happening when the *foliões* got together and for a time (which could go on for several minutes) engaged in the activity. In tuning, while the instruments were being tuned, people approached, gathered and thus prepared for what was to come.

In this article, my aim is to describe and analyze the relational dynamics involved in the tuning process. I understand the phenomenon as an activity, an event and collective practice carried out from and in the interaction between people, sounds, materialities and spatialities. I can say that my interest lies less in tuning as a product, that is, in the measurable relationship between notes and sounds (as in the face of the question “What is the tuning of this instrument?”, the answer is “It's in C”, for example), and more in fine-tuning as a process and a action (Small, 1998).<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the question that drive this reflection is not so much what is the tuning of the *folias* or what is tuning itself, but: how are the instruments tuned and what happens when the practice is performed? What effects does tuning produce? How does it relate to other ritual situations? What are the risks, threats and dangers that can affect the practice?

On a general and comparative plane, my interest in thinking about tuning in its continual (and not always successful) search for tuning, framing and adjusting differences, bringing people, things, temporalities, sensorialities and forces together, is to offer elements so that we can assess the potential and limits of dialogue – a subject that seems especially relevant at this time of so many uncertainties and trials in which it is perceived, on the one hand, the absence of listening and availability for what is different and, on the other, the proliferation and amplification of voices

4 | In many places I've visited, tuning is done in a more informal and relaxed way. In the case of folias that use accordion, as it is a fixed tuning instrument, it is the instrument that guides the tuning of the other instruments. In regions where there is no accordion, but, on the other hand, electronic tuners or devices as a reference, the tuning process is less ritualized and has less collective investment. Ultimately, each musician individually tunes its instrument and then briefly meets with the group for a general set-up. At Taboquinha, distinctly, since there is a large amount of string instruments and the absence of electronic means to conduct the tuning, the process involves several steps (some more collectivized and others more individualized), being intrinsically and intensely relational.

5 | Small (1998), in an interesting study on symphonic concerts, proposes as an object of ethnomusicological research and not the music itself, but what he calls *musicar* (“musicizing” in the original). For him, the term highlights music making, music as action and activity (in this regard, note that the verb “musicizing” represents the present participle and the gerund of the verb “to music”, thus denoting not only an action, but the action in progress, happening here and now). Incorporating Small's suggestions for thinking about what *foliões* do when they get together and tune their instruments, my interest is less on the tuning itself and more on tuning (especially what happens when such action takes place). Therefore, throughout this text, when I use tuning I mean the act, the action of tuning.

and authoritarian, extremist and denial speeches. In this scenario, will it be that by observing and, mainly, listening to the *foliões*, who so cherish and seek in tuning an ideal for the coexistence between people, things and the cosmos, won't we have something to learn?

However, before going into the tune of *folia*, it is important to tune up our perspective with some theoretical-methodological references.

### TUNING THE PERSPECTIVE

The analysis of the relationships between tunings, scales, melodies and musical structures is an old and recurrent concern in the history of comparative musicology. Oliveira Pinto (2001) thus refers to the main interests of researchers dedicated to the comparative study of musicalities in these early times:

Early, the scientific interest in the music of other peoples was mainly restricted to scales and different musical systems, instruments and their tuning, use and also the study and analysis of melodies, which were carefully transcribed into the spelling of Western music (2001: 257).

Among the pioneers of this new emerging field, we can mention the Austrian chemist Erich Von Hornbostel (1877-1935). Leading the Berlin Phonographic Archive (Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv) for nearly three decades (between 1905 and 1933), Hornbostel developed an influential paradigm for the comparative studies of peoples' music. His research method sought to describe the musical systems and the displacement paths (in time and space) of songs and instruments, pointing out precisely the melodic aspects of music (Nettl, 2005a [1983]; Blum, 1992; Oliveira Pinto 2004).<sup>6</sup>

The material called up by Hornbostel to carry out his investigations was basically composed of recordings that came in great flow to the Archive through the sending of records by ethnographers, missionaries, merchants, travelers and colonial administrators in the four corners of the world (Ames, 2003)<sup>7</sup>. Hornbostel's analytical method and procedure had a wide and lasting influence on comparative musicology and later on ethnomusicology, which developed in North America from the second half of the 20th century onwards. Hornbostel's study basically involved three movements: first, attentive listening to the recordings and examining the melodic contours of the songs; then, the encoding of intervals and keys through the comparison of several examples of melodic sequences in the same ethnographic area or in the same people/musical tradition; finally, access to the basic scales and tunings of a given musical system.

In describing Hornbostel's paradigm, with special mention of the priority given to melodic considerations as a privileged item into musical systems, Nettle (2005a

6 | Hornbostel holds a doctorate in chemistry from the University of Vienna and was one of the forerunners of comparative musicology (a science that emerged at the end of the 19th century in European countries, notably Germany, which turned to comparative studies of the music of different peoples). He was also an assistant to the German philosopher, psychologist and musicologist Carl Stumpf, creator of the Berlin Phonographic Archive in 1900. In 1905, Hornbostel succeeds Stumpf in the archive, which later became the main archive of music recordings in the world. Just to get an idea of the magnitude of the project, the archive, which in 1908 gathered around a thousand wax cylinders, in 1918 had a collection of more than 10,000 cylinders, "making it the world's largest phonogram collection and the hub of the global exchange network" (Ames, 2003:301). With the rise of Nazism and the chase of studies and scholars of musicology, the collection's destiny was to migrate, along with George Herzog, a student of Hornbostel, to the United States. The displacement of these recordings increased and gave rise to important collections such as the phonographic archives of the Universities of Columbia and Indiana (Bastos, 1993).

7 | Ames recalls that, between 1900 and 1912, in addition to recordings from the colonies, important recording sessions were held in Berlin, where it was possible to listen to and consume non-Western music in different spaces related to the rise of the leisure and entertainment industry — such as circuses, traveling shows, cabarets, ethnographic exhibitions, hotels and even in zoos (2003:301).

[1983]) says that he gave

[...] great emphasis on the melodic aspects of the music, particularly on what he calls scales. Enumeration of tones, and the relationship of the tones to a not always thoroughly defined tonic, and, beyond that, the specific intervallic distances, are what he speaks to most frequently and immediately. Throughout his work there is evidence of a feeling of urgency to uncover a theoretical framework that, while often unarticulated, must surely exist in each culture for the creation of melodic material (op. cit: 95).

It can be seen that, from Hornbostel's perspective, as evidenced by some of his observer, the purpose of the analysis was to describe the different musical structures (or theoretical structure of different musicologies) through abstractions such as scales and tunings, which in turn, were work out from melodic phenomena made in labs<sup>8</sup>.

In addition to working with recordings that were part of the collections of the Berlin Phonographic Archive, Hornbostel also contributed greatly to the development of the study and classification of musical instruments. Together with German musicologist Curt Sachs, responsible for the collection of musical instruments for the Staatliche Instrumentensammlung, he devised a rate system known as the Sachs-Hornbostel system (1914). This system, pioneer in organology studies, an important field of comparative musicology and which has been dynamizing with renewed approaches (De vale, 1990; Irving, 2009; Bates, 2012) is still widely used as a reference for the instruments rate (Seeger, 1987; Travassos, 1987). An important aspect of this study – and one that directly interests us – is precisely the possibility of describing the tuning and scales based on the instruments morphology, as well as the sound they produce.<sup>9</sup>

Direct unfolding of the practices of collecting instruments and recordings carried out in colonial and imperial contexts, such studies allowed musicology a less Eurocentric and more nuanced view of the sound phenomenon and musical structures. However, as Nettl (2005a) reminds us, these researches, by privileging melodies, scales, tunings and other abstractions essential to the Western musical imagination as criteria for the delimitation of “exotic” musical systems, ended up reifying the notion of music

In the context of musicological research in Brazil, the tuning theme came in the works of the folklorist, musicologist and researcher Luiz Heitor Correa de Azevedo<sup>10</sup>. In his methodological proposal for collecting and analyzing musical folklore, following the recommendations of the North American ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax, Luiz Heitor valued recordings and analyzes of musical instruments as the main sources. If we look at the models of the cards he developed and used in his field research, we will see that, as in Hornbostel, the description of popular melodies was the privileged

<sup>8</sup> | The primacy of melodic considerations in the scales definition of scales, tunings and musical systems, an approach developed by Hornbostel, had previously been defended by the English physicist Alexander J. Ellis, in a study published in 1885, “On the musical scales of several nations”.

<sup>9</sup> | In the Sachs-Hornbostel system, instruments are classified into four major groups (idiophones, membranophones, chordophones, and aerophones), which are subdivided into a series of levels and sublevels (Hornbostel and Sachs, 1961 [1914]).

<sup>10</sup> | The trajectory as well as the ethnographic and collectionist work of Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo were themes addressed in the researches of Aragão (2005), Barros (2013) and Mendonça (2007), among others.

entrance for the study of musical scales, keys and structures.

As for musical instruments, Luiz Heitor's recommendation was to describe them from a morphological point of view (with special attention to their dimensions, the nomenclature of their parts, etc.). In relation to string instruments, the researcher was also advised to indicate the sound (and the equivalent note) of each string individually, and then, by comparing the sounds of the different strings, trace the tuning system.

In the publication "Relação dos discos gravados no estado de Goiás" ["*Relationship of records recorded in the state of Goiás*"], from 1950, in the "texts and comments" section, we find an article entitled "Violas". In just five pages, Luiz Heitor presents the different tuning systems of the instrument in different places in Brazil. From a brief consideration of the alleged origins of the viola, its format, types of strings and different nomenclatures for the strings and other parts, it presents the different tunings of the instrument: "paulista", "guitarra" [guitar], "rio abaixo" [octave], "serra abaixo" and "maxambomba". These are some names to designate the tunings transcribed with the help of a musical staff. Naming each chord according to its respective sound (musical note), the musicologist, when mentioning, for example, the tuning "guitar", exposes the respective relationship between the notes (D/B/G/C/G), starting from the strings from bottom to top (highest to lowest string). When referring to the tuning "rio abaixo" (or "octave"), the relationship between the notes becomes D/S/G/D/G and so on.

By bringing Hornbostel and Luiz Heitor together, just to mention two important figures in musicological research in different latitudes, we note that for both, tuning was a matter of analysis and description. Except for the differences in the respective approaches that it is not appropriate to go into further here, the same procedure is put into practice: the tunings of the instruments are conceived as stable structures of distances between groups of notes related to each other. As Oliveira Pinto (2001) recalled well, and which applies to the two cases briefly recovered here, the theme of tuning used to be treated from a fixed, measurable and translatable model to Western terminology.

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Differently from the uses and meanings of the tuning category (as a product), in the context of the ritual *giro* of *folias*, tuning is a verb, an action, a tuning, therefore. Collective and effective practice of its achievement, things happen. From this framework, the question becomes more complex: What are the worlds created in the *giro*? How does tuning produce contexts ("frames") and how does the transformation of the participants' perceptual, cognitive and interpretive fields happen?

To address these issues, we also need to sharpen our perspective with other references. This is what I intend to do here, exposing some possible



theoretical-methodological paths. The first reference in this direction is Alfred Schutz, in an article entitled "Making music together: a study in social relationship" (1976 [1951]). Schutz mobilizes his phenomenological sociology to understand the ways of human communication, especially the one that resonates in musical practice (in making). Focusing on the phenomenon of playing together, mainly in small groups, without the presence of explicit leaders and hierarchies (as is the case of an orchestra conducted by a conductor), he seeks to describe and analyze the structural elements characteristic of the communication process involved in this making.

Driven by face-to-face interactions, through the involvement and engagement of participants, making music together, for Schutz, implies a mode of relationship that depends on sharing time (or duration) and cohabitation in space. In this environment, the musical process takes place in and through the search for a "no original mutual tuning in relationship", a movement in which the "I" and the "you" give way to the experience of a "we". For Schutz, this is the foundation of all possible communication.

Also according to Schutz, this kind of relationship, equally present in other practices (in the "march", in "love", in "dance"), involves actions carried out in partnership with other people through real interactions, mutual movements coordination and the search for an attunement to be created and experienced in the course (and flow) of situations. In this communicational rule, a musician (a lover or a dancer) must not only hear the other, but also see and feel it. Its action is affected by what the partner does:

The Other's facial expressions, his gestures in handling his instrument, in short all activities of performing, gear into the outer world and can be grasped by the partner in immediacy. Even if performed without communicative intent, these activities are interpreted by him as indications of the what the Other is going to do and therefore as suggestions or even commands for his own behavior. Any chamber musician knows how disturbing an arrangement that prevents the cop performers from seeing each other can be (1976 [1951]:176).

Schutz's elaborations present interesting insights for us to think about tuning in *folias*. First, the idea that musical practice involves the creation of mutual harmony between people and that such an agreement is built on strong interactions. When they say they are *tuning* their instruments, *foliões* engage in a collective and relational practice that takes place in the temporality and continuous flow of face-to-face interactions. The sharing of perceptions in the time simultaneity and in the space cohabitation in the *tuning* process aims, as they say, to gather, physically and emotionally bring them together and involve them in a unique and shared experience.

Another aspect that Schutz highlights is also very important in tuning concerns the musical making and the production of "mutual tuning in the relationship". Tuning does not only involve sounds and the sharing of the same temporality, but

encompasses several other senses. As we will see throughout the ethnographic description, when they are tuning, *foliões* communicate through sounds, gestures, words, facial expressions, looks, movements and through bodily engagement with their violas, guitars, fiddles and *caixas*. In this sense, when they get the instruments right, they trigger different temporal and spatial perceptions.

The harmony created in the interactions flow through the mobilization and combination of a set of expressive elements (sounds, gestures, objects, words, expressions, looks), by intensifying the collective experience ("we"), seems to produce an "interpersonal orchestration" or "social integration" (Tambiah, 1979). In this direction, the intertwining of multiple communicational and expressive media added to the spatiality, temporality and corporeality of the tuning process work as "demarcators" ("contextual cues", according to Bauman and Briggs, 1990). They are "targeting mechanisms" (Tambiah, op.cit) that say that something is happening or rather, that they make something happen in that situation<sup>11</sup>.

It is noticed that, during the tuning, there is a change in the relationships quality, behavior, attitude and emotional pattern of the participants - from the initial composure and dispersion when arriving at the house and greeting the residents to a posture of greater concentration, seriousness and solemnity. According to Bateson (2000 [1955]), we can say that one of the tuning effects is to create an "interpretive context" (or "framework") capable of providing the subjects, during the interactions, with elements (signs or markers) to understand and experience that situation.

In consequence, during tuning, attention and awareness are directed to what is happening and to engagement with (in) the activity. Participants are faced with the basic elements to identify the situation and answer the question: "What is happening? What is up?". Goffman (1974), in an unfolding of Bateson's reflections, says that the main objective in the study of frames is to perceive them as transformations, and not as fixed states. In this way, the interest is less in the "frame" or "framing" itself, and more in the process of producing them (the act of "frame" and "framing", therefore). To this end, Goffman proposes that the study of frames focus on "claves" or "keys" (keys in the original), as it is through them that situations are framed. Going further, he says that the main concept for interpreting how *frames* are created and transformed is *keying*. The category states, on the one hand, that we are facing transformational processes and, on the other, that transformations presuppose agreements and consensus.<sup>12</sup>

Another dimension of frames that dialogues with the phenomenon of tuning is their meta-communicative character (Bateson, op. cit). Having as the subject of the discourse the "relationship between the speakers", this communication about communication (or meta-communication) is what allows the participants to distinguish, for example, when the same act should be interpreted as a fight or as a game of struggle<sup>13</sup>. The same dimension seems to be present in the tuning, when the very

11 | For Tambiah, the meaning of communication in ritual contexts is not only (and not fundamentally) in terms of references and information (what is being transmitted and what is the meaning of what is said about something to which it applies), but in performative terms, in its capacity to produce engagement among participants. In the author's words: "Social communication of which ritual is a special kind, portrays many features that have little to do with the transmission of new information and everything to do with interpersonal orchestration and with social integration and continuity. The orchestration and integration aspects of the communicative process" (Birdwhistell, 1970: 86-7) includes many operations: the 'factual' characteristic that keeps the communication system in operation, the certainty of the message that reduces interpersonal anxiety and affective damage, the amount of linguistic and other cues that act as triggering mechanisms and context markers, the regulatory protocol that say what is considered adequate communication in equal or asymmetrical status - these are a related set" (1979: 132-133. My emphasis.

12 | It is interesting to note that one of the meanings of the verb "to key" (or "keying") has as possible synonyms "to attune" or "to tune", which translated into Portuguese means precisely "sintonizar" and "afinar".

13 | In Bateson's words: "(...) a frame is always meta-communicative. Any message that explicitly or implicitly defines a frame, ipso facto, provides the receiver with instructions or help in its attempt to understand the messages included in the frame" (op.cit: 44).

quality of the relationship between the musicians and the other participants is in evidence. By emphasizing that the nature of relationships must be interpreted in a specific and distinct way from what it had been, tuning can be understood as a mode of communication that deals with the potential of communication itself.

Thus, tuning is in itself an effective act, since from it and in it interactions and meanings emerge. Likewise, the act of tuning brings with it, as in a syntagmatic chain, events and situations that precede and follow it. Hence, in order to understand what emerges from it, it is interesting to put the tuning in the flow of the ritual process. So, however much I turn to the ethnographic description of tuning in the foreground, we must remember that it integrates a broader sequence of events (a before and an after): on the one hand, the journey of *foliões* as the greetings between them and the residents at their arrival in the houses, and the other hand, the singing already inside the house.

Like a web, the act of tuning articulates a passage, an opening, an important link that conveys and interweaves different phases and ritual sequences. Alongside the procedural and transitional dimension, fine-tuning, as a preliminary situation, also reveals the precariousness, ambiguity, uncertainty and dangers that surround beings and indeterminate conditions, situated in the interstices between the more stable and permanent positions (Turner, 2005 [1964 ]; 2013 [1969]). As we will see, the tuning in its incessant search for stabilization, balance, consensus and cohesion is, at all times, being put to the test and running the risk of not being successful. In this regard, it is worth recovering the following comment from Wisnik:

In the rituals that constitute the practices of modal music, the universe is invoked to be cosmos and not chaos. Anyway, the sounds tuned by culture, that make the music, will always be in dialogue with noise, instability, dissonance. In fact, one of the great graces of music is precisely this: to bring together patterns of recurrence and constancy with misfortunes that unbalance and make them unstable (1989: 27).

Starting from the idea that tuning is a performative and effective event, producing *frames* and “framings”, the proposal now becomes the description and analysis of the contexts and flows of interactions. After all, what are the communication means and how do they combine to produce the collective experience? What signs and elements (sounds, gestures, words, objects) are mobilized (and how are they mobilized) to create “mutual attunement in the relationship” (Schutz, 1951)? How does the “interpersonal arrange” (Tambiah, 1979) necessary for the perceptive and interpretive “framing” lead to singing? What does this apparent consensus consist of and how can it (and is) threatened?

How do noises, instabilities and dissonances affect the tuning?

## SAINTS AND FOLIAS

At Taboquinha, the instrumental group of the folias is made up of violas, guitars, fiddle and *caixas*, as well as tambourines, *balainho* and *geroma*<sup>14</sup>. The preponderance of string instruments in these folias justifies, as we saw in the prelude to this article, the term *cordial* to name them. The instruments, although can be gathered and perceived together, they diverge from each other in terms of sound and narrative origin, and in terms of use and meaning in ritual contexts.

Many devotees of the Three Kings – every year, between December 24th and January 6th – participate in the festivities and *folias* dedicated to the Holy Kings. For the devotees, the Three Kings were, in addition to people of great wisdom and intuition, skilled musicians (players and singers). In several accounts about the origins of the *folias de reis*, the fact that the wizards take musical instruments on the journey and visit to the newborn baby Jesus is mentioned. The most mentioned are the viola, *caixas* and fiddle (and in some cases the tambourine)<sup>15</sup>, in addition, of course, to the well-known gifts – incense, gold and myrrh.

In the course of a *giro* of *folia* at Taboquinha, when we observe the behaviors and the way people relate to the instruments, the centrality of the viola is clearly perceived. It is the most appropriate instrument for using the *guia* [guide] or *cabeça*<sup>16</sup>, in addition to being, as we will see later, the basis for the tuning process. Alongside the viola, as the narratives point out the fiddle, the tambourine and the *caixas* are also essential – precisely because they are associated with the wise men and the original *folia*.

As for the other instruments, they may or may not be present. I particularly draw attention to the *geroma* and the *balainho*, as they are the ones that most pass on in different hands. It is common during a *giro* to see these instruments passing from hand to hand, unlike the viola and fiddle, for example, which usually remain all the time with the same (or few) player. I once heard a comment justifying the pass on of *geroma* and *balainho*, arguing that they were instruments “that have no science”. I found the comment curious and intriguing: but why are these instruments not science? Why are some instruments science and others not? Given their non-participation in the tuning process, is the term science related to strings and, therefore, to tuning? Interestingly, as we will see, instruments that have science (strings, including the *caixa*, and, ultimately, the voice) are the preferred targets of the practices of magic and spells (wickedness and inconveniences) that can disturb the smooth running of a *folia* focusing precisely on its tunings.

At Taboquinha, as I mentioned, there is a great diversity of *folias* throughout the year, configuring a lively and intricate calendar of *giros* and festivities dedicated to different *saints* of the Catholic pantheon. When we look at this set of *folias*, an important distinction must be underlined – the one that separates and distinguishes the *Folias de*

14 | The *balainho* is a type of rattle. It consists of a small straw basket, the interior of which contains seeds – when moved, they produce sound. The *geroma*, on the other hand, is also a type of rattle, but it is made of a small wooden apparatus with a handle and a hollow rectangular structure (similar to a racket). This is crossed by wires in which are placed caps that when struck produce sound.

15 | Of these three (or four) instruments that appear in the origin narratives of the folia, the viola is particularly ambiguous. In addition to being sacred for being one of the instruments of the wise men, in many accounts, it appears as the instrument of the devil, considered by many players to be an excellent guitar player, endowed with an unparalleled ability to play and mute the instrument (Chaves, 2020). For a comparative analysis of a set of reports about the origins of the revelry, see Chaves (2014b).

16 | *Cabeça* (or *guide*) is the term that names the main leadership of the folia groups, the one who has the knowledge of ritual precepts, who dominates the repertoire of songs and conducts performances in the most different situations.

*Reis* from the others (called *folias de bandeira*). The *folia de Reis*, considered the first and main folia, is the only one that performs the *giro* without the flag and at night, as the three kings did. It is worth remembering that, according to the biblical account and as the *foliões* point out in their narratives, the wizards walked at night and were guided by the glow of a star. In the *foliões* point of view, if the kings were pursued by Herod, they are also being pursued. Following this logic, walking at night reduces the risks, which are always there, of finding undesirable situations. Silence is another capital value in the arrangement of these *folias and giros*, as the late *folião* Joaquim Goiabeira clarifies below:

The most sincere *folia* in the world is the *Folia de Reis*, it is at night, it goes on at night and it's like this: it's quiet, if you have to sing here, there, for everyone, set the instruments, and come, the four singers already go one after the other, in silence, the player already knows, stepping in silence, arrives, the door is closed, you push it very slowly, then enter, when it starts to sing that the owner wakes up ... (Testimony by Joaquim Goiabeira. My emphasis).

As the *folião*, who in life was an excellent builder and *caixa* player, says, in the *Folia de Reis*, silence is essential<sup>17</sup>. In addition to point out the uniqueness of the *Folia de Reis*, which only goes on at night, he explains how the tuning takes place. The process of tuning (or attune) the instruments in these cases begins when the *foliões*, who until then had been walking, stop and gather close to the house to be visited. The distance must be enough so that the sound of the instruments is not heard from the house. Following Joaquim's account, after the tuning process is finished, when the instruments are already set, the *foliões*, in silence ("treading in silence") walk to the house, go inside, settle in the room in the dark, then start singing.

Quite different is what happens in the *folias de bandeira*, a term used to refer to *folias*, except that of *Reis*. In these *folias* the same concern with the silence characteristic of the *folias de reis* is not observed. Walking and arriving at the houses are enveloped in an atmosphere of greater relax and informality. The *giros* are performed during the day and with the presence of the flag – a banner with the image of the saint who always remains in front of the group. It is the flag that announces the *foliões* on their walks, arrivals and departures from homes.

The dynamics of tuning and reaching homes are also different in these cases. Roughly speaking, we can describe it in six successive steps:

- 1) tuning around the house, as in the *Folia de Reis*, but without taking care that the sound is not heard by the residents;
- 2) walk to the gate that borders the property;
- 3) beginning of *alvorada* [dawn] (instrumental theme) – performed between the gate and the door that gives access to inside the house;
- 4) in the living room of the house, greetings between *foliões* and residents;

17 | The value and centrality of silence in the *Folias de Reis* caught the attention of researchers such as Carlos Brandão who, in his studies of the *folias* in Caldas, Minas Gerais, made the following observation: "Old *foliões* from Caldas say that in their past they are boys, the journey was carried out with much greater rigor and with much more obedience to what the Three Kings were supposed to do on their way to Bethlehem. Pursued by Herod's forces, they traveled only at night, in silence along the roads. Arriving at a house, they asked for a shelter, without singing and with little boasting. Only inside the house did they sing. During the day, they stayed inside a shelter to go out again at dark of a new day, in another whole night of journey. I heard the same news in other *folias* in Minas and Goiás (Brandão, 1981:52). If the walk at night and the silence, in Caldas and also in Mossamedes, Goiás (Brandão, 1977:10), were memories of past journeys, at Taboquinha they are practices that organize the *giros* nowadays and mark the singularity of the *Folia de Reis* in relation to other *folias*."

5) still in the room, new tuning (now more time consuming and attentive when compared to what was done previously);

6) song dedicated to announcing the presence of the saint, thanking the offerings, share blessings to the residents and inviting them to the closing party of the *giro*.

Having made these general comments about the diversity of *folias*, the instrumental organization and the contexts in which the tuning process takes place, I turn to the ethnographic description of the dynamics of a specific situation I experienced during the *giro* of the São José folia in 2006. It is about the arrival of the *folia* in the house of a man known as Zé Podaça. The description that follows is guided by listening to the recording I made at the time. In this listening and writing exercise, the sound of the speeches, instruments and silences will be the guides for the ethnographic narrative.<sup>18</sup>

### ARRIVAL, GREETINGS AND PLAY

Taboquinha, March 18, 2006, the day before São José day. The *Folia de São José* is approaching the house of Mr. Zé Podaça, at the time a man of almost 80 years who for a long time was part of, as *folião*, the term of local *folia*. After put the instruments near the gate that gives access to Zé's property, the *foliões* prepare to start the *alvorada*. It is with the instrumental sound of *alvorada* and with the flag in front of the group that cross the gate and walk through the space that detach it from the front door of the house. Mr. Zé, as soon as he notices the movement of *foliões* at the entrance to his property, goes to the door and from there he observes and listens to the arrival of the *folia* in his house. As the *foliões* approach the room's entrance door, Mr. Zé steps forward and goes into the room, where the players are heading while they play the *alvorada*, which only ends when everyone – *foliões* and owners of the house – are.

As soon as *alvorada* is over, a series of verbal interactions between the resident and the *foliões* begins. They are manners of friendly and relaxed greetings and usual compliments when people visit each other. Someone goes to Mr. Zé and asks "Are you okay?"; he replies "I'm fine, thank God!". Another *folião* reinforces "Are you really ok?" and then, addressing the owner of the house again, he asks "Blessing!?" Mr. Zé promptly reply with "God bless you!". Another *folião* arrives and jokingly asks "Steady and strong?". Mr. Zé, making fun of it, finishes off "And handsome too!". At that moment laughter takes over the environment. Mr. Zé, still in a playful tone, turns to me and speaks loudly so that everyone can hear: "Look at São José" (laughs) "Hey São José... thanks to God!",<sup>19</sup> more laughter. Finally, Mr. Martinho, a *folião* of the same generation as Mr. Zé, addresses him with the words "How you doing, *cumpadi* [buddy]?" and hears the answer "I'm fine, and you, *cumpadi*?".

At this point of arrival, the lines are loud, sometimes simultaneous and overlapping, creating an agonistic atmosphere of excitement and play. As Malinowski (1972

<sup>18</sup> | In addition to being based on listening to the sound recording made in this specific situation, my description is also based on two more complementary plans: first, using the observation and experience of several similar cases, the narrative detaches itself from this specific situation to present what it could be conceived as a recurring pattern of visits; second, the description of the concrete situation, as well as the abstract model, will be complemented with explanations, exegesis and elaborations by the *foliões* about the tuning process. In this direction, the present description simultaneously moves the three planes of the ethnographic perspective as formulated in the famous introduction by Malinowski (1922) to the "Argonauts of the Western Pacific", namely: 1) the "imponderables of real life" (flesh and blood), which is the way people act, behave and relate in real situations; 2) The scheme ("skeleton"), an abstraction constructed by the researcher based on the observation of the greatest possible number of real cases; 3) The "spirit", related to the natives' elaborations and explanations on a given subject.

[1930]) would say, more than communicating or informing, this type of communicative exchange aims to bring people together, produce sociability, keep a fellowship, gathering and friendship atmosphere. In such a communicational regime, the exchange of words without necessary or semantic meaning, aims to establish and prolong relationships, creating what is called “Comunhão pática [“communion experience”]. In Malinowski’s words, it is “a type of speech in which the bonds are made by the simple exchange of words”.<sup>20</sup>

With a strong propensity to establish and keep friendly contact between the participants – the *foliões* and the residents who receive them – these statements also delimit (and create) certain relationships and social positions (Tambiah, 1979). In this sense, greeting manners can be understood as rites that set status in two directions:

\* Vertically: requests and distribution of blessings between *foliões* and the owner of the house express and create asymmetries, legitimizing the authority of older people over younger people;

\* Horizontally: greetings also reveal and create relationships of equality and symmetry. This can be seen when two *compadres* [buddy] meet and recognize each other.

One way or another, what can be seen in these arrival and greeting rites, albeit with slight change with each new visit, is the way in which the hierarchies and relationships of social positions are far from being abstractions or pre-existing realities. On the contrary, they are created during solid activities and in the course of actions and interactions.<sup>21</sup>

## LOUDNESS, FREQUENCIES AND TUNINGS

While listening to the recording, it is noticeable how the laughter and speech decrease in intensity as the sound of the instruments is amplified, sounding and resonating in the environment, thus creating a singular “acoustic space” (Schafer, 1997 [1977]). Alongside the sounds, gestures such as the removal of hats and the *foliões*’ body movements evidence (and create) the ongoing transformation. The search for the sound threshold (the term I use to refer to the movement towards the tuned, attuned sound) involves multiple interactions and mediations (Hennion, 2003; 2011) – body movements, facial expressions, postures, looks, words, voices, musical instruments, sounds, among others.

Such movement of things, sounds and people gradually grows until it reaches its climax, when everyone plays together the same chord. At that time, the sounds of the instruments overlap and merge in the same frequency (loudness), making a constant sound pattern and in tune with the aesthetic and moral values of the *foliões*. When this

19 | At a certain point in this giro, Mr. Zé, whom I barely knew until then, started to joke with me saying that I was similar to São José. When the fun arrived at his house, following the protocol for these occasions, I went to greet him as well as did the others. What I didn’t expect was that he, jokingly and speaking loudly for everyone to hear, thanked God that São José was among them. In addition to some possible resemblance to the image him, the association of a (relative) strange and unknown with the sacred and mysterious was pointed out by Pitt-Rivers (2012) in an interesting study on the laws, rules and protocols of hospitality. Among other considerations, he shows how in relations between hosts and foreigners, the latter, in theory, represent dangers, threats and could be treated with hostility and insult. However, they also become guests and visitors, with whom the host starts to maintain friendly relationships of exchange and reciprocity. These relationships, however, do not prevent the differences between the respective roles (who receives and who arrives) from being eliminated.

20 | Malinowski (op.cit) says that breaking the silence with phrases like the European “It’s a beautiful day today” or the Melanesian “Where are you coming from?” it is the first act in the intercourse of a relationship whose main purpose is to establish, between the participants, bonds of friendship and exchange (not hostility, animosity or war). The link for intrinsic contact in this type of interaction is, for Jakobson, an example of the so-called “phatic function” (1973 [1960]), which, according to him, is to “see if the channel works”. Van Gennep (2011 [1908]), in his pioneering study of passage rites, had already pointed out that ‘greetings’ are important passage rites, as they promote aggregation and, therefore, acceptance and incorporation into the new environment for newcomers.

30 | In this way, following Bauman (1977), we can say that such rites are possible (since they are built in real interactions situated in time and space) and emergent (because things happen during their performance, relationships are produced and transformed).

threshold is reached and recognized, everyone remains silent for a few seconds until the guide intones the first chords of the sound on his viola.

The loudness reference for tuning is provided by the second string of the viola (from top to bottom, from bass to treble), called *baixão*<sup>22</sup>. The other strings of the viola, fiddle and guitar are tuned according to the *baixão* and *caixa*, the instrument most vulnerable to change, is always the last. As the late Neudir, one of the *foliões* who took charge of the process, explained to me:

I get the second string. The viola is better for giving the sound to others. The *caixa* is the last word, even if it's time to tune it. Suddenly the sun is hot outside, it's rising, it set, when you go in it's high again.

The tuning of the second string of the viola, or *baixão* (let's pay attention to this term), is the reference for the other strings and the sound indicator for the other instruments. It's provides the sound base of the group. However, the *baixão* of viola should be set according to the voice of the singer. Guitar players and other players tune their instruments according to the loudness of the voices of those who are going to sing. The tuning loudness should ultimately be good for singing.

The reference for the tuning process in folias, in this way, is the loudness. Relating loud and low, tuning is always a movement towards steady and sound ordering. Loud is always being built in the relationship between sounds and in the search for patterns of recurrence, always provisional, between the lowest and the loudest. During tuning, it is common to hear statements such as: "your *baixão* is on top."; "turn up the strings a little."; "Adjust the *caixa* a little bit more."; "It's missing."; "There's still a little difference."; "that's right". It is the listening, the perception of what is heard, gestures, body movements, looks and facial expressions that drive the process.

As Neudir explains again:

We got it right, right? Because sometimes someone has that instrument that isn't in tune, so they play loudly, they can make the right notes, as if they overshadow the sound of others. So, for example, when you're close; then you find out; so I go to them and to speak about it.

Movement towards a sound threshold, the tuning makes a texture of sounds that seek to stabilize at some point. The objective of the process, as the *folião* explains, is to place all instruments at the same loud (or frequency) so that neither of them overshadows the sound of the other. This metaphor reveals an ideal that values the whole (in the sense of collectivity), whose existence depends on how each instrument individually contributes and integrates into the totality. In this sense, an instrument,

22 | The viola, from the point of view of the aforementioned organological system by Sachs and Hornbostel [1961] (1914), is a ten-stringed chordophone, distributed in five orders of double strings. At Taboquinha, the strings of the viola are put in order of pairs from top to bottom (following the classification of the *folião* Neudir). They are: *bordão*, *baixão*, *retinta* and *baixim*, *toeira* and *prima*. String pairs are tuned in unison, as in the case of the fourth and fifth orders, respectively, or in octaves, as in the case of the first, second and third orders. In the case of the first two, the strings of smaller caliber, thinner, octaves, are called fellows of *baixão* and *bordão*. In the case of the third order, each string is given a name, with the *retinta* being the lowest and the *baixão* the loudest. For a more detailed description of the viola and other musical instruments used in the folias, see: Chaves and Fonseca (2005).



to fit with the other, must vibrate at the same frequency (and not sound above or below).<sup>23</sup>

Attunement (Schutz, [1951] 1976), built on the balance dynamics between voltage, frequencies and tunings, is expressed in the last chord, when everyone plays in unison. At that time, differences are kept down, uncertainties ordered and dissonances controlled. Tuning, from this perspective, is a process of searching for the ideal loudness (neither too low nor too high) for singing, thus creating a good context for performance. Loudness is based on the singer's vocal range and in the *foliões'* ears.

So, the first step in tuning is defining the loudness corresponding to the *baixão* of viola sound. With the reference of the *baixão* of viola sound, each player can attune their own instrument. Once the tuning is defined, the focus is on the relationship between the other strings of the instrument and the link between the singer's voice and the *baixão*. Thus, the *folião*, before checking the tuning with the others, must adjust its instrument by itself. It should be noted that, regardless of the *baixão* note (C, D or G), what matters is the relationship between its sound and the sound of the other strings. This is what guides the tuning. Sound, visual and bodily, the process requires from the player, in addition to a refined auditory perception, attention to the other (their gestures, expressions and attitudes). We can say that the whole body (and all the senses) participates in the tuning.<sup>24</sup>

Once the *baixão* sound is defined, the job becomes to adjust all the strings from it. The tuning takes place in a continuous sound (of tuning, frequencies and voltages). More than designating fixed states, the reference to the loudness of sounds points to relationships that are sensorially perceived by attentive ears. Relationships that, in seeking a threshold in this universe of possibilities and in this continuous movement of sounds and loudness (from the loudest to the lowest), remind us of Lévi-Strauss' reflections on chromatism (2004 [1964]).<sup>25</sup>

Engaging in tuning, therefore, involves two moves:

1) An individual work by the musician with its instrument, after all, ultimately, each one is responsible for attuning their own instrument. This is the condition for playing it in the folia, even if the process is started with the sound provided by the viola of the most suitable to guide the process. Thus, it is not uncommon to see *foliões*, after getting the guide sound, moving with their instruments to tune them alone, or even in pairs.

2) Once the tuning of each instrument is finished separately, the *foliões* get together again and tune the sound of their instruments together.

From a temporal point of view, we can say that the tuning moves (and moves

23 | The term "frequency" is being used by me in the sense pointed out by scholars of musical acoustics, such as Everest & Pohlmann (2009). According to them, the "frequency" of a sound refers both to the property of how the sound wave propagates in the environment (a physical property, therefore) and the way it is perceived by human ears (a psycho-acoustic phenomenon). As they pointed out, the singularity of a frequency is measured by the number of repetitions or cycles of the sound wave in a given unit of time (usually measured per second): the more repetitions, the higher and higher the frequencies and vice versa (fewer cycles per second means sounds at lower and bass frequencies). Although frequency and loudness cannot be equated, since other aspects must be taken into account, such as intensity and timbre, the two phenomena, as they are keen to emphasize, are analogous and it is in this sense that I use the terms in this article. As we are seeing, during tuning, the *foliões'* effort is directed to stabilize the different frequencies (perceivable constant slipping between low and high sounds) in the same tuning pattern (not too high or too low). To tune like this, as an argument, is a movement, a search towards a constant, regular and ordered frequency (loudness).

24 | Schutz shows that the mutual relational attunement implied in musical making involves, in addition to sharing time, also share the same space. Which leads a musician not only to listen to the other, but also to see it and act taking into account what the other performs (its movement) in time and space. In the words of the author, the environment of co-presence (spatial-temporal): "it is possible because making music together takes place in a true face-to-face relationship – as the participants are sharing not just a portion of time, but also a part of space" ([1951] 1976:176). Baily and Driver, in an interesting study on the blues guitar, say that the main component of musical cognition should not be sought in ergonomic aspects (which are related to the capabilities and limitations of human factors), but in what they call "thinking motor-space", which takes place in the interaction between the physical and bodily movements of the players and the morphology

in) two temporalities: at first, after the *baixão* loudness is defined, it happens string by string, step-by-step, successively, extending chronologically along the timeline. In this plane, *foliões* experience individually and/or in pairs, in diachrony, the sequence of acts that make tuning a measurable phenomenon, in what Schutz calls "outer time"<sup>26</sup>. In a second phase, the tuning moves vertically and synchronously (in simultaneity), at the moment (which does not coincide with measurable time), in what Schutz, inspired by Bergson, calls continuance (or "inner time"). This experience is expressed when everyone, starting from the same sound (the *baixão*) and after having tuned their instruments, play together and simultaneously the same chord. Singing, the most sacred moment of a visit, does not start without reaching this threshold.<sup>27</sup>

Having presented the tuning process, let's return to the *baixão* category, which, as we've seen, is used to name a specific viola string, the one that provides the basis for tuning. When following other uses of the same term, still in the context of *folia*, it is clear that *baixão* also alludes to a sonorous figure present in the song and which represents the extension of the last syllable at the end of verses pair. In these contexts, the term *baixão* is about the large "pedal" that sonorously delimit the passage between the question and the answer (or vice versa) and that coincides with the passage between the performances of the two pairs of singers. The point is that such a threshold involves an intertwining of voices, at a given moment (however ephemeral it may be), that sounds like a single and undivided sound (Chaves, 2014a).

Comparing the uses of the term *baixão* in the two situations (tuning and singing), it is clear that in both contexts the category has the same general meaning—the search for an experience of continuity, coherence, ordering and stability. The analysis of the meaning of the term, which couples the augmentative suffix "ão" to the adjective *baixo* [bass] (big bass), demonstrates bass, treble or heavy sound that support the basis of sound production. The value that the bass sound has from the perspective of *foliões* can also be noticed in the singing duo—the guide is the one who sings in the lowest way. It is worth remembering that, in the opposite sense, the diminutive "inho" is coupled to the noun, creating the term *small bass*—a term that names another string on the viola.

Schafer, in the aforementioned study on "soundscape", whose title is "The tuning of the world", draws attention to the fact that in soundscapes defined by low frequencies (such as waves when they break on the beach, planes depart in the skies or even popular music with its powerful bass amplifiers), the listener is immersed in the sound. That is, "the listener is at the middle of the sound; involved by it" (op. cit.: 170). In acoustic environments marked by medium and high frequencies (the concert hall being the exemplary case), the listener experiences sound as something external to it, placed in space and distinguishable in its development. Regardless of the criticism that we may direct to Schafer's model, whether for its schematism or for its reified and overly pictured conception of the "landscape" category (Ingold, 2015), the idea of a bass sound as a propellant of certain auditory experiences seems to me to be thought-provoking for

of the instruments. From this perspective, sound production and musical perception are related to the human body, the instrument's body and space. It is in this interaction that musical making and thinking are carried out. When observing how, on the blues guitar, the arrangement of notes along the six strings of the instrument enables and encourages some modes (arrangements) of playing, Baily and Driver consider the centrality of the sound dimension as the main means of thought and musical cognition: "The hypothesis that this arrangement encourages spatial thinking suggests that musical patterns are remembered and executed not solely as aural patterns but sequences of movement patterns which have visual, kinaesthetic, tactile, as well as auditory repercussions" (1992: 61).

25 | The phenomenon of chromatism, for Lévi-Strauss, is associated with small (and tiny) intervals (visual or sound). In his conception, instead of producing dissociation and distinctions between domains (as happen in large intervals), small intervals establish continuities and passages. The example of the rainbow is remembered several times throughout the "mythological" ones (especially in volume I, "The raw and the cooked"), in order to exemplify the mixtures, passages and juxtapositions created from the small chromatic intervals. While the chromatic (in music and painting) deals with small changes and intervals, the diatonic emphasizes large intervals, discontinuities and more or less well-defined dissociation. The small differences make the chromatic, according to Lévi-Strauss, a source of danger, instability and search: "It is as if the South American thought, decidedly pessimistic in its inspiration, diatonic in its orientation, attributed to chromatism a kind of original maleficence, such that the great intervals, indispensable in culture for it to exist, and in nature, for man to think about it, can only result from the self-destruction of a primitive continuum whose strength is still felt in the rare points where still survived: or for the benefit of man, in the form of the poisons it came to command; or against it, in the rainbow,

think about the case of folias.

In this correlation, we can say that the bass category, as a kind of sound around which the folias' tuning and musical system are organized, points to a sound experience (or way of hearing) that stressed involvement, continuity and immersion. The bass, in the musical (or "musicological") thinking of *foliões*, is a sound that go through, mixes, conveys, fills the environment with its presence that it itself becomes the environment, involving everyone with its regular, constant, simultaneous, and orderly frequency.

### THREATS, RISKS AND RUPTURES

The desired consensus, balance and stability (which the *baixão* category seems to express well) are provisional, tenuous and fragile as the strings of a viola. They face the threat of being broken at any and all times – which reveals the constant risk of the tuning not being successful, of not working out. A risky and uncertain company, tuning is subject to dangers, "impurities" and "contaminations" (Mary Douglas, 1976 [1966]) or "misfortunes" (Austin, 1962).

Consequently, tuning reveals a double nature: on the one hand, its purpose is to create order, stability, integration and cohesion from a sound ideal of balance. After all, as the late folião used to say, "the sound of one instrument must not overshadow the sound of the other"; moreover, tuning is also dealing with the unknown, with danger and with the evil that is always lurking. In the researched region, actions that destabilize the tuning of the folias are known as *atrapalho, malinagem and feitiço [inconvenience, wickedness and spell]*. In general, they are intentional actions of certain people moved by envy and that conduct rites (private and secret) for certain musical instruments. Not by chance, precisely the string instruments, including the *caixas* and the singers' voices.

By way of illustration and already heading to the end of this prose, I will mention some situations I experienced or related by me that point to the dangers, conflicts and tensions present in the universe of folia. Incidents that act directly on the tuning of instruments or on the singers' voices. The following narrative was related to me by Zé de Júlio, a *folião* who hosted me during my last field trip, between December 2018 and January 2019. I was at my host's house on a rainy afternoon when the conversation arose about the inconvenience, wickedness and spell in the *folia*. As I was interested in the subject, I wound up my host. He told me the following story. I transcribe it directly from my field notebook:

Martinho Capeta was the guide, Mr. Martinho (my host during most of my fieldwork) the counter-guide (or "verse catcher"). It was a folia for Bom Jesus, under a hot, dry sun. They were singing in a house when a man arrives, apparently from a family of famous sorcerers in the region. He says the man cast a spell on the folia that the instruments knocked out of

which it cannot control" (2004 [1964]:321). The tuning, built on the relationship between the sound of the strings through tensioning and the continuous search for small differences, can be thought of as an chromaticism example.

26 | For Schutz, one of the forms of temporal music existence is its measurability, the possibility of its division and subdivision into homogeneous temporalities: "Of course, playing an instrument, listening to a record, reading a page of music all these events occurring in outer time, the time that can be measured by metronomes and clocks, that is, the time that musician 'counts' in order to assure the correct "time" (op.cit.:171). The temporal dimension associated with chronometry (measurement of intervals), shared to the outside time of a watch (or metronome), is present in the tuning when it is observed that the practice, however careful and durable, cannot (or should not) be prolonged indefinitely.

27 | In this sense, the tuning in the folias seems to expand the observations made by Oliveira Pinto (2001), when he says that: "Different in rhythm or even in melodic configurations, the tuning structures and the combination of intervals already present a vertical disposition. As they result from sonic simultaneities, the vertical aspects of all music are often more difficult to perceive than the horizontal ones, which extend along the timeline. Instrument tunings belong to this vertical domain of sound structures" (2001: 241). What we are seeing in the case of folia is that the tuning, in addition to being placed in the verticality and simultaneity of the sounds that can be perceived in the last chord, also unfolds in the temporality, succession and movement of sequential sounds.

tune at once. Mr. Martinho's voice disappeared, he was silent. Then they went on the singing, finishing as it was. In the next house, they "attuned" the instruments on the way and started another chant. Until he started with acuity, but with time everything got messed up. In the end, Zezinho (Mr. Martinho's son and a religious leader in the community) decided to look for a healer in Riacho Fundo (a town next to Taboquinha). He took a cachaça for her and told her what had happened. The old healer looked at the bottle of cachaça and inside she saw the figure of a man, the one who caused the misfortune to the folia. She also said that it was people close to him who did the wickedness and that as a defense, all the foliões, before starting the song, should gather and each one take a sip of the beverage blessed by her. Said and done! Everyone drank the beverage that the old woman had prepared and the folia gradually became normal again.

Following Zé de Júlio's narrative, one can see how risks, threats and dangers are always on the lookout for folia. As I have heard several times, just as the wise men had to deal with the evil personified in the figure of Herod, whose intention was to chase and kill Jesus, the *foliões* also come into contact with these forces during the *giros*. Tensions, conflicts and dangers are constant in folia. Therefore, attention and care must be redoubled. Still following the *folião's* narrative, we see that the spell is not only headed at musical instruments, detuning them, but also at the singers' voices. We also learned that every spell (or attack) has a counter-spell (defence).

During field research, especially in *folias* located on the left (or west) bank of São Francisco, I came across some situations in which *foliões* sought to defend themselves against possible attacks. They sought to prevent themselves by eliminating (or reducing) the power and effectiveness of these dangers. Thus, it is usual in this region that *foliões* produce the so-called medicine – a mixture of roots and plants introduced in a bottle that will be used to put the cachaça offered for folia.

*Foliões* during the *gira* should only drink the beverage, which works both organically (helping, for example, in the digestion of heavy food or in supporting the singer's voice, punished for its intense and prolonged use) and spiritually (defending against inconveniences, wickedness and spells). In some festivities that I followed, the medicine was sent in a sack or bag and carried by the *alferes* [ensign], those in charge of carrying the flag and those responsible for the cachaça distribution<sup>28</sup>.

Regarding this matter, I transcribe an excerpt from the interview I did in August 2005 with Mr. João, *alferes* of folia and brother of the guide Rivalino, both residents of Pau d'Oleo, a town on the left bank of São Francisco, on the banks of the Pardo river :

In my folia we don't drink white cachaça! It's already prepared, we prepare it before... Then, put some root, some *unha danta*, that *quina rosa*, put Jataí honey, so it doesn't mess, cinnamon, cloves... put it in the drink for it to be delicious...

It has to be three or nine, no pair, leave a single one. There he takes the wood chips, takes it from another until it makes nine roots, then mash all of it, puts it in the bottle, the cachaça is sent to my home, as I am in charge I take and give it to my fellows. The *foliões* only drink from this cachaça.

And it take off some disturbance?

Yes, there is a saying that says it takes off, but I don't know if it takes off, right? We do some invocations that we don't drink it pure, because we say that we get screwed, drink a drop of one type here, another one there. And it being with the mixture, the taste of the mixture is already in it.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Tuning, which we saw as a collective practice in which multiple expressive and sensory means are combined and mobilized, is an action, an event, a performance that transforms the environment and people. It produces harmony and create "frames", establishing different links and connections. From the ethnographic report, the relational nature of tuning can be seen in multiple planes:

- 1) in the context of social relations: we saw how tuning creates proximity and engagement between people, bringing them together and enabling a sense of belonging and experience of the collectivity;
- 2) on the sensory level: tuning mobilizes the senses of hearing, vision and touch, thus producing a synesthetic and multisensory experience in the participants;
- 3) in the scope of the ritual process: it articulates different moments in the sequence of folia, being an important link for the passage between the *foliões'* walk from one house to another and the movement inside the houses;
- 4) on the level of temporalities: tuning articulates chronological time, as manifested when each *folião* individually attune string by string of their instrument, with synchronous, simultaneous and internal time, collectively experienced at the moment when all together play the same chord ;
- 5) on the cosmological plane: to tune is to engage in a clash with forces and potencies of good and evil, pure and impure, order and disorder, continuities and ruptures, consonances and dissonances.

As we have followed throughout the article, tuning is moving (putting into movement) words, bodies, objects and especially sounds in search of a threshold that transforms the flow of interactions - from informality, composure and dispersion observed in the arrival to seriousness, concentration and formality present in

28 | In Douglas' terms, we could say that the consumption of the medicine during the giro would be an ordering practice, which cleans, purifies and defends the *foliões* against threats, dangers and impurities arising from inconveniences, wickedness and spells. In his reflections on the relationships between order (purity) and disorder (impurity) in the beliefs, practices and dynamics of witchcraft and magic accusations, the anthropologist, thinking especially about the second category, clarifies that: "As we know it, impurity is essentially disorder. Absolute impurity exists only in the eyes of the beholder. If we dodge it, it is not out of cowardly fear or dread or sacred terror that we feel. Our ideas of illness also do not account for the diversity of our cleansing or impurity avoidance reactions. Impurity is an offense against order. By eliminating it, we don't make a negative gesture; on the contrary, we make a positive effort to organize our environment" (op.cit.: 6-7).

the song, the most solemn and sacred moment of the visit. However, tuning, as a production of “framing” (*frames* in Bateson's terms) and collective experience (similar to what Tambiah calls “interpersonal arrange and Schutz as “mutual tuning in relationship”), is a risky enterprise, dangerous, susceptible to countless imponderables and “misfortunes” (Ausitn, 1962) that, at the limit, may not work.

Thus, the nature of the “frame” in tuning is always a search, a becoming. In this sense, we should problematize, still with Bateson, the idea of frame in its physical and real dimensions (in its nuance of limit, as a line that somewhat precisely split the inside from outside).<sup>29</sup>

In the tuning of the *folias*, as we have seen, the “frame” is always provisional and unstable. Although understood as a kind of “interpretive context”, whose intention is to order and direct (tune) the perception of participants to a “frame” that values the inside (in which perception is intensified) to the outside (inhibited perception), tuning, even with subliminal messages such as: “Pay attention to what is inside and do not pay attention to what is outside” (Bateson, op.cit: 43), is not immune to dangers, uncertainties and paradoxes. Because segregation is never absolute. There are bonds, connections, contagions, nexuses, mediations and multiple entanglements.

Tuning, therefore, is to produce involvement, syntony, and balance in a world crossed by threats, uncertainties and risks. After all, as replicate by Riobaldo, who, in the Grande Sertão Veredas, by Guimaraes Rosa- “walked through the same regions where the *foliões* who we have followed so far walked: “Living is really very dangerous”.

I cannot neglect that as Ester led Emily to speak together with and from God the difficulty in completing the Creed became evident. Faced with the girl's failure

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29 | Simmel's perspective on the meanings and functions of “frames” in works of art also seems to indicate openings for problematizing the fixed and limiting character of “frames” and “framing”. In this direction, in the essay “The frame, an aesthetic essay”, published in 1902, Simmel observes a process of change in the meanings and functions of the “frame” throughout the history of art – from the classical period, when the work of art was conceived as an integrated, autonomous and self-sufficient reality “a being in itself, a totality, a closed world that isolates itself from the outside”, the “frame” functioned as the reinforcement mechanism of this unity, independence and dissociation of the work in relation to what it was exterior to the modern period, when the work of art as a totality dissolves and becomes part of other totalities. For this contradictory situation of the work of art (integral in itself, but which needs to make another totality with the outside environment), Simmel perceives a change in the function of the “frame”. This ceases to be a boundary between worlds and starts to perform the mediation task. In the author's words: “The work of art finds itself in the contradictory situation of having to make, together with its environment, an integral whole, already being, in itself, a whole; In this the general trouble of life is repeated in which elements of totalities claim their own autonomy. It is evident that the frame needs to be subtly considered through advances and retreats, energies and delays so that through vision it can fulfill its task within the visible of mediating between the work of art and its environment, through the creation of links and its dissolution - task this one in whose historical analogy the individual and society reciprocally consume” (Simmel, 2016 [1902]:173).

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