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The Invention of Samba and National Identity in Brazil

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Abstract

This dissertation, after acknowledging the dearth of works on nationalisms in Latin America and, particularly, the scarcity of publications on national identity in Brazil, investigates the processes through which samba (Brazil's prime national symbol) was invented as a national tradition during the first half of the twentieth century and the aspects of Brazil's national identity which can be discerned through samba lyrics. With regards to the first it is argued, following the works of Edensor and Hobsbawm, that samba was invented and constructed at a time when Brazilians were struggling to define themselves nationally and in which new discourses on race facilitated the rise of samba (a mulatto artform) into the national cultural arena. With regards to the latter, it is proposed that once established as a national tradition, samba came to function as a tool of national cohesion whilst representing a particular Brazilian identity: namely that of Brazil as a racial democracy and of Brazilians as an artful, cunning people living between the worlds of liberalism and clientelism. Finally, it is suggested that although banal, samba, as a paramount national symbol, is invaluable to the sustenance of a Brazilian nation given the several regionalisms which plague the country.

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The Invention of Samba and National Identity in Brazil

Introduction

Despite the growing body of work on nationalism and national identity produced in the last decades, relatively few scholars have attempted to contextualize the field's findings within a Latin American framework (Miller, 2006: 203). On the contrary, despite the seminal work of Benedict Anderson – *Imagined Communities* is an obvious exception to the rule – it is Europe that continually engages the research interests of academics, be them European or not. And if little has been said of nationalisms in Latin America, even less has been written on that topic within the context of Brazil. But the country's scarce appearance in academic texts notwithstanding, Brazil is inarguably a fertile ground for nationalism studies. In particular, the country's complex socio-economic structure as well as its multi-ethnic character makes investigating nation-building processes in Brazil a fruitful exercise – one that can enrich both the academia on nationalism as well as Brazilians' understanding of their nation.

Studying the Nation

The literature which is available on nationalism and nation-building in Brazil has been, for the most part, concerned with issues of race and economic modernization. With respects to the first, scholars have hotly debated how it might be possible to forge an inclusive state capable of accommodating the interests of different ethnicities (Abers, 2000; Htun, 2004; Telles, 2004; Twine, 1997); the significance of race and miscegenation in the formation of Brazil (Freyre, 1933; Holanda, 1936; Ribeiro, 1995; Skidmore, 1974; Rodrigues, 1969; Torres, 1938; Vianna, 1938, 1956); and the relationship between race and social inequality in the country (Fernandes, 1965; Prado, 1982, 2007; Telles, 1994) among other topics. With regards to the latter, academics have produced a multitude of studies dedicated to identifying paths to

economic modernization; to the role of the state in aiding economic development; and to the relationship between national economic growth and globalization (Almeida, 1963; Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Jaguaribe, 1958; Sodre, 1960). In summary, it has been modernization and racial integration that has featured most prominently in the literature on nationalism in Brazil.

A topic comparatively less explored, however, has been that of national identity and everyday nationalisms in the country. Promulgating a popular culture that is national and inclusive is, nevertheless, paramount to forging a nation-state, particularly in a state plagued by regionalisms such as Brazil. What is more, if one agrees that it is, after all, through culture – be it high culture or that which permeate everyday interactions – that individuals routinely experience the nation, then studying popular customs and identity is invaluable to understanding a country and its peoples. Anderson, for example, has shown that products of print-capitalism, such as newspapers and novels, greatly aided in the development of a national consciousness in Europe and the Americas (2006). Similarly, Edensor, following Billig, has argued that "national identity is grounded in the everyday, in the mundane details of social interactions, habits routines and practical knowledge," and, consequently, that studying the quotidian is an immensely useful tool for exploring the national (2002: 17). Forging and propagating a unique identity, therefore, is paramount to sustaining and legitimizing nations and national projects.

Curiously, however, despite popular culture's centrality to the construction and maintenance of nations, as well as Brazilian academicians' fascination with questions of race and miscegenation, a scholarship on culture and national identity in Brazil was late to develop. As in the rest of Latin America, it was not until the 1990s that researchers began to seriously study the processes through which a national culture had been forged in Brazil (Miller, 2006: 202). And this new interest in nationalism and national identity was long overdue if one recalls that Brazilian artists and intellectuals had already been struggling with these same topics for nearly a century (Saldanha, 2007: 2). As a matter of fact, as Brazil entered the twentieth-century and endeavoured to build a modern and inclusive nation, the bourgeoning middle-classes and intellectuals had already been striving to define themselves nationally. In particular, the changes which marked Brazil's entry into the new century, such as the transition from monarchy to democracy, the abolition of slavery, and the emergence

of national industries, had challenged Brazilians to re-think the country's economic and political future, but also to *question what it meant to be Brazilian*.

National Identity and Popular Culture in Brazil

In particular, the sweeping changes brought about during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century called for new justifications, new values, and ultimately a new national expression, to legitimize the new state and its aims. And it was with these concerns in mind that intellectuals at the turn of the century began their search for that which was truly Brazilian. Consequently, while Brazilians struggled to modernize and nationalize the state – through the nationalization of industries, the forging of a national educational system, the founding of national media outlets – musicians, writers and other artists searched for the Brazilian 'soul.' Illustrative of the new nationalism that pervaded Brazilian thought at the time were the works exhibited at the Week of Modern Art in São Paulo in 1922. The paintings, concerts and texts presented during that week were invariably in tune with a nationalist rhetoric, refuting all imperialisms and celebrating the popular, the Brazilian (Oliven, 2000: 57).

This new, national, artistic movement, which Oswald de Andrade cleverly baptized as *Antropophagia* (Anthropofagy), culminated in an incessant search for and in the celebration of Brazilian rhythms. Music, regardless of its genre, was 'brazilianized' and performed in numerous venues while composers praised the new styles' folk and African influences. Not surprisingly it was during the century's first decades that composers like Heitor Villa-Lobos (but also Pixiguinha and Donga[1]) enjoyed national and international success for their Brazilian compositions, that music became an integral part of public schools' curricula, and that a new and emblematic musical genre came to surface: samba. Music, and samba in particular, were to set the rhythm for modernization and nationalization in Brazil. And, as the country continuously transformed itself into an operative nation, a Brazilian identity began to take shape, one that could perhaps best be epitomized by samba and its message of miscegenation and celebration.

[1] Pixiguinha and Donga's real names are Alfredo da Rocha Viana Filho and Ernesto Joaquim Maria dos Santos respectively.

Samba and Identity

With samba's emblematic character in mind, as well as with the political and economic transformations which marked samba's ascendance from the popular to the national, this essay will investigate *(i) the processes by which samba was to become synonymous with Brazil and its culture; (ii) the facets of Brazil's national identity embodied by samba*; and, finally *(iii) argue that both samba and the identity it portrays must be understood within the context of Brazilian nationalism in the early twentieth century whilst emphasizing the importance of national cultural symbols and identities in forging and sustaining the nation.*

In order to do so this essay's first chapter will examine in greater detail the political and economic changes occurring in Brazil in the early 1900s and discuss some of the national concerns elaborated at the time, particularly by the Brazilian Modernists. This essay's second chapter will then expand on the meaning and history of samba and subsequently discuss some of the processes and actors involved in inventing samba as Brazil's national music. The chapter will draw from Hobsbawm's work on invented traditions and argue that as such, samba would come to function as a tool for the promulgation of national values and beliefs and as an instrument of social cohesion (1994:9). In its third chapter, this essay will attempt to underscore the facets of a Brazilian identity that can be discerned from popular samba songs' lyrics whilst relating these identity markers to the ideologies that informed Brazilian thought in the early twentieth century. The chapter will conclude by re-enforcing the notion that samba and the national identity it embodies are products of a particular historical moment. Finally, this essay's concluding chapter will reiterate the importance of national symbols and of national identities to the sustenance of nations, and argue that although banal, samba, whether played or heard, is a daily reminder to Brazilians that despite regional differences Brazil is, nevertheless, a nation.

Setting the Scene for Samba

In order to comprehend samba as a musical genre, its national significance, and, more importantly, to understand how samba was transmuted from a regional rhythm into a national musical genre, one must understand the transformations undergone by Brazil during that same time period. In other words, it is of little use discussing samba without discussing first the context in which it was born. With this in mind, this chapter will set the scene for samba by first (i) assessing the socio-economic and political changes that marked Brazil in the early twentieth-century. The chapter will then (ii) discuss why these particular transformations provoked Brazilians, especially intellectuals of the Centre-South, to think of nationalism and briefly expound some of their concerns. Finally, the chapter will conclude by (iii) arguing that because samba was born within this historical context, it would be crafted and interpreted to represent the nationalist, Modernist, ideology predominant at the time.

Brazil in the Twentieth Century

Although Brazil had gained its independence almost one-hundred years earlier, it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that the country began to develop into a nation proper. As historian Barman discusses, Brazil, in 1822, was a "state, not a nation" (1988:42). To begin with, Barman argues, despite being independent, it was not until 1842, for example, "that the interests of the nation-state would take precedence over local right and needs," that threats of separatism would be quelled, and that national institutions, such as political parties would come into existence in Brazil (1988: 216-8). Equally problematic was the fact that, despite having conquered its independence, Brazilians had done little to challenge the colonial structure set in place by the Portuguese metropolis (Dias, 2005: 128). On the contrary, until 1888 Brazil was still a slave-holding, agrarian society governed by a monarch whose grandfather had been none other than the late Portuguese king D. João VI. The prevalent regionalisms, both cultural and economic, as well as the social fragmentation that marked Brazil in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century,

therefore, meant that nationalism, and indeed a Brazilian nation, "flowered late, mainly after 1930" (Whitaker & Jordan, 1966: 76). But what were the changes, social, economic and political, that took place during these first decades of the twentieth century that inspired Brazilians to think of nationalism? Why was the year 1930, as Cruz Costa remarks, "a turning point for the Brazilian mind" (Quoted in Whitaker & Jordan, 1966: 79)? The question is in fact complex, one that beckons an examination of a plethora of events taking place both domestically and internationally. The following paragraphs will, however, due to spatial constraints, examine only key domestic transformations undergone by Brazil during the first decades of the twentieth century in an attempt to shed some light on why it was during that time period that Brazilians first began to engage with nationalism.

A brief political chronology: from monarchy to Vargas

Perhaps the most crucial political transformation undergone by Brazil during the period in question was the establishment of a republican regime (Graham, 1977: 339). As previously discussed, Brazil had been, since its independence, a constitutional monarchy. In 1889, however, Deodoro da Fonseca, president of the province of Rio Grande do Sul and later president of the Military Club, stormed the Ministry of War in Rio de Janeiro, dissolved the ministry, and proclaimed Brazil to be, thenceforth, a republic (Fausto, 2003: 234-5). And, although the fall of the Brazilian monarchy was the product of a confluence of events – most notably the military's dissatisfaction with the monarch Dom Pedro II and São Paulo's growing bourgeoisie's interests in a replacing the *carioca* emperor with a *paulista* president[2] – the new republican regime was anything *but* the result of a new found civic and democratic culture in Brazil (Fausto, 2003: 235). On the contrary, for the next several years, the Brazilian republican government would serve the interests of economic elites and, especially among these, the coffee oligarchy of São Paulo and the milk oligarchy of Minas Gerais[3] (Fausto, 2003: 261-2). The republicanism that

[2] *Cariocas* and *paulistas* are the names given to those born in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, respectively.

[3] Although the state of Minas Gerais also profited from coffee exports, the state's rivalry with São Paulo (Brazil's largest coffee producing state) led Minas Gerais to prioritize other economic activities like cattle ranging. Minas Gerais's oligarghy, therefore, was baptized the milk oligarchy

characterized Brazilian politics in the early 1900s, therefore, was oligarchic, exclusive and weak (Hagopian, 1996: 36).

It was perhaps precisely because the new republic rested feebly on the support of landed oligarchies with competing regional interests that it would come to an end only thirty years after its inception (Ianni, 2004: 162-3). In 1930, Getúlio Vargas, a powerful landowner and politician from Rio Grande do Sul, was indirectly elected president of a provisional government, bringing an end to the first Brazilian republic (Fausto, 2003: 331). Vargas' election and the republic's dissolution were the results of a tumultuous electoral campaign which had begun in the previous year: since 1913, São Paulo and Minas Gerais had forged an agreement under which both states would nominate candidates from each others' states for the country's presidency. Brazil, therefore, from that year on had been ruled by the coffee and milk oligarchies successively until the *paulista* president, Washington Luis, in violation of that same agreement, endorsed the candidacy of another *paulista,* Julio Prestes, in 1929 (Fausto, 2003: 272-3). Outraged, Minas Gerais launched their own candidate, Getúlio Vargas, hoping that with Rio Grande do Sul's support (Vargas' home state and the third most affluent state in Brazil), Prestes would lose the election (Herrlein, 2004: 185). Nevertheless, Prestes was elected, leaving Vargas' constituency disillusioned with the democratic process and the country ripe for a revolution. One that took place that same year, in 1930, when, under the military's auspice, Vargas brought an end to Brazil's first republic (Fausto, 2003: 325).

Socio-economic changes: the industrialization of the centre-south

It is important to remember, however, that the Revolution of 1930 was not only the product of Minas Gerais and São Paulo's oligarchies' disagreements. On the contrary, the electoral race between Júlio Prestes and Getúlio Vargas carried as well a larger, national, significance. In particular, the election symbolized the escalating tension (characteristic of Brazil in the 1920s) between traditionalists and Modernists, liberals and positivists, between the landed aristocracy and the nascent industrial classes and, ultimately, between the old (Júlio Prestes) and the new: Vargas. But why had

whose interests often clashed with those of São Paulo (Fausto, 2003: 265-268; Font, 1987: 69-70).

these ideological and social tensions come to a point of eruption in the year preceding the Revolution? One possible answer is that Brazil's changing economic structure, and particularly the industrialization of its Centre-South states, engendered new social actors with economic and political grievances which could no longer be addressed by the conservative republican regime.

After all, although Brazil was still by-and-large an agrarian society by 1930, several of its states had begun to industrialize (Burns, 1969: xi-ii). The south-eastern states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, most notably, but also Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul, had already begun to profit from their industries and the states' capitals had grown into considerable urban centres. As a matter of fact, the early twentieth century inarguably marked the beginning of the country's industrial revolution. Caio Prado, for example, a Brazilian authority in economic history, comments that while between 1890 and 1895 only 425 new factories were built in Brazil, by 1907 more than 3,258 factories were in operation (1982: 260). The First World War, moreover, gave the Brazilian industries (which predominantly produced consumer goods) a fundamental incentive: competing against rising European prices and demand, Brazilian factories multiplied in numbers and kinds in the developing states (Prado, 1982: 259; Dean, 1989: 249). By the end of the 1920s, therefore, states like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro had developed substantially and were the homes of industrial entrepreneurs, legal professionals and other petty bourgeoisie as well as of a growing proletariat. And it was precisely these new classes, whose interests often clashed with those of the landed aristocracy that routinely felt at odds with the governments' economic and political conservatism and its many democratic deficits.

The burgeoning industrialists, for example, disliked the governments' hesitance to invest in industrial projects. Specifically, although the republic's coffee subsidies helped turn coffee export profits into industrial investments in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, entrepreneurs felt the State to be apathetic to their needs (Prado, 1982: 264). If Brazil was to modernize, they felt, the government had to abandon its economic conservatism and invest in industry. Washington Luis, contrary to the wishes of the new industrialists, however, was averse to measures like the granting of federal aids, currency appreciation and favourable import taxes, necessary for the advancement of industry in the Centre-South (Fausto, 2003: 289; Topik, 1980: 605). The growing proletariat, in contrast, was disillusioned by the republic's inability to

tackle Brazil's 'social question.' Namely, although the federal government had done little to forward industrialization, it had had likewise not done anything to mitigate the social ills inherent to the process. For as late as 1930, for example, Brazil had no labour code, pension scheme or any other form of workers' compensation, all of which displeased the new working classes. Curiously, moreover, professional military men had also become disenchanted with the government. These army officials, and the younger lieutenants in particular, were invariably positivists and felt that the oligarchic republic lacked order. To them, Brazil had to industrialize if it were to progress. These lieutenants, therefore, although not themselves representative of the new class struggles and interests occasioned by industrialization, shared in the bourgeoisies and proletariats' disenchantment with the republic's inefficient liberalism[4]. (Wirth, 1964: 164-5)

Not surprisingly, it follows, the 1920s in Brazil was a decade marred by social activism. The lieutenants, for example, inaugurated the *tenentista* movement, inarguably the most influential movement of that decade[5]. The movement's participants, inspired by nationalism and positivism, unsuccessfully attempted to seize the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and subsequently marched more than 20, 000 kilometres through the country in the hopes of stirring a revolution during the years 1924-7 (Fausto, 2003: 309-10). And, while several members of the movement would end their lives in exile following the march's failure to arouse a revolution, many others would become instrumental supporters of Getúlio Vargas in 1930 (Wirth, 1964: 160,163). As a matter of fact, Vargas' political party, the *Aliança Liberal* (Liberal Alliance) was incredibly socially heterogeneous. It not only included several members of the Prestes Column, as the lieutenants' march was baptized, but also some working class elements (following the dissolution of the Brazilian communist party, (PCB)) as well as bourgeoisie members of São Paulo's Democratic Party (PD). The *Aliança*, one could argue, was the final meeting point of various social actors whose interests were no longer met by the oligarchic regime.

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[4] Liberalism here refers to the government's formal constitutional arrangement (Fausto, 2003: 261) and the State's economic liberalism (Topik, 1980: 593-4), particularly, its unwillingness to regulate the industrial market, although the Brazilian republic was not traditionally liberal in various respects.

[5] Other movements included the revolt at Canudos and Padre Cicero's revolt in the Brazilian backlands, which aimed at achieving social justice through religious programs; the urban anarchist movement in São Paulo as well as the Brazilian workers movement in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro to name but a few (Fausto, 2003: 295-300).

Thinking of Nationalism in the Early 20th Century

Ultimately, what this brief review of the social and economic changes taking place in Brazil in the early twentieth century suggests is that the revolution of 1930, which put an end to Brazil's first republic and led Getúlio Vargas to power was more than a coup – it was a signal that Brazilians were ready to question traditionalism, the landed aristocracy and to pursue industrialization and national development (Whitaker & Jordan, 1966: 79; Ianni, 2004: 31-2). Put differently, the revolution signalled that Brazil was ready for nationalism. *But why were Brazilians flirting with nationalism now? Why was Vargas' nationalism so appealing to these new social actors?* One possible answer is that Brazil's incipient industrialization strengthened regionalisms throughout the country which, in turn, challenged politicians, artists and intellectuals to question the meaning of a Brazilian nation. To understand why this was the case it is important to remember that the emerging industries were invariably located in the Brazilian Centre-South axis. Consequently, as the region developed, Brazilian states found themselves increasingly divided economically, politically and culturally.

The modernizing southeast, for example, sought government policies coherent with industrial development such as higher custom taxes and favourable exchange rates, while the agrarian back lands and its oligarchies felt scorned by the government's favouritism towards states like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In particular, the federal government's willingness to depreciate the national currency and to subsidize the purchase of coffee from São Paulo in order to maintain profits from coffee exports at a maximum during a period of international financial crises, outraged other states' elites (Fausto, 2003: 274). São Paulo, on the other hand, turned its coffee profits into industrial development, widening the economic gap between itself and the North and North-Eastern states of Brazil. In other words, Brazil's history of 'uneven development' was made all but too apparent as its southern states industrialized, engendering a variety of antagonisms between its regions (Ianni, 2004: 168).

And these antagonisms increasingly seemed to suggest to the contemporaries of Brazilian industrialization that Brazil was not a *de facto* nation, but, in Freyre's

words, an ‘archipelago’ -- one in which the least developed ‘islands’ increasingly felt the economic burdens of modernization (Quoted in Nedel, 2007: 86). As Freyre remarks, industrialization had brought about an “interregional maladjustment so reminiscent of conditions between colonies and mother country” that it was inevitable for Brazilians not to question just *what being Brazilian meant* and whether it was worthwhile (1970: 267). Not surprisingly, these years of industrialization and ‘metropolization’ were also the years in which regionalisms flourished. North-Eastern intellectuals like Euclides da Cunha, but also Graciliano Ramos, for example, wrote about the back lands, praising its unique geography and culture, *gauchos* clamoured around their *tenentes* (and ultimately around Getúlio Vargas), symbols of their military culture, and some regions, like São Paulo, even flirted with secession (Whitaker & Jordan, 1966; 78; Ianni, 2004: 163-4; Fausto, 2006: 14). Early industrial Brazil, one could conclude, shared much in common with Gellner’s fictitious Megalomania (with the important exception of Megalomania’s linguistic differences) (1983: 58-62). In other words, like Megalomania, Brazil was industrializing unevenly, and those who happened to live in its most distant, rural regions, grew increasingly conscious of their provincial cultures and customs and often felt these to be at odds with those of the modernizing federal district.

These regionalisms, inarguably fomented by the industrialization of the Brazilian Centre-South and the country’s oligarchic republican regime, consequently brought to the political forefront issues of nationalism, national development and national integration (Weinstein, 2003: 240). How was Brazil to modernize and retain its territorial unity? How could Brazil enter the expanding international cadre of nation-states without itself being a nation, without its people sharing a national identity that could transcend *sertanismo*, or *gaucho* culture, or any other regionalisms? These questions were precisely what plagued Brazilians involved with politics, but also artists, authors and musicians living in the turbulent first decades of the twentieth century. Some, confident in their country’s potential, like the intellectual Affonso Celso, urged Brazilians to be proud of, and make sacrifices for Brazil, a land that he identified as “possessing incalculable riches … that never suffered humiliations, that never did anyone wrong, whose history is related to the most noteworthy events in human history[6]” (1900, Quoted in Bastos, 2002: 255). Others, like the *paulista*

[6] My own translation. In the future, quotations translated by me will be marked #.

businessman and intellectual Paulo Prado, disagreed and argued instead that "in a radiant land [Brazil], lives a sad people," a people "victim to disease, pallid indifference and vice" (1997: 53, 144). Most, however, fell somewhere in the middle, recognizing Brazil's national potential while critically appraising its contemporary state of affairs. Examples of the latter abound, and include, most notably, *paulistas* like Oswald de Andrade, Mário de Andrade, but also *cariocas* like Heitor Villa-Lobos, *gaúchos* like Getúlio Vargas and military men like Luis Carlos Prestes. Prestes, for example, like other contemporary nationalists, believed in Brazil's need for a "strong central power, with the goal of educating the people," according to nationalist policies and doctrines (Fausto, 2003: 314). Not surprisingly, Vargas and his political alliance, the *Aliança Liberal*, whose constituency included several *tenentistas*, would incorporate many of these national, and nationalist, concerns in his political program in the 1930s (Prestes, 1999: 158-9; Wirth, 1964:171-2;).

The new nationalism that permeated political and economic debates in Brazil in 1920s, however, was perhaps best captured in the writings of young intellectuals living in the country's industrializing regions. The *cariocas,* and the *paulistas* in particular, had since the beginning of the century been thinking of nationalism and about national identity, and, their debates culminated in the Modernist cultural movement that took the country by storm following the Week of Modern Art held in São Paulo in 1922 (Oliven, 2000: 57; Suarez and Tomlins, 2000: 35-6). The young Modernists' goal, simply put, was to "solve the problem of being something" to 'brazilianize' Brazil (De Andrade, Quoted in Morais, 1978: 52, Quoted in Oliven, 2000: 57). As Mário de Andrade, one of the movement's leaders recognized in his manifesto published years later, "the Modernist movement was the precursor, the preparer, and, to a large extent, the creator of a national state of mind" (De Andrade, 1967, Quoted in Resende, 2000: 204). The Brazilian Modernist movement, in other words, which marked the decade preceding the revolution of 1930 but which gained momentum following Vargas' election, epitomized the political and economic debates held at the time. Namely, through the arts, Modernists asked, *what should a Brazilian nation be like?*

The Modernist agenda

The answer, argued the aspiring bourgeois intellectuals, was that Brazil should become an industrial state, free from imperialism but also free from regionalism, and a nation whose identity embodied its cultural and racial diversity. With regards to the first, it was only natural for Modernists to favour industrialization given that it was in the context of the new urban metropolises that Brazilian modernism had been born. Inarguably influenced by such European movements like Italian Futurism, but also by the changing Brazilian urban spaces, Modernists like Menotti del Pichia remarked that what Modernists wanted was "light, air, fans, airplanes, employees' demands, idealisms, engines, factory chimneys, blood, speed dreams … the noise of an automobile" (Quoted in Bellei, 1998: 89). At the same time, Modernists also understood that development should not mean Europeanization or Americanization. Consequently, despite the movements' undeniable European influences, Modernists strived to construct a national identity that was unique and Brazilian rather than an uncritical replica of the European Modernist aesthetic (Resende, 2000: 207). Illustrative of this Modernist ideal is poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade statement that Brazilians would only become "civilized in relation to well established civilizations the day we create the ideal, a Brazilian orientation. Then we will pass from imitation to a phase of creation … we will be universal because we are national" (Quoted in Oliven, 2000: 58).

And it was precisely because Modernists, reacting to the turn of the century's transformations, clamoured for an authentic national aesthetic that it refuted imperialisms, colonialisms and also the regionalisms that had been brewed by the European colonization of the country centuries before. Therefore, as Oliven remarks, "despite a certain bias towards São Paulo, the Modernists rejected regionalism," and favoured instead the creation of a national culture that, while inclusive of varying regional and racial traits, could supersede the existing national divisions (2000:57). Creating a national identity that symbolized Brazil's racial and cultural heterogeneity was, as a matter of fact, at the crux of the Modernist agenda. Nothing perhaps is more telling of this Modernist objective than Oswald de Andrade's Anthropophagic Manifesto published in 1928. In the manifesto de Andrade remarked, "only Anthropophagy unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically" and suggested that it was through the cannibalization of traditions and ideas that a national

aesthetic could be created (Quoted in Oliven, 2000: 58). Cannibalization was important to Modernists because it implied the digestion of existing customs and currents both national and international and the transformation of the existing into something new. In other words, Brazil could chose to consume both the cultural peculiarities of its regions as well as foreign aesthetics and still create something new, digested, something that was Brazilian.

Brazilian Popular Culture and Samba

It was within this context of industrialization, Modernism and of the nationalization of culture that samba was born. Consequently, any assessment of samba must take into consideration the historical peculiarities which informed its ascendance into the Brazilian national repertoire. After all, as Edensor comments, "culture is not fixed but negotiated, the subject of dialogue and creativity, influenced by the context in which it is produced and used" (2003:17). Samba, therefore, as a Brazilian cultural product – and, in particular, as a cultural product that has become the hegemonic representation of Brazil's national character – must be understood as a contested national symbol whose meaning reflects the dialogues and ideologies that permeate the Brazilian public space. And, at the time of samba's inception, these debates were invariably informed by nationalism (cultural, political and economic) and the aesthetic of the Modernist movement. This essay's next chapters, it follows, will draw on the political, cultural and economic concerns governing Brazilian thought examined above in order to discuss the popularization of samba and the aspects of Brazil's national identity portrayed through the genre whilst emphasizing popular culture's syncretism and dialectical essence.

The Nationalization of Samba

It was argued in the last chapter that samba was born amidst the political, economic and social turmoil that characterized Brazilian life in the early twentieth-century, and, consequently that any discussion of samba and nationality should be informed by the socio-economic, cultural and political concerns elaborated during that time. In order to expand on the relationship between samba, national identity and nation-building in the early twentieth century Brazil, however, something has to be said first about samba as a musical genre and about its consolidation as a national symbol. This chapter, therefore, will first (i) briefly elaborate on the meaning and history of samba; then proceed to (ii) identify some of the actors and institutions responsible for nationalizing the genre; and finally (iii) suggest, following Hobsbawm, that as an invented tradition samba would come to function as a symbol of social cohesion and as a vehicle for the promulgation of national values and beliefs (1994:9).

Samba: Its Meaning and History

Samba crystallized as a musical genre in its own right in Brazil in the early twentieth century (McGowan & Pessanha, 1998: 22). Until then, whether something like the modern samba was already being played in Rio de Janeiro or Bahia is highly debatable. Most researchers, however, have come to an understanding that it was the song composed by Donga, *Pelo Telefone*[7] (1917), that marked the birth of samba as a musical genre in Rio de Janeiro despite contending proposals (McGowan & Pessanha, 1998: 23; Gilman, 2001: 70). The product of a confluence of musical genres extending from the *modinha, marcha, lundu*, *polka*, *habanera*, *choro* and the *maxixe*, to the *batuque* commonly played in Rio in the nineteenth century, samba can be defined by a “2/4 meter, an emphasis on the second beat, a stanza-and-refrain

[7] # Through the telephone.

structure, and many interlocking, syncopated lines in the melody and accompaniment" (McGowan & Pessanha, 1998: 22-23)[8].

A concise history of samba

Before the advent of the radio in the 1920s, samba playing was largely confined to the popular neighbourhoods of Rio de Janeiro (Shaw, 2002: 81). The *carioca* square Praça Onze (Square Eleven), in particular, was the meeting place of aspiring *sambistas* (samba players), many of whom were immigrants of African descent that, following the abolition of slavery in Brazil, had come to Rio de Janeiro and to other Brazilian metropoles in search of work (McGowan & Pessanha, 1998: 22). Consequently, the atypical white-middle-class city dweller notwithstanding, those who would compose and dance samba at the *Praça* were invariably members of Brazil's growing black and mulatto proletariat residing in Rio's *morros*[9], and subjects of police violence and discrimination (Paranhos, 2003: 84). Samba, in summary, was nothing more than a regional, popular musical genre orchestrated with wind instruments, guitars and hand-clapping at the time of its inception.

The 1920s and 1930s, however, witnessed a virtual revolution with regards to samba. It was during the course of those two decades, for example, that records denominated as samba music were first produced; that burgeoning radio programs began to feature *sambistas*; that white and middle-class artists first dabbled with samba composition; and that Rio's Carnival became a veritable institution for the promulgation of samba (Paranhos, 2003: 84-89; Levine, 1984: 14-15). And, by the mid to late 1930s, samba had conquered international audiences as well. Carmen

[8] It is interesting to note, however, that in true Hobsbawmian fashion, samba's defining characteristics as listed in textbooks today were not always those governing earlier samba compositions, nor were they all uniquely Brazilian, as tradition has us believe. Mário de Andrade, for example, has shown that syncopation was not original to Brazilian songs but rather a rhythmic style imported from European genres (2006: 26). Similarly, the heavy percussion associated with samba was not always included in earlier compositions (Sandroni, 2001: 81). On the contrary, it was only in the course of samba's ascension into the national (and international) limelight that some of its features, including many of the instruments used as percussion today, became the rule.

[9] The *morros* of Rio de Janeiro, as Gledson explains, "are the steep hills which almost seem to crowd the city ... on which, from the late nineteenth century, the poor, in large measure the descendants of slaves, settled and built their shanties" (1994: 19) and is the symbolic opposite of the *cidade*, or city, where Rio's privileged classes live.

Miranda, for instance, the "Brazilian Bombshell," had, by the 1940s, starred in Hollywood films, hosted radio shows alongside Orson Welles, and graced the Broadway circuit with her sambas (Roberts, 1993: 3, 6). By 1941, samba had even occasioned the creation of a Walt Disney character: the parrot-cum-sambista José Carioca (McCann, 2006: 77). By the mid twentieth century, it follows, as Vianna points out, "samba had already become the clearly established musical representation of Brazil" (1999: 91).

Yes, We Have Samba![10]

But how did samba, in the course of only twenty odd years, become synonymous with Brazil? *How did a musical genre played by the socially disenfranchised of Rio de Janeiro's* morros *cross class barriers, conquer Brazil and subsequently audiences overseas?* Vianna, whose influential book attempts to answer the question, claims that there is a "great mystery in the history of samba" (1999: 10). Indeed, as Vianna points out, studies dealing with the genre predominantly concentrate on issues pertaining to its genesis in the *carioca* shanty-towns, samba's racial symbolism, and its metamorphosis into other genres like *Bossa-Nova* whilst habitually failing to address the process through which samba was nationalized. Equally problematic, however, is the fact that works like Vianna's, which do struggle to solve 'the mystery of samba', are characteristically myopic. Some, like McCann's *Hello, Hello Brazil,* for example, focus almost exclusively on the role of the state and its medium, the radio, in transforming samba into a national rhythm (2006: 5-6; Stroud, 2005: 398). Others, like Paranhos or Sodré, see the nationalization of samba as intricately linked to the market forces acting on Brazil's developing phonographic industry (2003: 82; Cited in Napolitano and Wasserman 2000: 180). Vianna himself dedicates most of his book's chapters to the role played by popular personalities who, acting as "cultural mediators," transported samba from the *morros* to Brazil's middle-class theatres, radio stations and cinemas (1999: 20-21; 88). This prevalent dichotomy in the study of samba, whereby academics either ignore agency or structure, however, is

[10] The phrase is borrowed from Paranhos (2003: 89).

detrimental to our understanding of the subject and prevents scholars from reaching a more detailed, holistic explanation of samba's nationalization.

With these observations in mind, it is far more plausible that samba's current popularity, rather than the outcome of *any one* particular structural or individual effort, was the product of a series of fortuitous events. In other words, it is likely that samba has come to represent a Brazilian identity not because the genre was coherent with state interests and ideologies, nor because the phonographic industry capitalized on samba's popularity within Rio de Janeiro, and nor because Modernists (genuine bohemians in Rio de Janeiro) saw in samba the ideals of cultural nationalism, but because *all these developments took place concomitantly within the state capital*. In short, samba was born in the right place at the right time. Although a crude statement when taken at face value, it is undeniably true that had samba not risen out of the *morros* of Brazil's federal district in the early twentieth century that it would not have prevailed as a national symbol.

Samba at the right time

To begin with, the cultural atmosphere in Brazil in the early twentieth century (inspired by nationalism and Modernism as discussed in the previous chapter) called for the valorization of folk customs, and, in particular, of the African and was, therefore propitious for the valorization of samba. As Santiago comments, the growing "admiration that the [European] cubist painters and sculptors felt for African art … allowed us [Modernists] to look without prejudice or elitism" at Afro-Brazilian productions (2005:9). Vianna similarly remarks that the "*negrophilie*" that infected Parisian thought at the turn of the century had encouraged Brazilians to re-evaluate the cultural contributions engendered by Africans in their own country. It was the influence of such men like Blaise Cendrars, for example, that prodded Modernists like Oswald de Andrade to identify "African drums and black singing … as ethnic forces contributing to the creation of modernity" (Quoted in Vianna, 1999: 70). Not surprisingly, it follows, samba's African origins – made all the more blatant by its predominantly mulatto and black composers – proved to be a plateful for the Brazilian avant-garde who were ready to consume anything thought to be authentically (and primitively) Brazilian. To these men, like Villa-Lobos, Mário de

Andrade, and Gilberto Freyre (who would later become important patrons of the new genre), samba embodied the racial diversity inherent to the Brazilian character as well as the Modernist, increasingly *negrophilie,* aesthetic.

New racial discourses elaborated by sociologists like Gilberto Freyre at the time of samba's inception, in addition, also contributed to the acceptance and valorization of samba. Having begun to question earlier Brazilian and European racial dogmas, men like Freyre, writing in the 1920s and 1930s, interpreted miscegenation as the essence of Brazil's racial character. And, in so doing, they "revealed a move away from the racist assumptions that dismissed the African as a barbarian" and urged Brazilians to re-consider the value of the black and the mulatto within their country (Skidmore, 1974:192). It was perhaps the novelty and popularity of writings such as Freyre's, coupled with the cultural elites' new-found interest in Brazil's African races that, in conclusion, added to samba's repute. Had samba emerged from a different cultural, historical context, the genre might not have enjoyed the hearty reception it eventually did in the mid nineteen-hundreds. Similarly, had samba not been a mulatto art form, an example of racial and cultural miscegenation and, therefore, coherent with the Brazilian aesthetics of its time, the genre might not have been so alluring to its contemporaries.

Illustrative of such an argument and of Modernism and Freyre's racial revisionism's impact on the Brazilian *mentalité*, is the fact that Brazilian musical compositions that lacked the distinctively African syncopation associated with samba were routinely undervalued. The Northeastern musician Catulo da Paixão Cearense[11], for example, complained that when, in 1921, the Belgian king and queen were invited for a Brazilian music concert, it was the Oito Batutas[12] (most of whom were from Rio de Janeiro and included, for example, the sambistas Donga and Pixiguinha) who were invited to play and not him, Catulo, whose music was equally 'authentically' Brazilian (Vianna, 1999: 83). Mário de Andrade also commented that Modernists, always preoccupied with European opinions, would yearn for the "spicy and exotic." "If they hear a fierce *batuque,*" Andrade comments, "they enjoy it, but if it is a *modinha*

[11] Catulo, born in Ceara, in the Northeast of Brazil was a "well connected performer" of 'modinhas' and other popular musical genres (Vianna, 1999: 23-4)

[12] The Oito Batutas was a small but reputable orchestra that played Brazilian regional music in the early twentieth century.

without syncopation … they twist their faces![13]" (2006: 12). In short, Modernists, always influenced by European intellectuals, craved that which was Brazilian as long as that Brazilian cultural production was African too. Samba filled these cultural requirements and was conveniently being played right there, in Rio de Janeiro. *Sertanejo* music, *forró*, *toada* and other Brazilian rhythms played elsewhere, on the other hand, remained unexplored and underrated. Had samba been born outside the industrial centre's borders, or had it been developed at a time when things African were not in vogue, it is not improbable that some other genre would have become concomitant with a Brazilian identity instead[14].

Samba at the right place

If samba was born at the right time, as argued above, it is also true that samba's genesis in Rio de Janeiro was equally advantageous. After all, as the Brazilian state capital and as one of Brazil's rapidly industrializing states, Rio de Janeiro would prove to be an ideal setting for samba. In particular, its development in Rio meant that the genre was readily accessible to Brazilian and European intellectuals, radio producers, and members of Vargas' political cabinet, all of which would tremendously contribute to samba's popularization. In other words, samba was played at earshot of the country's most influential men – men who, as discussed in the previous chapter, were struggling to re-define Brazil nationally and who could, consequently, favourably receive and promulgate samba as representative of a Brazilian identity.

Cultural mediators

Among these men were, of course, the Modernists. These bourgeois intellectuals were instrumental in "paving the way for the enthronement of samba as a cultural

[13] **#.** Batuque is an African rhythm that would influence samba compositions. Modinha was also commonly played in Brazil and, although of Portuguese origins, also influenced samba.

[14] In the same vein, it is interesting to observe that despite Brazil's large indigenous population, few if any of its national symbols are derived from aborigine culture. Brazil's national music, dance, dress and dish, for example, are almost all of African origin and suggest that the valorisation of the African that marked Brazilian nationalism in the early twentieth century largely influenced which of Brazil's cultural products would be granted national significance.

icon of the entire nation and not only of one or another … social segment[15]" by, among other things, bridging the gap between the *morro* and the *cidade* (Paranhos, 2003: 95). After all, invariably bohemian, men like Mário de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, and Gilberto Freyre often travelled to Rio's downtown popular neighbourhoods for some lascivious entertainment. And there, in places like the Gomes Freire Avenue, "a group of literary types who liked music and musicians who liked poetry" would meet and forge relationships which crossed racial and social barriers (Donga, Quoted in Vianna, 1999: 80). These friendships, subsequently, helped *sambistas* establish themselves as musicians within elite circles, widening samba's social space. It was through encounters between *sambistas* like Donga, Pixiguinha, Patricio and the erudite composer Villa-Lobos, in Rio – Brazil's "major cultural centre for the social elite" – for example, that the latter was inspired to compose pieces like the *Choro n.5 (Alma Brasileira[16])*, expanding samba's stylistic and social boundaries (Behague, 1994: 3; 82). Similarly, it was a chance meeting between the *Oito Batutas,* Antonio Lopes de Amorim Diniz (a reputable *maxixe* dancer) and the politician/diplomat Lauro Muller, in the bohemian quarters of Rio de Janeiro that enabled Pixiguinha and his band to tour Paris for six months in 1922 (Bastos, 2005: 177; 180-1). Samba's genesis in Rio de Janeiro, in summary, placed the genre in close proximity to men who, acting as "cultural mediators," to borrow Vianna's expression, introduced samba to new audiences and different social spaces, facilitating its popularization.

Vargas' cultural policies

Samba's birth in the state capital also meant that it was within the grasp of government bureaucrats – a condition which, after 1930, would be of particular beneficence to samba in light of Vargas' political proclivities. In particular, it was Vargas' dedication to creating a national culture capable of superseding the regionalisms hampering Brazil's national development in the early twentieth century that would result in his official endorsement of samba (Fausto, 2006: 48).

[15] #.

[16] Alma Brasileira translates to the Brazilian Soul. Although the piece is entitled a *choro*, another popular carioca genre similar to samba, the composition makes use of several samba traits, such as syncopation and an emphasis on the down beat (Behague, 1994: 82).

Illustrative of Vargas' commitment to a form of cultural nationalism was his government's establishment of organs such as the DOP (Official Publicity Department) in 1931, the DNPDC (National Department of Propaganda and Cultural Diffusion) in 1934 and the DIP (Department of Press and Propaganda) in 1939 (Santos, 2005: 86). These organs, although primarily vehicles for political censorship and undeniable linchpins of any authoritarian regime, nevertheless contributed to the formulation of a Brazilian popular culture by, among other things "organizing and sponsoring popular festivals," and promulgating a Brazilian musical tradition (Santos, 2005: 88).

Creating a musical tradition in Brazil was, as a matter of fact, one of Vargas' political priorities. Perhaps influenced by European totalitarian regimes or simply moved by Brazilian music's growing popularity abroad (the Oito Batuta's Parisian tour and Villa-Lobos's repute in Europe are a case in point here[17]), Vargas invested heavily in domestic musical programs. It was, for example, during the course of his regime that music was decreed a mandatory component of schools' curricula (Vassberg 1969:62). Similarly, it was during Vargas' presidency that publicly sponsored radio programs dedicated entirely to musical performances such as *Um milhão de melodias* (One million melodies), and *Quando canta o Brasil* (When Brazil sings) were established (McCann, 2006: 75). And, when Vargas' DIP decided what songs would be broadcast and consequently promulgated as Brazilian, it was invariably sambas that came to mind. Samba, after all, was being played right there in the state capital, within easy reach of radio jockeys, the phonographic industry and visiting tourists (not to mention reputable intellectuals who found themselves increasingly captivated by the genre's symbolic, aesthetic significance). Samba's development in Rio de Janeiro under the auspices of a government bent on nationalizing Brazil, one could conclude, was exceptionally fortunate.

It was, for example, because of organs such as the DOP that samba was transformed into a mainstay of Brazilian Carnival. Vargas, aware of the pre-Lenten festival's popularity, chose to publicly sponsor the parade as of 1935 (Levine, 1984:13). Although certainly a politically calculated move, the government's willingness to finance carnival allowed *sambistas*, whose limited resources often prevented their

[17] As Vassberg points out, "Villa-Lobos' Paris period established him as an important international figure" (1969: 56).

participation, to showcase their music during the festival as well. Organized into publicly sponsored samba-schools[18], *sambistas* quickly conquered Carnival with their elaborate *samba-enredos,[19]* sensual dancing and costumes. What is more, if like Edensor suggests, popular rituals like carnival "reinstate a sense of identity," whereby "particular styles [of dance] are believed to embody national characteristics" then samba's appropriation of Carnival and vice-versa during Vargas' regime certainly contributed to the invention of Brazil as the 'kingdom of samba' and of samba as symbolic of Brazil's national identity (2002: 82; 81).

Vargas, it should be added, also indisputably helped popularize samba through radio programs. The *Hora do Brasil* (The Brazilian Hour), a mandatory government broadcast initiated in 1934, for example, habitually featured performances by samba-schools such as the Mangueira and samba songs like *Aquarela do Brasil* (Watercolour of Brazil) (McCann, 2006: 28). The latter, a hit composed by Ari Barroso, formed part of the samba genre 'samba-exaltação', or samba-exaltation, known for its often over-the-top lyrical lauding of all things Brazilian. Samba-exaltação's nationalist rhetoric was particularly appealing to Vargas who understood the genre to be an ideal instrument for government propaganda. Not surprisingly, it follows, *Aquarela do Brasil* graced the airwaves during the *Hora* on more than one occasion, eventually becoming Brazil's unofficial anthem (McCann, 2006: 70). Anecdotes aside, what is significant here is that by sponsoring sambas through public radio programs, Vargas allowed the genre to reach mass audiences living outside of Rio de Janeiro. As McCann comments, "radio stations, above all, proved to be crucial laboratories for popular cultural formation" for it was the "radio that linked the production of the metropolis with the audience of the far flung hinterlands" (2006: 5). Ultimately, although indubitably motivated by a right-wing, nationalist program, Vargas helped catapult samba into the national cultural arena. And, again, had samba not emerged in such close proximity to the federal government, and at such a propitious historical moment, it might not have become the hegemonic musical representation of Brazil.

[18] A samba-school is a club, usually corresponding to a particular neighbourhood, which produce and perform sambas and parades during Carnival.
[19] A samba-enredo is a samba that tells the story of a particular moment in Brazilian history.

Conclusion

This brief exposition of the events and individuals who contributed to the popularization of samba, although by no means exhaustive, has hopefully made clear that neither particular actors nor structural developments alone can account for samba's ascension into the national cultural arena. On the contrary, if a holistic account of samba's nationalization is to be presented, individuals as well as larger, social and cultural transformations must be examined. Among these, this chapter has identified the Modernist Movement, intellectuals and other cultural mediators and Vargas' political programs as important contributors to the establishment of samba as Brazil's national rhythm. And, to the extent that all these identified variables were closely linked to the city of Rio de Janeiro and the early twentieth century, this chapter has suggested that samba materialised at a propitious time and place for its development.

By acknowledging the multitude of social forces at play in the process of constructing samba as a national product, moreover, this essay has strived to contest samba's authenticity as a Brazilian cultural symbol. On the contrary, samba's centrality within Brazil's national imagery must be understood as a product of the genre's fortuitous birth and popularization in the early twentieth century: a condition which allowed samba to be consumed, produced, and transformed by a variety of social actors who imbued the genre with meaning. What is more, much like Hobsbawm's "invented traditions", samba has undeniably come to function as a symbol of social cohesion and as a vehicle "for the inculcation of beliefs" and values in Brazil (1994: 9). Brazil's belief in a racial democracy, for example, is intricately tied to the invention of samba as is the artfulness stereotypically associated with the Brazilian character, which allows him or her to simultaneously dance, play football, and survive amidst Brazil's clientilism with ease. The next chapter therefore, in order to expand on the relationship between samba and the invention of national symbols and beliefs, will discuss two recurring samba characters and link these to Brazil's national identity.

Samba and National Identity

The first two chapters of this essay have discussed the historical context in which samba was born and some of the actors and institutions involved in propagating the genre as a national symbol, whilst arguing that samba's paramountcy within the Brazilian imagery was the product of social construction. This essay, however, has yet to discuss the precise nature of these symbols and expand on how they were informed by political, cultural and economic events. This chapter, therefore, will approach the topic by examining two recurring identity markers articulated through popular samba lyrics of the first half of the twentieth century: the mulatto and the malandro[20]. While it will be argued that the first has helped promulgate the idea of a Brazilian race marked by miscegenation and, more specifically, of Brazil as a racial democracy, the latter has aided in the construction of the Brazilian as a personality living between the realms of order and disorder as suggested by DaMatta (1995). This chapter will propose, moreover, that both these cultural symbols reflect the social concerns and ideologies that informed Brazilian thought during the early twentieth century as discussed in this essay's first chapter.

The Mulatto

The mulatto, or the man whose race is the product of miscegenation, is a recurring personage in Brazilian samba. Examples of popular songs that talk of the mulatto or the mulatta abound and include Ari Barroso's *Brasil Moreno* (1944), Ataulfo Alves' *Mulata Assanhada* (1956), Noel Rosa's *Mulato Bamba* (1932), and João de Barro's *A Mulata é a Tal* (1948),[21] to name a few. At face value, the mulattos' presence within samba lyrics is anything but surprising: samba was, after all, born in Rio de Janeiro's popular neighbourhoods and around the Praça Onze, which McGowan and Pessanha call a "true Africa in miniature" (1998: 22). Consequently, as it is only natural for artists to draw inspiration from their environment, sambistas in the early nineteen-

[20] The malandro is a spiv, a bohemian petty criminal.

[21] 'Brown Brazil,' 'Naughty Mulatta,' 'Cool Mullato,' and 'The Mulatta is the One' respectively. #

hundreds sang about themselves and the world they lived in – a world largely occupied by men and women of African descent or mixed race located at the borderlands or *morros* of Rio de Janeiro.

Samba, however, soon transcended the *morros* of Rio and entered the *cidade*, a social space economically and racially distinct from that inhabited by Brazil's first *sambistas*. *But, given that in the* cidade *samba was no longer the prerogative of an ethnically racially mixed social segment, why did sambas continue to invoke the character of the mulatto?* Why did men like Noel Rosa or Ari Barroso, white middle-class males, choose, in spite of their own racial backgrounds, to make sambas about the mulatto or its variant, the *moreno*[22]? One possible answer is that once samba entered the *cidade*, both the musical genre and its racially mixed protagonist were promptly transformed into corresponding national symbols, and, consequently, it became impossible to speak of or to make samba without invoking the mulatto and vice-versa.

To begin with, it is undeniable that once in the *cidade* the mulatto and his samba became, to Rio's middle-class audiences, testaments of Brazil's racial diversity; one that they had come to believe lay at the crux of Brazil's national identity. To understand why this was the case one must only remember the racial and social discourses governing Brazilian thought at the time of samba's passage into the *cidade*. Gilberto Freyre, for instance, already an authoritative anthropologist by the 1930s, had argued that it was *mestiçagem* that defined Brazil's true nationality (1933, 279). According to Freyre, Brazilian history had been marked by instances of racial mixing which extended back to the country's colonization. Portugal, for example, was to him, "a mixture of Europe and Africa," and Brazil, the synthesis of African, Portuguese, European and Indian races (1966: 40). What is more, in a full departure from earlier writings on *mestiçagem*, Freyre maintained that rather than a cause for backwardness, racial mixing had produced in Brazil a variety of positive cultural outcomes that ranged from a distinctively "good and sweet" Brazilian Portuguese language, to medicinal practices and "joyful" music (1933: 323; 131; 439). Freyre's ideas, which Thalez de Azevedo believed to represent "an authentic methodological revolution in Brazilian social history," took the country by storm

[22] Moreno (a), although meaning literally 'brunette,' is often used in Brazil to denote someone of mixed race or a mulatto (Pravaz, 2000: 51).

(Quoted in Vianna, 1999: 53). Consequently, when samba was suddenly 'discovered' by the bohemian bourgeoisies, Freyre's writings inevitably informed the white public's opinion of the genre. Samba was, to all intent and purposes, one more positive cultural outcome of racial mixing in Brazil[23].

The symbolic construction of samba as mulatto and the mulatto as Brazil, moreover, acquired significant strength as the genre continued to gather national appeal. Why Freyre's ideas on miscegenation and Brazilian culture – that contributed immensely to the acceptance of samba as an authentically Brazilian rhythm – were so quickly and completely embraced by contemporary scholars, however, is still unclear. Perhaps, as DaMatta suggests, Freyre was simply the first to "articulate that version of Brazilian history that all Brazilians like … to tell themselves: that we are a mixed, a mestiço culture" (Quoted in Vianna, 1999: 54). Perhaps, like samba itself, Freyre's ideas were fortuitously postulated at a propitious moment in Brazilian history. After all, the early twentieth century and, particularly the 1930s, were a time in which industrialization, coupled with the end of Brazil's first republic, raised questions about citizenship, democracy and racial integration. Freyre's understanding of Brazil as a multiethnic nation, one could conclude, was possibly opportunely formulated at a moment in which Brazil needed a new interpretive frame through which to imagine itself nationally – a theory with which to dispel that image of Brazil as a fragmented archipelago of races and customs. Ultimately, however, regardless of why Freyre's work was so promptly accepted, it is undeniable that miscegenation had become the operative paradigm by the time of samba's consolidation within both the political and cultural spheres.

With regards to the first, for instance, Vargas' creation of the Council on Immigration and Settlement, whose functions included "accelerating the process of adaptation, acculturation and integration" of immigrants within Brazil, illustrates the governments' commitment to the ideology of miscegenation (Rodrigues, 1969: 98). As a matter of fact, as Vianna comments, "the revolution of 1930 [had] made race mixing a semi-official doctrine" (1999: 51). What is more, miscegenation had also become an ideal within the cultural sphere. The Modernist movement, which preached the cannibalization of cultures and races and the production of a national, racially and culturally mixed art is a clear example of miscegenation's ideological

[23] Freyre himself would cite samba as an example of *mestiçagem's* cultural products (1970: 56)

appeal. And it was perhaps because racial mixing – particularly between Brazil's black and white populations – had become a fundamental political and cultural institution when samba entered the *cidade* through theatres, cinemas and the radio that it continued to be regarded (and constructed) to represent Brazil's multiracial, mulatto nationality despite the steady usurpation of the genre by the country's white middle-class population.

As a matter of fact, although samba was almost exclusively played by blacks and mulattos at the time of its inception, by the 1930s samba was as much a product of the *cidade* as it was of Rio's *morros* (Paranhos, 2003: 82; 100). Noel Rosa, for example, one of Brazil's most avid and renowned sambistas was a "white petit bourgeois from Vila Isabel[24]" (Galvão Quoted in S.C.N. Ribeiro, 1995: 10)[25]. Curiously, however, despite having little in common (other than for samba) with the mulattos living in Rio's *morros*, Rosa and other white sambistas' songs continued to address the man of mixed race and his lifestyle. And, while the usurpation of a popular cultural genre, in this case samba, by a dominant group is hardly uncommon within societies[26], it is nevertheless interesting that the image of samba as the music from the *morro*, the music of the mulatto, was consciously preserved by white elites (McCann, 2006: 42; 63-4). Rosa's song, *Mulato Bamba*, for example, states that when the "mulatto makes a samba ... it makes the news ... he has always been cool[27]," suggesting that it is the mulatto who truly masters samba. And, while it is probable that the white sambistas' commitment to the image of the mulatto reflected a necessity to propagate samba as authentic, as a genre emanating from "the people," here understood as the disenfranchised men of African descent, it is also true that the mulatto's enduring presence within samba songs likewise reflected the resilience of the metaphor that had been already been created: that samba was mulatto, it was Brazil (Pravaz, 2000: 51-2).

What is more, if by 1939 (the time *Aquarela* was composed), Brazil could already be imagined by Barroso as a "mulato inzoneiro[28]," it is also true that that image is still

[24] #.Vila Isabel was a middle-class, predominantly white neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro in the early 1900s.
[25] For more on Noel Rosa see McCann, 2001: 1-16.
[26] American jazz is an obvious example.
[27] #.
[28] A tricky mulatto or a mulatto *malandro* #.

hegemonic today. *Aquarela*, for example, has become Brazil's unofficial anthem. Not only is Barroso's song invariably played at resorts and hotels during the summer when tourists flock into Rio de Janeiro, but it is also featured in cartoons, movies and other international media productions. And contemporary sambas re-visit the metaphor of Brazil as racially diverse as well. From sambas performed during carnival by popular artists to those composed by internationally renowned musicians like Tom Jobim, the mulatto continues to be featured in song. Samba, one can conclude, has become not only a symbol of Brazilian culture, but also a symbol of that story that, as DaMatta put it, "Brazilians like to themselves": that Brazil is a racial democracy, that it embraces racial diversity just as it embraces samba, Carnival, and *feijoada*[29], the obvious inconsistencies in that story notwithstanding (Quoted in Vianna, 1999: 54).

The Malandro

If the mulatto immortalized through samba has become an integral part of Brazilians' sense of identity, it is also true that the malandro has become an equally hegemonic figure within the Brazilian imagination. The malandro, or the spiv who "wins without trying," is, like the mulatto, a recurring character within samba and, in particular, of sambas composed in the first half of the twentieth century (DaMatta, quoted in Oliven, 1984a: 70). *But how did the* malandro*, who Texeira describes as possessing "class, [and] cunning" and as a man inimical to "work, creditors, and the police," become synonymous with samba and subsequently with Brazil (2003: 33)?* Perhaps as Vasconsellos and Suzuki suggest, samba was simply born "at the edge of hard work," in an environment conducive to *malandragem*[30] and, consequently, the malandro quite naturally became the subject of choice of many *sambistas* who lived in *malandragem* themselves (Quoted in Texeira, 2003: 32). Perhaps, moreover, as samba transcended the *morros* and Rio's state borders, *malandragem*, already essential to samba, gained national appeal concomitantly with the musical genre. On the other hand, it is also possible that *malandragem*,

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[29] These are other Brazilian national symbols that, like samba, are of African origin.
[30] Malandragem is what the malandro does, such as gambling, drinking, and womanizing.

although popularized through samba, resonated with different social groups and among varying social spaces and, because Brazilians could identify with the malandro, the latter was promulgated as representative of Brazilians' national identity. In any case, in order to understand just how it was possible for Noel Rosa to pronounce as early as 1932 that the "malandro who does not drink, does not eat, and does not abandon samba" are "things of ours[31]," and to assess the validity of the possible answers given above, a closer examination of the malandro and samba is necessary.

To begin with, as Vasconsellos and Suzuki remark, samba was in fact born at a time and place propitious for *malandragem*. To understand why this was so, one must simply remember the conditions, both social and economic, governing the lives of mulattos and blacks living in the *morros* of Rio in the early 1900s. On one hand, the abolishment of slavery only two decades earlier meant that although free, men of African descent were nevertheless the victims of discrimination and economic hardship. After all, centuries of slave labour coupled with European racial dogmatisms dictating the biological inferiority of African races had instilled white Brazilians with a deep seeded disdain towards blacks and men of mixed race. As Skidmore suggests, in the early 1900s it was the work of men like Gobineau, Ammon, Lapouge and Chamberlain that informed Brazilian racial thinking, and, as a result, the man of mixed race was invariably labelled as inferior and as unworthy (1974: 55-6). The mulattos and blacks inhabiting the *morros* of Rio de Janeiro, it follows, were second class citizens during Brazil's first republic despite being free men. Often illiterate, unemployed and the victims of police violence, these were men and women who found for themselves neither purpose nor space in the new Brazilian order (Ribeiro, 1995: 222).

On the other hand, the incipient industrialization of Brazil's centre south only aggravated the subjugation of the African within the country's socio-economic order. In particular, once the Brazilian black man "conquered the right (and the need) to sell his labour," as Vasconcellos and Suzuki remark, he invariably entered the labour market as a proletarian, working in Brazil's unregulated factories (1996: 614). The meagre earnings of a factory worker were, after all, preferable to the alternative: to continue living in the Brazilian back lands, harvesting the lands of the men who had

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[31] # from *São Coisas Nossas*

kept them in captivity. The men and women who migrated to the centre-south in the hopes of finding a dignified occupation found themselves, however, "being neither slaves nor masters, [but] living in an intermediary and anomic social space in which it was neither possible to live without or within the social order[32]" (Schwarz, Quoted in Vasconselos and Suzuki, 1996: 615-6).

And it was precisely this anomic social existence, experienced by so many blacks and mulattos following the abolition of slavery in Brazil that prompted men into *malandragem* (Prado, 2007: 284-6). As Cardoso observes, faced with the choice between the undignified work available to him and idleness, the freed slave invariably opted for the latter, recognizing that "he must first define himself as idle, in order to feel himself to be free[33]" (Quoted in Vasconcelos e Suzuki, 1996: 625). *Malandragem*, it follows, allowed the disenfranchised blacks and mulattos to make a living whilst reacting to salaried work. By gambling, stealing, or playing samba, these men survived in that intermediate space between order and disorder, in *malandragem*. It was only natural, one could conclude, that samba and *malandragem* would become synonymous. Like the mulatto who is summoned through samba, the malandro as a character was none other than the sambista himself, particularly during the genre's inception.

What is curious, however, is that the malandro – the quintessential anti-hero – survived samba's passage into the *cidade* and its white middle-class social spaces despite such obstacles like the DIP and social prejudices[34]. In other words, like the mulatto, the malandro characterized through samba enjoyed a peculiar symbolic robustness. Illustrative of the malandro's resilience within samba are the lyrics written by Noel Rosa. Rosa, despite studying to become a doctor, wrote sambas like *São Coisas Nossas, Escola de Malandro, Felicidade, Filosofia, João Ninguem, and Mulato Bamba,* all of which speak of the malandro and his lifestyle (Bastos, 1999: 74)[35]. In *São Coisas Nossas,* for example, Rosa says that "the malandro who does not … abandon samba … are things of ours." Similarly, in *Felicidade* (1932) he remarks

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[32] #.
[33] #.
[34] One of the DIP's goals was to remove the *malandro* from samba, (Santos, 2006: 92-3) and, consequently, it is significant that *sambistas* during the Estado Novo continued, nevertheless, to talk of *malandragem*.
[35] #*These Are Things of Ours, School for Spivs, Hapiness, John Doe,* and *Cool Mulatto* respectively. It should also be noted that these are only a few of Rosa's songs that talk of the *malandro*.

that “my destiny was laid out in the cards, I was never meant for work, I was meant to *batucar*[36]”. In *Mulato Bamba* Rosa comments that the mulatto “was born lucky … he lives gambling, he never saw work … *he has always been cool*.” Rosa’s lyrics suggest that the malandro, as a symbolic recourse, had become endemic to samba as the genre continued to gain popularity in Rio de Janeiro and that rather than a simple delinquent, the malandro had qualities deserving of praise as well – qualities that Rosa judged were Brazilian, that were “things of ours.” Consequently, while it is true that the malandro, sung about by the early *sambistas* of Rio’s *morros*, was certainly popularized as a national stereotype as the genre gained adherents from other social classes and spaces, it is also true that the malandro’s description seemed to capture a valid aspect of Brazilians’ national identity. Why else would *sambistas*, even lawyers like Ari Barroso, continue to insist that Brazil was a “tricky mulatto,” a veritable malandro?

Mário de Andrade, for example, the author of *Macunaíma* (1928), a saga described as both the epitome of the Modernist movement and as one of Brazil’s most remarkable novels, spoke of the Brazilian as the “hero without character”. In particular, Macunaíma, the novel’s protagonist and, in de Andrade’s interpretation, the “the hero of our people,” is a man who “feels so lazy,” (Andrade, 1928: 7)[37]. He is “a trickster of flickering cleverness and innocent malice, charming, guileful … he negates the steadiness, reliability, and goal-orientedness necessary to achieve the kind of success that depends on hard work” (Wasserman, 1984: 107). In essence, one can conclude, Macunaíma is a malandro, a man who reacts against the capitalist, “Yankee rhythm”, associated with industrialization and modernization (Freyre, 1967: 59). What Mário de Andrade’s novel suggests, therefore, is that the malandro, more than just a recurring personage within samba, is also symbolic of the Brazilian national character. The malandro, in other words, is not only the man who “does not eat, does not sleep and does not abandon samba,” in Rosa’s words, but also the epitome of the Brazilian character as it was understood by sambistas, but also by novelists, historians and anthropologist in the early twentieth century.

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[36] Batucar was another way of saying ‘to play samba.’

[37] Suarez and Tomlins, for example, comment that Andrade “sought the ultimate Brazilian character” and found that what was most Brazilian was “indolence, sensuality, astuteness” (2000: 100). Roberto Reis, a Brazilian, confirms Andrade’s inkling: “we are all Macunaima.” (Quoted in Suarez & Tomlins, 2000: 112).

Freyre, for example, writes in *Order and Progress* that "the climate of the tropics arouses little inclination for hard labour. The rhythm of life which prevailed in Brazil was one that favoured easy living" (1970: 260). Political and cultural change in Brazil, Freyre continues, has consequently been governed by its people's placidity. From the country's slow transition from slavery to free labour, to Brazil's hampered passage from an agrarian to an industrial society, development in Brazil has historically followed a tropical tempo (Freyre, 1970: 261-2). Freyre's assessment of Brazilians' relationship with time and its people's historical aversion to hard work seems to suggest again, (this time from an anthropological point of view) that the Brazilian national character is not unlike that of the malandro. Like Rosa's spiv who won't work while there is samba[38], the Brazilian identified by Freyre does not adopt a "time is money" mentality nor does he renounce "the cigar smoked slowly in the hammock" (Freyre, 1970: 261). Rather, he "sits penniless at the breakfast table, drinks a sip of *cachaça*, laughs and leaves[39]" without paying, hoping to survive in that "sociological disaster" which is Brazil – a place that DaMatta describes as "a class society" oddly coupled with "clientelism, syndicalism, corporatism, and strong-arm bossim", a place "where everything is out of place" (1995: 270; 271).

Samba and National Identity

In summary, the malandro and the mulatto (often one and the same) have become symbols of Brazil's national character. Both, moreover, were at first thematic recourses of *sambistas*, who, due to socio-economic circumstances, were often racially mixed malandros themselves, living at the edge of hard work, at the edge of the *cidade*. In addition, this chapter has argued, both the malandro and the mulatto functioned as symbolic representations of the Brazilian character and, consequently, were continuously re-visited by latter-day composers whose social backgrounds often differed from those of the original *sambistas*. Sambas by Noel Rosa and Ari Barroso, quoted above, are especially illustrative of the malandro and mulatto's symbolic

[38] # In *Escola de Malandro,* Noel Rosa writes: "While samba exists I do not want to work anymore".
[39] From Chico Buarque's *O Malandro (1978)#.*

robustness if one recalls that both were middle-class white males. The chapter has also argued that as symbols of the Brazilian character, the mulatto and the malandro speak to Brazilians' understanding of themselves as living in a racial democracy and in a society displaced between order and disorder respectively. With regards to the first, the mulatto sung about in samba has come to represent Brazil's multiethnic character and, particularly, the country's commitment to the ideal of a racial democracy. Therefore, despite social inequalities and racial discrimination, the mulatto and samba's popularity within Brazil is invariably divulged as evidence that Brazilians embrace their African heritage and that miscegenation lies at the crux of the country's national identity. The invention of samba in the early twentieth century, its appropriation by dominant social sectors and its "subsequent transformation into a symbol of national identity," one can conclude, more than just an example of how popular culture is often constructed in Brazil, has helped consolidate that myth still in vogue today: that Brazilians live in a racial democracy (Oliven, 1984b: 113).

The chapter has also suggested that the malandro's cunning and charming and his aversion to work has become emblematic of the Brazilian man who lives between the order embodied by modernization and the disorder characterized by social inequality, economic backwardness and the clientilism which pervades Brazil. Andrade's and Freyre's work are particularly telling of how the malandro, although popularized through samba, resonated with a larger Brazilian audience, and, particularly, with artists and intellectuals struggling to define Brazil nationally. The malandro, as a result, more than just a hustler who occasionally plays and is featured in samba, has also come to reflect the Brazilian persona (Oliven, 1984b:109). Brazilians, discourses on national identity suggest, are malandros*:* they have *jogo de cintura* (artfulness), *categoria* (class), a special *jeitinho* (a special way of doing things) and a lightness with which they take things despite living in *prontidão* (lack of money)[40], in a "place where everything is out of place" (Oliven, 1984b: 107; Barbosa, 1995: 35-6; DaMatta, 1995: 271).

By way of a conclusion it should be remembered that although, like samba itself, the malandro and the mulatto sung about by the genre's musicians have become

[40] For a better discussion of the *jeitinho* Brasileiro, or "a special mechanism for bypassing rules and getting things done" (1995:36) commonly utilized in Brazil see Barbosa, 1995: 35-48.

emblematic of Brazil's national identity, these symbolic representations of the Brazilian were inarguably fabricated during a period in Brazil's history when men and women were struggling with questions of nationalism, economic modernization and racial integration. Consequently, both the malandro and the mulatto must be understood as allegories constructed to address the concerns which invariably arose during the course of building a Brazilian nation, as previously suggested. With this qualification in mind, this essay's conclusion will address the importance of constructing national symbols within the context of nation-building and propose that although banal, the invention of samba has been invaluable to the forging and sustenance of a Brazilian nation.

Conclusion

In his seminal book – *Imagined Communities* – Anderson argues that the nation is just that: "an imagined political community ... imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (2006: 6). Anderson's definition, although telling of any national unit, appears exceptionally fitting when one considers Brazil. A country notoriously torn by cultural and economic regionalisms, Brazil's national survival seems intricately tied to its members' ability to *imagine themselves nationally*, to believe that, like other national collectivities, they too are living in a "spirit of communion" (Anderson, 2006: 6). And, to that end, the availability of national symbols and of a national popular culture seems pivotal: they are instruments of social cohesion, national binding agents. In Brazil, moreover, as this essay has sought to enunciate, samba has come to play an integral part within this configuration of cultural and communal symbols. Perhaps the result of Brazilians' historical predilection for music, or simply the product of chance, it is nevertheless true that music has become one of the "most unifying element[s]" within the Brazilian society (Freyre, 1970: 70)[41]. To quote Andrade: "Brazilian popular music is the most complete, most fully national, most forceful creation of our race" (2006: 20)[42]. And samba, even

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42 #

foreigners can attest, "is Brazil's "national rhythm," its prime symbol of cultural nationalism" (Chasteen: 1999: xiii).

Having established samba's centrality within the Brazilian national psyche, this essay described how, following its invention as a national tradition, the genre came to function as a symbolic representation of a Brazilian identity. In particular, the mulatto and the malandro's recurring presence within samba songs was discussed and it was proposed that whilst the first has facilitated the belief among Brazilians that Brazil is a racial democracy, the latter has come to embody Brazilians' simultaneous disregard for a kind of Weberian work ethic and playful artfulness which allows them to survive between the realms of order and disorder characteristic of Brazil. In this respect, although undeniably banal, samba helps to remind Brazilians, be them from the industrial Southeast, the agrarian North or the cattle-ranging South, that despite their different accents, skin colours, and values, there is something to be said of Brazil as a national collectivity as well. In other words, samba, whether sung during Carnival or heard at home on a record player, reminds Brazilians that they also share a common identity: that they too, like the rest of samba's national audience, have something of Barroso's "tricky mullato[43]" and that regional differences notwithstanding, "samba, cunningness and other *bossas*, are things of ours[44]". Ultimately, if Billig is correct in asserting that for the nation to be reproduced daily "a whole complex of beliefs, assumptions, habits, representations and practices must also be reproduced ... in a banally mundane way," then samba – heard and lauded by every Brazilian – seems to be invaluable to the sustenance of that nation (1995: 6).

But if samba, perhaps more so than any other Brazilian cultural practice, serves to flag the nation daily, what will happen when it no longer resonates within Brazil? Or, to quote Vianna, once samba, undeniably the product of a particular historical moment, loses its national appeal, what will "assure the unity – even if only the musical unity – of Brazil?" (1999: 106). Perhaps, as the country struggles to advance economically, but also politically and culturally within the international cadre of nation-states, it will encounter new problems that will beckon the invention of new, more appropriate traditions. Perhaps, conversely, other existing traditions (soccer

[43] # Ari Barroso, *Watercolor of Brazil.*
[44] # Noel Rosa, *These Are Things of Ours.*

playing for example) will simply come to replace samba within the Brazilian national imagery. In the end, regardless of what the future holds for samba, it is indisputable that forging a national identity – be it through the establishment of traditions, a popular culture or common myths – is paramount to the sustenance of nations and, accordingly, that the topic merits academic attention.

This concise study of samba, moreover, has hopefully shown that Latin America is deserving of scholarly investigation as well. Its racially and economically diverse countries make of the continent's nations veritable archipelagos that, nevertheless, continue to survive as nation-states. As a result, by studying the processes by which these countries continually imagine themselves nationally and the cultural products with which they flag their nations daily, something might be learned about nationalisms elsewhere too. And, although providing a comparison between samba and national identity in Brazil and other nationalisms is beyond the scope of this essay, perhaps by moving away from Europe as our comparative centre more of nationalisms' peculiarities might come to be understood. Ultimately, in any case, the scholarship on nationalism will only be enriched if more researchers turn their attention to nations, like those of Latin America, that are routinely left unexplored, whose mysteries are left unsolved.

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