



It's a pleasure to publish another article written
by
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**SAO SEBASTIAO DA ESTRELA
MINAS GERAIS
THE VILLAGE OF “Jaguar”
AND ITS NEIGHBORING VILLAGES**

SAO SEBASTIAO DA ESTRELA, MG – THE VILLAGE OF “JAGUAR” AND ITS NEIGHBORING VILLAGES

“Jaguar Waterfalls” – Mun. Sto. Antonio do Amparo, MG



The oral history of the southern region of the State of Minas Gerais where the Canil Boiadeiro do Jatobá is located has it that some odd 70 years ago, jaguars roamed freely and plentifully. Then, the region had not yet been stripped of its natural forests and vegetation, to give way to the coffee plantations and beef cattle pastures that have replaced them. One of these big cats, said to be unusually large did not survive the very popular jaguar kill. The proud hunter of the animal made his prowess known to everyone in the small village, by displaying his trophy kill and telling his valiant story. Since then, in homage to the animal,

the village became known as "O Arraial da Onça" or the "Clearing of the Jaguar".

When outside of the community, people from the village greet each other by asking "So, how's the Jaguar doing?". As if the small town were a living, breathing feline.

This essay is a written and photographic portrait of the "Jaguar", its nearby villages and some of the characteristics they share. I also write an account of the dogs that stood out to me the moment I drove into town, having heard some years earlier about a Brazilian hunting dog. It is also a brief introduction of the strongly embedded religiosity in the culture of Minas Gerais. From medieval allegory to African influenced rituals, I find it important to register

this legacy, still not corrupted by the consumerism and cult of celebrity of our times. It could be just a matter of time..

“Sunday afternoon” S.S. da Estrela M.G.



Not much has changed in the rural cowboy, hunter, farmer, coffee-picker town of a little over three thousand inhabitants.

Although, there has been assimilation by the younger generation of "Funk"; a genre of music that originated in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro, inspired by

what's known as "ghetto" culture wherein rhymes about crime or sexually explicit lyrics objectifying women are sung to African American beats. Then there's the cell-phone and the internet. There are two Lan Houses in the Arraial do Onça which provide high-speed internet to the young population that just can't wait to play Grand Theft Auto (called *GTI*) or chat with friends in different towns and even countries.

One of those Lan Houses occupies half of the town's only feed store. Thus, globalization is creeping in juxtaposed with strong catholic traditions, rodeos, and an ever present hunting heritage.

“Street parking in the village” Fagundes, MG.



“Blacksmith’s Shop” S.S. Estrela, MG





“Street party” Fagundes, MG



“Older generation” S.S. Estrela, MG



“Younger generation” SS da Estrela, MG

Nowadays, any mention of hunting jaguars or any other animal is secretive. Even having been a very appreciated pastime in rural areas of Brazil, hunting is illegal in the entire Nation. Any kind of hunting including inside private property, if caught or reported, will bring the environmental authorities around and they will confiscate everything hunting related. That includes furs, horns, guns and dogs. Nonetheless, it's common knowledge those actions are quite arbitrary. Confiscation of endangered wildlife happens upon certain variables. It's implicit that if you can pay the right price, you might keep your endangered animal or bird, hunt or take down as many endangered species of trees to substitute for grazing pasture as it takes. Just another one of the shameful aspects the legacy of corruption in Brazilian government reveals. Efforts towards preservation and conservation cannot keep up with the force of action in the opposite direction. In addition, adepts to regulated Hunting have very little lobbying power within government.



Armadillo Hunt - S.S. da Estrela, MG



Among the Brazilian breeds of dog that are known and called as Raças Crioulas" or "Creole Breeds", is the blacklisted hunting dog called "Urrador" or "Rastreador Brasileiro" or even the "Americano". Respectively in English, *Howler*, *Brazilian Tracking Dog* or *The American*.

The breed was developed by the son of politician, lawyer, Consul of Brazil to the US and ex-President of the United Nations Assembly, Oswaldo Aranha Filho. Native of Rio Grande do Sul and avid hunter, when it was a national sport. He pursued characteristics for a breed capable of hunting wild hog and jaguars. A breed capable of holding prey so it could be shot by the hunter and which would have excellent scent and tracking ability as well as a loud howl or bark. Yet, being very resistant to Brazilian geography, vegetation and climate.



The breeds involved in this formulation were the: American Foxhound, Black and Tan Coonhound, Petit Bleu de Glascone, Black and Tan English Hound, American Bluetick Hound and the Brazilian Deer Dog of the Pampas. Dogs were imported to Brazil specifically for the purpose of the formation of this hybrid breed.

In 1967, after 13 years of development and improvement, the breed was recognized by the FCI after all documentation and protocol was followed and handed to 3 FCI foreign Judges that were in Brazil. While developing the breed, Mr. Aranha Filho gave away more than 30 male puppies to land owners, farmers and hunters all over the country in exchange for evaluation of their hunting performance and ability.

Unfortunately, in 1973 the breed was declared extinct because as the only known breeder at the time he had lost all 39 of his exemplars to Pyroplasmiasis, an epidemic caused by ticks and aggravated by intoxication by excess insecticide applied by a caretaker. Nevertheless, there is no doubt the descendants of the pups given out by the designer of the breed generated offspring throughout Brazil, from Bahia to Rio Grande do Sul and Mato Grosso to Rio de Janeiro. I'm told that the best exemplars and greater numbers of the breed are located in the region where the breed was formed and in the Pantanal, MT area.

These dogs are known to be kept and bred in the north of Minas as well as the south. There are many around the area where our Canil is. They are easily seen roaming the streets as well, which one could mistakenly assume to have no owner. Most are kept in what could be considered clandestine

kennels in small farms of the region. I know of 2 breeders in the region, which have given me permission to photograph their dogs in action and at their kennels. I've also assisted in and caring for a liter here at our farm



One of the breeders I've met has had all his dogs (40 at the time) confiscated by the environmental police as well as all pictures and documentation of his early dogs. Every year he travels to the north of Minas with his dogs to hunt with friends from the region. They exchange breeding pairs and bring captured deer to live and procreate in what remains of the original rainforests of the area. These are the dogs I photographed at a farm about 6 km. outside of the village.





The shed is built with sturdy logs to withstand the pulley that is used to raise beef cattle. This farm supplies one of the local butchers with meat.

RELIGIOSITY AND ETHNICITY:

Saint Benedict (São Benedito) and Nossa Sra. de Aparecida, both black saints, are highly regarded and worshiped in Brazil.



Specially in this area of the south of Minas Gerais which had one of the largest populations of slaves in the country due to its coffee and sugar cane plantations, as well as abundant minerals and precious stones. The population of the area is overwhelmingly Black and Brown. As slavery was abolished a little over 100

years ago in Brazil, many of the older black persons of the region were sons or daughters of slaves.

Recently, Petrobras funded a documentary shot in the village of Fagundes, 6km away from the Village of Onca, entitled: “Ce me da Licenca” (Can you excuse me?). The video presents the work of Captain Julio Antonio Filho. The Patriarch of the “Terno de Mocambique”, who commands the men and women that celebrate a religious feast of Reinado– *Reigning*.



“Coral Congo” Inside the “Saint rosary” Church Mass – Guarita, MG



The feast preserves the religious concepts and cultural practices of the descendents of Africans in the Americas, which define the format of the feast. African beats are played on African drums, while praising catholic saints as African divinities, as well as celebrating the three Magi from Africa who sought after Jesus' birthplace. Inside the small churches mass is conducted also over the beat of the African rhythm. Outside the churches, songs are chanted in part using the language of *the Coast* known as "O Congo



Many of these Afro-Brazilian "Congado" groups and their feasts are frowned upon by more traditional priests, so they are usually concentrated in the small rural villages which have a large Afro-Brazilian population, where the priests welcome their style of celebrations.

Although, Saint Sebastian was regarded as the patron Saint of the small village of Onça, because the only image of a Saint they had when they erected their very first church. The "Clearing of the Jaguar" eventually became a municipality and thus had a name change. Officially, it's called "São Sebastião da Estrela" (Saint

Sebastian of the Star).



"The Congo Coral" chants religious hymns as the saint watches on.



Most of the country's festivities are tied to religion which is also tied to pageantry and ritual. Among the Festivities that are celebrated in the Village is



THE CAVALHADA

The **Cavalcada** is an allegorical representation that has its origins in Medieval Tournament. Today, it is living metaphor for the battles between Christians and Moors. The theme is a simulated battles fought by Carlo Magnus and his twelve Knights, the 12 Pairs of France, sent to combat the Moors in the Hibernian Peninsula. The allegorical festivity in the South of Minas is played for three days following a Sunday procession and it always ends in a representation of Christian victory. In the Arraial do Onca it is performed during

Brazilian Carnival, three days prior to ash Wednesday. Donations are collected and given to the local catholic church.



Before fire-arms were out-lawed in Brazil, muskets were pointed and shot in the air, they were substituted by flowers, symbolizing peace.

The riders as well as their horses, are wonderfully adorned as they set out to perform feats of horsemanship skills. All the horses are meticulously groomed and decorated. Most of the horses are purebred Mangalarga Marchador Mineiro. In a region famous for its Mangalarga Marchador Mineiro, the horse is considered the most valuable farm animal.



Masked horsemen wear handcrafted masterpieces of local folk art. These masks are similar to the ones worn for fencing, made of wire mesh, but on which a caricature of a face is painted.



I watched this spectacle for the very first time during the Carnival of 2007 and was impressed and delighted to see this colorful event and learn about this pageantry. The weather was beautiful that first year. The sunlight and clear blue skies made the colorful prints and patterns used in the costumes and decorations stand out.

First the horsemen parade, in a circle then back and forth. There are two groups of twelve, which ride side by side.



Afterwards, each horseman gets a shot at the challenges. The pole is reminiscent of weapons used by medieval knights. On the tip of this pole there is a metal hook type attachment. This horseman is preparing to dash up to where there is a small ring on a wire hung between two posts and try to remove it.

The winner is the one who takes the ring.



This year the rainy season started quite early and made the event quite messy, but not enough to spoil the fun.

The colorful variety and plethora of different ethnic inspiration found in this region are a constant reminder of what a unique culture every state in the nation contributes to the country's cultural treasure.

“Tinho Preto” rolling in the mud

It is a pleasure for me to share about the region where the Fila Brasileiro originated. I hope to have succeeded in showing the rusticity and the deep rooted diverse cultural heritage that is behind the phenotype of the breed.



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