

Fontes, Paulo; Buarque de Hollanda, Bernardo (ed.). 2014. *The Country of Football: Politics, Popular Culture and The Beautiful Game in Brazil*. London: Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 274pp. (ISBN 978-1-84904-417-2).

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The Country of Football, edited by Paulo Fontes and Bernardo Buarque De Hollanda, is a well-thought-through collection of short essays by nine academics. Beginning with the introduction of football to Brazil and finishing with the anticipation of the 2014 World Cup, the book goes through significant milestones of Brazil's footballing history, leaving the reader at the eve of the World Cup. Both editors contribute a chapter that fit appropriately in this insightful book detailing the world of Brazilian life explored through the country's affiliation with the game. The chapters are thoughtfully put together and work extremely well side by side; they are chronological and tie in with one another through themes of class, race, inequality and politics. Their unifying research into Brazilian life and how it is founded, shaped and defined by football, allows for insight into the academics' work that is both exciting and thought provoking.

Fatima Martin Rodrigues Ferreira Antunes begins the book with a chapter on the origins of Brazilian football. Antunes takes the reader through some basic history of the game, and then focuses on the development of football clubs within factories solidifying the position of the game in daily life. Gregory E. Jackson's following chapter on the professionalism of players neatly takes over from Antunes, where the evolution of teams and players to professionalism started to create challenges, especially for black players. Marta Cioccarì's chapter 3 focuses on the culture of football in the coal mines of Rio Grande Do Sul. Again, Cioccarì's work ties in with Jackson's in that she explores the

challenges of the professionalisation of the game. Ciocari's focused anthropological research of the coal mining communities differs from that of Jackson's broader historical perspective. Paulo Fontes' own chapter follows this, focusing on the changes in working class life and football in the context of rapid urbanisation in São Paulo between 1940-1960. The development in industry and urban growth inevitably affected the culture of football which had evolved in factories.

José Sergio Leite Lopes' chapter on the life and death of footballer Garrincha comes next and is a truly fascinating piece of writing. He uses a remarkably detailed account of Garrincha's death to raise issues around racism towards football players. Lopes compares the life of Garrincha to that of Pelé; not a particularly revolutionary comparison given the greatness of their careers and the stark contrast of their private lives and experiences of retirement from the game. However, Lopes begins to explain the possibilities of how and why this difference came about through the way in which they presented themselves and their private lives to the media, and how this affected their careers. Lopes' affectionate study of Garrincha details the paradox between the spectacle of his funeral to the tragedy of his short and eventually lonely life.

Clément Astruc's chapter follows Lopes', drawing on the oral histories of players called up for the national team between the 1950s-1980s. His focus is remarkable in highlighting the contrasting treatment of players between then and now. Where many would say players are treated akin to gods in the modern game, Astruc's essay is a timely survey of the past where players were treated as barely human, and more often as a commodity to be traded. José Paulo Florenzano's chapter 7 touches on many of the same themes, focusing on football during the military dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s and fits exceptionally well after Astruc's. Florenzano considers the incapacity of footballers to make decisions regarding their own careers, and places it within the

context of the military regime. Furthermore, the remarkable unity of footballers detailed by Astruc becomes a key element in Florenzano's exploration of the power of football in voicing opposition to the military regime.

Bernardo Buarque de Hollanda's chapter follows this, comparing the 1950 and 2014 World Cups through the development of the Maracanã Stadium. Through an anthropological study of changes in the structure of the stadium and in the culture of fans, Hollanda argues for the importance of a stadium's structure to the position of football in society. Hollanda convincingly argues that the changes made to the Maracanã for the 2014 World Cup symbolise the commercialisation of the game and demonstrates the effect this is having on the fans. Once again the structure of the book smoothly bridges Hollanda's chapter to Christopher Gaffney's, which is the final chapter of the book. Gaffney uses the architecture of the stadiums of the 2014 World Cup to explore the larger economic, political and social tensions surrounding Brazil's hosting of the 2014 tournament. Although one may be left feeling slightly pessimistic about the state of football and Brazil, Gaffney's essay ties together ideas from each chapter to remind the reader how Brazil reached the position it did in 2014. Gaffney describes well the clear conflict between the desperate need for public spending and the resultant public outcry at the cost. Gaffney compares ticket prices for the most recent World Cup tournaments (in South Africa and Germany) as one method to consider the inaccessibility of modern football to the working class in Brazil. This chapter draws together the importance of the working class, the effects of urbanization, the state of politics and the economy, structural implications of changing stadiums and the combined effects of all this on the voice of fans.

It is in this way that the book is such a triumph: through the lens of football, the authors explain the historical and contemporary causes of conflict in Brazil prior to the

2014 World Cup. Issues that existed pre-2014 are equally as relevant in the run up to the 2016 Olympics. Using a variety of disciplines to explore how and why Brazil is in its current state, the history covered throughout the book becomes strikingly relevant in the final chapter. Two essays stand out in particular as exceptional: Lopes' work on Garrincha, as its brilliant detail allows for insightful and refreshing analysis of the the issues surrounding black footballers; and Hollanda's chapter, which presents extremely thought provoking ideas surrounding the culture of fans and how the structure of stadiums affects supporters. The joy of this book, however, is the variety of topics and ideas that are explored through football, providing the reader with new perspective. Within this field other authors have used the failures of the national team to provide historical and cultural context for the 2014 World Cup (Duarte, 2014), or provided a detailed overview of the history of the country and sport (Zirin, 2014). While these books are also brilliantly written and worth reading, what makes *The Country of Football* different is the variety of voices and academic backgrounds that complement one another.

While undeniably demonstrating the positive relationships that have long existed between football and Brazil, it is undeniable that close study of football in Brazil also uncovers some deep-rooted issues of inequality in Brazilian life. There are several references to Brazil's history of slavery and the uncomfortable echoes regarding the treatment of black footballers. One criticism of this book is that it perhaps tries to cover too much ground. Many chapters would make for fascinating books in themselves, while giving a detailed and accurate overview of the main theories and arguments surrounding Brazilian sport and culture. Another criticism – and one that is perhaps inevitable when several academics write about the same topic – is the danger of repetition, particularly regarding the early formation and development of factory clubs.

Atunes admirably summarizes this early period of football in Brazil, so it needs less attention elsewhere. The book takes a broadly chronological path and each chapter is written by an authoritative voice in their respective discipline. This makes it almost impossible for the book to be dull, and emphasises the variety of topics that can benefit from analysis vis-à-vis football to enhance debates within other fields of study.

References

Duarte, Fernando. 2014. *Shocking Brazil: Six Games that Shook the World Cup*. Edinburgh: Berliinn Ltd.

Zirin, Dave. 2014. *Brazil's Dance with the Devil: The World Cup, The Olympics, and the struggle for Democracy*. Chicago: Haymarket Books