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The Role of the Nossa Senhora Aparecida Festival in Creating Brazilian American Community

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Articles

The Role of the Nossa Senhora Aparecida Festival in Creating Brazilian American Community

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Once a year, the Brazilians who live in the Boston area come together at St. Anthony Church in Cambridge to celebrate the festival of *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* (Our Lady who has Appeared), view the statue of the Virgin Mary that has brought miracles to the people of Brazil, and honor this patroness. The festival, attended by hundreds, is primarily religious but also has important cultural aspects. Yet, at the end of the day, the Brazilians disappear off to their own parish churches and into the obscurity that has marked the Brazilian presence in America. Is there a Brazilian community? If so, what role does this festival play?

In my research, I determined that the festival plays an important celebratory role for a Brazilian community that is obscure but not nonexistent, a group of people who maintain ties to Brazil through interacting with each other, worshipping together, and speaking Portuguese. However, to understand the events and comments of those who attended the festival, I will first describe the ethnography that has been done with Brazilians in New York. Then I will compare festivals in Brazil and the different models for Portuguese-language festivals carried on in Massachusetts by Luso-Americans. Lastly, I will discuss what I observed and what I learned from interviews and questionnaires about the role of the festival in both reflecting and helping to create community among the Brazilians in Boston.

Brazilians in the United States

We will begin with a look at the history of Brazilians in the United States. Since the early twentieth century, there has been a small number of Brazilians in America, and by the late 1960s, the number of *mineiros* (residents of Minas Gerais, some of the poorest Brazilians), working in New York City and in the resorts in the Catskills had

grown to a sizable amount. However, the greatest period of Brazilian emigration began in the mid-1980s, when hyperinflation and economic uncertainty first began to plague this fifth-most populous nation in the world. Throughout the 1980s, Brazilians fled to Spain and Japan as well as the United States. Both the economic difficulties and the emigration continue today, though the latter occurs at a lower rate due to travel restrictions imposed by the Brazilian government. The Brazilian government estimates that between 1986 to 1990, about 1.4 million people permanently left Brazil.¹

The majority of emigrants to America left Brazil on travel or student visas and overstayed, becoming "out of status." Most are living illegally in the United States. The fear of being found out by the Immigration and Naturalization Services and being deported or prosecuted weighs heavily on the minds of these Brazilians and, as we shall see, influences a good deal of their behavior. The one major study of Brazilians in America was done by Maxine L. Margolis, who stresses that her results on the largest community in New York should not necessarily be generalized to other groups of Brazilians in the United States. However, as we shall see, many of Margolis's descriptions closely match attributes of the metropolitan Boston community, cited by Margolis as the second largest in America.²

New York's *brazucas*, as Brazilians living in the United States are called, represent a cross-section of the Brazilian population, matching the gender balance and religion of the mother country. The racial balance of those who stay in America is skewed toward the white end, reflecting American race prejudices, and the well-educated and affluent are also over-represented. As these groups are most likely to succeed within Brazil for these same reasons, it seems surprising that the emigrant population has these characteristics, but it is precisely this exodus of the most creative and intelligent segment of the population that has hurt Brazil in this decade-long lack of confidence.³

The Brazilians are predictably young as well, in their twenties and thirties. Fresh from college and facing no commitments at home, they emigrate to the United States to attempt to make some money and return to Brazil in a better economic situation. Though most are single, their minds are never far from Brazil, as the large amounts of money remitted each month to Brazil suggests. While other areas, including Boston, are populated with *mineiros* and other members of the Brazilian underclass who had no opportunities within Brazil, a majority of the immigrants in New York City (and a substantial number nationwide), by Margolis's estimation, are middle to upper class, with family lands or businesses in Brazil. Economic and family ties help keep the Brazilians thinking of themselves as sojourners,

living only for a short time in America, rather than as true immigrants.⁴

Margolis states that the stereotypes of Brazilians as shoeshine boys and go-go dancers are not totally inaccurate—though Brazilians are also domestic workers, food stand owners, dog walkers, restaurant help, and construction workers. The Brazilians have been limited to dead-end and menial jobs; Portuguese is a far less common language than Spanish, and both are undesirable in hiring. People with university degrees laugh at the work they do, for once they might have hired someone in Brazil to do the sort of tasks they now do. However, most justify it by considering this a temporary stay, a place to bide time and make a little money until the Brazilian economic situation stabilizes.⁵

The key aspect of the community, a concept which Margolis stresses repeatedly, is the invisibility of this immigration. One reason for invisibility, Margolis suggests, is that Brazilians are mixed visually and conceptually with Hispanic Latinos. Since there is no existing geographic neighborhood, Brazilians have settled throughout New York, though concentrations do exist in Queens and in Spanish Harlem. This is one way Margolis feels New York is not representative of other Brazilian communities in America: the Ironbound neighborhood of Newark, New Jersey, for example, is heavily populated with Brazilians, and both Newark and Framingham, a Boston suburb, present more homogeneous working-class Brazilian communities.⁶

A whole culture of code words has developed around the Brazilians' illegal status. Green cards, for example, are referred to by the name of the Brazilian singer Gal Costa and the Immigration and Naturalization Service is called "Tia Mimi" in casual conversation to prevent suspicion. The Brazilian community keeps remarkably silent; with a low crime rate and no prominent community face, the number of Brazilians has grown almost imperceptibly. In immigration studies and on *New York Times* feature pages, the Brazilians have been (until recently) absent when new immigrant groups are discussed.⁷

The geographic illiteracy of American citizens also plays a part in Brazilian invisibility. Americans are uncertain of Brazilian history and its separateness from the rest of historically Spanish-controlled Central and South America. Furthermore, the American confusion of Brazilians with "Hispanics"—those who speak Spanish, which does not include the Portuguese-speaking Brazilians—is offensive to them, and the use of "Latino" (which is accurate for all people from Latin America) as a synonym for "Hispanic" is also disheartening to them. In Brazil, Spanish is not even commonly known, though it is much

more common among the Brazilians in America, given that a number of their coworkers often are Hispanic.⁸

The Brazilians are too frustrated or apathetic to protest the inaccurate understanding by Americans, Margolis says. Yet this can be a very serious problem when the misunderstanding is official policy. Margolis details at length how the invisibility of the Brazilian community was built into the 1990 census by not having a place for Brazilians. Since Brazilians are not Hispanic, they were not included in the census categories. "Brazilian" is not a race, so that census blank also was not appropriate. Margolis explains how the only remaining and only accurate choice on the common "short" form was "white." Margolis estimates that the lack of a place on the census form, combined with a population not confident in English and perhaps worried about the census's effects on their immigration status, resulted in an undercount of anywhere from 33 to 80 percent of the Brazilian population. The "mistake" will be corrected in the 2000 census, but such errors only heighten the invisibility of the Brazilian community.⁹

All these factors have led to a dramatic underestimation of the numbers of Brazilians in America. Though the official numbers are 10,641 for Massachusetts, for example, the language barriers and the fear of being turned in as illegal residents may shield a population estimated to be in excess of 150,000. While the 1990 census recorded only 14,403 Brazilians in the New York metropolitan area, both census officials and members of the Brazilian consulate place conservative estimates at 100,000. "The official numbers," Margolis concludes, "are, quite literally, a drop in the bucket."¹⁰

Invisibility most concretely impacts the possibilities for community and community folklife in the lack of a physical presence, in New York or elsewhere. "Little Brazil" is the name for one block on West 46th Street that has a number of restaurants and boutiques carrying Brazilian items; these shops represent but do not serve the Brazilians in the city. Only the Brazilian Independence Day parade celebration brings a large number of Brazilians together, though again it is with *baraccas* (booths) set up to cater to non-Brazilians who have come to observe and, presumably, to buy Brazilian foods and other goods.¹¹

With all the evidence of invisibility, Margolis raises the question of whether there is really a community at all, which she answers with a very qualified affirmative. Prematurely inspired by the parade, Margolis writes, she soon found "that this was surface event that only gave the appearance of community—a Potemkin village with precious few underpinnings." With no social organizations and no place to gather, it is hard to point to any Brazilian community at all, though Margolis does provide a number of important explanations for the apparent lack of community. Like other immigrant groups, especially

Salvadorans or Israelis, the Brazilians see themselves as temporarily in the United States and do not devote the energy to building community here; they rather stay very closely attached to the events and people in their mother country.¹²

In addition, the fear of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the tight job market for undocumented immigrants makes Brazilians suspicious of one another. They do not get together often owing to the fear of informants and freeloaders. Margolis says the Brazilians "undergo an extreme Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde metamorphosis": Brazilians rely on each other to find jobs and first become settled but then often refuse to help newcomers after them who they fear might steal their jobs or call the INS. It is common for Brazilians to decry new immigration among non-Brazilian friends so as to distance themselves from the newcomers. The lack of these networking groups is particularly significant given the importance of clubs and social organizations that bolster both the Portuguese festivals and the Portuguese community as a whole. Unlike in the Portuguese community, Margolis feels that among the immigrants, social class and general distrust can overshadow national commonalities.¹³

Religion provides a unique respite. More than elsewhere, Margolis said that religious services and church functions were marked with a greater sense of unity and camaraderie. "The communion and amiability that suffuses . . . religious gatherings are in stark contrast to the disunity that pervades the community as a whole," she says. I was in no position to measure such aspects of the festival I attended, though her remarks on the larger reach of the church mirror the report on Portuguese in Cambridge described later in this article. Religion is the only piece of Brazilian life with any serious institutional development. More than half of those Margolis interviewed claimed they go to church regularly.

A Brazilian church was founded in New York in 1990; most of congregation, however, are from only the very newest immigrants.¹⁴ Of note, that church celebrated its dedication by buying a replica of the *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* statue and installing it in a Mass on May 13, 1990, the anniversary of the Virgin's first appearance in Brazil. By making the statue part of the defining event of the new congregation, the church gave evidence to the centrality of *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* in Brazilian life, both in Brazil and in America.¹⁵

The new church is perhaps the most important emblem for the developing concept of Brazilian community. Until now, the Brazilians may have felt that they are sojourners in America, but as they marry and have children who are American citizens, that relationship becomes more permanent. As we have seen, a number

of communities spend decades claiming they are not permanent residents, yet slight changes—whether it is renovating an apartment or finally buying a winter coat—indicate that that relationship is being transformed. While Brazilians say they are ready to return to Brazil when the economy recovers, as the years pass, the affinities for the United States—its greater gender equality and privacy—become more familiar and more dear. Ultimately, "the distinction between a migrant and a settler," Margolis quotes from a study of such immigration patterns, "appears to be one of degree, not of kind."¹⁶

Margolis does not see much of a Brazilian community in New York, which seems accurate, yet this should not be misconstrued to say these people are not members of a community. Both in her work and, as we shall see, in my observations, the Brazilians present a rich and powerful order for their lives, where the priority of language and well-being overwhelm considerations of honor and to some extent patriotism, as these people work outside their home country with the hope of returning. Much of this rich tradition derives from Brazil, so it is worth looking at how festivals are celebrated there.

Festivals in Brazil

Within Brazil itself, festivals are a dominant form of cultural expression with their roots at times only perfunctorily in religion. Vibrant and colorful celebrations mark the Brazilian holidays, often including ornate costuming and special ceremonies. While some popular holidays, including saint days, Advent, Christmas, and Mardi Gras, are celebrated worldwide as part of Catholicism, the syncretism of Portuguese Roman Catholic and pagan rites, as well as the influences of indigenous peoples and the African slaves brought to colonial Brazil, have led to a remarkable mix of holidays celebrated only in Brazil. Among these are celebrations once unique to a part of the population, like the *Congada* festivals from Africa, that are now celebrated by Brazilians of all ancestries. Similarly, many of the national Catholic festivals reflect this mixed history, often in a pattern of "resistance and accommodation" between the panoply of African and Indian traditions and the official doctrines of the church.¹⁷

This is often expressed through "popular Catholicism," a term that includes the folk traditions brought over or created by the laity. According to folklorist Lélia Gonzalez, though "the Catholicism which arrived here by official routes has always been characterized by authoritarian formalism," emphasizing words and gestures over meaning, "another Catholicism was brought by anonymous representatives" which "valued . . . direct contact, full of intimacy." Her sweeping summary is evidenced in the thoughts and festivals of Brazilians. Though built around saints' days and the appearance of

religious icons, as in the case of *Nossa Senhora de Aparecida*, the festivals are memorable more for the traditions and ceremonies that have built up around them than for their religious significance. In Brazil, festivals are marked by jousts, bonfires, masquerades, processions, and the decoration of houses, churches, and plazas in lights, masks, or streamers.¹⁸

Gonzalez only mentions the *Nossa Senhora de Aparecida* festival once, in a list of other regional festivals. Though she is the national patron within the Brazilian audience for which Gonzalez writes, her festival is only significant as a local event (in the town of Aparecida do Norte in the state of São Paulo) that attracts a number of pilgrims from the rest of the country. As we shall see, it has a much greater significance in the community of Brazilians in the United States, for both demographic and ideological reasons.¹⁹

In Brazilian festivals, the procession is a common form in which participants carry the festival icon on their backs through the streets or on a prescribed path. In the Procession of Monte Santo, during Holy Week, one barefoot pilgrim leads the crowd carrying a cross, while others have dummies that represent mourners. Participants shown in a photograph in Gonzalez's book are in street clothes, while those leading the procession have coverlets over everything from suits to jeans and halter tops. This is similar to the procession here, though the majority at the Cambridge festival were in "Sunday best" and those dressed more casually seemed to be the teenagers and young adults.²⁰

The two other photographs of processions show floats carried on the backs of participants similar to the shrine of *Nossa Senhora*; though differences in decoration may relate to these specific holidays, it seems significant that they are both more ornamented and carried exclusively by the men. As the statue of *Nossa Senhora* was carried only by the women here, it seems a significant difference, which may stem from the connection of the holiday with the mothers and especially children of Brazil.²¹

In these photographs, processions take place at night or on the seashore with highly ornamented floats. Perhaps the lack of physical connection to the land of Brazil and the necessary convenience of holding an afternoon festival here, so that many families could attend, altered the celebration in America. Additionally, time and money constraints may have been the reason why the float, though decorated, cannot compete with the ornate displays from Brazil. Given this evidence, it seems that the procession and statue forms match closely the traditions celebrated in Brazil. We will now examine the history of the Portuguese in Massachusetts, a group whose festivals are dramatically different from those of the Brazilians, although they share a language and ancestry.²²

Portuguese Festivals

Portuguese festivals and feasts, as they are more often called, do not much resemble Brazilian festivals, a finding confirmed by questionnaire respondents. However, because of the few similarities, as well as the grouping in the American mind by language (when Brazilians are adequately separated from Spanish-speaking Latin Americans), it will be valuable to briefly examine the Portuguese American communities in New England and their festivals.

New Bedford, Massachusetts, has the largest concentration of Portuguese and Luso-Americans in the United States, and its festivals have been the subject of a number of ethnographic studies. Sizable populations also exist in Fall River, Massachusetts, the Cambridge-Somerville area, and in Boston generally. I would like to call attention to the terms above as they are often misnomers when applied to these communities. The majority of "Portuguese" immigrants to the United States have been Portuguese citizens from outlying provinces, especially the Azores, Madeiras, and in recent years the Cape Verdes— island groups of the Atlantic controlled by Portugal. All have very different folklife and immigration patterns than continental Portuguese. Once this distinction is understood, it is helpful to call the communities Portuguese, since this is how they themselves refer to their general community on most occasions.²³

Like the Brazilians, the Portuguese came a half-century ago for economic reasons and saw the festivals as a good way to maintain faith and devotion to their traditional saints. The festival tradition in New Bedford was begun by the smaller but more visible Madeiran community among the Portuguese, holding their first festival, the *Festa do Santissimo Sacramento* (Feast of the Blessed Sacrament), in 1915. The Madeiran festival has always been larger than the festival of the Micaleses (people from the island of São Miguel in the Azores), who were the first sizable population of Portuguese in New Bedford.²⁴

By 1929, the Micaleses had set up their festival, the *Festa do Senhor da Pedra* (Feast of Jesus of the Stone). Like the Brazilian festival, this festival includes a statue, and the festival was successfully revived, after a lull caused by World War II, by the production of a replica of the statue from the Azores. A second similarity between the Brazilian and New Bedford festivals is that the smaller Micaleses festival, which is the only one of the two to exhibit any real resemblance to the Brazilian festival, continues to be attended and organized primarily by immigrants rather than second- or third-generation Luso-Americans as among the Madeirans.²⁵

The Portuguese in New Bedford have had more time than the newly arrived Brazilians to develop distinctly American cultural forms. The

Madeiran festival, known as "the largest Portuguese feast in the world," is nothing like the Brazilian one; it has no procession, and, as ethnographer Stephen Cabral notes, more haggling over beer prices and distribution than religious issues. The Micaleses festival, while similar to the Brazilian festival because of its immigrant attendance, is only slightly better in this respect. It bills itself as "the largest purely religious festival in the world." They still had a procession at the time of the Cabral study, yet they too seemed more concerned with the sales at the *barracas* than any purely religious observance. Cabral notes that both festivals are unrecognizable in comparison with the original celebrations in the Azores and Madeiras, discussing how the length of time the community has lived in the United States as well as the competition between the festivals has led to a more grandiose and materialistic display. The Brazilian festival, which is not as commercialized and holds much more closely to the religious and cultural practices of Brazil, stands in stark contrast with the well-established and more secularized Portuguese festivals.²⁶

The material nature of the festivals has not evolved without tension. One Micaleses was quoted as saying that the festival "is not for the whole goddamn city," referring to the more extravagant plans of the Madeirans, whose festival held the distinction in 1975 as the largest beer-drinking event in the American social calendar—more than triple the amount drunk at the Indy 500. Though the Portuguese are distant if not downright adversarial with the clergy (a situation that does not exist among the Brazilians), the organization and motivation has remained religious. As one participant pointed out, people would not donate their time if the festival did not have some religious underpinning. The elaborate organizational structure of the clubs, established to coordinate the festivals and provide continuity year to year, show a commitment both to community and to the religious nature of the festivals. They view the secular and religious as linked, and so the remarkable large secular carnival feel of the festival is justified in their minds by religious aims.²⁷

To sum up, the Portuguese festivals are not an exact match for the Brazilian festival because they differ in age, size, and focus and have shown a tendency to be less than purely religious. The Portuguese festivals give the general community a chance "to enjoy the pretense of being Portuguese for the weekend," something the Brazilian community seems to have no interest in facilitating. It is unlikely that the Brazilians would want to commercialize their festivals to such a point that they could draw the crowds that the Portuguese do. The Brazilian Independence Day celebrations have drawn thousands to their carnivalesque atmosphere, but the festivals are much more closely linked to church events and are seen, at least in Brazil, as times to be

with family, not a general American community. However, this may be only the reflection of a recently emigrated community who, as they begin to establish a permanent and perhaps more prominent face in America, will also hope to commercialize and popularize their festivals.²⁸

Though the Brazilian community is too young for any definitive judgment to be made, it is unlikely that it will develop the sort of clubs that organize the Portuguese festivals; at present, the group is too transient. Perhaps the second generation, twenty or thirty years down the line, will need or want such organizations to maintain their language and festivals, but this too seems unlikely. Brazilians do not contact each other as much as the Portuguese immigrants a half-century ago did, when their clubs were forming. Indeed, some Brazilians feel their compatriots are actually detrimental to their ability to get a job and make money in America. Moreover, the Portuguese clubs coordinate the celebrations separately from the church, while the Brazilian festivals are as yet still very closely related to the church.

One lesson from the Portuguese festivals that is applicable to the Brazilian community is that the festivals tend to blur regional distinctions between cities and states in the home country. This effect has been heightened in the Portuguese case since the festivals no longer attempt to mirror Madeiran celebrations and so have blended all Madeiran traditions, which vary from parish to parish, into a larger more uniform festival here. No matter how faithful a religious observance the festival is, any regional differences must be erased or compromised upon, giving the festival a socializing aspect. The result is that the religious beliefs of individual Brazilians bring them to the festival, but once there, a sense of national unity among fellow countrymen, even if from other states and cities, may take hold.²⁹

The Portuguese in Cambridge

Though the studies are over twenty years old, two reports written for the City of Cambridge provide a background on the Portuguese community in Cambridge. Within Cambridge, the Portuguese community is well-established and rather assimilated. According to the 1972 study, Cambridge's late nineteenth-century manufacturing industry first drew the Portuguese immigrants to Cambridge. The study credits the well-attended Portuguese-language Masses at St. Anthony Church as the main reason why the Portuguese presence persisted, while family members and friends joining the established community brought about growth. Clubs and especially St. Anthony Church served as focal points of the community. "Along Cambridge Street today," the report says, "it is possible to live, work, play, worship, and die without speaking a word of English." At the time of

the report's update, St. Anthony was just beginning to build its current, larger building, proving its centrality and lasting power in the community.³⁰

Though connected by a network of Portuguese clubs, the community often experienced generation- and assimilation-related conflict and disunity within the community, causing the authors of the report to stress that "the Portuguese priest is the only figure in the community who is above all of these divisions." While this comment is a dated analysis of the Portuguese community, it applies as well to the Brazilian community, which may not be organized around any body but the church and its clergy. With this brief glimpse at the Portuguese presence in Cambridge, we will now turn to the festival that I attended and determine its role in the Brazilian community.³¹

Brazilians in Cambridge: What I Experienced

On Sunday, October 12, 1997, I left the campus of Harvard University in the early afternoon to attend the *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* festival. During the previous week, I learned that the procession was scheduled to begin at three o'clock with Mass following and received directions to the church. The walk down Cambridge Street from Harvard's Memorial Church to St. Anthony Church led me through the heart of the Cambridge Portuguese community, situated among the various other ethnic groups that populate Cambridge. On the way to the corner of Cambridge and Cardinal Madrieros streets, where the modern form of St. Anthony Church (figure 1) is located, I saw signs for Portuguese restaurants and Polish American clubs as well as some Brazilian stores (figure 2). The community served by St. Anthony Church has changed over time, in ways the neighborhood does not fully show: the English-speaking Italian Catholic community that dominates the church has long shared space with the Portuguese community, which also often worships in English, as well as the emerging Brazilian population, which prays in Portuguese.³²

When I arrived, the majority of people were milling around in the church courtyard or in the social hall. Young children rushed around playing, and mothers and fathers watched or held their children, while older attendees socialized. Groups of teenagers and young adults also formed circles of conversation, often divided by sex. Some of these young men and women had T-shirts made for the occasion (figure 3), and some also wore other youth-group T-shirts in Portuguese with an image of Jesus covering the globe.

The official, religious part of the afternoon was surrounded by a number of activities. On the courtyard, a booth sold food tickets inside the social hall, while a concession stand had Brazilian desserts and



1. *Nossa Senhora* procession reaching the St. Anthony Church, Cambridge Street and Cardinal Madrerios Way, Cambridge, Mass. The icon is held by women in the congregation and escorted by most worshippers, divided behind banners from their home parishes. Priests on bullhorns help lead the crowd in prayer.



2. Brazilian-Boston Connection specialty store on Cambridge Street. Brazilian flags, posters, and foods dot Cambridge Street, a culturally diverse avenue celebrating immigrant communities both old, in Portuguese and Polish clubs and restaurants, and new.



3. and 4. The parish T-shirt and procession banners from two parishes. The festival serves as a meeting place for members of different parishes, and congregants have a good deal of pride about their local community while celebrating the larger Boston Brazilian community as well. Notice the image of *Nossa Senhora* on the shirt.

drinks. Brazilian music was playing over a loudspeaker, and announcements were made every few minutes in Portuguese. In the entire courtyard, very little English was spoken; only the children were speaking English as well as a few non-Brazilians, perhaps ten among the roughly eight hundred in attendance. Three other booths were set up in the courtyard; one was a Portuguese-language religious book outlet run by Pauline nuns, one a Portuguese-language music offering from a retailer in New Bedford, and the last a BankBoston booth supervised by a Brazilian employee, trying, with balloons and other items, to entice people to establish BankBoston accounts.

In the social hall, different music played, and an efficient line of women and young adults served traditional Brazilian foods. For the first of many times, I was asked a question in Portuguese, for many people my age simply assumed I was Brazilian until I confessed I knew no Portuguese. One enterprising young man wanted to practice his and my Spanish, though we ended up speaking in English. He described the food available as beans, rice, chicken Milanese, a beef dish like *carne asada*, and *mayonez*, a traditional mayonnaise salad made with potatoes, carrots, and peas. There was also rice pudding. He, as well as many others, said to ask if I had any other questions; they were curious about my interest in them. The teenagers were especially helpful with my questions.

The social hall proved the best place to get people to answer questionnaires (see Appendix 1). Outside, people were moving around and engaged in conversation, while inside they were sitting and eating. I approached with the questionnaire, often pointing out the part in Portuguese as I tried to explain the information slowly in English. Often the father responded and when I came back the mother would have answered the questionnaire. Teenagers were also more likely to respond. Due to work patterns, women are more likely to speak English since their jobs as domestic assistants and elsewhere required English more than industrial or construction labor of the men. Alternatively, it may be a cultural situation of patriarchy that the men would respond and then the women would do the questionnaire.

Following lunch, it was time for the main event—the procession and Mass of *Nossa Senhora Aparecida*. The procession began soon after three o'clock with priests on bullhorns speaking in Portuguese and organizing people from each parish community behind their respective banners (figures 1 and 4): Boston, Cambridge, East Boston, Hyannis, Rockland, Framingham, Somerville, Marlborough, and Lowell.

Many others joined two lines behind these groups and followed the figure of the *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* (figure 5), a facsimile of the original in São Paulo, out of the church parking lot, down a block, and then up Cambridge Street. A few police officers helped to direct traffic around the procession. The procession walked slowly and the organizers used walkie-talkies and megaphones to keep all its parts on the same line of the same hymn, as they sang a number of songs praising the Virgin Mary.

At the front were robed young men and women carrying candles and crosses and swinging censers, followed by the statue, carried on the shoulders of a number of mothers, and then the banners and parishes (figure 1). A number of people also carried white flowers or wore shirts or buttons showing the Brazilian flag or an image of Jesus. Others had white and blue handkerchiefs, the colors of the Virgin, and waved them as they walked. As in the crowd as a whole, of whom about 90 percent joined the procession, the dress was varied, from little girls all in white stepping out of a limousine to young men



Figure 5. Image of the community's *Nossa Senhora de Aparecida*, a facsimile of the original statue in Aparecida, Brazil. A number of children brought necklaces and flowers up to the image of *Nossa Senhora Aparecida*, known since its discovery by fisherman for its miracles for the Brazilian people.

in jeans and soccer jerseys or women dressed either in boots or high heels, jeans or long dresses.

On the sidewalk, some people had video cameras and filmed the procession; others, often elderly, were people who lived in the houses and came out to see what was going on. I spoke with one Italian gentleman in his seventies at least who said the church is normally all Italian but today that is completely changed, and that it was a "happy day" for the whole community so he wanted to come observe.

The procession stopped at the main doors of the church, waiting there until all were seated inside for Mass and then proceeded with a grand entrance, with everyone rising and singing as the women set the image on the altar. Inside, it was hot and the air was filled with the fragrance emanating from the censers. After the figure was set on the altar, a number of small children in fancy clothes, mostly girls between the ages of two and six in white dresses, gathered at the foot of the image and posed for group pictures, while people in the audience commented on how cute they all looked.

The service then began with a dance by a group of eight girls in white robes. Some girls had tights under their robes, while others had jeans, indicating they may have just come off the street, though all had rehearsed the performance. One girl was black and the rest were Latino, which was about accurate for the general makeup of the worshippers. The crowd clapped after this performance and after every song. A number of children then brought necklaces and flowers up to the image of *Nossa Senhora Aparecida*, which was accompanied by songs praising the Virgin's attributes.

The Mass itself was a joyous, energetic affair, punctuated by guitar, keyboard, and percussion music, with a large portion of the congregation joining in the singing of hymns. Many swayed to the music's Latin rhythms, and people waved white and blue handkerchiefs and prayer pamphlets to the music. It was very crowded; all the aisles were three and four deep and all the pews were full, though a good number of people continually made their way through the crowds. There were eight priests at the altar representing their different parishes, while Father Gerardo and Father Baz, from the host parish, lead most of the readings and prayers.

Soon it was dark, and when the Mass let out a long line formed for dinner in the social hall. At dinner, I came across a man with a mug, thermos, and case for his *chimahon*, a special tea drink (figure 6) from the very southernmost state in Brazil, in his case, the city of Porto Alegre. Packed with green tea leaves, a hole is made for the water and then a metal spoon or straw is placed in the cup and the liquid drawn out. Father Baz told me that a cold version also exists, called



Figure 6. View of *chimahon* and carrying case. This unique beverage, a type of tea, is popular in Porto Alegre and other areas in southern Brazil. Packed with green tea leaves, a hole is made for the water and then a metal spoon or straw is placed in the cup and the liquid drawn out.

tatere, and that the drink is also popular among people in the inner states as well.³⁹

The most striking moments came as dinner ended. The sky was clear, the air was full of cigarette smoke and the sounds of Portuguese conversation and music, and the courtyard was crowded with groups talking, boyfriends and girlfriends holding hands under the cover of dark. It felt like a scene in a Brazil city plaza following a celebration of the Mass of *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* in that country.

Festival Comments—The "Official" Side

In addition to attending the festival myself and taking slides, I also distributed a questionnaire there and conducted a series of interviews with Father John Baz, the priest selected by the Archdiocese of Boston to organize and conduct the *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* festival. As might be expected, given the syncretized nature of religion in Brazil, the declarations of Father Baz differed significantly from the questionnaire responses, though the respondents touched on many of the same issues. For this reason, I will begin with the "official" version from Father Baz. Later I will discuss my reactions to the festival as well as the questionnaire responses from the attendees.

Father Baz is a Caucasian of Luso-American ancestry who answers the phone and has an answering machine in Portuguese. He describes himself as part of "a Redemptorist missionary community" that has sent missionaries to South America since 1929 (the year the Micalesse

festivals in New Bedford began). He had been a missionary in Brazil for twenty years, and his work in the Brazilian community here "is a continuation of that ministry."³⁴

In preparing me to write about the festival, Father Baz first emphasized, "It has nothing to do with the United States," and stressed that, "this is the patronal feast of the Brazilian people, in and of people." He meant primarily that the festival was not a chance for Brazilians to offer up their culture to the general American population, a fact that was evident in most of the workings of the festival. Beyond stressing the national character of the festival, Baz worked hard to get across how the festival is a religious expression, no more or less. "It is part of their faith tradition they have brought that with them," he said. "They celebrate here and do what they would do there."³⁵

However, the festival is more than just religious and is truly "of America" at some level: BankBoston and other vendors were American businesses vying for attention among the Brazilians. As is the tendency within the United States, a procession through the neighborhood and down the main thoroughfare, escorted by the police, necessarily includes some sense of presentation to others. As my Italian informant explained, sheer curiosity could bring some out to watch the event.

Baz also described how the festival follows closely the Brazilian tradition of having a week of prayer, like the *novenas* once observed in the Portuguese communities in New Bedford, culminating in the Mass and procession. Though he says the festival has no special recognition from the Vatican, "If [it has] not officially been proclaimed or canonized, it is accepted as something very extraordinary." Baz further noted that there is a basilica devoted to the image, and because of this appearance of Mary, there is a special place for the festival in the hearts of Brazilians.³⁶

As for the procession that distinguishes the festival from other Sunday Masses, Father Baz said that when possible it contains a facsimile of the *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* statue, (the Cambridge community's statue, shown in figure 5, was carried in the procession). The statue, he said, was discovered by fisherman from the city of Aparecida, near São Paulo, in one of their nets. Though it originally appeared without a head, the fisherman threw in their nets again and pulled up the head. The statue and the special connection to the Virgin it represents, Baz said, has been testified to by the number of miraculous happenings that have occurred after prayers or a pilgrimage to visit the statue. Through these joyous events, the statue has gained its place as the most important link for the Brazilian faithful to the Virgin Mary, the patroness of Brazil.³⁷

The procession may occur before or after Mass, and, Father Baz stated, the statue may be carried by anyone. "There is no reason, no real symbolism to it being carried by the women" in the Cambridge festival. Similarly, he stated that there is no special significance to the way people follow in procession but that it is simply "a public manifestation of the devotion" to the Virgin, in hymns and prayers. These assertions are contradicted by my experience with the procession and in the questionnaires. Many Brazilians mentioned the ties to mothers and children as a vital part of the holiday, suggesting why women might carry the statue, and the various groups that comprised the procession were clearly delineated by parish, giving a sense of local American as well as general Brazilian pride through the procession.³⁸

In the Mass itself, Father Baz said the festival differed from other Catholic Masses in that it was a rite in which Brazilians in particular participated, as expressed in both their character and numbers. He pointed out that although in years past there had been over one thousand attendees—and that "as far as the Brazilians go, that is a drop in bucket, there are a lot more than one thousand" in the community—he admitted he was slightly disappointed in this year's attendance.

The conglomeration of eight regional communities that make up the festival, which has been going on in the Boston area for a number of years, provides a unique look at distinctly Brazilian differences, according to Baz.³⁹ "[American Catholics of most nationalities] are dead, mummified," Baz said. "They don't open their mouths." He characterized the Brazilian Mass as more lively and happy with a good deal more singing than typical services. Describing how "St. Anthony's on a normal weekend would be Portuguese mainly from the Azores," he said that they are "mostly Americans of Portuguese descent, the next generation, and mainly English-speaking." Their services are in English, Baz said, and "the Portuguese do things differently" by having a less spontaneous and, what would seem to typical American eyes, a more devout service.⁴⁰

Baz said that since the weekly community services of the Brazilians are held in Portuguese, they hold many of the same unique aspects that merely are heightened during the festival. He felt there was no reason for the waving of handkerchiefs during the Mass; he assumed "that was just a spontaneous expressions of happiness . . . and wanting to express their joy of being with Mary the Mother." Baz remarked that the festival "was a big shin-dig," mentioning that much of the music and colorful displays were organized by the various Brazilian youth ministries from all the different communities. He noted that the large participation by teenagers "is interesting to see in

any church," and much larger than among American Catholic communities. Though it was possible the festival drew people who did not otherwise attend services, he thought it was unlikely. However, the questionnaires, as we will see, suggest that some do attend who would not otherwise go to church.⁴¹

The differences in the spirit of the service came from very concrete distinctions that also mark the Brazilian community from other Portuguese-speaking communities, Baz said. Though both the Portuguese and the newer Cape Verdean population also pray in Portuguese, he said all three have different cultures and are provided for by three different ministries of the Archdiocese's Office for Ethnic Apostolates. The office helps to organize services in over twenty-five languages. Of the three Portuguese-speaking groups, "The Brazilians' [immigration] is the most recent and is actually going on; they are still in transit." Baz noted that the fate of the Brazilian community depends to a great extent on President Clinton and immigration policy, saying, "They could all be shipped out of here tomorrow." He pointed out that a common trait among all the immigrant Catholic groups is a constant fear of being deported.⁴²

The festival also gives a good picture of what is unique about the Brazilian community in general, Baz said. "The Brazilians in this area are all first generation, all immigrants," he explained. "They are people from last week up to people from a couple of years ago. Anyone that is here seven or eight years or more is an old-timer among them." He pointed to this as a primary difference from the Portuguese or Cape Verdean populations, and said "[The Brazilians are] as we say 'adventurers' that come up here," which he explained meant they came only to make money and return to Brazil in better economic shape, the same sorts of concerns that motivate the Brazilian community in New York that Margolis has documented. Father Baz also identified Minas Gerais and Santa Catarina—areas in the southern part of Brazil that are the home of most New York immigrants—as the areas where most Boston Brazilians also come from.⁴³

Due to the youth of Brazilian immigrants, Baz continued, "all the people over forty are considered old." Most of the Brazilian population "is likely to be on their own and not have their whole family structure here in America." In his mind, this causes the absence of the sort of committees and intricate social structures that back the Portuguese festivals. "The Brazilians are too young," Baz said, "and they are not here that long and not too stable." Baz said history was a main cause of the difference: "The Portuguese had different emphasis; they came as families," while the Brazilian population of single temporary residents does not generate the same sorts of organizations. These

ideas echo Margolis's characterization of the Brazilian community in New York.⁴⁴

At such large gatherings as the festival, Baz told me, preparation, food and drink are a necessity to create "afterwards a little bit of Brazilian-ness." Nevertheless, he felt, customs and celebrations are really secondary to the religious nature of the festival. Though there is this necessary "social dimension," Baz said that there is no particular traditional food or activity connected with the festival. All the booths and foods available were "nothing special to this festival . . . It is just taking care of the physical needs" and having an opportunity to buy things and see people that might not otherwise exist for the Brazilians. He dismissed this as mostly to meet a need and "just to keep the kiddies busy" during the Mass.⁴⁵

When I proposed the idea of such events being evidence of folklife at the festival, Father Baz strongly disagreed. "You need to understand this is a religious faith celebration," he said, "not of folklore or dance or celebration with just going to church afterwards." Though there are other festivals with more of what he called "your folklore," Baz said that this festival "is mainly religious—a spiritual, religious celebration that is a demonstration of their faith."⁴⁶

Baz did not consider the festival's purpose nor its enactment to be what he conceived as "folklore"; he was only willing to see the Brazilian gathering as a group of worshippers, not a community. As we will now see, however, the responses from the Brazilians suggest that the event had a number of purposes not directly related to the religious procession, which provide evidence of community-building and community celebration among the Brazilians at the festival.

Nossa Senhora in the Words of the People

I received answers to 67 of the questionnaires I handed out, 39 in Portuguese and 28 in English. The answers, in aggregate and specifically, shed a great deal of light on what this festival means to those who attend. I will quote answers in English and from translation that especially help to give a picture of this community. The facts and opinions I obtained from these questionnaires have influenced my analysis and make clear the relevance of the background material I have provided. For this reason, I will approach the questionnaires and the responses not in the order in which they were administered but as they relate to the studies we have so far explored—the Brazilian community in New York City and the Portuguese and Luso-American festivals in Massachusetts—and in comparison to Father Baz's ideas. I will then discuss the statistical problems and absences the survey has, and what material must be left unanswered because of this.

Within the survey, language united the largest number of people. Only two Brazilian respondents, both children, said they did not speak Portuguese; even one non-Brazilian attendee said she could understand Portuguese. It is only natural that a Mass and procession conducted in Portuguese will be attended by those who understand it, but other such assumptions might not hold true—for example, two Brazilian respondents identified themselves as Protestant, suggesting more than just religious motives are at work in attending the festival.⁴⁷

The most striking characteristics of the respondents, mirroring Margolis's study of New York Brazilians, is the first-generation immigrant status of the attendees. Eighty-three percent of all respondents were born in Brazil, and as both Father Baz and Margolis proposed, the average time in the United States was less than a decade. Both age and time spent in the United States made a considerable difference in whether the respondent wrote in English or Portuguese. The average age among those writing in Portuguese was 32.8, having been in the United States for 6.6 years, while among English-language respondents the average age was lower, 24.3, and the stay longer, 7.5 years.

The younger average age of the English respondents is skewed by the large number of children, who had learned English in school, filling out the forms. The largest segments of English-respondent ages are in their teens or their thirties, which is more in line with the total average age. Given this, the Portuguese-language respondents, with the majority in their twenties and thirties, may actually represent a younger population. The difference in years here is slight, and the range, from one month to twenty-five years, is consistent for both groups. The majority of people in both groups had been here three to ten years, though a larger number of Portuguese-language respondents had been here less than three years.

The questionnaires brought out a number of interesting contrasts among festivals and celebrations in New Bedford, Cambridge and Brazil. Eighty-four percent of respondents said they had been to a festival like this before, with over half of those saying they had been to a festival in the United States, often this exact festival, while a quarter specifically mentioned a festival in Brazil. In comparison to this festival, respondents were equally divided on whether it was the same or different from the other festivals in content, size, and spirit.

"It is the same sort of thing—there is no difference," wrote Lina Figueiredo, though many disagreed: "It is different because it is cold and my family is not here," said Joaquim Valente, marking the differences from festivals in Brazil. "The object is the same but in each place the celebration is different," said Josue R. Balbi, who expressed the idea, shared by many, that the number of people, specific foods,

and games are different, though the general reason for coming together is the same. "It's getting better every year, since our community is growing more and more, organizing itself as a community in the United States," wrote Monica Odila, while Mario Montello said he felt the immigration status of the participants lent a tension that made it hard to celebrate the festival.⁴⁸

Though most respondents said their city and family traditions were similar to those in the American version of the holiday with its linking of community unity, religious devotion, and local food and drink, they stressed the difference between their festival and Portuguese rites. Half of those who responded to that question said Portuguese rites were different, though another quarter said they did not know. This suggests how separate these groups really are, despite the fact that they share a language and often church space. One respondent actually wrote "language" as a difference, perhaps referring to the differences in languages used here between the Brazilians and the assimilated Portuguese.⁴⁹

"I think Brazilian festivals are more exciting," wrote Evelina Barbosa, which others echoed, especially noting "the natural human warmth" that Brazilians possess. As we have seen, Father Baz also felt there was a difference in the affect of the two populations. On a more technical level, a bookseller from the Portuguese community in New Bedford said this festival differed by being held outdoors and that "there are no conferences," suggesting that the Portuguese are now even more organized than previous ethnographies suggest. One respondent, Maria Ribiero, wrote that the two festivals are different but that "I see it as a motive for bringing the two communities together to socialize," and that through these festivals, gaps in nationality and perhaps now in language can be bridged.⁵⁰

I approached the issue of how the festival reflects and creates community through three questions asking why the respondents came to the festival and what they expected to participate in at the festival. By inquiring how they heard about the festival, I hoped to ascertain what sort of existing, year-round community of Brazilians existed and might therefore support expressions of Brazilian folklife in America outside of this one weekend.

Over half of respondents, not surprisingly, had heard about the festival in their church. Linda Escobar cited "church propaganda" as where she heard about the festivals, and numerous others mentioned they had heard about it from their local parish. "I'm a member of a church so not only did I hear about it, but I sought to talk about it," wrote Monica Odila with an activism mirrored in a few responses. While a tenth of respondents said they had heard about it from their family—a number bolstered by children who wrote they had heard it

from their parents—twice as many said they had heard from friends and word of mouth while a few others mentioned radio, television, and newspapers.⁵¹

The church and, to a lesser extent, the network of friends mentioned suggest a permanent group of Brazilians, a community, that exists beyond just the festival. "In Brazil we celebrate this festival of Our Lady with great joy, and even here we all know about it through our community," wrote Lorena de Pontes Santos. Marco Gondim mentioned directly "I'm a member of this community" as the reason he attended.⁵²

While a majority mentioned religion, especially the Mass, as the reason they attended and the part they looked forward to most, an equal number spoke of the community aspects of the event as an enjoyable time to see friends and celebrate together. Cléria Villela said she attended because "I like to value the works of my community," while Maria Ribiero said she came "to have a good time, to see my friends and go to Mass." All the non-Catholics, furthermore, said the community aspects played a large role in their attendance; two cited the ability to meet other Brazilians and another spoke of the ability to reconnect with old friends. Even Julie Fahrens, an American Catholic of "German-Polish-Irish" background, said she attended with a friend and felt "a real sense of community."⁵³

Some expressed personal and national concerns. "It is part of my religion and the country which I was born in," said Lorena Silva, linking the religious *Nossa Senhora* with the national. For others, it was the ties to the nation that were best served at the festival: "It's very important for those of us who live far from our homeland to maintain our customs and traditions," said Monica Odila. "It's a way of not letting the Brazilian within us die." Another described how the procession by women was important to them and significant, contradicting Father Baz. Mario Montello wrote "It is the recognition of Mary as the mother of God and as our mother, and consequently the valorization of woman as important in salvation," indicating that for him the procession helped to celebrate the position of Mary.⁵⁴

In any questionnaire there are faults, and this one is no different. Though most answers seem truthful, the young age of some respondents might have distorted their answers, and some of the English- or Portuguese-language questions may have been misunderstood. Some respondents felt the survey was too long, and others declined to answer because they were suspicious about the motives or affiliations of an American researcher among such a wholly Brazilian crowd, particularly one asking questions about how long they have been here and where they were born. One respondent

did list his name as "ME" to counter these concerns. Perhaps I should have made name an optional question.

Despite the questionnaire's length, I would have liked to have added questions, such as current occupation, family structure, and how long the respondent expected to be in the United States. One difficult question for many was the one about ethnicity, which was left blank by many and others filled in as "Brazilian." "White non-hispanic," which we have seen as the most accurate and "invisible" response to the 1990 census question, did appear on two questionnaires filled out in English.

Overall, I was pleased with the very positive responses to the questionnaire. Many people said I was doing their community a great service that they appreciated. Others felt it was very important to be written about and to bring to greater publicity to Brazilians within the general American community.

Conclusion

The *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* festival is the most visible part of Brazilian life in the Boston area. Serving both to celebrate and gain support for the activities in parish churches, informal groups of friends, and the community as a whole, the festival is not the only time Brazilians interact with each other but certainly the most prominent. The Brazilians maintain their language, culture, and values through other contact that is "invisible"—hidden from public view and at times from one another.

Although if asked directly he would completely deny it, Father Baz describes the workings of a vibrant Brazilian community in the religious as well as secular aspects of the festival. It may be the only time they meet in such a large forum, but the preparation and dedication the Brazilians show not only to the Mass but to organizing an entire day of food, networking, discussion, and music is evidence that the festival takes place not just "to keep the kiddies busy." It is a chance to create a real piece of Brazil, something very valuable to this growing immigrant community.

Even if they are "out of status," or perhaps more so because of it, the Brazilians have a strong community life *in absentia*. They do not want to see America as a home, but in working to return to Brazil, where the social, familial and religious ties remain intact, the Brazilians often need to affirm their ties to Brazilian culture. Carried on in this voluntary exile from Brazil, the festival helps to sustain and create links between people, connections to Brazil through other Brazilians. This has special relevance among Brazilian families with children born in the United States. One respondent said she attended the festival with her family so she could "pass it on to my son."

The role of *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* in the dedication of the Brazilian church in New York described earlier is particularly significant. As a celebration honoring the patroness of Brazil, the festival of *Nossa Senhora* has been designated as the most central religious time for Brazilians, a fact that connects them closely to the festival's roots in Brazil. Because it is organized by the church and not by a social club, the *Nossa Senhora* festival clearly does not follow the path of the more showy and secularized Portuguese festivals, but is a more immigrant-focused and transitory event, much like the Brazilian community itself.

A study of Brazilian American homes would be even more significant in determining how strong the Brazilian community is. If these people live mostly alone or more recently in young families, how are the ties to Brazil communicated? Are there shrines or flags? Are the songs the children sing and the books they read Brazilian? What language is spoken in the home? These issues could provide a valuable supplement to festival research. The activities in private homes may be more revealing than the occasional public celebration.

Maxine L. Margolis characterizes the Brazilians of New York as a transient group between countries and therefore not interested in forming community more than a minimal amount to celebrate religious festivals and other important Brazilian holidays. However, the necessities of life do not allow such a limbo existence to continue for long. Eventually, married and raising children, immigrants will come to terms with their presence in the United States, for their children's sake as well as their own. They will likely establish the necessary schools and church groups to keep their children as familiar with Brazil, its language, culture, and religion, as they are. Perhaps more visible communities will develop within the next decade, and the passion, energy, and sheer number of those that attend the *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* festival will not be the only appearance from the shadows but one of many public celebrations for Brazilian Americans.

APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire

Hello. My name is Adam Arenson and I am a Harvard student attempting to document this festival for a class on American ethnicities and folklife. Any comments, from participants, spectators, and anyone in between is greatly appreciated. Thanks!

Alo, meu nome e Adam Arenson e eu sou um estudante de Harvard tentando documentar esse festival para uma classe de etnicidades e costumes Americanos. Qualquer comentario ou contribuicao e muito apreciado. Muito obrigado!

Name/ Nome:

Place of birth/ Lugar de nascimento:

Age/ Idade:

Time in the United States/ Tempo nos Estados Unidos:

Ethnicity/ Etnicidade:

Religion/ Religiao:

Do you speak Portuguese/Voce fala Portugues?

Why did you come to this festival?

Por que voce veio a esse festival?

Have you ever been to a festival like this before? If so, where and when?

Ja participou de um festival como esse? Se ja, aonde e quando?

How is this festival the same? How is it different?
Comparando suas experiencias, como sao iguais? Como sao diferentes?

What traditions or rituals do you attach with this festival? What is the most important?
Que tradicoes voce conecta com esse festival? Qual e a mais importante?

How does this Brazilian rite differ from Portuguese festivals?
Como se diferencia esse ritual Brasileiro de um festival Portugues?

What family traditions do you connect with this festival?
Que tradicoes familiares voce conecta com esse festival?

What traditions from your town/city?
Que tradicoes se derivam da sua cidade natal?

How did you hear about this festival?
Como soube sobre esse festival?

NOTES

This paper was written for a class called "American Ethnic Folklife" taught in the fall of 1997 at Harvard University by Simon Bronner, who is Professor of American History and Folklore at Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg. I would like to thank Professor Bronner for all his help at every stage of the project, as well as my translators, Eduardo Carvajal and Nicola Cooney, and my editors and advisors, who helped with aspects of the paper which stretch far beyond the page: Michael Afergan, Shira Fischer, Matthew Lawson, Christopher John Moran, Michel Rest, Timothy Pierhops, Zachary Smith, and Susannah Tobin.

To protect the church members and priests quoted in the study from any difficulties their participation might cause, the names used in this paper are pseudonyms. Additionally, the full questionnaire results are retained by the author for reasons of confidentiality.

- 1 Maxine L. Margolis, *Little Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 4, 5, 6, 31.
- 2 *Little Brazil*, pp. xix, xxi, 4, 12, 13.
- 3 *Little Brazil*, pp. 83.
- 4 *Little Brazil*, pp. 83, 96, 98, 101, 258-260.
- 5 *Little Brazil*, pp. 142, 146, 149, 17, 18.
- 6 *Little Brazil*, pp. 7, 8, 10, 12, 17.
- 7 *Little Brazil*, pp. 23, 27, 249.
- 8 *Little Brazil*, pp. 249-250, 242.
- 9 *Little Brazil*, pp. 252-257, 252-4, 255-6.
- 10 Maxine L. Margolis, *An Invisible Minority: Brazilians in New York City*, The New Immigrant Series, ed. Nancy Foner (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), p. 6; *Little Brazil*, pp. 15, 13.
- 11 *Little Brazil*, pp. xviii, 187, 190.
- 12 *Little Brazil*, pp. 195-198.
- 13 *Little Brazil*, pp. 199, 200, 201, 220; *Invisible Minority*, p. 84.
- 14 *Little Brazil*, pp. 211, 213, 219.
- 15 *Little Brazil*, p. 211.
- 16 *Little Brazil*, pp. 168-9, 213, 259, 269, 274; *Invisible Minority*, p. 125.
- 17 Lelia Gonzalez, *Festas Populares No Brasil* [Popular Festivals in Brazil], trans. Anthony Zineski (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Index, 1989), pp. 12, 13, 44-5, 50, 93, 113.
- 18 *Festas Populares*, pp. 44-5, 50, 82, 118.
- 19 *Festas Populares*, p. 119.
- 20 *Festas Populares*, pp. 44, 45, 124.
- 21 *Festas Populares*, 124, 128.
- 22 *Festas Populares*, pp. 124, 128.
- 23 *The Portuguese in Cambridge and Somerville*, combined edition (Cambridge: Cambridge Community Development Department, 1980), 1972 report, pp. 7-8. See for example Adalino Cabral, *Immigrant of the People: Good Lord Jesus of the Stone* (New Bedford: Promontora Portuguesa, 1993) and Stephen L. Cabral, *Tradition and Transformation: Portuguese Feasting in New Bedford* (New York: AMS Press, 1989).
- 24 *Immigrant of the People*, p. 1; *Tradition and Transformation*, pp. 1, 40.
- 25 *Immigrant of the People*, 5, 6; *Tradition and Transformation*, 141.
- 26 *Tradition and Transformation*, 1972 report, pp. 30, 60-75, 136.
- 27 *Tradition and Transformation*, 1972 report, pp. 75, 79, 107, 137.
- 28 *Tradition and Transformation*, 1972 report, p. 87; *Little Brazil*, p. 187.
- 29 *Tradition and Transformation*, 1972 report, p. 133.

30 *The Portuguese in Cambridge and Somerville*, pp. 1, 4, 14, 51-2; 1977 update, p. 105.

31 *The Portuguese in Cambridge and Somerville*, 1972 report, p. 53.

32 Photographs, with descriptions, appear in Appendix I.

33 Father John Baz, telephone interview with author, 22 November 1997. Hereafter referred to as Interview 3.

34 Interview 3.

35 Father John Baz, telephone interview with author, 21 November 1997. Hereafter referred to as Interview 2.

36 Interviews 2 and 3.

37 Interview 2.

38 Interview 2.

39 Father John Baz, telephone interview with author, 10 October 1997. Hereafter referred to as Interview 1; and Interview 3.

40 Interviews 1 and 3.

41 Interview 3.

42 Interview 3.

43 Interview 3.

44 Interview 3.

45 Interviews 1 and 2.

46 Interviews 1, 2, and 3.

47 Julie Fahrens [#49], questionnaire, 12 October 1997.

48 Lina Figueiredo [#21], Joaquim Valente [#18], Josué R. Balbi

[#16], Monica Odila [#28], and Mario Montello [#37], questionnaire, 12 October 1997.

49 Joaquim Valente [#18].

50 Evelina Barbosa [#46], Arturo Dagnino [#1], representative of "Promontora Portuguesa, Inc." [#52], Maria Ribiero [#14], questionnaire, 12 October 1997.

51 Linda Escobar [#19], Monica Odila [#28], questionnaire, 12 October 1997.

52 Lorena de Pontes Santos [#25], Marco Gondim [#23], questionnaire, 12 October 1997.

53 Cleria Villela [#12], Maria Ribiero [#14], Julie Fahrens [#49], questionnaire, 12 October 1997.

54 Lorena Silva [#47], Monica Odila [#28], and Mario Montello [#37], questionnaire, 12 October 1997.

INTERPRETATION: Why? How? By Whom?

EDITED BY DANIEL FRANKLIN WARD
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY ROBERT BARON

The following article is a transcript of the plenary session of the 1995 New York State Folk Arts Roundtable. The roundtable is an annual forum for the public folk arts field in New York State, devoted to the discussion of ideas, issues, and practices of public folk arts programming. It is organized by the Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts and the Cultural Resources Council of Syracuse and Onondaga County. Everyone attending the roundtable actively participates through presentations about current and recent projects in small group discussions and by attending panels of general interest to the folk arts field. Robert Baron, director of the Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts, facilitated this plenary session on interpretation and wrote the introduction. Other participants were Olivia Cadaval, Office of Folklore Programs and Cultural Studies of the Smithsonian Institution; Roby Cogswell, Folk Arts Program of the Tennessee Arts Commission; Michael Frisch, Department of American Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo; and Chief Irving Powless, Onondaga Nation.

Introduction

From its earliest days, the New York Folklore Society has believed that community perspectives should shape the interpretation and presentation of their traditions across cultural boundaries. The society's founders opened the pages of this journal to teachers, librarians, and local historians who wrote about traditions practiced within their own ethnic groups and regions. Such educated laypersons dominated the ranks of the society's membership during the early postwar period. The small number of folklorists who led the society wrote for the general reader, mindful that they would be read in the communities whose traditions they discussed. If folklorists of the "school of folklorists in New York" had "one quality in common," Louis C. Jones claimed, "it was the desire to return to the people themselves an awareness of their own traditions."¹