PANDEIRO: THE TRADITION EVOLVES

Considered the national instrument of Brazil, the Pandeiro has a unique history. Like all frame drums, its origin can be traced to North Africa and the Middle East, and through migration via Portugal to Brazil. The Pandeiro eventually attained its own identity; one that varies from region to region in Brazil.

Originally, the Pandeiro was not played with the constant 16th note rotation in the left hand that one would typically see today. This rotation has become relatively standard in the last 10 to 15 years. Many Samba players use "double thumbs" to play a pattern. Shown below is a more modern approach.

Notation Key

TH = thumb = closed

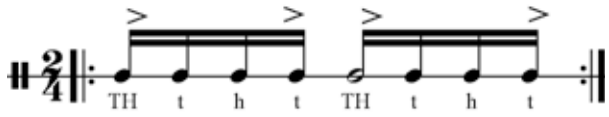
t =tip = open

SL = Slap x = slap

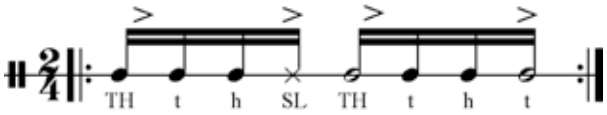
h =heel

Samba Patterns

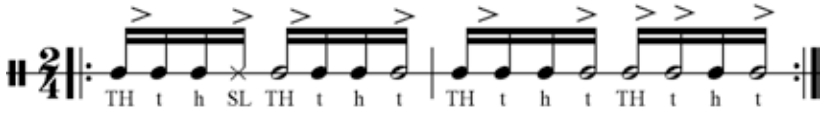
To utilize the constant 16th note motion, the pattern uses a base note on the tips instead of the thumb to utilize "hand-over-hand" technique adapted for the Pandeiro.



As samba evolves, players change the pattern slightly.



When playing Choro or Samba, it helps to think of the Surdo, which is what the base notes are copying and embellishing. A great way to practice, is listening to the Surdo patterns and then try to adapt them to the Pandeiro.

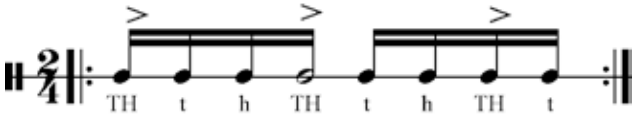


North Eastern rhythms such as the Baião, Côco and Maracatú have become much more popular, within Brazil and internationally. In the same way that the Pandeiro copies the Surdo in a Samba or Choro pattern, the Pandeiro also copies the Zabumba (Baião)or Alfaia (Maracatú) bass drums, in the North Eastern rhythms.

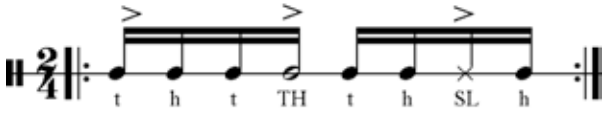
Here is an evolution of the Baião pattern on the Pandeiro:

Baião Patterns

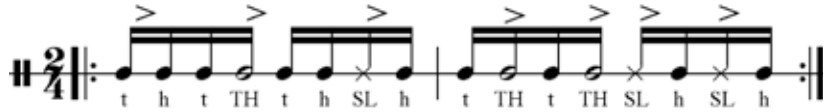
1. Traditional Baião pattern starting with thumbs:

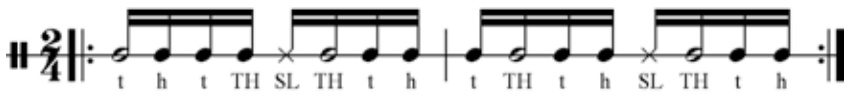


2. Similar Baião pattern starting with the finger-tips which maintains a constant 16th note motion in the left hand:



3. Baião variation adapted from Zabumba:



4. Maracatu rhythm played on pandeiro starting with the thumb: / Maracatú rhythm starting on finger-tips:

5. Maracatu-funk: