

# History at the Roots: Modernity, Cordiality and the Middle Class in *Raízes do Brasil*

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*“We brought from foreign lands a complex and accomplished system of precepts, without knowing to what point they were consistent with the conditions of Brazilian life and without thinking about the changes these conditions would impose on them. In truth, the impersonal ideology of democratic liberalism was never naturalized among us.”*

Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (Roots of Brazil, 1936)<sup>1</sup>

Rooting among the crumbling, yellowed books in a São Paulo *sebo* (used book store) some years ago, I came across a battered copy of the 1955 first Spanish edition of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda’s *Raíces del Brasil*, originally published in Portuguese in 1936. Judging by the date of a newspaper clipping tucked inside the book, its anonymous owner had probably read it in the latter half of 1973.

Interestingly, the reader left other traces as well – underscoring, asterisks and marginal brackets, almost a road map of his or her passage through the text. With a blue ballpoint, this reader underlined the opening sentence of chapter 1, “Frontiers of Europe,” stating that Brazilian society represented the “only successful effort . . . to transplant European culture to a tropical and subtropical zone.” (9)

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Our reader also ran the pen under the words, “we lived a singular experience” and then the words declaring Brazilians to be “exiles in our land” whose roots were in Spain and Portugal as “frontier zones” and “bridge territories.” (9) A few pages on, the reader marked passages commenting on the Brazilian antipathy to “theories negating free will” and on the fact that Iberian countries lacked the “rationalization of life” characteristic of Protestant countries. Further on, the reader bracketed a paragraph remarking that Iberians had always resisted “any morality based on the worship of work” or oriented toward “crude profit.” (16–17) In chapter two, “Work and Adventure,” our reader underlined the “complete absence, or almost complete, of any sort of racial pride” in Brazil. (31) A sentence describing Brazilian life as bearing “a singularly energetic accentuation of the affective, the irrational, the passionate, and a corresponding stagnation, or more accurately atrophy of the ordering, disciplining and rationalizing qualities” was also bracketed and underlined. (40) In chapter three, “The Rural Heritage,” our reader singled out several lines discussing the centrality of “domestic life” as the axis of authority during the colonial period and underlined a sentence asking how “profound transformations” could even come to a country where “the traditional bases that needed to be overcome were maintained?” (59, 63) A section calling attention to “the love of speculative thought” and “sonorous phrases” so characteristic of law school graduates was underscored and asterisked. (65) The words “lack of an independent urban bourgeoisie” were marked. (72) Our reader then appears to have skipped chapter four, “The Sower and the Builder” (the pages were not split), but read chapter five, “The Cordial Man” (the pages were split). In this crucial chapter, the reader underlined passages referring to Weber, the “cordial man,” “legitimate expressions of an extremely rich and overflowing emotional depth” and cordiality as “the sphere of the intimate, the familiar, the private.” (131, 132, 133) The final chapters, “New Times” and “Our Revolution” appear to have been unread, as the pages were not split, almost as though our reader lost energy or interest, as so often happens with books that seem so exciting at the start.

I was intrigued by this discovery, bought the book and filed it on the shelf with so many others. After many years, it occurs to me that this found archive provides a singular portrait of one reader’s engagement with the ideas in Holanda’s *Raízes do Brasil*, a book that has been central to Brazilian historical thinking since the 1930s. In this essay, I have used the anonymous reader’s underscoring as a kind of guide to reading the book in a critical vein.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, by combining the reader’s traces and my own reading of the text, I will argue that *Raízes do Brasil* had such an enduring impact because at a crucial moment in Brazil’s history it responded to a defining perplexity of national existence: Could Brazil be modern? Or more accurately, could Brazilians be modern and Brazilian at the same time.

*Raízes do Brasil* first appeared in 1936, in the middle of a decade of extraordinary cultural and intellectual ferment.<sup>3</sup> Just as a generation of young thinkers was offering novel and bracing views of Brazil's past, a new urban reading public had begun to take an active interest in the big issues of the day. None was bigger than the question of what Brazil had been and was to be. Three remarkable works of history were published during the decade between 1933 and 1942: Gilberto Freyre's *Casa Grande & Senzala* (1933), Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's *Raízes do Brasil* (1936) and Caio Prado Jr.'s *A Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* (1942).<sup>4</sup>

Of these three major historical interpretations, Holanda's was the most self-conscious of and explicit about the dilemmas of writing history from a Brazilian perspective. Freyre's *Casa Grande* had begun to shift the historiographical terrain by creating a new vocabulary of heterogeneity, fluidity, plasticity and ambiguity that defied the strict categories of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century positivist histories and rejected scientific racism's premise that miscegenation was inherently fatal to the nation's prospects.<sup>5</sup> For all its novelty, though, *Casa Grande* represented the Northeastern colonial slave plantation as a place that time forgot. *It was thus and thus has it ever been*, it seemed to say. And like the plantation, Brazil was and had always been a place of "balanced antagonisms," where love and violence commingled and identities as well as bodies were miscegenated.<sup>6</sup> Brazilians, for Freyre, were those who lived and thrived in this reality. How people had arrived at this position, he did not say. Caio Prado's *Formação* struck a distinctly materialist chord, adopting a structural approach focusing on modes of production, labor regimes and Brazil's status as an exporter of commodities for consumption abroad. This was above all a critical economic history, unconcerned with whether a conceptual framework developed outside of Brazil and without Brazil in mind was adequate to articulating a usable past.<sup>7</sup>

*Raízes do Brasil* stood between these two masterworks, offering an historical account tracing Brazil's development from colonization to the mid-1930s. Superficially, the book reproduced Brazil's essayistic tradition but challenged the expectations undergirding it. As a work of history, it differed from *Casa Grande* in its treatment of time. Temporality figured centrally in Holanda's account, defining his analytical and interpretive challenge and allowing him to speculate about Brazil's future in ways Freyre had not. What set *Raízes* apart from Prado's *Formação* was the explicit refusal to import a theory through which to examine Brazil's past.

For Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (commonly referred to as SBH) the intellectual challenge of *Raízes do Brasil* was not simply to write a more thorough historical synthesis than others had produced. The task he set himself was more ambitious: To write the history of Brazil on Brazilian terms, which meant to

write against the idea that the teleological currents of modernity should sweep all countries briskly toward the future. Holanda's seminal insight was to understand and reveal the pitfall of what was then the dominant mode of historical thinking – that of treating modernity as a universally applicable emanation of the Enlightenment and the only solid basis for a meaningful sense of national purpose and aspiration.

My goal in this reflection is to develop what I perceive to be the book's central argument regarding the relationship between historical imagination and modernity as an intellectual, social and political problem for those who have had to think from beneath the enormous weight of Europe as the “sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories.”<sup>8</sup> Put another way, this essay reflects on how Sérgio Buarque sought to tell, and his readers sought to grasp a Brazilian history from a particular perspective, that of Brazil's *cordiality*, rather than from the vantage of an illusive universalism defined by the European experience.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of Brazil in the 1930s, a new reading public was emerging just as vital issues of national identity and modernity were coming to the forefront of contemporary debate. But who were these readers? The tentative answer I offer is that *Raízes*' broad public may be characterized as urban, middle-class Brazilians for whom the questions of what it was to be Brazilian and what it was to be modern were tightly entwined, a point SBH himself seems to have understood as the book took on a life of its own after its initial publication. My main argument is twofold. First, that *Raízes do Brasil* represented a new way to conceive of Brazil as a national project, one that made it possible to imagine being simultaneously Brazilian and modern. As such, it represented a novel approach to historical thinking that refused the premise that Brazil's history could only be told from a position of insufficiency and defect vis-à-vis European history. Second, I conclude that the book, and its central idea of cordiality, resonated especially with a newly emergent middle-class readership that could see in it a framework for thinking about Brazil and their place in it. The book's suggestive, critical approach enabled these readers to see themselves in their own history, rather than as bystanders to national failure. To this extent, *Raízes* should be understood as a vital chapter in the intellectual and social history of modernity, in Brazil and elsewhere.

### ***Raízes* and the Dilemmas of Brazil**

*Raízes do Brasil* had a deep impact in the world of Brazilian ideas. It quickly became a classic, debated vigorously among critics, discussed among readers and republished and reedited many times; it has been continuously in print since

its first edition. Thus, I have chosen not to treat the 1936 edition as a frozen moment. The book went through several editions over the thirty years following its original publication and through much of the period Sérgio Buarque made a point of revising the text.<sup>10</sup> As he noted in the preface to the first Spanish edition in 1955, “to reproduce this book in its original form, with no touch up, would be to repeat opinions and thoughts which on many points no longer satisfy me.”<sup>11</sup> As we shall see, SBH’s ambivalence about the book and its central thesis is itself part of the story.

In some ways, *Raízes* is an erudite book.<sup>12</sup> Its influences are many and diverse, bespeaking a remarkable opening of Brazilian intellectual life. Textual references and footnotes indicate that Holanda was riding the intellectual and artistic currents of his time. As an eighteen-year old aspiring poet and critic, Sérgio Buarque had caught the wave of Arielismo that swept Latin America during the 1910s and like so many others came to see the U.S. as a kind of crass and utilitarian Caliban to Latin America’s ethereal and spiritual Ariel.<sup>13</sup> During the 1920s, he channeled the experimental and playful spirit that grew out of São Paulo’s Modern Art Week in 1922.<sup>14</sup> In law school and in his journalism work in the mid-1920s, he honed his rhetorical and analytical skills.

In 1929-30, he served as a foreign correspondent in Berlin for the *Diários Associados*. He began writing *Raízes* there, though he would not finish it for another six years.<sup>15</sup> While in Berlin he glimpsed Brazil from a new angle. In his first article posted from Germany, he specifically noted the idea of *Geist*, which he characterized as a “unique perspective from which national reality is constructed.”<sup>16</sup> The lesson Sérgio Buarque seems to have taken from his German sojourn is that Brazilian national reality had to be “constructed” by identifying the unique vantage from which to see it. This led SBH to seek the ground between Alfonso Celso’s naïve optimism in *Porque me ufano do meu país* (Why I Am Proud of My Country, 1900) and Paulo Prado’s melancholy, almost despairing *Retrato do Brasil: ensaio sobre a tristeza brasileira* (Portrait of Brazil: Essay on the Sadness of Brazil, 1928).

During these years, Sérgio Buarque absorbed a wide variety of influences: from sociologists, social psychologists, anthropologists and historians writing in English, including Margaret Meade, R.H. Tawney, Veblen, Toynbee and lesser lights; to European philosophers, historians and political theorists, including Vico and Hobbes, Hegel, Burkhardt, Dilthey, Ranke and Nietzsche; to more critical voices, such as Bergson, Marx, Schmitt and Croce. In Berlin he met liberal historian Friedrich Meinecke and deepened his engagement with the works of Simmel and Max Weber.

Yet this was no arid intellectualism. Like so many others of his day, SBH understood himself to be writing at a hinge of history. Following the turbulent

1920s and the Revolution of 1930, Vargas's experiments in political association, labor relations and economic priorities were shaking previously unquestioned structures of Brazil's social order. In Europe, the painful realizations following the hecatomb of World War I, dislocations of the global economic crisis after 1929 and the rise of the Third Reich after 1933 raised sharp questions about the limits of liberal-democratic capitalism and the dangers of totalitarianism. In the United States, the crisis of capitalism was forcing a rethinking of accepted truths and economic arrangements. From the perspective of those who had looked toward Western civilization as a beacon of modernity, the 1930s was a period of unprecedented openness to possibility – and a forced confrontation with the anxieties of uncertainty.

Born in an unsettled moment and reacting against the shattered wisdom of Europe's best account of itself, *Raízes* is not an easy book to compass. It is propelled neither by chronology nor narrative. It can seem fragmented and halting.<sup>17</sup> As I will show, its dominant motif is a critical confrontation with the presumed truths of teleological accounts of European history, whether offered by Weber or Hegel. And yet, *Raízes* rarely declares its intentions openly, adopting instead a “playful” and “irreverent” mood that can seem “slippery” to the reader overly invested in “Cartesian rationalism,” as one scholar has put it.<sup>18</sup> Later, SBH himself seemed to recognize this aspect of his prose. He explained in a pamphlet published in 1967 that in 1936 he had been writing as an essayist rather than as the historian he later became. The essayist, he argued, has a freedom the historian does not to choose topics and emphasize “personal theories.”<sup>19</sup> The most concrete expression of such a theory seems to have been his effort to tell Brazil's past against the narrative of European history as the progressive unfolding of social and political modernity. Up to the time he was writing, Brazil had been unable to reproduce this trajectory, a fact that had led many Brazilian elites to despair of its future. For SBH, the problem was not Brazilian history, which could only be what it was. Rather, the issue was that Brazilian history had been held up against a European standard and found wanting. To confront this problem, he emphasized Brazil's particularities but put them in fugue with European writers skeptical of teleologies and universalisms, such as Dilthey and Croce. This allowed him to affirm the irreducibility of the Brazilian experience without having to deny the relevance of that experience to humankind at large.<sup>20</sup>

Holanda framed the indeterminacy of his times by insisting that Brazil had been characterized by a kind of spatial and temporal irresolution from its very origins. The opening chapters focus on Brazil's deep past: discovery, exploration, economic extraction, plantations, slavery and cities. Brazil's roots, said SBH, stretched back to Iberia, a “frontier zone, of transition,” an “undecided region between Europe and Africa” at the very moment of European expansion. When

the Spanish and Portuguese had conquered the New World, they had done so not in a “methodical and rational” way but “carelessly and with a certain abandon,” making its inhabitants “exiles in our land.”<sup>21</sup> Brazil had been born of the creative tension inherent in Iberia’s status as an “undecided region.” Time was no more determinate than space. In the later chapter entitled “Our Revolution,” SBH argued that while an authentically Brazilian revolution had been underway since the mid-nineteenth century, its “visible form” might not appear as “catastrophic convulsions, which by a single mortal blow and through preformed ideas seek to transform long-established values.” It is possible, rather, that “some of the culminating phases have already passed by, without our having been able to perceive their transcendent importance. *We are living between two worlds: one definitively dead and the other yet to be born.*”<sup>22</sup>

Sérgio Buarque’s larger point seems to have been that history in Brazil could not be thought of in terms of a smooth transition from premodern to modern. Nor could it be thought of in terms of the negative version of that transition – a place that remained stuck in the premodern.<sup>23</sup> Time’s various registers bled into one another and coexisted for long periods according to what SBH called the “law of flux and reflux” – *fluxo e refluxo* – a concept derived from his reading of Vico’s idea of *corsi e recorsi* (roughly, historical cycles). Vico, as interpreted by Sérgio Buarque, understood historical consciousness as a dialectical movement of oppositions, mingling rather than segregating past, present and future as men made their own history with full face to providence.<sup>24</sup> Far from a mere formula for doing history, this implied that each people, each period, each culture could be encountered only in its particularities – its own historical uniqueness. Every historical trajectory, therefore, was only accidentally linear. For Sérgio Buarque this meant that no “preformed ideas” could hope to dictate a path; nor could any retrospective narrative reveal the inevitability of such a path. The historian’s job was to look past “a complex and accomplished system of precepts” to the particular things that history had made.

For Sérgio Buarque, Brazil’s particularities could best be understood in relation to global history since the discovery of the New World. The opening pages of the book characterize Spain and Portugal as “bridge territories” through which Europe had “communicated with other worlds.”<sup>25</sup> While during the sixteenth century the rest of insular Europe was distracted by struggles between Catholics and Protestants, Iberia had looked outwards to the wider world. In venturing beyond the peninsula, Portuguese and Spanish “adventurers” had been “pioneers of the modern mentality,” individualists before their time who carried with them an exaggerated sense of the “value of the human person, of the autonomy of each man in relation to his fellows in time and space.”<sup>26</sup> As a result, they were given to “an extreme exaltation of personality” and distrusted all theories tending to

negate “free will” and “personal responsibility.”<sup>27</sup> This had made them equally averse to rigid medieval hierarchies and to the historical forces that in Europe had given rise to a “political organization artificially maintained by an external force,” that is to say, the modern state.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, long before sailing the Atlantic, the Portuguese had been marked by an “extraordinary social plasticity” that allowed them to mingle easily with the indigenous people of the New World and the Africans who were brought there as slaves. Taken together, these traits had enabled the Portuguese to “conquer the tropics for civilization” as no other people of the Old World could have.<sup>29</sup> In this manner, Brazil had inserted itself into world history. Indeed, Dutch settlement of Brazil’s northeast between 1581 and 1654 had failed precisely because the Calvinists had never learned to live with the people there. Though methodical and coordinated, they had lacked the “tolerant and communicative sympathy” – characteristic of a Catholic church “more universalist or less exclusivist” than the Protestant – that had enabled the Portuguese to thrive amidst the Indians and blacks of the country.<sup>30</sup>

By pointing to Catholic success in the face of Protestant failure, SBH was responding to Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.<sup>31</sup> If by the mid-1930s Weber’s account of capitalism represented a widely-shared (if much criticized) myth regarding the origins of Western modernity, what Brazil needed most, Sérgio Buarque seemed to be saying, was not further criticism of that story so much as an alternative to it.

Previous generations of Brazilian reformers had failed to understand that the future lay not in mimicking foreign ideas or bemoaning the fact that Brazil was not Holland or the U.S., but in finding ways to articulate Brazil’s own history to the challenges of the modern world. Thus, he sharply criticized Brazil’s nineteenth-century “pedagogues of prosperity” who had found their country wanting because of its inability to live up to “partial truths” that had been transformed into “singular and obligatory requisites of all progress.”<sup>32</sup> Had not such thinkers ignored Brazil’s actuality by nurturing a “belief in the miraculous power of [foreign] ideas” and harboring “a secret horror of our reality,” he asked.<sup>33</sup> For SBH, what was true of Brazil’s nineteenth-century intelligentsia held true for the dominant classes at large. Lacking a ready explanation for Brazil’s lag behind Europe and the U.S., traditional elites had looked to scientific racism and its disdain for miscegenation as an all-purpose theory to account for national backwardness.<sup>34</sup> In doing so, they had effectively turned their backs on the great bulk of Brazil’s population. Nor had a new urban upper class offered a clearer sense of direction for Brazil. Whereas plantation elites had assumed that society could continue to be governed by patriarchal relations, city-dwelling elites were abandoning any notion of patriarchal obligation in favor of breakneck industrialism and modernization. In Brazil as elsewhere, noted SBH, state officials and



capitalists in the 1920s were busily turning workers into “simple numbers” and corroding “human relations.”<sup>35</sup>

While elsewhere this process had displaced personal relations with impersonal arrangements, Brazil’s history had produced a different outcome. Throughout the colonial period, Sérgio Buarque claimed, the family rather than the state “had furnished the most normal idea of power, respectability, obedience and cohesion among men” – all of the basic reflexes of social life.<sup>36</sup> As a result, “sentiments appropriate to domestic community, particularistic and antipolitical by nature” had seeped into the public and political sphere. In short, the family had invaded the state.<sup>37</sup> Dominant during the colonial centuries, personalism had led in the modern period to “a singularly energetic accentuation of the affective, irrational, passionate, and a stagnation ... of the organizing, disciplining, rationalizing qualities.”<sup>38</sup> Slaves had been an important part of this process. By their actions to temper the adversities of bondage, “a fastidious and sugary gentleness invade[d] all spheres of colonial life” from very early on and carried over to culture more generally.<sup>39</sup>

By insisting on Brazil’s pervasive personalism, Holanda was continuing his assault on Weber’s account of the rise of capitalism-qua-modernity. It was true that the Calvinist “spirit of spontaneous organization” and a more abstract and impersonal understanding of social life had not taken root in Brazil. But this fact was only half the story, for Brazilian history had not left a vacuum where a Calvinist revolution or its cultural equivalent might have been. Instead, Brazilians had developed a different spirit and ethic, one that neither the state nor any other impersonal institution had managed to uproot – the underlying *intimismo* (intimism) of Brazilian social life.

For Sérgio Buarque, the vitality of the intimate accounted for Brazil’s political dilemmas in the 1930s but also defined what made it distinct. Personalism had so permeated culture and society that it had become the condition of all politics. From the imperial court and parliament up to 1822, to ideological conflicts between Liberals and Conservatives through the nineteenth century, to the oligarchical politics of the Old Republic up to 1930, intimism had seeped into every nook and cranny of collective life. And having lodged there, it underlay the fundamental contradiction of Brazilian political and social life – that between liberalism and *caudilhismo* (roughly, political personalism).

These two forces represented the point of confrontation between modernity as a general phenomenon and Brazilian history in its particularity. Liberalism, for Sérgio Buarque, was the abstract political-economic principle most emblematic of Eurocentric modernity, one in which: individuals answer above all to general laws rooted in reason; the impersonal processes of democracy exclude emotion as a legitimate spring for personal and political action; and the supposedly

anonymous workings of the market mediate economic relationships premised on the notion that individuals must “live for themselves” through competition.<sup>40</sup> *Caudilhismo*, by contrast, was the accumulated habits of interaction between hierarchical superiors and inferiors, mediated by dependencies, reciprocal obligations and emotional relations in the intimism of everyday life. He characterized the broad historical transition to liberalism as a “crisis” of adaptation to a “social mechanism” that dictated the “decisive triumph of certain *antifamilial* virtues.” This was especially true of the unrelenting competition that characterized the world of industrial labor.<sup>41</sup> Brazil, like other countries, had experienced these tensions. But *caudilhismo* had survived the crisis in Brazil because historical forces of intimism had become so deeply embedded in social and political life.

This, argued SBH, is what erstwhile reformers had missed. They had seen only that Brazil lagged behind industrializing societies in Europe and the U.S. “Drugged” (*narcotizados*) by their “obstinate belief” in “the illusions of liberal mythology,” they had supposed that proper political parties and the apparatus of the modern state would spring into existence as though by the force of history itself.<sup>42</sup> The problem with this line of thinking, according to Sérgio Buarque, was that it denied Brazil the possibility of a historical process of its own. Instead of liberalism displacing political personalism once and for all, *caudilhismo* had suffused all of politics and made its home by burrowing beneath the great structures of liberal thought, eroding the ground on which it stood. To this extent, “democracy in Brazil had always been a lamentable misunderstanding.”<sup>43</sup>

It is at this point that Holanda invoked theories of historical movement and dialectics in answer to the reformers’ stunted and derivative historical understanding. Liberalism tout court could not be the outcome of a dialectical process in Brazil, he insisted, because a synthesis could only emerge according to the logic of a given society (a lesson he learned from Dilthey, Meinecke and Vico).<sup>44</sup> What appeared to be an antithetical relationship between liberalism and *caudilhismo* would not resolve dialectically in Brazil, because *caudilhismo* formed part of the “same circle of ideas to which the principles of liberalism belong.”<sup>45</sup> Brazilian *caudilhismo* was the “negative form of the liberal thesis,” rather than its antithesis for dialectical purposes. What must be vanquished, then, was not *caudilhismo* as such, but the conjoined and stable antithesis that *liberalismo-caudilhismo* had become in the Brazilian context, a contradiction ensured by the continuous presence and renewal of *intimismo*.

Thus, the answer could not be to condemn or eliminate intimism, for it was too much a part of what Brazil had become. Rather, Brazilian history suggested that the problem lay in the idea that the emotive and intimate had to be eliminated from social and political life in modern societies and that only if these were “overcome” could Brazil move ahead.<sup>46</sup> It is in explaining how this was to happen

that Sérgio Buarque was the least clear, for although it might be possible to root out all traces of Brazil's personalism in an effort to implant Euro-American style liberal democracy and modernity, doing so would require Brazil to surrender the distinctive and positive outcome of its own history, summed up in the book's famous phrase *O homem cordial* – the Cordial Man.

### **Making Brazil Cordial**

For Sérgio Buarque, the Hobson's choice between being Brazilian and being modern was precisely why Brazilian historicizing had to adopt a critical perspective and begin from novel premises. The Cordial Man, characterized by "gentleness in personal encounters, hospitality and generosity," was not only Brazil's (and SBH's) answer to Weber's this-worldly-ascetic Calvinist, but also Brazil's gift to the world.<sup>47</sup> The Cordial Man chafed at discipline, shallow ritual, rigid hierarchies, rule-defined civility, utilitarian calculation and above all impersonal social structures – the defining qualities of modernity understood in more-or-less Weberian terms. The Cordial Man was not governed by stilted "politeness" (*polidez*), because there was "something coercive" and unspontaneous about following rigid rules in relations among people. Instead, the Cordial Man faced the world from "an extremely rich and overflowing emotive depth."<sup>48</sup> Cordiality was been inscribed linguistically, in Brazilian Portuguese's wide use of the diminutive *inho*, which allowed Brazilians to "become more familiar with people and objects and, at the same time, put them in relief," making them "more accessible to the senses and also closer to the heart."<sup>49</sup> Cordiality carried the day even in the midst of competition. As Sérgio Buarque noted, a Philadelphia businessman had once recoiled in amazement when told that in Brazil to gain someone's custom it was necessary to become his "friend."<sup>50</sup>

Although it bore a superficial resemblance to a Weberian ideal type, the Cordial Man was for SBH an embodied historical process that had led Brazilians to reject any broad social arrangement that purported to set emotion to the side.<sup>51</sup> Cordiality had its roots in the historical fact that Brazilians rarely applied themselves "body and soul to an object outside ourselves" and cared little for any "principle of supraindividual organization." Each person saw the world through "emotive affinities" rather than general laws and rigid schemes of behavior. This emphasis had given rise to a radical separation of the social from the political, which in turn had created a genuine failure of organization in Brazil.

Even so, *cordial values* represented "a terrain of election" in Brazilian history. It was true that Brazil had not reproduced the "success" of Protestant Europe and the United States, for "the intimate life of the Brazilian is neither cohesive

enough, nor disciplined enough to envelop and dominate all of his personality, integrating him, like a conscious pawn, into the social whole.”<sup>52</sup> But for this very reason, the Cordial Man knew a freedom Weber’s modern man, trapped in his Iron Cage, could not – the freedom not to be forced to “live for oneself” in competition against all others.<sup>53</sup> Rather, the Cordial Man was “free . . . to abandon himself to the entire repertoire of ideas, gestures and forms he finds in his path, absorbing them without great difficulty.” Rather than “conscious pawns” of society, Brazilians were people – and a people – who related first and foremost to other people rather than to impersonal structures.<sup>54</sup>

I contend that Sérgio Buarque meant this as a challenge to fundamental premises of European political thought, which had bedazzled and baffled earlier Brazilian reformers. On one hand, he acknowledged the price Brazil had paid for not following what looked like a yellow brick road to modernity; organization and development had been stunted. On the other hand, he insisted that Brazil’s history had produced alternative premises for social order that must be taken into account if Brazilians, and with them humanity as a whole, were to thrive (we must recall that he was writing during the interwar period). Specifically, by rejecting Weberian rationalization and depersonalization, and thus refusing to live by the code of “impersonal love,” Brazilians had pointed to fundamental flaws in the liberal-democratic idea as a universally achievable state. Societies ordered exclusively on an impersonal basis, Holanda asserted, were not sustainable on their own terms, because a general love for abstract humanity could not finally ground durable social relationships. Liberalism as a theory lacked emotional content and lent itself to rigid formulas that obscured the irreducible specificities of “flesh and blood” human beings.

This bloodless stance, noted Holanda, was premised on liberalism’s acceptance of Hobbes’ mythical war of each against all as the default condition of humankind. Modern society and the state were grounded in this assumption, for human beings lived in fear of each other in the state of nature and only the Leviathan could hold this fear in check. Thus, the paradox of modern liberal society: people had no choice but to live alongside those they would most fear in a state of nature.<sup>55</sup> Hobbes’ Leviathan did not banish the existential fear of the natural state. Rather, it built a social order around it and then sought to control the behavior that produced the fear – but without banishing the fear itself. Or, to be precise, the Hobbesian solution simply assumed that fear would not matter if the war of all against all was controlled within tolerable limits.

Brazilians, by contrast claimed SBH, did not fear each other. Indeed, whatever the Hobbesian myth may have meant for Europeans and Americans, the notion “of a humanity evil by nature and of a war of all against all” is one Brazilians (and all Latin Americans) would find “extremely antipathetic and uncomfort-

able.”<sup>56</sup> For the Cordial Man, life in society was “liberation from the fear he feels in living with himself, of leaning only on himself in all the circumstances of existence.”<sup>57</sup> For Brazilians, society was an answer to the existential fear of living alone, not to the fear of the other. The Hobbesian assumption, Sérgio Buarque argues, made a mockery of liberal arguments regarding “natural human goodwill.” The gap could only be papered over by substituting a Benthamite concern for “quantity” in place of the “quality” of human love.<sup>58</sup> That is, lacking any emotional content, liberalism had only utilitarian calculation to rely on. But as SBH noted, the idea of “the greatest good for the greatest number” was “in direct contrast with any form of human conviviality based on cordial values.”<sup>59</sup> Human beings simply did not behave in strictly utilitarian fashion.

Of course, says Holanda, cordial values alone could not create solid principles. Some durable normative elements must exist. But there was no insurmountable barrier to creating such norms in Brazil, so long as cordial values were respected alongside those more characteristic of modernity. Speaking with almost oracular pomp – and with oracular clarity – Sérgio Buarque concluded that whatever Brazil was to become, it could not be by giving up this sense of how and why human beings live together. If liberalism had not solved this problem in Brazil (and more generally), neither will other “ingenious elaborations” by themselves.<sup>60</sup> There must be “a world of more intimate essences which will always stay intact, irreducible and disdainful of human inventions. To ignore this world would be to abandon our own spontaneous rhythm, the law of flux and reflux, for a mechanical beat and a false harmony.”<sup>61</sup> Modern Brazil may be able to organize itself better than it has, not by mimicking European or American models, but by taking what they have to offer and grafting these shoots on to Brazil’s own roots. The question was whether a newly metropolitan Brazil could hope to salvage its cordial heritage, or would be forced to give up what had been its historical accomplishment. Implicitly, Europeans and Americans had already accepted the impersonal and competitive qualities of modernity as natural.<sup>62</sup> From the perspective developed in *Raízes do Brasil*, Brazil’s advantage was precisely that its history had kept Brazilians from forgetting that cordiality was central to life in common.

### **Reading from the Middle of History**

There are two obvious questions in trying to connect *Raízes do Brasil* to concrete readers. How widely was the book read? And what impact did it have on readers’ views regarding large questions of the day? – what it meant to be Brazilian, what it meant to be modern and what place Brazil was to have in the

world. As to the first, *Raízes* appeared just as the until-then small universe of Brazilian books had begun to expand. Before World War I, most books sold in Brazil, even those written by Brazilian authors, had been printed in Europe, chiefly France and Portugal. The reading public had been limited to small numbers in larger cities, such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The years following World War I brought important changes. Brazilian literary publishing took off in the 1920s. The number of titles produced by new houses and the size of print runs grew briskly. By the 1930s, Brazil had a small but solid publishing business trucking in translations, especially from French and English, and increasingly in books by Brazilian authors, including fiction and nonfiction. For instance, José Olympio, the original publisher of *Raízes do Brasil*, was founded in 1931. It published 8 titles in 1933, 32 in 1934, 59 in 1935 and 66 in 1936 (one of these, presumably, *Raízes*). At that point it became the largest publisher of non-instructional books in Brazil. Through the 1940s and 1950s, it published 2,000 titles in 5,000 editions. *Raízes* itself saw four editions and nineteen printings in the three decades after its initial publication.<sup>63</sup> The literati alone cannot have read all of these: this was a book that gained a wider following.

The harder question is whether we can have anything to say about who was included in this audience. Public reaction to *Raízes do Brasil*, other than by critics, is limited.<sup>64</sup> As I have shown elsewhere, a self-conscious middle class referred to as such in public discourse was a part of the social terrain in 1930s Brazil.<sup>65</sup> These were white or near-white people who saw themselves as a cut above workers, who had disposable income for certain luxuries, who often had some education and who thought of themselves as *culto* in comparison to those below.<sup>66</sup> Yet they knew themselves to be perched on the edge of their status, always in danger of falling. At the same time, these middle-class people looked yearningly and at times resentfully toward those above them, the new and old elite who had property, money, power and patronage. These were people who knew themselves to be stuck in the middle. Novels of this period chronicled the anxieties of this group, bespeaking a wide reading public of just such people.<sup>67</sup> Sérgio Buarque did not refer to the *middle class*, at least not in 1936, but as attentive as he was to developments of his day, it is almost certain he would have recognized its existence. While it is difficult to link *Raízes* directly to this group explicitly, in point of fact, a middle-class readership is the best explanation for why the book went through several editions and was continuously republished for decades.

Perhaps a more productive question, therefore, is to ask in what way *Raízes* could have appealed to middle-class readers? In his postscript to *Raízes*' fiftieth anniversary edition in 1986, Antônio Cândido noted that one of Sérgio Buarque's most important accomplishments was to have written in a "little-known, rarely-

posited and little-used vein in our political and social thinking,” one that transcended the tired formulas of nineteenth-century politics by gesturing toward “the potential radicalism of the middle classes.”<sup>68</sup> It is not altogether clear what Cândido meant by this reference. He might have been referring to the parallel political movements of the 1930s, the left-wing National Liberation Alliance and right-wing Integralism, both of which had significant middle-class involvement.<sup>69</sup> I believe, however, that he may have been making a somewhat broader point. In *Raízes do Brasil*, asserted Cândido, SBH “may have been the first Brazilian thinker to abandon the so-called ‘illustrious’ position, by which it falls to enlightened intellectuals, politicians, and rulers to manage the interests and direct the activities of the people.” Instead, wrote Cândido, *Raízes* seemed to call on the people to “take the initiative, ... take charge of their destiny.” In the Brazil of the 1930s, a reference to *the people* most likely represented the fragile hope for an alliance between a new and untested working class and a self-consciously anxious and uncertain middle class.<sup>70</sup>

While it is not inconceivable that working-class people came across *Raízes* – by 1920 urban literacy rates in Rio and São Paulo may have been as high as 75 percent<sup>71</sup> – middle-class readers, who produced and consumed a wide variety of publications, from newspapers and magazines with “national” reach, to association journals and a growing corpus of fiction and nonfiction in Portuguese, were far more likely to have done so. Such people, deeply concerned with questions of nationality, identity and modernity, looked to the printed page for information, inspiration, confirmation and truth.<sup>72</sup> Sérgio Buarque himself seems to have recognized the middle class’s emergence as a reading public. In the 1948 edition of *Raízes* (the first of four after 1936), he introduced a small but telling change from the first edition, substituting the phrase “classe média” (middle class) for “burguesia urbana” (urban bourgeoisie) in the following sentence: “In a country which during the great part of its existence was a land of masters and slaves, without commerce that was not in the hands of opportunistic men ambitious for wealth and nobility, it was impossible to find a numerous middle class.”<sup>73</sup> It is worth noting here that SBH, as he so often does, seems to assert an idea by allowing an implication to flow from its negation: it was impossible (in the past), to find a middle class, with the unstated implication that it was possible now. Given the robust discourse about the middle class during these years, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that SBH was in effect drawing attention to the existence of a middle-class reading public by recognizing that the term *middle class* was far more likely to resonate among his readers than *urban bourgeoisie*, with its connotations of property ownership, wealth and power that did not characterize the broad reading public in the 1940s.<sup>74</sup>

In *Raízes* middle-class readers may have sensed the subtle but profound change in their relationship to the Republic of Letters that Cândido would point to decades later. Where they had always been on the outside looking in, curious bystanders beyond the gates of culture and refinement, SBH opened the door to them as no one had before. Freyre may have begun the trend in *Casa grande*, but Sérgio Buarque went much further in addressing himself explicitly to what might be thought of as an intelligent lay readership capable of reflecting on the great problems of the age. His rhetoric in this regard was far more powerful for implying rather than declaring. He made the connection not by announcing the existence of a middle class – even in 1948 he referred to it only by noting its absence in the nineteenth century – but by holding the “patriarchal” elite and the traditional intelligentsia up for scrutiny and finding them wanting from the perspective of a new literate public. The “pioneers of our independence and of the Republic” had preferred to hide the shame and burden of slavery from themselves and from the nation at large, he wrote. They “preferred to forget the ugly and disconcerting reality in order to take refuge in an ideal world to which they were beckoned by the doctrines of the time. They sprouted wings in order not to witness the detestable spectacle that the country put before them.”<sup>75</sup> Those who read *Raízes do Brasil*, he seemed to be saying, could be more courageous by refusing to fly above reality and choosing instead to dive into it.

According to critics, the book was eminently readable. A 1936 radio program praised Holanda for “not being heavy, for not allowing himself to be carried away by scientific terminology.” His thesis was “profound and his argument serious,” but he understood how to present historical and psychological problems “with simplicity.”<sup>76</sup> According to one reviewer, *Raízes* could galvanize a reading public “thirsty for easy formulas” to renew the instincts of nationality.<sup>77</sup> In another way, however, the book’s style was “slippery” for the reader overly invested in “Cartesian rationalism,” for Sérgio Buarque rarely stated an individual proposition outright, but instead “affirmed by negating” and “negated by affirming.”<sup>78</sup> In doing so, he seemed to invite diverse readings and thus opened a wide field for impassioned discussion over the meaning of the text. In other words, for many different reasons, here was a highbrow book for a middlebrow public, written by an author who wanted to connect with a broad readership, rather than lord his erudition and rhetoric over them.

Attentive middle-class readers could have heard echoes of their situation in Sérgio Buarque’s text. In the chapter on “The Cordial Man,” discussing the emerging role of the state in social affairs writ large, Buarque notes in a somber tone, “for the first time in history ... competition among citizens ... had become a positive social value.” In earlier epochs, “everything had contributed to a greater harmony and closer correspondence between the virtues of the home



and those that assure social prosperity and order among citizens.” While such competition had had corrosive effects everywhere, in Brazil, where social life was rooted in the intimacies of the patriarchal family from the very beginning, the late growth of cities had led to what SBH called “a social disequilibrium whose effects are with us still today.”<sup>79</sup>

Although he was not clear on this point, Sérgio Buarque seems to have been suggesting that this disequilibrium was an opportunity in the form of a crisis. In 1942, João Lyra Filho noted in his book *Problems of the Middle Class* that “[i]t seems extraordinary the extent to which the competitive spirit has penetrated all of our activities.”<sup>80</sup> In their work lives, in the publications of their professional organizations, in news and entertainment magazines and in novels of the period, middle-class lives were dominated by the hopes and anxieties of what SBH called a “regime of free competition,” a kind of Hobbesian war within society itself.<sup>81</sup> The Brazilian alternative to such a regime, wrote Sérgio Buarque, was to reject the way of the “conqueror” and his “violent solutions.” Instead, Brazilians would be “the gentlest most composed people in the world.”<sup>82</sup> He was not suggesting that Brazilians turn away from all ambition, only that amidst the combat of everyday life in competitive societies, they remain true to what Brazilian history had taught about human experience – that emotions and interpersonal relations were the soil that nurtured collective life. For those subject to the constant temptation to live only for themselves in an intensely competitive social order the appeal to cordiality may have seemed a resource for preserving humanity.

Perhaps more fundamentally, *Raízes* may have seemed to hold out the chance for a positive engagement with the idea of modernity. Where the *pedagogues of progress* had only criticized Brazil for what it had not become, Sérgio Buarque demanded that his readers think about what Brazil’s history had made and what Brazil’s possibilities were in the world. Organization was called for, that much was clear. But it could not be the “impersonal” spirit of Weber’s Calvinism: in Brazil it was unimaginable that a wholly “immaterial and impersonal entity” could preside over the destinies of peoples.<sup>83</sup> The state, “a spiritual creature,” was necessary, but not the Leviathan, which ruled by fear and cultivated fear of others within the very order of society. The people needed to participate, but not through the empty political slogans and utilitarian calculations of nineteenth-century European and American liberalism. Whatever was to come had to grow from Brazil’s “positive notion” of personalism, its intimate response to social life, the sense that society was premised on a desire to be together and grounded in cordial values.<sup>84</sup> Only in this way could Brazil “compose a perfect whole from antagonistic parts” and be “consistent with itself.”<sup>85</sup>

This is where hope lay. For all that liberal-democracy and the modern order it symbolized had been a “misunderstanding” and an “illusion” in Brazil, there was no reason modern ideals could not ultimately prevail. Three factors militated in their favor. First, wrote SBH, the principle of individual autonomy was well entrenched in Brazilian history, for the descendants of the Amerindians and the original colonizers had rejected all “rational hierarchy.” Second, Brazilians were by historical experience open to all new ideas, including liberal-democracy, precisely because ideologies held lesser rank than a natural openness to the world and its differences. Third, Brazilians were, relatively speaking, opposed to preconceptions of race and color, at a time when the world seemed obsessed with them. Moreover, a central tenet of the French Revolution, one rarely mentioned after the eighteenth century – *fraternité* – was wholly in keeping with Brazilian *cordiality*. A broad national movement toward a Brazilian modernity was possible, but only if the elite gave up its privilege to cultural exclusivity and only if *the people* took up the challenge of constructing national reality.<sup>86</sup>

While Sérgio Buarque’s telling of Brazilian history against the grain of modernity was unusual for its time and place, his insistence on the contradictions of liberalism in historical context echoes back to an earlier historian who thought about the destinies of liberal polities and the historiographies appropriate to them. According to Lionel Gossman, French historian Augustin Thierry understood early in the nineteenth century that the liberal dream of imposing political unity by eliminating all opposition and difference could only result in the perpetuation of blind conflict. Yet, according to Thierry, liberalism was premised on the notion that social conflict could be neutralized without resort to the state’s coercive force (except in extreme circumstances). Thierry’s challenge was to learn how to write of France’s division and violence without yielding the principle of French unity.<sup>87</sup> He did so, says Gossman, by writing the history of France as the history of the bourgeoisie, whose conception of private property represented the synthesis of liberalism’s foundational antithesis between desire (violence) and reason (peace). Since such a synthesis was the condition of a stable and prosperous social order, the bourgeoisie, for Thierry, was history itself. Through the silent operations of property ownership the fundamental conflicts of the social order could be defused largely without resort to direct violence by the state.

In some ways, Sérgio Buarque’s task a century later was not so different from Thierry’s. Like France, Brazil had a history of division and conflict and had struggled through the nineteenth century to discover a principle of unity. As in Thierry’s France, liberalism in early twentieth-century Brazil could not simply be taken for granted as the basis for social order and progress. Thierry had faced a similar problem and solved it historiographically by linking prop-

erty ownership to a specific social group and making that group's stability the condition of social order writ large.

But Brazil's history was not France's and liberalism was not just a stencil that could be easily transferred from one surface to another. Private property was perhaps not so obvious a solution to liberalism's contradictions. Until 1889, property in Brazil had been in people as well as in land, not merely a form of indirect power over others but a direct enslavement of as much as half the population during the colonial period. There is no evidence SBH read Thierry, so we cannot say he thought explicitly along these lines. But it may be that he understood intuitively from his engagement with Brazilian history that he needed to look beyond property for a durable unifying principle, because it had been indelibly tainted by the history of slavery. Cordiality, by contrast, had enabled Brazilians to bridge difference, at least in the realm of personal relations. Perhaps more fundamentally, *Raízes* saw early twentieth-century Brazil as facing a somewhat different problem than early nineteenth-century France. For Thierry liberalism was the answer to the antithesis between desire-as-violence and reason-as-peace. In *Raízes*, SBH proposed a different antithesis as the defining core of modernity, that between the desire to live together (desire as cordiality/peace) and the reason of universal struggle (reason as competition). From the perspective developed in *Raízes*, what made early twentieth-century Brazil different from early nineteenth-century France was that modernity had created a competitive social order that sowed discord and undermined human attachments, a development at odds with Brazil's history of intimism. From this perspective, Brazil's dilemma required a different synthesis than France had arrived at by enshrining private property as the ordering principle of social life. But cordiality was a lived experience, not a theoretical construct or a concrete institution defined by laws and clear codes of behavior. For it to have meaning in the wider context of national identity, it needed to be announced. This is what *Raízes do Brasil* did – it addressed itself to a new reading public that extended beyond the limited intellectual elite of old and called them to think about and above all feel what it meant to be Brazilian and in doing so accept Brazil's past as their own.

In this context, it hardly seems an accident that SBH touched only lightly on an issue that would become so contentious later in the context of Brazilian national identity – race. Where Freyre had faced this problem by talking about slavery and race in the distant past, Sérgio Buarque's concern for temporality led him to speak relatively little about these legacies, and then chiefly to deny them as a source of national division. Perhaps this was the most comfortable position for white/near-white middle-class Brazilians who knew race could not be ignored, but feared overemphasizing it.<sup>88</sup>

The great irony of *Raízes*' staying power is that Sérgio Buarque himself became more skeptical of what he had written as the book achieved iconic status. In 1959 he came close to disavowing it entirely. "I'm not exactly in disagreement with the book, but I would like not to have written it," he said in an interview. In 1967 he said the same and he repeated the sentiment in 1976, insisting that the 1930s were other times and that he had been under the influence of Weber (like so many others). As a historian, he felt that the book had remained at the level of an essay and lacked the rigor and exhaustiveness of his later research.

Yet he never abandoned the Cordial Man and ultimately softened his stance toward the book. In 1977, asked whether it was true that he had declared the Cordial Man dead, he noted that the newspaper had said so, not him. He acknowledged that he would not use the same term today, because of the misunderstandings it had engendered and because it was fundamentally ambiguous. A year later he further moderated his view, saying that he would not retract anything in the book, though he would not write it the same way.<sup>89</sup> Poignantly, despite his equivocations, he never stopped signing copies of it as gifts to friends and family members.

*Raízes do Brasil*, its unstable meaning and SBH's struggle with it, remind us how difficult it has been to write history from within the long shadow of modernity's narrative of success and how deeply the idea of a transition from premodern to modern has been inscribed into the act of history writing.<sup>90</sup> Put another way, Sérgio Buarque's effort to write a history of Brazil on Brazilian terms hints at the crucial role the idea of modernity has played in conjuring the specter of "backwardness" that hung over so many countries in the twentieth century. The notion of an almost providential history embodied in European and U.S. experiences often led other nations and their peoples – and perhaps especially their elites – down a rabbit hole of aspiration in which universal models replaced historical concreteness as the basis for judging what the moment called for. As SBH argued, this reflex had made it hard for Brazilians to encounter themselves in their own past. He spoke only vaguely of who might take the path toward which he gestured. In principle, no one was excluded. Elites willing to abandon their delusions might walk along. Working-class people could join if they would look beyond the antagonisms of their political position. Blacks, whites and everyone in between could all be Brazilians, since this diversity is what Brazilian history had made. Above all, I believe, *Raízes do Brasil* resonated with middle-class readers, people who were part intimist Brazilians and part striving moderns. SBH had called on them to look up from anxious lives and consider that a sense of *cordialidade* might be as important to the future as the pat formulas of modernity – for Brazilians and for wider humanity.<sup>91</sup>

## Epilogue

*Raízes do Brasil* was doubtless read many different ways by many different readers. It is clear from our reader in 1973 that the ideas presented in the book were tools with which to think actively about Brazil and its problems. For tucked into the pages of the book (between chapters three and four, right where the reader left off before skipping to chapter five), was a newspaper clipping from Rio de Janeiro's main newspaper, *Jornal do Brasil* dated 20 January 1974. The article by J.O. de Meira Penna was titled "Os latinos e o princípio de autoridade" (Latins and the principle of authority). At that time, the military regime that had come to power in 1964 was just beginning to loosen up after years of repression, arrests, torture and disappearances. The author asks why liberal democracy had worked in Western Europe, whereas countries no less civilized had experienced a "notable institutional disequilibrium."

In answering the question, Meira Penna points to religious differences between Protestantism and Catholicism (which our reader bracketed) and offers a brisk historical tour of the Italian merchant republics, France during the Enlightenment and Brazil's history from 1822. Penna concludes that Weber's emphasis on "rational behavior" is the key to the problem. He then contrasts the "Logical Society," which knows how to think, plan and organize politically, to the "Erotic Society" that knows "only how to feel," or at best react instinctively. In this context, the "cordial man," in comparison to the "logical man," is the one whose behavior is a function of personal relations, friendships, sympathy and affect. Our reader read the whole article, underscoring the contrast between the *logical man* and the *cordial man*. What he or she had in mind is impossible to know, though there was a sharp hash mark next to a sentence in *Raízes* noting that the absence of "the rationalization of life" had tended to produce "military dictatorships" in modern times. (17) It is tempting to think that the reader was rejecting cordiality as a guiding principle for national living. Perhaps. But by now it should be clear that one of *Raízes do Brasil's* virtues is to invite multiple readings. The idea of the *cordial man* seems to have become a potent phrase, however it was understood, for grappling with the paradoxes of Brazilian modernity.<sup>92</sup> This, more than anything else, may have been why it has enjoyed such longevity. And though the reader did not mark the line, it is worth noting that the article closes with the following sentence: "Only little by little is a correct conviction emerging that we must walk, by ourselves, our long and arduous path." The extent to which this is in keeping with Sérgio Buarque's fundamental ideas is worth pondering.

## Notes

- 1 Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Universidade de Brasília, 1963), 153.  
I wish to thank the University of Virginia's Summer Research Grant Committee for a travel grant that allowed me to spend two weeks at the Sérgio Buarque de Holanda Archive and Library at UNICAMP in 2008. I wish to thank then-graduate-student-now-doctor Anne Daniels for some of the spot help from afar in the summer of 2012. I have benefited immensely from the comments of many readers, including colleagues at: the University of Virginia; the International Colloquium on the Latin American Middle Class, Sverdlin Institute for Latin American History and Culture, Tel Aviv University, Israel (2013); the University of Grönigen, The Netherlands (2010); the Latin American Studies Association meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2009); the IV Simpósio Internacional de História do Brasil, Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro (2008). I owe thanks as well to an anonymous reader.
- 2 The reader marked passages other than the ones I have indicated here. There does seem to be a notable consistency of interest throughout the underlining. I have no basis to remark on why this reader would have chosen to read the book in Spanish. The cutting that came with the book does have a short hand-written note in Portuguese.
- 3 There are several points of entry to the historiography regarding the intellectual and cultural life of this period: Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Duke University Press, 2001); Maria Lúcia Garcia Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre. Um vitoriano nos trópicos* (São Paulo: UNESP, 2005).
- 4 Gilberto Freyre, *Casa grande & senzala* (many editions in Portuguese), translated into English as *The Masters & the Slaves* (New York: Knopf, 1956); Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (many editions in Portuguese), translated into English as *Roots of Brazil* (Notre Dame University Press, 2013); Caio Prado Jr., *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo* (São Paulo: Livraria Martins Ed., 1942 and other editions in Portuguese)..
- 5 An important nineteenth-century history is Francisco Adolfo de Vornhagen, *História Geral do Brasil* (Madrid, vol. 1, 1854; vol. 2, 1857). On scientific racism, see: Lilia Moritz Schwarz, *The Spectacle of Races: Scientists, Institutions, and the Race Question in Brazil, 1870-1930* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1999); Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender and the Nation in Latin America* (Cornell University Press, 1996).
- 6 Ricardo Benazquen de Araújo, *Guerra e paz: Casa grande & senzala e a obra de Gilberto Freyre nos anos 30* (Rio de Janeiro: Editôra 34, 1994), 96.
- 7 This is merely a précis to the rich scholarship on the literary production of this period, sometimes referred to as the Generation of 1930. A good starting point is Pallares-Burke's *Gilberto Freyre*, published in English as Pallares-Burke and Peter Burke, *Gilberto Freyre: Social Theory in the Tropics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008). A similar book has not been written for Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, though the collection *Sérgio Buarque de Holanda: perspectivas* (Campinas: Unicamp, 2008) offers a superb overview of the newest scholarship on Buarque's intellectual production. As yet there has been nothing quite like either of these for Caio Prado. Maria Ângela D'Inca's *História e ideal: ensaios sobre Caio Prado Júnior* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1989) is useful but dated. To a certain extent, I conjecture, Caio Prado's contributions may have become caught up in ideological battles over the usefulness of Marxism as an analytical tool.

- 8 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 27.
- 9 The epistemological challenge of writing history in Latin America was not new. See Jorge Cañizares Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford University Press, 2001); Mark Thurner, "After colonialism and the king: notes on the Peruvian birth of contemporary history," *Postcolonial Studies* 9:4 (2006), 393-420.
- 10 *Raízes* saw five editions and at least nineteen printings up to 1969. Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira, "Relendo *Raízes do Brasil*. <<http://www.bresserpereira.org.br/papers/2000/00-71.RelendoRaizesDoBrasil-Holanda.pdf>> By 1969 it had been translated into French, Spanish, German and Japanese. Only in 2013 was it finally translated into English as *Roots of Brazil* (Notre Dame University Press). The intricate intellectual history of Holanda's reworking of the text has yet to be written.
- 11 Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raíces del Brasil* (México: FCE, 1955), 7.
- 12 There is a large body of literature on *Raízes do Brasil* and SBH. A useful starting point is the book co-authored by Pedro Meira Monteiro and João Kennedy Eugênio, *Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. Perspectivas* (Campinas: Ed. UNICAMP, 2008) (hereafter *SBH. Perspectivas*). It contains many fine essays on the book and other works by SBH.
- 13 See Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, "Ariel," *Revista do Brasil* (maio 1920, no. 53) [Fundo SBH (UNICAMP). Série: Produção Intelectual, Atividades Jornalísticas, PI 2, P 2].
- 14 Brasil Pinheiro Machado, "*Raízes do Brasil*: Uma releitura," in Monteiro, et al., eds. *Sérgio Buarque de Holanda*, 155-80.
- 15 See "Sérgio Buarque de Holanda: História brasileira num castelo medieval," *Tribunal de Imprensa*, Rio de Janeiro, 14-15 nov. 1959 [Fundo SBH. Série: Entrevistas, Vp204 P4].
- 16 Quoted in Marcus Vinicius Corrêa de Carvalho, "Outros lados. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda: crítica literária, história e política (1920-1940)" (Doctoral Thesis, UNICAMP, 2003), 118.
- 17 In addition to the map provided by the reader of the 1955 Spanish edition, I have been guided by a short essay SBH wrote the year before *Raízes* was published. Many of the synthetic points he advances in the book are prefaced there, at times verbatim. The essay reads like a précis of the book stripped of its historical details. See SBH, "Corpo e Alma do Brasil. Enasio de Psicologia Social," *SBH, Perspectivas*, 583-600.
- 18 Conrado Pires de Castro, "*Raízes do Brasil* e o debate sobre a 'Modernização' da sociedade brasileira na década de 30" (Universidade Estadual de Campinas, julho 1996), 1.
- 19 Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, "Elementos básicos da nacionalidade: o homem," *SBH, Perspectivas*, 617-637.
- 20 On the negating quality of SBH's prose in *Raízes*, see Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias, "Negação das negações," *Perspectivas*, 317-347.
- 21 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Universidade de Brasília, 1963), 3-4, 18. I have used the 1963 version for citations, except where I have referred explicitly to other editions.
- 22 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 175.
- 23 Holanda's method and rhetoric are of great interest and have been closely examined by others. I have chosen to emphasize Sérgio Buarque's critique of Eurocentric historical thinking, woven throughout the chapters, and the idea of *cordiality* because these are the features of the book that received most comment in the years and decades following its publication. See especially part 2 of *Perspectivas*.

- 24 I have drawn here on Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias, “Introdução,” Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* in the series *Intérpretes do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Aguilar, 2000), vol. 3, 901-928. SBH’s library contained a copy of Vico’s *Works* in Italian. The essay “Il metodo degli studi del tempo nostro” (De nostri temporis studiorum ratione [On the Study of the Methods of Our Time]) was heavily underlined and annotated, with close attention to any mention of “spirit.” Coleção Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Biblioteca UNICAMP. He could not have read this edition of Vico before 1936, as this one dated to 1953 (*Opere*, Milano: Riccardo Ricciardi).
- 25 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 4.
- 26 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 4. Simmel, one of SBH’s main influences, wrote in 1911 that “adventure lacks the reciprocal interpenetration with adjacent parts of life which constitutes that life-as-a-whole,” something we speak about “precisely when continuity with life is . . . disregarded on principle.” Georg Simmel, *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*, Donald Levine, ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1972), 189.
- 27 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 8, 13.
- 28 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 12.
- 29 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 17. Freyre covers similar ground in *Brazil: An Interpretation*, first published in 1945 in English, reissued in English as *New World in the Tropics: The Culture of Modern Brazil* in 1958 and translated into Portuguese as *Novo Mundo Nos Trópicos* only in 1971.
- 30 SBH, 48. He even cited Toynbee (*A Study of History*, vol. I) for the proposition that modern racism had its roots in Protestantism. And while he claimed not to agree entirely with Toynbee on this, he was in no doubt that racism was “more accentuated” among Protestant peoples.
- 31 He seems to have set Tawney’s criticism of economic individualism against Weber’s tale of this-worldly-ascetic Calvinists. SBH’s library contained a 1936 edition of Tawney’s *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London: John Murray, 1936). It was heavily underscored and commented. He put a square bracket next to a sentence noting that what modern thought saw as “irreconcilable antitheses” medieval thought had seen as “differences within a larger unity.” He also underlined the sentence in which Tawney writes: “The medieval theorists condemned as a sin precisely that effort to achieve a continuous and unlimited increase in material wealth which modern societies applaud as meritorious.” On debates over the New World, see Antonio Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World: The History of Polemic, 1750-1900* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), 436-38, 571-76; Nicolás Wey Gómez, *The Tropics of Empire: Why Columbus Sailed South to the Indies* (MIT Press, 2008).
- 32 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 159.
- 33 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 151.
- 34 Schwarz, *The Spectacle of Race*; Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*.
- 35 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 130-31. This concern had deep roots for SBH. As early as 1921, in *A Cigarra*, a popular magazine of the day, he had written an article entitled, “O homem-machina” (The Man-Machine) where he had criticized utilitarianism, especially of the Anglo-Saxon stripe. *A Cigarra*, 1 mar. 1921 [Fundo SBH (UNICAMP)]. Série: Produção intelectual, Atividade jornalística, PI 16, P 12]. Also republished in *SBH. Perspectivas*, 559-562.
- 36 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 69.
- 37 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 42.
- 38 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 42.



- 39 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 42.
- 40 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 130, 133, 153-54, 177, 179-84.
- 41 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 131.
- 42 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 151.
- 43 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 153.
- 44 For a useful discussion of historicism through Dilthey, Meinecke, Simmel and Vico, see “Dilthey e o historicismo, a redescoberta da história,” in José Carlos Reis, *História & teoria: historicismo, modernidade, temporalidade e verdade* (Rio de Janeiro: FGV Ed., 2007), 207-46.
- 45 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 174.
- 46 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 174-75.
- 47 Ribeiro Couto first used what SBH called the “happy formula” in a letter to Mexican writer Alfonso Reyes in 1931, who published it in his literary journal *Monterrey*. See also Elvia Bezerra, “Ribeiro Couto e o homem cordial” <<http://www.academia.org.br/abl/media/prosa44c.pdf>>. Writer Cassiano Ricardo sharply criticized Sérgio Buarque’s use of *cordialidade*, arguing that the word cordial was too equivocal to be analytically useful, since it could be employed with kind or aggressive intent (as when one signed an angry letter “cordial greetings”). For this reason, Ricardo preferred to speak of *bondade* (goodwill). SBH insisted that *cordiality* had no particular “ethical” content and did not need to be tied to some positive aspect of interpersonal relations: enmity (*inimizade*) could be as cordial as amity (*amizade*). Citing Carl Schmitt, he distinguished enmity from hostility, as rooted in the difference between hostility as a matter of public and political conflict, and enmity as a matter of private hatred. See SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, p. 137, fn. 140. See also the exchange between SBH and Ricardo in the journal *Revista* in June 1948 (included as an appendix in the 1963 edition of *Raízes*). Sérgio Buarque signed his response “cordialmente.”
- 48 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 137.
- 49 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 139.
- 50 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 140.
- 51 Here SBH reveals his debt to Simmel, especially his more ambiguous understanding of “forms” and his penchant for antinomies and paradoxes (Simmel was criticized by Parsons and others for lacking rigor). See generally, Simmel, *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*; Donald M. Levine, *The Flight from Ambiguity: Essays in Social and Cultural Theory* (University of Chicago Press, 1988), 133-34.
- 52 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 144.
- 53 In this, SBH seems to have stood with Tawney. In his marked up copy of *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, SBH underlined the following sentence: During the middle ages, “Society was held together ... not as the expression of economic self-interest, but was held together by a system of mutual, though varying obligations. ... Pecuniary transactions were a fringe on a world of natural economy.” Coleção Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Biblioteca UNICAMP. In his copy of Robert Park’s *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (University of Chicago Press, 1924), SBH emphatically underscored the following sentence: “Competition is opposed to sentiment. ... It is just because corporations are ‘heartless,’ that is to say impersonal, that they represent the most advanced, efficient, and responsible form of business organization.” Obviously, SBH’s view on cordiality cannot be read off of Park’s understanding of the opposition between competition and sentiment, since competition could certainly accommodate the kind of enmity toward another that SBH seems to have contemplated as part and parcel of cordiality.

- 54 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 144.
- 55 Judith Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear,” in N. Rosenblum, ed., *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Harvard University Press, 1989), 21-38. Shklar’s is a complex argument that begins by denying all other bases for liberalism – from natural rights, to Locke, to pluralism, to negative liberty. She then sets out fear as a matter of “historical memory,” chiefly of the horrors of 1914, as the irreducible basis for liberal views. For her, the basic unit of political life is not discursive persons, or citizens, but the weak and the powerful and liberalism’s only goal must be to ensure the latter do not hurt the former. This flies in the face of liberal egalitarianism, which is Shklar’s critical point. As another scholar points out, this is a “fearful liberalism” characterized “by its cautions more than by its hopes.” Jacob T. Levy, *The Multiculturalism of Fear* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 33. It is worth noting that people outside of Europe did not experience World War I as Europeans did, a point that bolsters SBH’s argument regarding liberalism’s limits in the Brazilian context.
- 56 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 180-81.
- 57 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 138.
- 58 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 181.
- 59 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 181.
- 60 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 184.
- 61 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 185.
- 62 Here, Simmel’s 1903 essay, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” is particularly resonant.
- 63 The best sources on the publishing house are Laurence Hallewell, *O livro no Brasil: sua história* (São Paulo: EdUSP, 2005) and José Olympio’s official history by journalist Lucila Soares, *Rua do Ouvidor 110: História da livraria José Olympio* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio Ed., 2007).
- 64 See Castro, “*Raízes do Brasil*” and Carvalho, “Outros Lados” for detailed discussions of critics’ reactions to the book.
- 65 Brian Owensby, *Intimate Ironies: Modernity and the Making of Middle-Class Lives in Brazil* (Stanford University Press, 1999).
- 66 Generally on the Brazilian middle class in a variety of contexts, see: Cristina Peixoto-Mehrtens, *Urban Space and National Identity in Early Twentieth-Century São Paulo. Crafting Modernity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010); Owensby, *Intimate Ironies*; Décio Saes, *Classe média e sistema político no Brasil* (São Paulo: Queros, 1985); Décio Saes, *Classe média e política na Primeira República brasileira (1889-1930)* (Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1975). For a recent broad treatment in English of the middle class in global context, see A. Ricardo López and Barbara Weinstein, eds., *The Making of the Middle Class: Toward a Transnational History* (Duke University Press, 2012).
- 67 Examples are: João Calazans, *Pequeno burgúes* (1933); Érico Verissimo, *Crossroads* (1935) and *The Rest Is Silence* (1943), both published in English; Jader de Carvalho, *Classe média* (1937); Maria José Fleury Monteiro, *Eramos seis* (1943) and *Dona Lola* (1949); Jacy Pacheco, *Bancário ... (misérias de uma profissão)* (1943); Democrito de Castro e Silva, *Classe média* (1945); Macedo Dantas, *João Classe média* (São Paulo: Cia. Ed. Nacional, 1959).
- 68 Quoted in Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Roots of Brazil*, trans. G. Harvey Summ (Notre Dame University Press, 2012), xxxv. While an English translation of *Raízes* is welcome, this version appears to have some flaws.
- 69 Marilena Chauí, “Apontamentos para uma crítica da Ação Integralista Brasileira,” *Ideologia e Mobilização Popular* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1985), 17-117; Décio Saes,

- Classe Média e Sistema Político*; Robert Levine, *The Vargas Regime: The Critical Years, 1934-1938* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); Owensby, *Intimate Ironies*, chap. 6.
- 70 This is a point I have made in *Intimate Ironies*.
- 71 Owensby, *Intimate Ironies*, 28.
- 72 This is the lesson of the more recent scholarship on political and social developments involving middle-class people, from the bureaucrats who worked for new government institutions addressing the “social question” and cultural developments (see Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Remaking of the Working Class in São Paulo, 1920-1964* (University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Duke University Press, 2001)), to white-collar, middle-class people whose decisions and pressures affected the urban shape of a modernizing São Paulo (Merhtens, *Urban Space and National Identity*), to the consumption by middle-class readers of books, magazines and professionals journals (Owensby, *Intimate Ironies*).
- 73 Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio Ed., 1948), 117. The line is also quoted in Cândido Motta Filho’s article in the *Diário de São Paulo*, 4 abr. 1948, “Notas de um constante leitor: Raízes do Brasil” [Fundo SBH (UNICAMP). Série: Produção de terceiros, Resenhas, PT 178, P 61].
- 74 Owensby’s *Intimate Ironies* and Merhtens’ *Urban Space* discuss the middle-class role in culture, society and politics during these years.
- 75 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 182.
- 76 Castro, “*Raízes do Brasil*,” 20.
- 77 Castro, “*Raízes do Brasil*,” 2.
- 78 Castro, “*Raízes do Brasil*,” 1.
- 79 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 134-35.
- 80 Quoted in Owensby, *Intimate Ironies*, 98.
- 81 Owensby, *Intimate Ironies*, 72.
- 82 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 171.
- 83 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 179.
- 84 The quoted words come from SBH’s 1935 essay, “Corpo e Alma do Brasil,” which in broad strokes prefigured the book that came out a year later.
- 85 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 185.
- 86 SBH, *Raízes do Brasil*, 180.
- 87 Lionel Gossman, “Augustin Thierry and Liberal Historiography,” *History and Theory* 15:4 (Dec. 1976), 1-83.
- 88 It would require another essay to unpack the complicated question of “racial democracy” over the following decades and its relation to the Cordial Man. For a discussion of debates regarding race and racial democracy, see Emília Viotti da Costa, *The Brazilian Empire*, chap. 9, “Racial Democracy: A Legacy of Empire,” 234-46.
- 89 “Sérgio Buarque de Holanda: História brasileira num castelo medieval,” *Tribuna de Imprensa*, 14-15 nov. 1959 s.p.; “Elementos básicos da nacionalidade,” *SBH. Perspectivas*, 619; “A democracia é difícil,” *Veja*, 28 jan. 1976; “O que a História deve a Sérgio Buarque,” *Isto É*, 15 jun. 1977, 33-34; “Que país é este?” *Folha de São Paulo*, 30 abr. 1978 [Fundo SBH (UNICAMP). Série: Entrevistas: VP 204, P 4; VP 206, P 4; VP 207, P 4; VP 213, P 4]. In the last of these, SBH said that if he had it to do over again, he would spend less time on the Iberian roots of Brazil.
- 90 Constantin Fasolt, *The Limits of History* (Chicago University Press, 2004), xiii-xxi, 1-45.

- 91 Of course, SBH did not intend that cordiality as an idea be limited to Brazil, leaving us to wonder what it might mean for our broader conceptions of human politics. See Paulo Luiz Moreaux Lavigne Esteves, “Cordialidade e familismo amoral: os dilemas da modernização,” *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* 134:36, São Paulo, Feb. 1998. I am intrigued by the title of a book I recently came across by Adela Cortina Orts, *Ética de la razón cordial* (Oviedo: Ediciones Nobel, S.A., 2007).
- 92 In some ways it might be thought of as what Raymond Williams has termed “keywords,” words that in particular cultural contexts exert a binding force through their ability to seem so broadly relevant, so unavoidable as to accommodate multiple meanings and change over time. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, 2d ed.).

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