

Memória do jongo: As gravações históricas de Stanley J. Stein, Vassouras, 1949. Edited by SILVIA HUNOLD LARA and GUSTAVO PACHECO. Rio de Janeiro: Folha Seca / CECULT, 2007. Photographs. Illustrations. Notes. Lyrics. CD. 197 pp. Paper.

Jongo is a combination of dance, chanting, drumming, and spiritual ritual originally performed by African descendants in coffee and sugar plantation areas in southeastern Brazil. Currently, *Jongo* is performed as part of a variety of cultural and political practices of Afro-descendant groups in urban and rural areas. This book, a collection of reminiscences, song transcriptions, and primary sources on Brazilian and Atlantic slavery organized by the historian Silvia H. Lara and the anthropologist Gustavo Pacheco, has the flavor of music. This is not only because the book includes a CD with recordings of *Jongo* practitioners and singers made by Stanley and Barbara Stein in 1948 in Paraíba Valley. The diverse authors of this book return to songs themselves each time they contextualize, analyze, and reflect on how, under what conditions, and with which theoretical, technical, and methodological approaches music and dance were transformed into knowledge and document.

As a young Harvard graduate student in history following WWII, Stanley Stein envisioned a study on the economy of a post-slavery society, following Charles Wagley and other North American social scientists and historians' views on "plantation America." The coffee plantation area of Paraíba Valley offered the possibility of studying economic development cycles and the aftermath of abolition. In 1947 Stein and his wife, the historian Barbara Stein, went to Paraíba Valley and the Vassouras region. Instead of an isolated stay limited to visits to the local archives, they interacted with planters, rural workers, former slaves and overseers, local dwellers, merchants, and others. Although slavery was not his primary interest, Stein managed, in his words, "to live together with people who were there, in the same scenario where they had spent their whole life" (p. 51). Stein's research tools were a combination of ethnographic and historical methodologies. By studying fieldwork techniques under Melville Herskovits and by reading ethnographies and case studies written by Robert Redfield and other anthropologists, the Steins learned to conduct interviews, to interact with people in the field, and to pay attention to material culture and social relations and to the "need to establish a relationship of explicit empathy with the community" (p. 38). Stein identifies these microsocial approaches as a kind of forebear of social history as it was proposed by the French historians. Stein also underscores the role of Brazilian historians in both his training and his book.

The transformation of Stanley Stein's dissertation into the book *Vassouras, a Brazilian Coffee County, 1850-1900* (Harvard University Press, 1957) is considered in depth by the historian Silvia Lara, who tracks the reception of the book among Brazilian scholars. In the midst of different intellectual and political debates that have transformed Brazilian historiography over more than three decades, the book was rediscovered by a new generation of scholars. From a "case study" of a small municipality in the southwest of Rio de Janeiro state, it became an example of the combination of rich sources in which the voices and agency of slaves and their descendants could be heard. In this new context

of reception, Jongo lyrics and Jongo practitioners appeared as privileged sources through which the conditions and culture of the everyday life of slaves could be understood. Until then a subject of only folkloric interest, Lara claims, Jongo lyrics seemed to reveal a different perspective on slavery, supposedly free of the researcher's mediation and intervention. In a chapter analyzing the place of Jongo in folklorist literature, Hebe Mattos and Martha Abreu describe the contemporary reappropriation of this singular meaning of Jongo as a kind of window on the "slavery past." Robert Slenes goes further, analyzing the entangled *pontos* and *cumbas*, specific themes developed and repeated in Jongo verses and refrains, through a careful reading of the historical literature on colonial slavery in Central Africa. References to religious practices—among others, those related to healing and witchcraft—reveal the plurality of linguistic and cultural influences intervening in Jongo songs. Finally, if for historians, Jongs are a unique source for scholarly understanding of the social history of slavery in Brazil, being what Lara calls the "sounds of bondage" (p. 45), one must ask for which observers and listeners this interpretation really matters and under which circumstances.

This question leads us to the ongoing meanings that have been ascribed to Jongs by contemporary practitioners. After reading the careful interpretations made by Pacheco, Lara, Mattos and Abreu, and Slenes, along with Stein's recollections, it seems clear that Jongo entails diverse practices of meaning over different times and spaces. Among them, slavery stands as one out of many other themes alluded to by Jongo practitioners, not only at the time of Stein's research but also currently for the Comunidade São José da Serra (p. 104) and other *jongueiros* groups. As Gustavo Pacheco reminds us, *Memória do Jongo* is the result of a rather unusual interdisciplinary project. The discovery of Stein's lost recordings was made possible through the joint endeavors of a group of anthropologists and historians. For this reason, the broad scope of this project invites us to explore other varieties of historicity that these recordings engage, not only those related to Stein's recollections or to the historical and ethnomusicological interpretations of these meanings in a distant, colonial, and enslaved past. As Pacheco and Abreu and Mattos point out, Jongo is not a lost and forgotten practice. Rather, Jongo continues to be a creative form of expression, rich in its capacity to create and allude to the present. Perhaps, one unforeseen outcome of the recordings revealed in the book is to inspire other inquiries on the diverse temporalities of slavery, not only what it *really* was in the past but what kind of conversations current knowledge of the past has been producing in the present.

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