

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Memória do Jongo: As Gravações Históricas de Stanley J. Stein: Vassouras 1949* by Silvia Hunold Lara and Gustavo Pacheco

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final chapter examines the Argentine writer Juana Manso, whose outspoken views on women's rights resulted in marginalisation in her time, and thereby serves to bring Manso back from that exile.

In addition to the interesting and insightful reading provided by these chapters, some overall advantages of this book include its uniting of textual analysis of the 'big' (male) writers of South American independence, along with the less-studied work of women of the era. Similarly, the joining of historical and literary methods and material (with a healthy splash of feminist theory) makes the book a rounded study of the subject. The inclusion of both gender analysis and a focus on women brings a methodological sophistication to the book; however, this reader would have liked to see some discussion of the construction of masculinity as well. Another issue is the relatively sparse material on Brazil. These minor shortcomings should not, however, detract from the overall usefulness of this volume. It could be used successfully in upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses in history, literature, and Latin American studies. And it goes without saying that for scholars of the independence era it is an important addition to bibliographies and bookshelves.

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Silvia Hunold Lara and Gustavo Pacheco (eds.), *Memória do Jongo: As Gravações Históricas de Stanley J. Stein: Vassouras 1949* (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Edições Folha Seca, 2007), pp. 197, \$25.00, pb.

Memória do Jongo is perhaps best viewed as extended liner notes to the CD that accompanies the book, as, in effect, the volume aims to contextualise the recordings made by Stanley J. Stein in 1949, during his research into the daily life on a coffee plantation in the Vale do Paraíba (Rio de Janeiro state) from 1850 to 1900. While the CD contains a few examples of other musical genres, such as sambas, folk renditions of recorded popular songs, and a tune from the mummer-like ensembles known as *folias de reis*, the bulk of the recordings, 60 in all, are of *pontos de jongo*, that is, short songs to accompany the jongo, a dance that was performed as both entertainment and religious expression by the slaves on the coffee plantations of southeastern Brazil. Often no more than ten seconds in length, the recordings of the *pontos* involve a solo male voice, sometimes accompanied by clapping, performing a set of two or more lines to demonstrate the text and melody of each item. These historic recordings, made on a wire recorder owned by the US Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, remained hidden in a drawer for nearly 60 years. Once found, they prompted a series of projects associated with the jongo and the pioneering research of Stanley Stein, culminating in this publication.

In the introductory chapter Gustavo Pacheco provides a basic description of the jongo (also known as the *caxambu* or *tambu*), showing its links to other African-Brazilian communal circle dances, such as the *batuque*, the *candombe*, the *samba de umbigada*, among others. The chapter also includes a useful overview of the history of ethnographic recordings across the Black Atlantic, which helps highlight the importance of this collection and its item-based orientation to recording. The chapter concludes by introducing each musical genre contained on the CD. The discussion of the jongo centres on the poetic resources used in the *pontos*, noting

how metaphors were used by the slaves to conceal from their white masters the true meaning of the words.

In the second chapter the reader is treated to a personal narrative by Stanley Stein himself, highlighting the multiple influences that ultimately led him to produce his classic book, *Vassouras, a Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900* (1957), not least among them his wife, Barbara Stein, who had been in Brazil in 1940 studying the abolitionist movement. His own interests centred on colonial export economies, which he hoped to merge with a ‘community studies’ perspective. If such a perspective were to generate a ‘total history’, it would have to encompass the experience of the slaves, a social category whose story could not be uncovered through traditional historiographic methods. Following the lead of other researchers at the time, such as Melville Herskovits and Benjamin Botkin, Stein turned to the songs and narratives of the descendants of slaves. Thus, *pontos de jongo*, of which 15 are cited in *Vassouras*, became central sources in gaining access to the ‘voice’ of the slaves.

Although titled ‘Vassouras and the sounds of captivity in Brazil’ (*Vassouras e os sons do cativo no Brasil*), the next chapter, by Silvia Humbolt Lara, is actually a detailed contextualisation of *Vassouras* within academia. Interestingly, she shows how the reception of the book in the USA, where it was immediately recognised as much more than a local history in showing how wider national processes could affect a local setting, contrasted with its reception in Brazil, where the academic focus was concerned with understanding the shift from a slave economy to agrarian capitalism and its impact on the Brazilian black population. To Brazilian academics, the social world portrayed in *Vassouras* seemed to confirm the view that the old plantocracy was a hindrance to the country’s economic progress. This view of the book would change radically in the 1980s, however, once Brazilian historiography began to encompass the excluded and turn its attention to the documentation of everyday practice. As the range of modes of daily negotiations and strategies employed by slaves throughout Brazil came to be recognised, the innovative research methodologies Stein had employed were heralded as exemplary models to be followed.

Hebe Mattos and Martha Abreu contributed Chapter Four, which provides an extensive survey of historical sources referring to the *jongo* throughout southeastern Brazil. Beginning in the early nineteenth century and throughout the 1800s, travelers documented their reactions to the dance, ranging from disgust to total fascination. In the first half of the twentieth century, however, the main sources are to be found in the works of folklore collectors, whose interests in the *jongo* were linked to nationalist projects. A sociological orientation began to develop around the mid-twentieth century, generating studies aimed at gaining an insider’s perspective; it is, of course, within this model that Stein’s work is situated. Finally, the authors show how local communities of *jongo* performers today are re-appropriating their heritage. In some instances, as amongst the *jongadeiros* of São José da Serra, the dance has even been used to legitimise claims to land rights.

The last chapter is a fascinating socio-linguistic study by Robert W. Slenes. It begins by identifying the linguistic links between the *jongo* and the Bantu-speaking regions in the Portuguese territories of West Central Africa. It then shows how many of the metaphors employed in the texts of the *pontos* derive from common Bantu associations. For instance, following an African poetic device that associates social roles to distinct animals or plants, many *jongos* link the plantation owners to

the *embaúba*, a tall, domineering tree, whose wood is, however, useless; furthermore, it seems to be lazy, as it is favoured by the sloth. Similarly, the frequent references to armadillos, animals with a great capacity to dig deep holes in which to hide, highlight the abilities of slaves to conceal themselves from their masters.

At the back of the book there is a series of photos of plantation life taken by Stanley Stein, and this is followed by the texts of all the songs on the CD, a very useful addition, as it is not always easy to understand the singers on the recordings, despite the meticulous cleaning processes they underwent following digitisation. I was somewhat disappointed that the volume did not dedicate more space to the musical dimension of the *jongo*. But, even so, the book as a whole is unquestionably an outstanding and deserving tribute to Stanley Stein's legacy to Brazilian scholarship.

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Maya Talmon-Chvaicer, *The Hidden History of Capoeira: A Collision of Cultures in the Brazilian Battle Dance* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008), pp. xi + 237, \$ 24.95, pb.

Recent years have seen the practice of capoeira accorded greater importance in different fields. In the Brazilian context public policies have been funding projects related to capoeira, and in the international arena capoeira groups have proliferated in many countries around the world, and been used in advertising campaigns targeting a wider public. The remarkable expansion of the practice outside Brazil has been accompanied by a growing interest from academics, anthropologists, historians, sociologists and educators in North America and Europe who see capoeira as a subject of study inviting a wide range of possible interpretations.

Maya Talmon-Chvaicer's book fits into this wave of new interpretations of the history of capoeira. Her focus, she says in the introduction, is to reveal narratives that were suppressed or excluded from history books, in particular the importance and influence of Congolese and Yoruban culture. Therefore throughout the book she suggests connections between the practice of capoeira and rituals and languages of the West and West Central African cultures.

The context of capoeira in the early nineteenth century is analysed with the help of primary sources already well known to scholars: travellers' accounts, images, reports from the Royal Police, and the Brazilian legislation that punished capoeiras. The text is enriched by an intense dialogue with other researchers of the history of capoeira and slavery in colonial Brazil. The transatlantic slave trade between Africa and Brazil is analysed with the aim of identifying the possible provenance of capoeiras in the early nineteenth century and its probable 'cultural roots'.

Regarding its origins, Talmon-Chvaicer believes that the foundations of capoeira were built through the transatlantic slave trade, by combining West Central African fighting techniques, war dances and combat games that arrived in Brazil. She notes the fragility of the arguments that are used to trace the African origins of capoeira by highlighting the lack of conclusive evidence. Interestingly, she proposes the concept of 'African games' to better understand capoeira: according to Congo culture the 'game' is incorporated into a philosophy of life, a way of understanding life and to prepare for it. The author analyses capoeira and its surrounding universe, from the etymology of the name, through its rituals, the clothing of its practitioners, the