

## Reviews

Meira Monteiro, Pedro and Michael Stone. *Cangoma Calling: Spirits and Rhythms of Freedom in Brazilian Jongo Slavery Songs*. Dartmouth, MA: Luso-Asio-Afro-Brazilian Studies and Theory, 2013. Print.

*Cangoma Calling: Spirits and Rhythms of Freedom in Brazilian Jongo Slavery Songs* is one of the most pleasurable books I've read in recent years on music and African diaspora studies. Comprised of thirteen essays written by a wide range of scholars, *Cangoma Calling* focuses on the importance of U.S. historian Stanley Stein's research in Vassouras, Brazil in the 1940s. The book also contains maps and photographs centered on the *jongo* communities that Stein researched, and a list of *jongo* songs and lyrics that he recorded, with free on-line access for sonic exploration.

Stein's "marvelous journey," the title of his essay in this book, taken to perform field research for his doctoral dissertation at Harvard on what would later become a classic of Latin American historiography, *Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850-1900 (The Roles of Planter and Slave in a Plantation Society)*, highlights the value of *jongo* to his research endeavors. By drawing upon his lively interests in other academic fields, anthropology and ethnomusicology among them, Stein was one of the first researchers to push disciplinary boundaries at a time when they had just begun to be called into question. It was through his expanded intellectual sensibilities, we learn, that he came to discover *jongo's* true significance.

Upon asking how the news of the abolition of slavery reached Vassouras, Stein's interlocutor responded by humming *jongos*. This interaction might have been undervalued by another researcher, but not by Stein, whose curiosity was piqued. *Jongo*, as it turned out, proved inseparable from the sociology of coffee. In fact, *jongo* made such a lasting impression on Stein that the chapter of his book, "Religion and Festivities on the Plantation," is entirely dedicated to the topic.

Despite their importance, and for reasons that are unclear, Stein's *jongo* recordings remained untouched for decades. That would change around 2003

when professor Gustavo Pacheco contacted him in an effort to make them available to the general public. The *jongos*, which were captured by wire recorder—a technology that preceded the advent of the magnetic tape circa 1948—are some of the most rare and significant recordings available of *jongo* music to date. This fact alone was enough to consecrate Stein as a leading scholar in the field of Latin American Studies.

For those who are not familiar with *jongo*, it originated from the dances of slaves working on the coffee plantations of Vale do Paraiba, in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and also on plantations in some regions of Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo. The essays in *Cangoma Calling*, however, move well beyond the significance of *jongo* on the plantation. What they present are windows into the cultural production of New World Africans that better apprise us of the rich heritage of the last generation of enslaved peoples in the Americas. Indeed, *jongo* is resituated in a hemispheric context that enables us to view the unfolding of its legacy within a wider scope of the African diaspora.

The thirteen essays in *Cangoma Calling* cover a vast number of topics that cannot be adequately explored here. Gage Averill's, for example, provides rich biographical information on Stein's relationships with academic doyens like Alan Lomax and Melville Herskovits. Robert W. Slenes's two essays are crucial, for they astutely provide the overview and context for what follows. First, Slenes demonstrates that *jongos* originated in slave quarters dominated by Atlantic zone West Central Africans, with Kongo and "near Kongo" people at its core. Thereafter, he performs a close reading of the "interlocking metaphors" in the *jongo* lyrics collected by Stein and Maria de Lourdes Borges Ribeiro in the mid-twentieth century. This is where Slenes examines the tropes that are associated with the herding of animals, digging, making and traveling roads—figures of speech that are recurrent in the *kumba* constellation; an interface of sacred *kumba-kuba* words in Kikongo, the Kongo language (65).

The parallels that Slenes establishes tangentially with other Afro-diasporic nations like Cuba make their mark in the writings of Arcadio Díaz Quiñones, and especially, Kenneth Bilby. Slenes's Central African "conceptual cluster" (a nexus of keywords and metaphors) that bridges meanings with the Atlantic zone, in Africa's far interior, and even in Cuba, is just part of a much

larger equation. To Bilby, many of the esoteric terms and concepts referenced by Slenes in his analyses of Stein's recordings relate to cognate terms and concepts in Jamaica, Haiti, and other parts of the Americas (102). In turn, Díaz Quiñones contextualizes the surge of Afro-Caribbean thought from the likes of Fernando Ortiz, Nicolás Guillén, Alejo Carpentier, Jean Price-Mars, and Luís Palés Matos in the horizon of Afro-Americanist anthropology and phenomena like the Harlem Renaissance and the Négritude movement.

In other essays, Michael Stone investigates how *jongo* seems to have embraced West African Yoruba features associated with Candomblé introduced through economic and demographic shifts in southeast Brazil from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Pedro Meira Monteiro, on the other hand, analyzes Mário de Andrade's involvement with ethnomusicology and his motion to defolklorize popular musical expression during Brazil's modernist period. Hebe Mattos and Martha Abreu, in one of my favorite essays, delineate *jongo's* history from its beginnings to its utilization as a vehicle of cultural resistance during the military dictatorship, and beyond.

Retrospectively, the recovery and availability of Stein's small but precious collection of *jongos* has had an impact that has undoubtedly exceeded his expectations. It is my hope that *Cangoma Calling* will encourage researchers to think as broadly as Stein did, breaching disciplinary constraints to assemble a more holistic vision of social and cultural histories.

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