

Vassouras Yesterday and Today

Revisiting the Work of Stanley J. Stein

Dale W. Tomich

In 1957, the publication by Harvard University Press of the book *Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900* by Stanley Stein, originally a doctoral thesis, initiated the distinguished career of this work. The first Brazilian edition was published in 1961 by Editora Brasiliense under the title *Grandeza e Decadência do Café*. The 1957 edition was republished in 1970 by Atheneum as part of the series *Studies in American Negro Life*. In 1985, Princeton University Press published a commemorative edition with a new preface by the author and 39 images, including iconography from the nineteenth century and unpublished photos by Stein, made during the period of his fieldwork. Finally, in 1990 Nova Fronteira published the Portuguese translation of this last edition in Brazil. Over the course of more than fifty years, this work by Stanley Stein has established itself both as an obligatory reference for the history of slavery and coffee in Brazil and as a classic of Brazilian and North American historiography.

Intellectual Framework: History and the Social Sciences

Why has a doctoral dissertation retained such importance for more than half a century? To better understand the historiographical richness of Stein's work, I would

like to emphasize some of the intellectual influences in the conceptualization of the project and in its execution that contributed decisively to the depth of the book. A discussion of these influences is especially important because an explicit theory is absent from its pages and because of the apparently descriptive character of the work. To many, the analytical perspectives through which Stein structured his project appear outmoded. Nonetheless, a careful reading of how Stein constructed *Vassouras* reveals that the book still has great value for contemporary historical reflection.

The very title of the book, *Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900*, calls attention to the key elements of its theoretical and analytical framework. First, the title identifies the object of the work as the county of Vassouras. The book is conceived as the analysis of a community. The term “county” (*município*) delineates Stein’s unit of analysis and determines the architecture of the book. That is to say, the book is not constructed around the relations between masters and slaves, but rather around broader relations among all of the groups that form this community. Stein’s focus on the county of Vassouras indicates the impact of “community studies,” which were highly influential in the social sciences in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s and which inspired the construction of the research project. In a revealing interview granted to the Brazilian historian José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy at the end of the 1980s, Stein remarked that *Vassouras* was intended as a contribution to community studies: “Therefore, I think that it is appropriate to suppose that my work is integrated in a general historiographical trend that evolved from a technical and methodological debate in North America on community studies” (Meihy 1990: 85).

The importance of “community studies” in Stanley Stein’s work is testimony to his broad interdisciplinary approach to historical work, even while a graduate student. Stein, a graduate of the City College of New York in 1941, began to study the history of Latin America in the Department of History at Harvard University under the supervision of Charles Haring after having served in the Navy during the Second World War. In the interview with Meihy, Stein recalled: “while still a student at Harvard I decided not to be trained only in political history. The most important courses for me were in anthropology and sociology” (Meihy 1990: 84).

(The other course that was essential for him was Arthur Schlesinger's course on North American cities, emphasizing the importance of material culture in historical development.)¹ Stein's interest in the social sciences permitted him to conceive of history in way that was open to interdisciplinary influences. The perspective allowed him to go far beyond the predominant political history of that era to engage economic and social history.

In Stein's dialogue with the social sciences, anthropology played a fundamental role. At that time community studies had a strong presence in anthropology and offered useful models of analysis, especially for students of Latin America. Stein recounts: "Anthropology at that time was in a strong phase of community studies and had developed techniques that made possible exciting results. . . . Moreover, with regard to community studies there existed a significant number of excellent works done in Mexico, resulting from research done on that country since the Mexican Revolution. Some of these studies were by authors such as Ralph Beals, Robert Redfield and the last member of this group, Oscar Lewis. . . . Following the methodological evolution of this group suggested to me a way of studying Brazil" (Meihy 1990: 84). In Stein's words, "anthropology functioned as a type of introduction to social history" (Meihy 1990: 84). (It is worth remembering that he was formed as a historian decades before the social history revolution of the 1960s and 1970s.) At the same time, he followed the methodological development of anthropological research on Mexican communities in order to form his project of social history. Anthropology, then, offered him not only a new object of research, but also a new methodological approach. Influenced by anthropologists such as Beals, Redfield, and Lewis, he defined the object of his research as the history of a Brazilian microregion, a type of study of Brazil that was not common at that time.

The delimitation of the scale of analysis to a particular microregion offered obvious practical advantages for a dissertation based on primary sources. Stein recalls, "Following this path, that is, taking a community as my point of departure, it was not necessary to elaborate a monumental thesis, a gigantic explanation of the entire country, nor of the continent, and this was at least prudent for a foreigner who was beginning Brazilian studies" (Meihy 1990: 84). On the contrary, this

strategy permitted intense research on diverse themes in the local archives within the period of time available to a young researcher. From the onset of the project, Stein sought to break with the use of general sources such as travelers' accounts that were common in Brazilian historiography. The availability of local sources was a fundamental factor in the choice of Vassouras as the focus of research.² As Stein recounts, "I was not interested in returning to the same old sources such as travelers' accounts that invariably resulted in general analysis. . . . This practice, used since the nineteenth century, had already been worked over, almost always producing generic and repetitive histories. I wanted to do something new. My challenge was to reflect on important documentation and combine it with the living memory of persons of the time. I sought a passage between recorded history and experiences that could still be captured" (Meihy 1990: 87). In fact, *Vassouras* is distinguished by its trail-blazing exploration of the municipal archives and the records of the public notaries (*Cartórios Públicos*), characterized by Stein in the preface to the first edition as "the richest and perhaps the most neglected repositories for historians, economists, anthropologists, and sociologists" (Stein 1985: ix).

Anthropology influenced Stein in another way. Even while he was planning the project, Stein was concerned with the problem of "gaining access to the 'voice' of the slaves on the big coffee plantations, recreating their world, and particularly finding the forms or expressions of resistance and accommodation" (Stein 2007: 39). Two sources inspired his aspiration to interview former slaves or the descendants of slaves in Vassouras: on the one hand, the projects of interviews with former slaves and the descendants of slaves carried out in the 1930s by Fisk University and by the Federal Writers Project, parts of which had been published in the book *Lay My Burden Down*, edited by Peter Botkin (1945); on the other hand, the work of Melville J. Herskovits and his studies of the acculturation of Africans in the New World.³ Herskovits's importance for Stein's work was not limited to the innovative theoretical perspectives on the experience of Africans in the Americas that he introduced, but also encompassed new research techniques.

Barbara Hadley Stein met Herskovits for the first time in Bahia in 1941–1942, in the course of her own research. Before traveling to Vassouras, Stanley and Barbara Stein met

with Melville Herskovits and his wife Frances at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, to learn interviewing techniques.⁴ During that visit, Herskovits showed them some recordings of black music made in the course of their field research in the Caribbean, Brazil, and Africa. This experience made Stanley Stein aware of the technical possibilities for recovering voices and memories (in this case, a big, heavy tape recorder borrowed from the U.S. embassy) that were realized in his recordings of *jongos*⁵ (Lara and Pacheco 2007). (In this context, we must also call attention to Stein's use of photography to document aspects of work and material culture in the course of his research in Vassouras.) Through his contact with Herskovits, Stein utilized anthropological techniques to obtain nonwritten documentation and extend the range of sources available to historians (Stein 2007: 39–40). Stein's conception of the project combined anthropological field research with work in the archives: "Thus I established two approaches to documentation: the officially registered data and the informants, the bearers of the memory of process. I think that I established a path between the two blocks of sources and then was able to elaborate more pertinent links [between them]" (Meihy 1990: 86).

Community Studies and Plantation Society

Community studies were widespread in North American sociology between the 1920s and 1980, above all because of the importance of Robert Park and the Chicago School in the social sciences. For the group that formed around Park, the concept of "community" is an instrument to analyze the impact of modernization on rural and urban cultures. An imprecise concept, "community" refers in general to small-scale collectivities—rural populations or urban enclaves, neighborhoods, or subcultures. Frequently it is associated with positive traits such as solidarity and familiarity as well as unity of purpose, interest, and identity (Rabinowitz 2001: 2387).

In general, there are two theoretical approaches to community studies. The first, which is perhaps more common today, is based on fundamental sentiments of identity, belonging, or both, independent of the geographical distribution of the members of the group. The analysis of "imagined communities" proposed by Benedict Anderson (1983) offers a good contemporary example of such "communities

of sentiment.” This type of study is geographically diffuse and ambiguous from a spatial perspective. It includes extensive communal relations, but in general is limited to sets of singular ideas, values, and beliefs and does not deal with complexity. It is possible that communities of sentiment can exist in a given locality, but typically they extend beyond locality (e.g., nationalism, Catholicism, etc.). From this point of view, local communities can have little importance. On the other hand, within a given locality, isolated, unique, and homogenous communities of sentiment generally do not exist. Rather, multiple communities coexist, interact, and even collide with one another (without mentioning the social and material conditions of life that unify the community). From this latter perspective, given collective sentiments are interpreted by means of complex interactions that establish particular and defined local contexts.

The second approach to community studies is older and typical of the period in which Stein wrote *Vassouras*. It emphasizes the territorial base of community and treats groups within a defined locality. This approach to community studies seeks to understand the complexity of diverse relations and processes that form a given community in space as a totality (Redfield 1989: esp. 1–16). We should mention here that the concept of “totality” does not refer to an empirical whole, but rather to a methodological construction that can be conceptualized from diverse perspectives. This conception, nevertheless, calls attention to the importance for the formation of community of ecology and geography as well as social structures, relations, and organization that go beyond sentiments and cultural values. It treats these elements as parts of a whole and analyzes the relations among them to reconstruct the relevant historical contexts. Thus, this approach to community studies offers a method for understanding the dense, specific interconnections of the relations forming the community, and is not restricted to the more general field of regional or national studies.

Vassouras is constructed in accordance with this second conception of community. However, its emphasis on spatial unity, social solidarity, and identity of interests and common values—elements inherent in the concept of community—required Stein to reformulate it to account for the historical character of his object of inquiry. To analyze the county of Vassouras as a community, Stein had to address three

specific problems. First, he had to identify the limits of a community based on a monocultural agro-export economy that was dependent of the African slave trade. Second, he had to account for the distinct socioeconomic and cultural inequalities, divisions, and conflicts that characterized a slave plantation society. Third, in the context of the divisions in the slave-based society of Vassouras, he had to identify the elements and mechanisms that integrated it as a community.

Faced with the heterogeneous, ambiguous, and poorly defined elements of a slave society based on coffee monoculture, it is important to call attention to the influence of Charles Wagley on Stein's work.⁶ In Stein's words, "It is important to remember, nevertheless, that in 1947 I was interested in *plantation* economy and society, not in slavery itself, much less in the comparative history of slavery or in slave agriculture in the New World. In other words, my attention was drawn to what the anthropologist Charles Wagley once appropriately called '*plantation America*'" (Stein 2007: 36).

Within the field of community studies, Wagley was one of these responsible for the formulation and popularization of the concept "plantation society" as a subtype of community (Wagley 1957). Wagley treated the plantation not as a unit of production, but as a type of society. Identifying the characteristic aspects of "plantation society"—monoculture, rigid class divisions, multiracial societies, weak community structure, the presence of small peasant proprietors, and matrifocal families—Wagley elaborated a general typology to treat the common elements of the "cultural sphere" of "plantation America," which included the U.S. South, the Caribbean, and Brazil, extending from Maryland to São Paulo. Wagley's purpose in constructing this typology was to avoid research that was conducted in "too local terms" and to promote a more comparative perspective (Wagley 1957: 11–12).⁷

Construction of the Research Project

With the typological approaches of anthropology and sociology to "community studies" on the one hand, and "plantation America" on the other hand, the problem

confronting Stein as a historian was to reconstruct the “plantation society” of Vassouras as a historical community, formed within specific relations and processes.

Stein’s interest in developing a research project on Vassouras was motivated by his interest in Brazilian economic history and, above all, by the history of coffee. As he recently stated, “My objective was to examine a theme that has been present in the history of Brazil since the beginning of the sixteenth century—the successive cycles of export-oriented growth. First around sugar, then tobacco, then gold, and, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, coffee” (Stein 2007: 35). This emphasis on the importance of economic cycles and on coffee indicates the influence of Brazilian authors on Stein’s thought. He cites the significance of his readings of Roberto Simonsen, Paulo Prado, Sergio Milliet, João Normano, Caio Prado Júnior, and the fifteen volumes on the history of coffee by Affonso Tauney, as well as Gilberto Freyre and the novelists Monteiro Lobato and José Lins do Rego (Stein 1985, 2007). It would not be an exaggeration to say that the situation that was current in Brazil in the 1940s also influenced the young historian: “*Vassouras* was deeply influenced by that Brazilian nationalistic current critical of perennial export-oriented plantation agriculture with and without slave labor, that had confined Brazil to the condition of ‘*país esencialmente agrícola*’ [essentially agricultural country] and prevented the formation of an industrial base” (Stein 1985: xii–xiii).⁸

Under these influences Stein conceived his study of the Paraíba Valley by making use of the concept of “coffee cycle.” In his words, “That full cycle could be seen in a geographical area first fully developed and ravaged by coffee producers, the middle and upper Parahyba Valley” (Stein 1985: xii). The coffee cycle—from its beginning, to its apogee in the middle of the nineteenth century, until its decline around 1900—established the temporal limits of the period that he examined. In spite of the importance given to the concept of the coffee cycle, Stein rejected the possibility of writing a general history of coffee or of treating the history of the Paraíba Valley as if it were the history of Brazil, or even a simply “local” history of a coffee community. On the contrary, he opted to integrate the history of a particular “plantation society” with the history of the coffee cycle of the second half of the nineteenth century. “Barbara and I,” Stein recalled in a recent memoir,

“discussed the various options for developing the research and decided to examine a coffee society in a specific area of Brazil, insofar as possible analyzing it with the hope of being able to see it from within and from without” (Stein 2007: 36).

However, for Stein this desire to see the coffee community “from within and without” could not be realized by simply juxtaposing “internal factors” and “external factors.” Rather, inspired by the French *Annales* school, he sought to write “total history”: “There was one final influence on the research and writing of *Vassouras*. From the outset, there was the intention, perhaps overly ambitious, to produce a holistic study of a coffee plantation community along the lines of what was then termed the ‘new history’: to recreate a sense of ambiance as would a human geographer integrating soil, topography, climate, and man; to detect networks of community through the lenses of the social anthropologist; to achieve a historian’s perception of factors and processes over time” (Stein 1985: xii). The project of reconstructing the “total history” of the community of Vassouras in the nineteenth-century coffee cycle required empirical research, methodological reflection, and theoretical rigor. Stein reflects, “This thematic definition, however, was neither mechanical nor easy. On the contrary, it followed a course that combined my intellectual development and my training with the situations encountered in the field” (Meihy 1990: 84–85).

The relevance and the analytical value of the project deepened with the reconstitution of the relations that integrated the community of Vassouras with the coffee cycle and with broader historical processes. The theoretical innovation of the book resides in the reconfiguration of the concept of “cycle” by means of a dialectical analysis of the relation between the movements of the world market and the local economic, social, and political forces that produced them. To achieve this, Stein broke with the understanding of cycles then current in Brazilian social sciences. Taking the local community as his point of departure, Stein reconstituted its links with processes that operated at more varied scales. “To approach community, it is sufficient to choose a representative area, investigate it through a prism that is of interest and has ample expression. And that is what I did. . . . The general framing came about from the insertion of the product of historical analysis, the

past of the community, into the larger context of the economy on an increasing scale, suggesting the passage from the local to the regional, from the national to the international. . . . It was, so to speak, the reverse [of what] was done in terms of Brazil, where histories were general, almost always” (Meihy 1990: 84–85). By means of this methodological procedure the study specifies its object in space and in time. It implies not only the reconstruction of the community, but also the locality as a historical phenomenon. As Stein declared in the preface of the first edition of *Vassouras*: “The aim of this analysis of the plantation economy and society in Vassouras, a community of the Parahyba Valley of south-central Brazil, is to examine at the local level the effect of the changing world economy upon Brazilian institutions” (Stein 1985: vii).

In contrast to general studies, Stein’s method discloses the complex spatial-temporal totality of historical relations and processes that constitute the coffee cycle. On the one hand, Stein specifies the particularities of the community of Vassouras within broader networks of relations—local, regional, national, and, at the limit, global. On the other hand, this community is a specific element in the formation of these same networks, illuminating, from this point of view, the processes that form broader scales.

The Architecture of Vassouras

As has already been stated, there are various ways to think of community as a totality. Stein’s approach to this question determines the architecture of the book, that is, the mode of presenting the work and its analytic structure.

Stein begins his analysis of Vassouras by examining the ecological unity of the community. He establishes this unity by reflecting on the impact of coffee on the environment and on the formation of the community. From this perspective, he emphasizes the physical and material aspects of coffee cultivation in the context of the particular geography of the valley and of the county of Vassouras. He

implicitly distinguishes between the ecological system and the productive system, demonstrating how the specific geographical and environmental conditions were transformed by the introduction of coffee. Even in the 1940s, Stein was sensitive to the destruction of the Atlantic rainforest and how the intense exploitation of the environment resulted in a migratory agricultural system and fragile base of prosperity. On the other hand, analysis of the ecological-productive unity of the Vassouras coffee community was complemented by discussion of the world market. At this stage of the analysis, Stein highlights growing European and, above all, North American demand for coffee, the importation of the slave-labor force, and the sources and movement of credit. In this way, the analysis of the development of the Vassouras coffee community is framed within the external conditions and limits determined by nature and by the world market.

The material conditions and processes of production form the organizing thread of the analysis of ecological-productive unity of Vassouras. To establish this unity and the specific characteristics of the community, Stein traces the expansion of coffee cultivation in the county and documents the concentration of land and the formation of coffee plantations beginning in the decade of the 1820s. He calls attention to material conditions, including the scale of production, the patterns of cultivation, agricultural practices, and the transportation networks. In this way, beyond carefully describing the material culture and architectonic aspects of the plantations, he discloses the routines and rhythms of work that were operative on the coffee plantations. Finally, he interprets changes in the material and social conditions of production as indices of the growth of coffee cultivation.

From the perspective of the material conditions of coffee cultivation, Stein reconstructs the social unity of the community—its specific structure formed by the diversification and reintegration of various social strata that are related to one another through the coffee economy, at the same time that these strata are seen as diverse and even conflicting. The concentration of land meant the marginalization of squatters, the economic, social, and political domination of the great planter clans, and the appearance of non-rent-paying tenants (*agregados*) as a significant

social group. In this context, Stein examined the demand for labor on the coffee plantations and the various categories of labor available to satisfy it. He proceeded to analyze the impact of the international slave trade and the internal slave trade on the county to appraise the changes in the demographic composition of the slave population during the coffee cycle. Reconstructing in this way the complex and heterogeneous social structure of the community, Stein addresses the necessity of establishing its social limits. For that purpose, he examines the commercialization of the product, local provisioning, and the transport networks to identify groups such as mule drivers and commission agents who operate on the margin of the community, but who in their turn link it to the external world. In effect, their activities defined the social frontier between those within and those without. (Obviously, the circulation of goods, products, and credit followed national and international circuits that went beyond the limits of the community.) After distinguishing the diverse groups by their economic roles, Stein treats the community in terms of “free” and “slave” as well as other social categories that simultaneously integrate and divide the community.

Thus, only after establishing the unity of diverse material and social factors does Stein address the relation between masters and slaves. It is important to note this strategy carefully, because despite the importance of the master-slave relation for determining the character of the Vassouras community, it is itself formed within an already established complex of historical relations and processes. The agency of both masters and slaves was formed through specific material conditions and social relations. Grounding his analysis in concrete historical conditions, Stein turns toward the exploration of the classical themes of community studies done by anthropologists. He examined the interrelations and interactions between masters and slaves, and reconstructed the patterns of life on the plantations as well as typical biographies, values, and beliefs. The path he followed reveals the violence of domination in slave society, the forms of slave resistance, and the social and cultural practices that maintained the integration of the community despite the fundamental antagonisms between master and slave and that, at the limit, permitted the formation of communities within the community (Redfield 1989: 113–31).

Conclusion

Grounded in specific spaces and temporalities, Stanley Stein's *Vassouras* is not a general history (Mintz 1959: 557); at the same time, it is "more than a local history" (Wagley 1958: 420). The book is a rich source of data and perspectives, and for this reason it is open to various possible readings. Reflecting the changes of interest and perspective over the last fifty years, the book was read as a critique of Gilberto Freyre's interpretation of Brazil's slave past, as a contribution to the analysis of Brazilian economic dependence, as a source for historical comparisons between the Paraíba Valley and the west of São Paulo, as a methodological model for local agrarian history, and as an interpretation, model of research, and source of information for the culture and memory of the enslaved population (Lara 2007: 53–67).

Each of these readings finds a legitimate basis in Stein's book. Nonetheless, they are all partial. I would like to argue that the great value of his work lies in his "apprenticeship in total history," that is, in his reconstruction of the material, social, and cultural processes and relations that formed a slave plantation society in the coffee cycle of the nineteenth century. The richness of his analysis of this concrete totality focused on the community of Vassouras permits all of these partial readings. More important, however, is what it reveals with regard to the interrelation of historical phenomena that are not taken in isolation. In Stein's perspective, each historical process is realized within a broad complex of relations that form the communities and interact with other such processes. The density of such diverse interdependencies and interactions establishes the specific context of historical processes and thus deepens our comprehension of them. Recalling the words of English historian E. P. Thompson, "history is a discipline of context and of process: every meaning is a meaning-in-context, and structures change while old forms may express new functions or old functions may find expression in new forms" (Thompson 1977: 256). Stein's methodological approach clearly offers such an interpretive movement within a dynamic historical whole.

To conclude I would like to mention two other questions implicit in Stein's work that perhaps are relevant for contemporary historical studies—that of representation

and that of scale. For Stein, as for anthropologists, the value of local community studies is that they represent “microcosms” of more general processes (Stein 2007: 37–38; Redfield 1989: 103, 105). Reflecting larger worlds, Stein’s focus on community thus permits the realization of more concrete analyses that are closer to lived experience and human agency than is generally possible in macrohistorical studies. Nevertheless, it is necessary to pay attention to the contribution of Italian microhistory. As Giovanni Levi emphasizes, automatic mechanisms through which social actors align themselves with structural changes and transformations do not exist. These processes present problems for historical analysis. According to Levi, reduction of scale represents an experimental and analytic method capable of revealing previously unobserved factors. By means of this process, microhistory seeks to discover previously anomalous or unobserved events that reveal the incoherencies in an apparently unified order (Levi 1991: 107). In this way microhistorians open a space to reflect on communities in broader contexts.

On the other hand, we can interpret *Vassouras* from the opposite perspective. Stein’s focus is the community, which he wants to analyze “from within and from without.” In spite of his reconfiguration of the concept of “cycle,” his notion of “without” remains an abstract and general conception of the world market. Changing the unit of analysis to world-economy, it becomes viable to consider the plantation community as the object of inquiry within broader processes. Thus, it is possible to place the local plantation community of Vassouras within the processes of expansion of the world-economy and the reformation of the world geographic and economic division of labor. From such a perspective, the similarities between the Paraíba Valley coffee zone, the cotton South of the United States, and the Cuban sugar zone are evident. Seen in this way, the analysis of Vassouras reveals not the linear repetition of an archaic slave system and plantation regime threatened by economic, social, and political modernity, but rather the formation of a new productive space in which the reconstitution of the slave system and the plantation economy occurred within the framework of an integrated world market, marked by the expansion of industrial production, by the political independence of Europe’s former colonial possessions in the New World, and by the ascension of liberal ideologies, which include both national and international abolitionism—in other

words, the creation of a new frontier of slavery. From such perspectives, Stanley Stein's *Vassouras* still has much to teach us.

Notes

1. Stanley Stein discusses his experiences before beginning his historical studies at Harvard in Meihy 1990: 81–82.

2. "In Vassouras I found, in the Archive of the Municipal Council, several boxes of documents under the stairs, together with old and dusty personal belongings. In the city there were three Public Notaries, and after I visited them the decision to study that community was relatively immediate. Finally, Vassouras, a great producer of coffee, had abundant documentation and made possible good conditions for work and family life. . . . It was during this period that I precisely defined my intention make a socioeconomic community study, covering the passage of coffee from its beginning up to what I thought would be the end of its presence, between 1900 and 1910. . . . Then my family and I hurried to move to Vassouras, where, with only a few interruptions by trips to Rio de Janeiro to finish research, we lived from December 1948 until November of '49. Having lived such a long period in Brazil, I can say that I felt well adapted and even partly Brazilianized" (Meihy 1990: 85).

3. "Nor could an apprentice social historian fail to be stimulated by the fresh perspectives on the black process of acculturation and the black experience in general in the New World and Africa in the works of Melville Herskovits—*The Myth of the Negro Past*, *Dahomey*, and *Trinidad Village*" (Stein 1990: xii).

4. "[W]hen we went to Vassouras to gather testimonies from people, I always remembered what they said to me, in essence, in the first place [that I should] never take notes in front of people and, second, [that] I should visit the informants and speak with them in their surroundings, not in mine. . . . Following such suggestions, after having established my contacts, I was careful to meet and converse with them in the fields. I prepared beforehand a long series of questions, and with them in mind, I went to their homes and we conversed. . . . After the interview, I sat down and wrote my notes. I then typed them, making a sort of diary that later, my wife organized by themes. . . . This gave me a base of information from which to reconstruct what the lives of Blacks had been during the time of slavery" (Meihy 1990: 87).

5. Impromptu rhymed verses sung at slave festivals (*Caxambu*). Also slave work songs (Stein 1985: 298, 297).

6. Anthropologist and Latin Americanist specializing in Brazil, Charles Wagley was professor of anthropology at Columbia University from 1946 to 1971. By chance Wagley and his wife Cecilia were on the same boat when Stanley and Barbara Stein travelled to Brazil in 1948 to do their research in Vassouras. Stein already knew Cecilia's mother, Dona Belinha, and even lived in her house on his first trip to Brazil in 1942 (Meihy 1990: 82–83).

7. "Within the framework of the culture sphere of Plantation-America there are innumerable 'variables' which make comparison both possible and promising. . . . It is precisely in this projection of the cultural variation—whether inherited from Europe, derived from variations in the local natural and sociocultural environs or from distinctive developmental trends—against the common feature of the cultural sphere and in the seeking out of significant relationships that we can use the comparative method to help us build a science of society and culture" (Wagley 1958: 12).

8. "I arrived . . . in Brazil, in 1949, at the height of the 'O Petróleo é Nosso' [The Petroleum is Ours] campaign. It was all very interesting, full of enthusiasm, dynamic, and contagious! . . . It fed my desire to know more and understand better the important themes of the social debate, the vivacity of that culture. . . . Logically, such matters involved aspects of the debate over the role of agriculture, which sharpened my curiosity even more. Finally, it was a period in which the effects of the colonial agricultural past could be weighed and one could reflect on the importance and relevancy of agriculture in a phase that began with modern industrialization. . . . This was a rather attractive and vivid mosaic for someone who came from abroad with the intention of doing historical studies that in some way intersected all these themes" (Meihy 1990: 85).

Works Cited

- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Botkin, Benjamin A., ed. 1945. *Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lara, Silvia Hunold. 2007. "Vassouras e os sons do cativo no Brasil." Silvia Hunold Lara and Gustavo Pacheco, orgs., *Memória do jongo: As gravações de Stanley J. Stein: Vassouras, 1949*. Rio de Janeiro: Folha Seco; São Paulo: CECULT, 45–67.

- Lara, Silvia Hunold, and Gustavo Pacheco, orgs. 2007. *Memória do jongo: As gravações de Stanley J. Stein: Vassouras, 1949*. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Folha Seco; São Paulo, Brazil: CECULT.
- Levi, Giovanni. 1991. "On Microhistory." Peter Burke, org., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 93–113.
- Meihy, José Carlos Sebe Bom. 1990. "Como um todo a comunidade brasilienista não se mostrou passiva: Entrevista com Stanley J. Stein," *A Colônia brasilianista: História oral de vida acadêmica*. São Paulo: Nova Stella, 79–101.
- Mintz, Sidney W. 1959. "Vassouras. A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900, by Stanley J. Stein." Book review in *The Economic History Review*, n.s. 11(3): 557.
- Rabinowitz, Dan. 2001. "Community Studies: Anthropological." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, edited by N. J. Smelser and P. B. Baltes. Vol. 4. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2387–89.
- Redfield, Robert. (1960) 1989. *The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Midway Reprint.
- Stein, Stanley J. 1957. *Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- . 1961. *Grandeza e decadência do café*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- . 1970. *Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900*. New York: Atheneum.
- . 1985. *Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900: The Roles of Planter and Slave in a Plantation Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- . 1990. *Vassouras: Um município brasileiro do café, 1850–1900*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira.
- . 2007. "Uma viagem maravilhosa." S. Hunold Lara and Gustavo Pacheco, orgs. *Memória do jongo: As gravações de Stanley J. Stein: Vassouras, 1949*. Rio de Janeiro: Folha Seco; São Paulo: CECULT, 35–42.
- Thompson, Edward P. 1977. "Folklore, Anthropology, and Social History." *The Indian Historical Review* 3(2): 247–66.
- Wagley, Charles. 1957. "Plantation America: A Cultural Sphere." *Caribbean Studies: A Symposium*, edited by Vera Rubin. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 3–13.
- . 1958. "Vassouras. A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900, by Stanley J. Stein." Book review in *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 38(3): 420–22.