

In Salvador, Bahia, Brazilians demonstrate the art of Capoeira on the streets as a tourist attraction. In this city, about 1,000 miles north of Rio de Janeiro, much

of the African culture brought over during slavery times, has been retained.

## Japanese have KARATE

## • Chinese have KUNG FU

## Black Man's Martial Art CAPOEIRA:

By William Moore

If you think that black people do not have a martial art of their very own, much as Chinese people have kung fu and Japanese have karate, then you are sadly mistaken.

There is a black martial art that had its very beginning in Africa but was developed into an intricate martial art and deadly art of defense during the last three hundred years in Brazil.

It was called Capoeira by the Africans who brought it to Brazil from Angola. They first used this method of fighting to escape into the large Brazilian interior where they could live as free men.

As the Portuguese slave bounty hunters made expeditions into the thick of the interior, they met up with Africans deftly using their feet in acrobatic fashion in **PAGE 22** 

combat against the arms the hunters carried.

These Africans developed this martial art to keep themselves from being returned to a miserable life of slavery.

Capoeira was a quick and agile way that a man could defend himself

A man would take advan-

tage of the strongest muscle

in his body, the leg's thigh

muscle, to deliver stunning

blows quickly and effectively

against an opponent with a weapon. Mule kicks, rapidly swinging turn kicks and somersaults to move and escape were a part of this defense system.

to his opponent.

When slaves escaped, they had no weapons with which to defend themselves.

in Brazil.

Result: Their own martial art.

> had been flourishing among the slaves as fathers passed it along to their sons, their only means of defending themselves or retaining their freedom if they escaped.

This was the development

of Capoeira in colonial Brazil

of the late 1600s through the

1700s into the 1800s when

slavery was finally abolished

The Portuguese

slave owners,

quite naturally,

did not take too

kindly to the art of

Capoeira, and

thus made it

illegal to teach the

art which

The law that made Capoeira illegal was sidetracked by the slaves who just disguised the deadly martial art with music and drums, making it seem like a dance that men performed in competition together.

They would learn all the deadly steps and discipline of Capoeira to music, to the delight of their owners who thought it was just entertain-

In reality the drumming, the singing and the playing of the tamourine and the African on stringed bow-like instrument called the berimbau managed to cover-up the art of Capoeira as a deadly martial art.

The slave owners did not realize that the same deadly art they had outlawed was being taught and practiced by men as a dance.

The musical accom-(Continued on Page 24)

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