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BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU IN SALVADOR DE BAHIA, BRAZIL

NATHANAEL P. MURPHY  
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Reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Solsiree Del Moral  
Assistant Professor of History  
Thesis Supervisor

Catherine Wanner  
Professor of History, Anthropology, and Religious  
Studies  
Honors Adviser

Matthew Restall  
Professor of Colonial Latin American History,  
Anthropology, and Women's Studies  
Honors Adviser

\* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

## **ABSTRACT**

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is both simultaneously a martial art and a competitive sport activity. In historical terms the activity is young, having existed for less than one hundred years. There exists very little in regards to published academic research concerning Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. This study analyzes the evolution of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu into a popular mainstream competitive combat sport and the implications of this on the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu community in Salvador de Bahia Brazil. A formal interview with Eduardo dos Santos, a native Bahian black belt, combined with informal interviews with the greater Salvadorian Brazilian Jiu Jitsu community and the author's own experiences in the spring and summer of 2011 make up much of primary research. In addition the study examines oral and written history of the beginnings of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in the early twentieth century and the formation of Team Gracie Barra. It also demonstrates the relationship between Bahian culture, and the popular martial art/dance, capoeira, in relation to Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. The study concludes with the relationship between Mixed Martial Arts and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and the potential future of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Section I: Overview**

There is little published information concerning the institution of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ) in the city of Salvador de Bahia, Brazil. I chose to write this thesis in an attempt to provide an academic overview of an unpublished topic. This thesis is an ethnographic study on the BJJ community in Salvador de Bahia. The primary sources of the thesis are the histories of BJJ as an individual martial art, the history of the state of Bahia, Brazil and its martial culture, as well as my own individual research and observations from my time living within the BJJ community in Salvador de Bahia.

This thesis is an attempt to demonstrate BJJ's continued growth from a martial system of self-defense to a popular combat sport in Salvador de Bahia, while also analyzing specific aspects of the culture of BJJ. In addition to drawing on various published primary and secondary sources, the bulk of my research on the specific Bahian BJJ community was conducted during a sixth month stay in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil from January to July of 2011. While there, I trained with the BJJ Gracie Barra-Bahia Team six days a week. I participated in formal and informal interviews with my instructors and fellow teammates. My time in Brazil was supplemented with a study abroad experience at the Universidade Católica do Salvador (UCSAL) where I took classes including capoeira, a traditional martial art from Brazil. I also supplemented my time volunteering a local community development center where I taught local children BJJ and body movement exercises/games.

Future scholars can use this study to analyze the culture of BJJ in Salvador de

Bahia, specifically in 2011. Furthermore, this is the first academically published paper that deals with the history of Bahian BJJ as well as many other facets of the BJJ culture in Salvador and Bahia. This thesis could be used in a future compare and contrast of the BJJ community of Salvador with the BJJ communities of other Brazilian cities or states, as well as the BJJ communities in other countries.

This thesis is divided into an introduction, followed by three chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The introduction is divided into two sections. The first section describes the intent and overview of the entire thesis, and the second section describes what Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is. The first chapter discusses the history of BJJ and the Gracie family. It is broken into three sections, the first describes the foundation of BJJ in Brazil, the second describes the spreading of BJJ into various Brazilian communities and the formation of Team Gracie Barra, while the third section describes BJJ coming to the United States and the beginning of the UFC. The second chapter is divided into two sections, the first of which provides a brief history of the state of Bahia, Brazil. The second section describes the martial culture of Bahia, specifically the institution of capoeira and its relationship to BJJ. The third chapter is divided into four sections. The first section describes how BJJ arrived in Salvador and Bahia, the second section discusses aspects of the culture of BJJ in Salvador, the third section discusses the influence of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) in Salvador, and the final section attempts to analyze the future of BJJ in Salvador. The conclusion provides a summation of the arguments of the preceding chapters. Throughout the writing Portuguese and BJJ technical terms are translated or described in the footnotes, negating the need for a formalized glossary.

## Section II: What is Brazilian Jiu Jitsu?

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ) is a martial arts system with a primary emphasis on ground fighting and grappling. Grappling refers to a broad range of specific techniques and movements used by one person to physically dominate an opponent. That domination can take the form of positional dominance, such as holding your opponent down to stop him from moving or escaping. This positional dominance is the core aspect of grappling arts, such as American free style wrestling that is popular in high schools and colleges throughout the United States. It can also refer to the act of making your opponent submit, or give up, through the application of chokes and joint locks that can ultimately cause injury or death. Positional dominance and the use of submission techniques go hand in hand and are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Grappling has existed for millennia throughout human cultures. It is by no means a new phenomenon. Some of the best examples of ancient grappling, at least in a Western context, is ancient Greco wrestling.<sup>1</sup> However, older and geographically distant wrestling forms also existed. Grappling is not a mere collision of brute force and strength. It is absolutely essential, in any form of grappling, to have an understanding of physical leverage, human anatomy, and possess years of experience and technical knowledge to perform at a high level. Typically, grappling does not include the use of weapons or strikes. Grappling can be used for self-defense, as a combat sport, or both.

Grappling is not the same as ground fighting, although grappling can, and

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<sup>1</sup> For the definitive scholarly work on ancient Greek, Roman, and Ancient Near Eastern combat sports, especially grappling arts, see: Michael B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World: Competition, Violence and Culture* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987).

often does, occur on the ground. Ground fighting refers to combat that occurs when one or both opponents do not have their feet on the ground. Ground fighting requires skill, training, and the use of leverage to defeat your opponent with the use of submissions or positional dominance. Like grappling it usually does not involve weapons and does not necessarily involve strikes. Numerous martial arts incorporate ground fighting in some way into their curriculum or style.

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is a specific form of martial arts that incorporates grappling with a heavy emphasis on ground fighting to defeat an opponent. Specifically, the use of leverage and body mechanics will allow the BJJ practitioner to defeat a larger and stronger opponent by applying superior technique. Traditional BJJ practitioners wear a uniform called a gi, or *quimono* as it is called in Portuguese. A BJJ gi is like a karate or judo uniform although it always has long sleeves. Like a judo uniform, it is thick and durable comprised mainly of interwoven layers of cotton with thick often cotton covered rubber lapels and collars. The jacket is the heaviest and most durable part of the uniform, to compensate for the abuse it takes from opponents grabbing and manipulating it. Gi pants are usually reinforced cotton with extra layers on the knees to prevent ripping and tearing from the constant friction associated with the knees from ground fighting.

The jacket is secured by a belt, which also serves to show the persons rank or skill level. In BJJ there are five main belts. People start with a white belt, and then receive their blue belt, then purple, brown, and finally black.<sup>2</sup> However, there are also degrees given on all the belts and are especially important for black belts. Degrees are denoted by a thin white stripe of material, usually medical tape,

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<sup>2</sup> There is a different belt system for kids under 16 years of age, and you are not eligible for a blue belt until age 16. Still, everyone one, regardless of age starts as a white belt.



fastened to the end of the belt. When a black belt acquires their sixth degree they receive a red and black belt and the ninth degree becomes a full red belt.<sup>3</sup> Red belts are extremely rare and almost no one has one. The earliest they can receive it is after a minimum of ten years after their ninth degree.<sup>4</sup>

It is becoming increasingly more common for people to forgo the gi at times or to abandon it entirely. This is either called no-gi Brazilian Jiu Jitsu or submission grappling. In no-gi, people either wear a neoprene rash guard, a t-shirt or no shirt at all.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes they use the gi pants, or athletic-style knee length shorts or simply brief-length compression shorts. Also, some practitioners will choose to wear wrestling shoes when training. In no-gi, grabbing the clothing is not permitted. The clothing does not have the structural integrity to allow grabbing of the clothes.

BJJ focuses on chokes and joint holds. Although positional dominance is extremely important, the overall goal is to submit or incapacitate your opponent. The gi can be used to control the opponent and even choke them. Joint locks primarily attack the elbow, shoulder, wrist, knee, and ankle through the use of various technical movements. There are two types of chokes in BJJ: trachea chokes, and blood chokes.

Blood chokes apply pressure to the carotid arteries and close them off, thus denying blood access to the brain. The result is within less than ten seconds of full obstruction of the arteries; the person being choked will lose consciousness. Even if the person being choked can still breathe, no blood, and therefore no oxygen is

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<sup>3</sup> The red and black belt is often called a coral belt because of its similar appearance to a coral snake's markings, except the belt does not have yellow stripes like the snake.

<sup>4</sup> International Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Federation, "IBJJF Graduation System," International Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Federation, <http://www.ibjjf.org/graduation.htm> (accessed December 20, 1011).

<sup>5</sup> With the exception being girls, who always wear some form of a top piece.

being supplied to the brain. However, the person will regain consciousness very quickly once pressure is relieved and blood can flow back to the brain.<sup>6</sup> Still, if the pressure was maintained for minutes on end, the person being choked could suffer severe mental disability, due to lack of oxygen, or even death. Nevertheless, blood chokes are usually not painful.

Trachea chokes, or air/wind chokes, are applied to the front of the neck restricting airflow through the trachea. This means the person can no longer breathe. The blood in the body still has oxygen in it and the person will usually not pass out quickly from a trachea chokes. However, acute pressure applied to the trachea is extremely painful and the person being choked will usually submit to pain long before they are in danger of going unconscious. In addition, sustained pressure to the trachea can cause tracheal injury that could, in rare circumstances, result in death.

In BJJ, people usually submit to their opponents before they are choked unconscious or break/dislocate a joint. This act of submitting is commonly known as “tapping out” because the person will tap their hand a few times against their opponent’s body or the ground. Sometimes they will “tap” verbally by saying “tap” or making a pained noise. Verbal taps are often used because the person’s hands are unable to move or the submission goes on so quickly or painfully that they do not have time to use their hands and must shout to acknowledge their submission.

It is important to understand that BJJ is not solely focused on sparring, or “rolling”. Classes are usually composed of stretching and warm up exercises. Then the instructor teaches techniques to the student. For technique training the partner does not resist and allows you to perform the technique on them, while also

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<sup>6</sup> It is not like the movies or television where someone is choked unconscious by a “sleeper hold” and then remains so for minutes or even hours.

critiquing and helping them do it correctly. People are usually not injured during training of techniques and do not apply them at 100%.<sup>7</sup> Following the technical training, there is usually sparring sessions.

People partner up and spar with unresisting opponents with the aim of making them submit. Normally, the sessions are timed at around five minutes each so that people can change training partners and spar with people of different sizes and skill levels. Sometimes people spar at 100%. People of higher skill will usually go much easier on newer/less experienced training partners. In this way students are allowed to grow and develop even when training with people much more adept than themselves.

Students of BJJ are often encouraged to compete in BJJ tournaments. Some schools factor competition experience heavily when deciding to promote their students, but many people never compete and still receive a promotion. Competitions can be won via points accumulated for achieving dominant positions and certain techniques. However, if someone is submitted within the match time limit then they automatically lose, regardless if they were ahead on points prior to the submission. This is a part of BJJ philosophy that encourages practitioners to try and submit their opponent rather than just attempting positional dominance, like in wrestling.

The above information is about BJJ in the modern form. It has changed and evolved, since its relatively recent inception in the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite the title *Brazilian Jiu Jitsu*, it is practiced all over the world. It is

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<sup>7</sup> Applying technique at 100% refers to fully applying a joint lock or choke with enough pressure to cause the person to tap out or incur injury or unconsciousness.

especially popular in Brazil and the United States.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Brazil and the United States are considered to have the most and the best BJJ practitioners.

## Chapter 2: The Formation of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu

### Section I: Helio and Carlos Gracie-The Founders

This analysis of the history of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu draws mainly from the book *The Gracie Way: an Illustrated History of the World's Greatest Martial Arts Family* by Kid Peligro. Peligro is an author and practitioner of BJJ who enjoys an intimate relationship with many members of the Gracie family. *The Gracie Way* was published in 2003 and is based on first person interviews conducted with various members of the Gracie family, as well as drawing upon sources from the Gracie Archives and the Gracie museum. Therefore, many of the testimonials provided in Peligro's analysis contain a heavy pro-Gracie bias while eschewing the achievements and contributions other individuals/groups may or may not have had on the sport. However, little to no actual published histories exist concerning the formative years of BJJ that are not directly written or influenced by the Gracie family. It is for this reason that the analysis draws so heavily from this source. Although some of the history is folkloric in nature, much of it can be referenced and proven from a perspective of historiography.

The Gracie family is Brazilian family with European Scottish roots. George Gracie, a Scottish man, immigrated to the northeastern state of Pará Brazil in 1801. The family remained in Pará throughout the nineteenth century and expanded into a large extended family. This European heritage helped form the early family's identity in Brazil, while simultaneously providing them a more privileged social status in Brazilian society. An enhanced social status was key to the Gracie's early interactions with the Japanese immigrant community and therefore the early interactions with Japanese martial arts.

The Gracies possessed, and still do to a certain extent, a monopoly on the

history of BJJ. The commonly accepted history derives directly from the Gracie's version, and is therefore celebratory of their contributions and condemning of others. Still, of importance is the fact that the Gracie version of history is the commonly accepted history within the international BJJ community. Unfortunately, many of the early BJJ practitioners who broke off from the Gracie family did not record their history and were forgotten or the Gracie family repressed their memory, thus denying them their possible historical contribution.

There is no hard proof that histories of other early groups were in fact repressed, but perhaps the overall lack of information serves as a form of proof in itself. The Gracie family held social, and even political clout within their respective Brazilian communities and was defending the martial art that provided them an economic means of survival and put food on their table. Because of the direct relationship between BJJ and the Gracie's financial and social legacy they probably did what they could to keep BJJ within their hands and under their influence. This includes forwarding their sole version of the history of the formation of BJJ and its subsequent expansion through Brazil and later the world.

Even though the Gracie family monopolizes the early and intermediary history of BJJ, they are responsible for creating, based on Japanese martial ideas and techniques, the independent martial art of BJJ. Without them, BJJ would not exist today and would not be practiced all over the world to this day. Their reputation as the pioneers of BJJ has helped cement the family as a group of influence within both the past and contemporary global BJJ community. Moreover, the history that the Gracie's present is not mere folk history; it can be verified by documents and historical analysis, even if it is often colored in a way that favors the Gracie family. The earliest documentation concerning BJJ concerns early Japanese immigrants in

Brazil.

Brazil currently holds the largest Japanese immigrant community in the world. Once Japan was opened to the West in the later half of the nineteenth century, Japanese immigrants began moving to new homelands. The first Japanese immigrants came to Brazil in 1908.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Japanese martial artists, especially ones with grappling backgrounds like judo and sumo, began fighting professionally around the world, thus exposing foreign cultures to Japanese martial arts forms.<sup>10</sup> Professional fighters would win money, but large motivations behind the Japanese fighters were the ideals of *kokutai* and *fukoku kyokai*, which stressed the cultural and often physical superiority of the Japanese race.<sup>11</sup> The famous practitioner of Japanese judo, Mitsuyo Maeda, came to Brazil to demonstrate his ability as a martial artist via professional wrestling matches.<sup>12</sup> Professional wrestling in this sense was not at all like the current American form of professional wrestling. Although it was indeed a form of entertainment, the fighters were not fighting matches with predetermined outcomes and were allowed to use whatever style of martial arts they preferred. In Maeda's case he used judo.

Maeda had an extensive background in Jigoro Kano's judo system and was well accomplished and well respected.<sup>13</sup> However, by deciding to become a professional wrestler he turned his back on many people within the official Japanese judo community because many believed true *judokas*, or practitioner of judo, could

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas A. Green, and Joseph R. Svinth. *Martial Arts in the Modern World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003) , 67.

<sup>10</sup> Green, and Svinth. 62-3.

<sup>11</sup> Donald Hastings, "Japanese Emigration and Assimilation in Brazil," *International Migration Review* , Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring, 1969): 34.

<sup>12</sup> The terms judo and jiu jitsu were still used synonymously in Japan.

<sup>13</sup> Green, and Svinth. 64-5.

not fight for entertainment purposes or to win money.<sup>14</sup> Still, this alienation from the official traditional confines of judo allowed him greater freedom of action and a chance to make some money.

In 1908 Maeda landed in Brazil for the first time and finally made his way to Pará, Brazil where he met Gastão Gracie in 1916, the grandson of the original Scottish immigrant, George Gracie. According to current Gracie family history, Gastão held political clout and used his connections and influence to help Maeda and the local Japanese immigrant community.<sup>15</sup> In response to Gastão's help, Maeda took on Carlos, one of Gastão's sons, as a jiu jitsu disciple.<sup>16</sup> This is important because Japan did not allow the teaching of jiu jitsu to someone of non-Japanese decent.<sup>17</sup> The fifteen-year-old Carlos and the jiu jitsu instructor Maeda had a good relationship. For this reason, Maeda was very open in his teaching of techniques and principles to Carlos, despite the fact that Carlos was not Japanese. Although Carlos was the only Gracie to train under Maeda, he quickly taught his brothers what he learned.<sup>18</sup>

When Carlos was twenty-one, Maeda returned to Japan for a time. Maeda's departure from Brazil was significant because without his instructor, Carlos was forced to adapt and develop his own martial arts style. Furthermore, without the confines of traditional Japanese martial arts ethos, Carlos was able to branch away from the purely Japanese form of the art. Carlos actually began offering private lessons out of his own household, and opened his own academy shortly afterward.

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<sup>14</sup> Green, and Svinth. 65.

They were allowed to receive monetary compensation for teaching.

<sup>15</sup> Green, and Svinth. 67.

<sup>16</sup> Kid Peligro. *The Gracie Way: an Illustrated History of the World's Greatest Martial Arts Family* (Montpelier, VT: Invisible Cities, 2003), 5.

Judo and Japanese jiu jitsu were still interchangeable terms.

<sup>17</sup> Peligro. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Peligro. 5-6.



This was the first Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Academy in the world.

Gastão Gracie became ill; as a result Carlos invited his younger brother Helio to live with him, in an effort to ease their father's burden. Gastão had many children of varying ages, so Helio was actually eleven years younger than his older brother Carlos. The brothers moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1925 where they opened an academy. Interestingly, Helio had always been known as a frail and weak child. In fact, he was reportedly prone to bouts of dizziness that left him unable to attend school. Instead, he would spend his days at Carlos' jiu jitsu academy. However, due to Helio's weak condition, Carlos originally refused to let Helio participate. Helio was relegated to the sidelines, but with little else to do he watched the others practice and began to actually understand the system without actually training it.<sup>19</sup>

One day, Carlos was late for class. A student asked Helio if they could "play" while he waited for Carlos. After two years of watching, Helio understood the concepts well enough to not only "play" but to actually teach the eager student that day's lesson. When Carlos finally arrived, the student exclaimed that he did not mind Carlos was late because Helio had done such a fine job teaching the class. In fact, the student wanted Helio to teach him from then on.<sup>20</sup>

This was important because it finally brought Helio into an active position with his brother's academy; he was no longer stuck watching the class. He could actually train and teach. Carlos had adopted Maeda's aggressive and athletic style of jiu jitsu to overwhelm his opponents. Helio, on the other hand, was a weak young man who lacked the physical prowess of his brother. The concept at the heart of BJJ is the application of leverage and solid technique so that a smaller, weaker person can defeat and even dominate their larger and stronger opponent. Helio is

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<sup>19</sup> Peligro. 6, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Peligro. 15.

responsible for many of the technical innovations that specifically advantaged his smaller body structure.

Helio was the man responsible for honing and developing the techniques that would allow him to beat his more athletic adversaries. He adjusted moves and began experimenting with leverage points to allow him the greatest chance of success.<sup>21</sup> It is simple physics and leverage that allows us as human beings to do things that would otherwise be physically impossible. The concept of leverage is akin to how someone uses a wrench to screw in or unscrew a metal bolt. When loosening a bolt that is tightened properly, people do not just use their fingers to unscrew it. Even if someone could get a good grip on the bolt, the human fingers do not possess enough leverage potential to unscrew the bolt. To overcome this problem people use a wrench.

The wrench has a long handle, normally the bigger and stronger the bolt is, the longer the handle on the wrench. When using a wrench people never grip it at the base of the handle, because that provides little more leverage than using bare fingers. Instead, people grasp the very end of the handle and use that to loosen the screw because that provides the most leverage potential to torque the bolt and thus loosen it.

Fundamentally this is the same principle used in BJJ to apply joint locks, chokes, and to throw or trip an opponent to the ground. It was Helio, due to his smaller size, who was forced to really fine tune the techniques so that he could maximize the use of leverage. Carlos began relegating more and more of the teaching responsibilities to Helio and focused on managing and promoting the

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<sup>21</sup> Peligro. 15-6.

academy.<sup>22</sup> Since Carlos was spending less time on the mat and therefore less time training he did not get to see many of Helio's innovations or appreciate what Helio was doing for the art.

Helio decided he had to update his brother on the achievements he had made, so that the other instructors at the academy could start teaching, what Helio believed were his superior techniques. At first Carlos did not believe Helio's techniques were superior and told Helio he could not defeat the other bigger and stronger instructors at the academy. Helio disagreed and told his brother that he could beat the other four instructors at the academy in less than twenty minutes, facing them one after another. Carlos still did not believe it and made a bet with Helio that he would not be able to defeat all four in under twenty minutes if they faced off the next day.<sup>23</sup>

The following day, Helio showed up and Carlos told him he did not have to go through with the challenge. He did not want to see his younger, weaker brother hurt. Helio was determined to show the effectiveness of his style and went through with the challenge. The seventeen-year-old Helio defeated all four instructors in twelve minutes, despite their strength and size advantages. Carlos was shocked and extremely impressed. He decided to become Helio's manager and use him as a promotional tool to advertise the superiority of their Brazilian style of jiu jitsu.<sup>24</sup> This story comes directly from an interview with Helio, so it is unclear to what extent he is aggrandizing his actions. The names of the other instructors he beat are not mentioned, neither is it mentioned how they timed the individual matches. However, the story is important because this same story was passed onto the

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<sup>22</sup> Peligro. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Peligro. 16-7.

<sup>24</sup> Peligro. 17.

younger generation of BJJ practitioners, and is still used as an example of how a smaller person can use proper technique and strategy to defeat larger opponents. It has become a folk myth, at least partially based on a real event, to show how Helio overcame adversity and began assuming a leadership role within the BJJ community.

At the time, it was relatively common for people of different martial arts styles to fight each other at organized events to prove the superiority of their respective styles.<sup>25</sup> In fact this was how Mitsuyo Maeda came to Brazil in the first place, to demonstrate his style of martial arts to the Brazilian people, especially the Japanese immigrant community. In this same spirit, Carlos organized Helio's first professional fight. Antonio Portugal was the reigning Brazilian Lightweight Boxing Champion when Helio was scheduled to face him. Helio was still relatively unknown and extremely nervous before the fight. Wisely, he did not choose to stand and strike with Antonio, which would have favored the boxer's specialty. Instead, he instantly took the pugilist down and applied an arm lock. The boxer with no ground fighting experience was forced to submit or break his arm. Helio contends that fight was over in less than thirty seconds.<sup>26</sup> It was very impressive to the audience that an unknown seventeen-year-old boy from Rio had just defeated a national level boxing champion without taking a punch. Although the story may seem fantastical, it is the whole point of BJJ to take fights to the ground and submit them. If someone, like a boxer, has no ground training then they are completely out of their element once the fight goes to the ground, and are very susceptible to being submitted or beaten in a quick amount of time.

This was the start of what would be the famous Gracie challenges in Brazil.

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<sup>25</sup> Green, and Svinth. 64-8.

<sup>26</sup> Peligro. 18.

The Gracie family, starting with Helio, would fight anyone of any martial arts style in front of a public audience. In this way the Gracie's were able to market their style of martial arts and build a fan following. Helio became a Brazilian celebrity, as evinced by his numerous newspaper articles depicting him and his public fights.<sup>27</sup> People loved to see this small unassuming man fight and beat his larger and stronger opponents.<sup>28</sup> However, publicity was not the sole goal of these fights. Carlos and Helio wanted to develop the most effective martial arts system they could. By challenging well-known fighters from many disciplines they could really test to see if their BJJ was legitimate. If Helio tried a technique in the ring and did not work, he and Carlos were forced to modify it at the academy or discard it entirely. In this way these public no rules, or "no holds barred" contests were fundamental to the early development of BJJ.<sup>29</sup> In fact, this is one of the reasons BJJ gained so many students. It was the public displays of utility and efficiency that drew people in who wanted to learn how to successfully defend themselves. This is still the reason many people join any martial art; they see it being performed on television or in the movies, even if it is in a fictional manner, and want to emulate what they see.

The 1930s saw another big step for BJJ when the Gracie brothers moved their academy from the Flamengo neighborhood of Rio to the downtown area on Rio Branco Avenue. This new, bigger academy in a central location allowed the Brazilian elite to experience and train BJJ. In fact, the son of the famous Brazilian President, Getúlio Vargas trained BJJ at the new academy. Even Carlos Lacerda, the eventual governor of Rio de Janeiro trained BJJ at the Gracie Academy. Other notable political figures and social elites trained there adding to the prestige and influence of BJJ in

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<sup>27</sup> Peligro. 18-20.

<sup>28</sup> Peligro. 18-20.

<sup>29</sup> *Vale Tudo* in Portuguese. The term vale tudo is now used synonymously with "no holds barred" in the United States as well.

Brazilian society.<sup>30</sup> Brazilian society is very political and men are expected to be political and social figures to demonstrate their worth and prestige to society.<sup>31</sup> Thus BJJ was one tool, among many, for early practitioners to demonstrate their high social stature.

The elite in society were training BJJ because they were the only ones who could afford the training. BJJ was still heavily restricted from the poorer sections of Brazilian society. Even though they could watch the public fights that Helio and others participated in, they were unable to spend the money, or the time, necessary to learn at the Gracie Academy. This fact influenced the development of *luta livre* in Brazilian society. *Luta livre* fighters did not wear a gi uniform because they could not afford one and were perceived as rivals by the Gracie family, who also helped perpetuate the stereotype that they were little more than street thugs. Occasionally *luta livre* fighters would start fights in the streets of Rio de Janeiro, as would students of the Gracie Academy. However, since the students at the Gracie Academy came from high social stock they were not the ones stereotyped as thugs, it was the poorer *luta livre* fighters.

Attendance swelled and the academy grew to six hundred students. However, at this time the curriculum was still very different than it is today. BJJ really only focused on self-defense, such as street fights and how to disarm an armed opponent. There were no official BJJ sport federations or sport competitions for students to compete in. Because of the self-defense nature, strikes were incorporated into the curriculum, especially the ground fighting aspect. Not only would people look for submissions when in dominant positions, but they would also

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<sup>30</sup> Peligro. 23.

<sup>31</sup> Glenn Dealy, *The Latin American: Spirit and Ethos*. (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1992), 53-95.

learn how to strike an opponent to either incapacitate him, or force himself to fall into a submission.<sup>32</sup> The only real “competitions” outside of organized sparring within the academy were street fights and the public professional wrestling matches. BJJ was simply not considered a sport at this time, and lacked any sort of sport ethos.

Helio had beaten or fought to a draw basically every opponent he faced, regardless of nationality. In 1951, while Helio was forty years old, the Japanese sent one of their best Japanese Judo practitioners and his star disciple to fight Helio. The star was named Kimura and his star pupil was named Kato. Kimura was much larger and a full ten years younger than Helio and did not want to fight him, believing Helio was not even a worthy challenge. Instead, Helio fought the pupil, Kato, inside Maracaña Stadium in Rio.<sup>33</sup> Maracaña is one of the landmarks of Rio and is still the largest stadium in all of South America. An event in Maracaña was, and still is, a big deal to people in Rio de Janeiro and even the rest of Brazil. This fight would thus garner an enormous amount of attention due to the sheer volume of people who could watch the fight.

The two fought three ten-minute rounds with no clear winner. However, they fought again in São Paulo Brazil just a few weeks later. This time Helio choked Kato unconscious for a definitive victory<sup>34</sup>. Having proved his worth to Kimura by defeating Kato, Helio was scheduled to fight Kimura just two weeks later in front of a huge crowd that included then Brazilian President João Café Filho. This also shows the significance of the event because the current president of the country actually attended the fight. Few expected Helio to survive the first round. He did survive the

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<sup>32</sup> Peligro. 24.

<sup>33</sup> Peligro. 29.

<sup>34</sup> Peligro. 29.

first round, but was unable to dictate the pace or action of the fight and instead was forced to fight defensively the entire time.

In the second round Kimura applied a shoulder lock on Helio and cranked it as hard as he could. Helio refused to tap and broke his arm. Only Carlos throwing in the towel ended the fight.<sup>35</sup> Helio's refusal to tap added to the aura of toughness and macho-ness surrounding him, and helped advertise the mental fortitude of BJJ fighters. To this day that shoulder lock is still used by students of BJJ and is known as the "Kimura" in honor of the famous Japanese fighter. Helio retired soon after to focus on building and promoting the academy. However, he actually came out of retirement in 1955 to fight a former instructor at the Gracie Academy, Waldemar Santana.

Waldemar had a falling out with the academy and had departed to focus on his own school. Helio wanted to defend the honor of the academy and further prove the Gracie's were still the best fighters in Brazil. Despite Waldemar's sixty-six pound advantage and Helio being twenty-three years his senior, the two fought for three hours and forty-five minutes. The fight had no rounds or breaks and ended when Helio finally succumbed to exhaustion and accumulation of damage. Despite what may have been a moral victory for the middle-aged Gracie, Waldemar officially won, further evincing that Helio and the Gracie family was not unbeatable.<sup>36</sup> Helio, in his interviews, contends that he did not really lose the fight, but he was the fighter who could no longer continue after the lengthy battle, and therefore he was the loser in the fight.

The loss signaled the end of Helio's fighting career. What would the family do now that the face of their organization was retired? Moreover, he retired after two

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<sup>35</sup> Peligro. 30-1.

<sup>36</sup> Peligro. 31-2.



public losses that began to discredit the Gracie family. It was up to Carlos' son, Carlson Gracie, to take up the torch. In 1956, despite not being the required twenty-one years old to fight in a public event, Carlson challenged Waldemar Santana in an effort to avenge his uncle's loss. This fight was scheduled for six, ten-minute rounds. It would not be one continuous round like Helio had fought against Santana. As was often the case with the early Gracie's, Carlson was the lighter fighter and weighed close to forty pounds less than his adversary in this particular fight. Carlos had prepared with Helio for the fight and understood Waldemar's style. Moreover, since Waldemar Santana had been a former instructor at the Gracie Academy he was using the same BJJ that Carlson knew. The fight would be decided by who was more technically sound and who had more motivation. In the end, Santana refused to return to the fight after the fourth round and Carlson was the victor.<sup>37</sup> He simultaneously became the new face of the Gracie Academy.

All of this information shows how BJJ was founded as Brazilian martial art based heavily on the Japanese martial art of judo. However, the Brazilian style was more focused on allowing smaller weaker people to defeat a larger opponent. Furthermore, the Gracie family had European roots and enjoyed their place above more marginalized groups in the social hierarchy because of their European heritage, this allowed them to gain students from the elite social circles in Rio de Janeiro and to increase their family prestige and the prestige of BJJ in general. The Gracie's martial art system was originally purely a form of self-defense and was showcased in public professional wrestling matches as such. Early student's prime motivation for training was not to compete in a sport environment, but to learn how to defend themselves while simultaneously showcasing their ability as Brazilian

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<sup>37</sup> Peligro. 43-5.

social men to master a variety of activities including martial arts.

## **Section II: Branching Out- Emergence of Team Gracie Barra**

This next section concerning the history of BJJ represents a turning point and expansion of the activity. BJJ is not static; it is constantly evolving and changing, but the process of evolution happened faster during this phase than the preceding phase, which was focused primarily on Helio Gracie and the original Gracie Academy. BJJ was no longer the exclusive activity confined to the Gracie Academy. Furthermore, it is during this point in the development of BJJ that it began to embrace an athletic sport atmosphere, not exclusively a self-defense atmosphere. However, the self-defense aspect was still the primary base of BJJ. Some of this change was precipitated because former students were leaving the Gracie Academy and starting their own schools or groups, thus fostering competition between the different groups.

When students and former instructors, like Waldemar Santana, left they did not completely reinvent the martial art, they used what worked the best for the types of no holds barred fights that were common in Brazil at the time. In their mind, what worked best was still BJJ. So new academies that were not affiliated with the Gracie Academy were still practicing and teaching the same techniques that Helio and the other instructors were teaching. Still, just being in a new environment would naturally lead to changes in style and an expansion of the original techniques.

However, the Gracies did possess some unique advantages when it came to BJJ. They still maintained their professional academy with professional instructors with decades of knowledge and experience, and decades of prestige in the public eye. The sons of Helio and Carlos, like Carlson, were able to train BJJ from infancy and develop as fighters from a very young age. Carlson, for example, began training at just three years of age. Many other new instructors outside the Gracie affiliation

did not have the time or resources, social or financial, to train full time or start their children training at such young ages.

Furthermore, BJJ gis are not cheap and many poorer Brazilians simply could not afford either the uniform or the membership fees at an academy. For this reason, BJJ without the gi gained in popularity among people outside the Gracie Academy. These were the aforementioned *luta livre* fighters. Many of the no holds barred vale tudo fights were fought without the gi, or sometimes with one opponent wearing a gi and the other eschewing it. What also went along with the lack of money for these schools was a lack of organization. This meant that there are sparse records, if any, for many of these informal groups or part-time academies. The Gracie's on the other hand kept meticulous records which, in many ways, allows them to present their history of BJJ at this time as the only history of BJJ, even if that is not the full truth.

A big development in terms of the team structure and size of Gracie affiliated BJJ came in 1968 when Carlson's opened a second Gracie Academy in Copacabana, the famous beach neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro. Carlson had a different style of teaching and conducted classes with a larger focus on live sparring over technical training. This, combined with the lack of space at the original academy led to the Copacabana Academy. Carlson did not have a falling out with his father or uncle, and therefore his new academy still held heavy ties and affiliations with the original. A larger Gracie BJJ team was developing. Even so, Helio did not agree with the concentration of live sparring over technical training and it was best for Carlson to have his own space.<sup>38</sup>

Carlson kept fighting in public vale tudo matches, just like his uncle Helio had

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<sup>38</sup> Peligro. 48-9.

done. He often fought against former Gracie students who were now running their own team. The result was more exposure for Carlson than for Helio. As a result, students wanted to train under Carlson and membership at his academy grew. He encouraged his students to fight and compete alongside him, further bolstering the academy's prestige. Along with this came an increase in the amount of students training under him, which also meant more money to expand. Quickly, Carlson had enough money to open a new academy in a nearby Brazilian city, Niteroi.<sup>39</sup> His new academy was bigger, but farther from the urban giant of Rio. This was an important step for spreading the Gracie family outside the city of Rio de Janeiro.

It was at this new academy in Niteroi that Carlson brought his half brother, Rolls in to help teach the students. Rolls had studied extensively under Helio and adopted Helio's technical style of BJJ.<sup>40</sup> This contrasted with Carlson's aggressive style and the two decided to each have their own set of students and be two independent, but still Team Gracie, schools.<sup>41</sup> They shared the same building and mat space, but alternated the days when each instructor would teach. Thus, their teams were still very connected and in regular contact with the other.

By this time, the late 1960s and early 1970s BJJ had expanded beyond the Gracies. Other schools existed and early BJJ tournaments were beginning. These tournaments were not vale tudo fights, but were BJJ matches fought in the gi without strikes. Every school that was run by a Gracie was still part of Team Gracie,

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<sup>39</sup> Peligro. 49.

<sup>40</sup> Peligro. 50.

Rolls helped teach at Carlson's Copacabana Academy as well, meaning they were both teaching at two academies. Rolls was actually an illegitimate child of Carlos born from a mistress. For this reason, Carlos' wife did not want to raise him. However, he was not abandoned. Helio raised him as a son. Even though Carlos was his birth father, Helio was his real paternal parental figure. This explains his preference for Helio's technical style of BJJ.

<sup>41</sup> Peligro. Pg. 50.

regardless of who was the instructor. However, tournaments only allowed for two students per division from any one team.<sup>42</sup> This led to friendly, but intense, competition between the various Gracie schools that would hold their own in-house tournaments to determine who would represent Team Gracie at the tournaments.<sup>43</sup>

This enabled the evolution of BJJ and the Gracie Academies because the competition between them pushed the instructors to become more innovative and open-minded. The added pressure on the students and instructors was ultimately a good thing. Instructors and students would often see a certain technique or strategy being used a tournament by another school, and if it was successful would try to adopt it into their own school and then try to make it even more effective. In this way the development of BJJ tournaments, regardless of Gracie affiliation, also pushed the martial art to new levels. It also created a growing interest in BJJ as a sport rather than as a system of self-defense.

It was during this stage in the evolution of BJJ that the first ties with the United States were formed. Rolls Gracie was important not only for the fact that he was an instructor at a Gracie Academy, but also as a link between Brazil and the United States. His birth mother had moved to New York City when he was still a boy. Although his uncle Helio mainly raised him in Brazil, he traveled extensively to New York City to visit his mother. He even travelled to Europe with her.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps his cross-cultural experiences and open mindedness are the reason for his adoption of techniques from other martial arts into his style of BJJ. He saw the utility of wrestling and knew concepts and techniques from it could be incorporated into BJJ. Wrestling is a popular sport in American high schools and colleges, and Rolls must

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<sup>42</sup> Divisions are separated by belt level (experience) and weight to ensure fair and competitive matches.

<sup>43</sup> Peligro. 50.

<sup>44</sup> Peligro. 57.

have seen and heard about it when he was in the U.S.

This further allowed for new innovations and new styles to develop within BJJ. BJJ and wrestling are both grappling, and in large parts, ground-fighting activities, therefore aspects of wrestling could be used in BJJ to strengthen its effectiveness. Wrestling in the United States is also possesses a sport atmosphere, something BJJ could embrace as it focused more heavily on competition between schools. Rolls also brought in aspects of *sambo*, a Russian form of grappling that focuses extensively on joint locks, especially joint locks that attack the legs. Before Rolls, BJJ lacked these leg attacks, but with his influence they made their way into the Gracie Academies and BJJ as a whole. Rolls even pitted himself in tournaments against other grappling arts, like sambo, wrestling, and judo.<sup>45</sup> Thus allowing him to study and absorb their techniques and strategies. It also exposed him to how other grappling arts ran their tournaments, and he could use those experiences to possibly improve BJJ tournaments he was involved in.

In the late 1970s, the International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles (FILA) sent a well established American wrestler, Bob Anderson, to Rio de Janeiro to help develop and improve the existing wrestling programs in Brazil.<sup>46</sup> In a strange twist of fate, the representatives from the Brazilian Wrestling Federation who were supposed to gather Anderson from the airport failed to arrive. After making some calls, eventually it was Rolls Gracie and his brother Robson who picked Anderson up at the airport. Even though Rolls had a relationship with the Brazilian Wrestling Federation he was not a member and did not consider himself a wrestler, despite

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<sup>45</sup> Peligro. 63.

<sup>46</sup> Peligro. 67.

this he was still contacted by someone and ended up at the airport that day.<sup>47</sup> He accepted to receive Bob Anderson at the airport because he wanted an opportunity to learn Anderson's wrestling techniques and incorporate them into BJJ.

Rolls took Bob Anderson to his academy to train. Anderson still did not realize that Rolls was not a wrestler or associated with the Brazilian Wrestling Federation and just assumed that Brazilians wrestled in gi uniforms and had a very different style from Americans. Eventually after about a week at the academy, Anderson questioned Rolls about the obvious lack of traditional wrestling concepts in BJJ, and Rolls finally told him that he was not associated with the Brazilian Federation and really just wanted to study wrestling from someone with such an outstanding wrestling pedigree.<sup>48</sup>

By this time the two had already established a friendship and Anderson was staying at Rolls' house in Rio. Instead of going to work with the Brazilian Wrestling Federation or another organization, Bob Anderson stayed with Rolls and helped teach wrestling concepts to Rolls and his top students. In this way Rolls was able to further refine BJJ and incorporate wrestling concepts from an internationally respected wrestling coach and competitor.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore it created another link between BJJ and wrestling and another link between BJJ and the United States.

Tragically, in 1982, at just thirty-one years of age Rolls died in a hang gliding accident.<sup>50</sup> He is still remembered to this day as one of the greatest innovators in the Gracie family who strived and succeeded at incorporating techniques, movements,

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<sup>47</sup> Rolls was more than likely contacted to get Bob at the airport because he spoke English well. Although he was not directly affiliated with wrestling, Rolls did incorporate aspects of wrestling into BJJ. It was through his use of wrestling in BJJ that he maintained a relationship with members of the Brazilian Wrestling Federation.

<sup>48</sup> Peligro. 67.

<sup>49</sup> Peligro. 69.

<sup>50</sup> Peligro. 70-1.



and strategies from other martial arts styles into BJJ. Moreover, he fostered relationships between the United States grappling community and the Brazilian grappling community. However, the vacuum left by Rolls death would lead to the emergence of another Gracie and the official development of Team Gracie Barra.

Rolls younger brother Carlos Jr. had been training extensively with Rolls up until his untimely death. With the head instructor dead, the academy obviously needed a new one. Roll's students along with Roll's wife actually elected Carlinhos to be the new head of the academy.<sup>51</sup> Carlinhos had a diverse background as a student of BJJ due to spending much of his formative years training with his uncle Helio, Helio's son Rorion, and his brother Rolls.<sup>52</sup>

Carlinhos possessed a great amount of teaching experience from most of the Gracie Academies and drew upon knowledge from different family members from every generation. In fact, when he was still Roll's assistant at Roll's Academy he had actually opened up his own academy where he and his brother Crolin taught.<sup>53</sup> However, after becoming the head of Roll's Academy he devoted more time and energy into that school. Still, he did not like the atmosphere in Copacabana and in 1984 he transplanted the academy into a smaller, but also affluent, neighborhood called Barra da Tijuca. Since there were multiple members of the Gracie family training at the new academy Carlinhos named it Gracie Barra rather than Carlinhos Gracie Academy.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, due to the affluence and positive reputation of Barra in Rio, Carlinhos may have named the new academy Gracie Barra as a way of

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<sup>51</sup> Peligro. 89.

Carlos Jr. is almost always referred to as Carlinhos, which is the diminutive form of Carlos in Brazilian Portuguese. In Brazilian society, and within the BJJ community, it is common for people to go by their diminutive name even when introduced to strangers.

<sup>52</sup> Therefore Carlinhos' cousin.

<sup>53</sup> Peligro. 91.

<sup>54</sup> Peligro. 91.

advertising and linking the family to that neighborhood. BJJ was very established within the extended Gracie family's lifestyle. Although no one had to teach BJJ, almost everyone in the family started training at some point and many became involved with the numerous academies in some way, for this reason many of Carlinhos relatives were training at his new academy, which influenced him when naming the school.

Carlinhos' formation of Gracie Barra, which would ultimately grow into an organization with hundreds of affiliate schools, was a major influencing factor in the growth of BJJ academies throughout the world. It allowed instructors, who might not have had the financial resources or business acumen, to start their own schools under the Gracie Barra name. They could rely upon the resources of the greater organization to help them and the name itself was prestigious enough to garner students. Furthermore, the expansion of Gracie Barra schools did not all occur in the same geographic area. To avoid competition among schools of the same name, instructors are encouraged to open schools in areas that did not have a BJJ school, or at the very least did not have a Team Gracie Barra school.

As the head of Gracie Barra, Carlinhos looked to expand and organize the BJJ tournament scene. Instead of a loose disorganized mix of various tournaments and small-scale events, Carlinhos wanted to create a highly reputable, prestigious, and organized system for BJJ competitions. At first he successfully promoted a large tournament and signed two large corporate sponsors, a Brazilian clothing company named *Company*, and one of the largest newspapers in Brazil, *Jornal Globo*.<sup>55</sup> Corporate sponsors allow for much bigger tournaments with better facilities, as well as better prizes to compete for. Since corporate sponsors bring money with them

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<sup>55</sup> Peligro. 95.

there is less of a burden on the event organizer, in this case Carlinhos. Furthermore, the event organizer can spend less time fundraising and more time working on the logistics of the tournament and making sure it operates smoothly.

However, legal troubles put an end to that specific tournament from the start. *Company* had taken a picture of two fighters from a previous unsponsored tournament and used their image to make t-shirts and event posters for the tournament. The two fighters found out and sued *Company*. The result was *Company* withdrawing from future sponsorship and support.<sup>56</sup> These legal troubles turned out to be a blessing in disguise because Carlinhos learned he had to create legal security and develop good relationships between schools, sponsors, and competitors to ensure successful, and profitable, tournaments. In an attempt to avoid future troubles, Carlinhos organized all the local schools near his Gracie Barra Academy to form an association who would run tournaments together and ensure each school acted fairly and respectfully. The success of their tournaments, and therefore the organization, did not go unnoticed and Carlinhos was able to actually create the Confederation of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (CBJJ) in 1994 to organize BJJ in Brazil.<sup>57</sup> The formation of a confederation demonstrates that BJJ was going further along the sport path.

A confederation was important because it allows for uniformity and cohesion within the BJJ sport community. The CBJJ organized an official rule system, a rule committee, and referee committee to protect competitors from unqualified judges and referees. This has been very important for the organization and prestige of BJJ

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<sup>56</sup> Peligro. Pg. 95.

<sup>57</sup> Peligro. Pg. 95-7.

Confederação Brasileira De Jiu-Jitsu, "A CBJJ," Confederação Brasileira De Jiu-Jitsu, <http://www.cbjj.com.br/acbjj.htm> (accessed December 20, 2011).

competitions. People cannot break the rules or promote unsportsmanlike conduct without penalties. Before the federation unsportsmanlike conduct at BJJ tournaments was common and generally went unpunished. Rules and regulations have been good for the overall growth of sport BJJ and the competition atmosphere. A practitioner is more likely to compete if he or she knows there is a standard that his or her opponents will be held to, and will not be able to bend the rules or avoid punishment because of who they are or who they train under.

Carlinhos also promoted BJJ in the media. In 1994, the same year he officially founded the CBJJ he began publishing *Gracie Magazine*.<sup>58</sup> Currently it is distributed in both Brazil and the United States. The U.S. version is printed in Portuguese and English. Furthermore, most articles are published online in both languages as well. It is widely considered the premier BJJ publication in the world and despite its name, does not focus exclusively on BJJ from the Gracie family. It covers the entire spectrum of the BJJ community. A regularly published magazine allows practitioners and fans of BJJ to remain current on events within the BJJ community. It also allows for advertising space for BJJ related companies to potentially gain customers.

The period in BJJ history from Carlson Gracie to Carlinhos Gracie and the founding of the CBJJ were instrumental because this was the period when BJJ really began expanding outside of the original Gracie Academy. More academies, and more teams not directly affiliated with the Gracies were formed. The increased amount of academies led to an increase in competition between students of the different academies. This competition manifested itself into formal BJJ tournaments. Tournaments allowed an exchange of ideas and techniques between competing schools and allowed BJJ to take a more sport oriented direction. Moreover, sport

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<sup>58</sup> Peligro. 105.

competitions helped to legitimize BJJ as street fights between practitioners were less common, because practitioners had a legitimate venue to compete and demonstrate which team or academy was the best.

Furthermore, it was during this period that the first international relationships were forged, especially between the United States grappling community and Brazil.

Innovators, like Rolls Gracie, were able to successfully incorporate aspects of other grappling and ground fighting styles into traditional BJJ, which allowed it to become even more effective and more versatile, both as a system of self-defense and also as a sport. BJJ was set to be displayed to an international audience.

### **Section III: Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Hits America**

The Introduction of BJJ to the United States represented a turning point for the activity. It increased participation beyond the country of Brazil and precipitated the formation of new groups and teams. These new teams further precipitated the desire and application of formalized competitions and a further emphasis on sport BJJ rather than BJJ as a system of self-defense. The United States possesses the largest economy in the world and is within relatively close proximity to Central and South America. For this reason, it has been a target for Latin American immigrants for decades. The United States has a large combat sports entertainment industry and its own culture of martial arts. Certain members of the Gracie family chose to immigrate to the United States to build lives for themselves there. When they arrived they did not abandon BJJ or their martial arts lifestyle, on the contrary they came to the United States to promote it. Although multiple members of the Gracie family came to America in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the Gracie family regards Rorion Gracie as the family member to introduce BJJ to the United States.

Rorion was Helio Gracie's first son, and was introduced to the jiu jitsu mats before he could even walk. In 1969 he had first visited the United States on vacation as a seventeen-year-old boy and quickly became infatuated with the country. In 1978, nine years after returning to Brazil and finishing a law degree in Rio de Janeiro he moved back to the United States to settle permanently.<sup>59</sup> Instead of practicing law or pursuing a legal career he chose to attempt to bring BJJ into the U.S. market. He immediately began teaching his families BJJ out of his garage in Southern California. BJJ lacked the exposure and Rorion lacked the finances to begin a professional academy in the United States. Still, Rorion, and some other family

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<sup>59</sup> Peligro. 73.

members were able to train students and gain some exposure within the American martial arts community. Rorion took advantage of his proximity to Los Angeles and used his connections within the martial arts community to land some small roles in T.V. series and become the martial arts consultant for Mel Gibson in *Lethal Weapon*.<sup>60</sup>

Adopting the same strategy that his father and uncle had used in Brazil, he issued official “Gracie Challenges”, in which he challenged practitioners of various martial arts backgrounds to no holds barred fights for large sums of money.<sup>61</sup> It was through these public challenges that Rorion, and consequently BJJ, started to gain more exposure in the American martial arts community. Rorion, or fellow family members who had followed him to the United States, were winning all their matches against their opponents. Still, their fame was largely confined to California and the West Coast.

These were not sport competition matches or tournaments. BJJ did not have enough practitioners in the United States to make a BJJ only tournament possible. Instead these were no-holds-barred fights against students of other martial arts disciplines. For example the Gracies would challenge, or be challenged by a student of a local karate. Then Rorion, or one of his relatives living in the United States, would fight the challenge using BJJ with strikes to defeat their opponent who was not using BJJ. Since many martial arts styles do not focus on ground fighting, or place very little emphasis on it, once the fights went to the ground the BJJ fighters had an immense advantage, even if they were at a large disadvantage when standing up.

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<sup>60</sup> Peligro. 76.

He played minor roles in *Startsky and Hutch*, *Hotel*, and *Hart to Hart*.

<sup>61</sup> Peligro. 76.

They were slowly expanding and gaining a reputation for martial artist that did not hide techniques from their students or hold back when fighting each other. Rorion and the other Gracies training with him actually encouraged new students to go their hardest and try to beat them on the mat. This went against many martial arts attitudes at the time, where the instructor was usually off limits and protected from heavy sparring.<sup>62</sup> However, this attitude was what drew many people to BJJ. People wanted to learn real self-defense techniques that would work outside the safety of an academy/dojo. Furthermore, people wanted to go hard in training so they were not thrust into a real combat situation unprepared.<sup>63</sup> Many students of martial arts are principally drawn to the combat aspect of it. When they are not allowed or do not have the opportunity to participate in actual sparring or fighting they often become disillusioned and quit that particular style. Since sport BJJ does not use strikes of any kind, people can actually grapple their hardest without restraining themselves and still remain uninjured. This is almost impossible in striking arts such as karate where the students would experience head trauma, among a host of other injuries, if they sparred full force without restraint every day. This is one of the things that was so appealing to many martial artist about BJJ.

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu received its first high profile national media attention when a story was published in a 1989 issue of *Playboy* Magazine. The article described Rorion's relatively unknown martial arts style with a heavy emphasis on grappling and ground fighting, and mentioned the "Gracie Challenges" that the family issued.<sup>64</sup> *Playboy* was, in 1989, and still is, a nationally and internationally circulated

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<sup>62</sup> Peligro. 76-8.

<sup>63</sup> Peligro. 76.

<sup>64</sup> BJJ was still unknown to most people in the United States, and was only practiced by a handful of martial artists who lived near, and could therefore train with, the Gracies.



magazine. Furthermore, *Playboy's* principle readership is men, who were also the Gracie's principle targeted demographic. Thus, many men all over the United States were introduced to BJJ for the first time, including a man named Art Davie.<sup>65</sup>

Davie was a salesman in the advertising business and a long time fan of martial arts. After reading the *Playboy* article, Davie, visited Rorion and the other Gracies in Torrence to talk about using them in an advertising campaign for a beer product he was trying to sell. The beer advertising with them never materialized, but Davie did become a student of Rorion after watching him choke multiple karate black belts unconscious at a challenge match in Compton California.<sup>66</sup> This meant that Davie not only maintained his relationship with BJJ and the Gracies, but he also had a vested interest in training and promoting the activity.

With Davie's business savvy and connections, Rorion and he began to sell and distribute footage of the various Gracie members beating opponents in Brazil and the United States. It was through this grassroots style of advertising that BJJ gained some more popularity and Rorion and Davie were able to prove that it was capable of making money. The pair managed to raise enough money to pursue an even bigger venture to try and take BJJ awareness to the next level.<sup>67</sup> In 1993, Rorion and Davie created their own company to try and pitch their idea to major pay-per-view companies. After some failed attempts, Semaphore Entertainment Group (SEG) agreed to promote Rorion and Davie's event, which would have people of all different martial arts styles, including a BJJ practitioner, fight against each other in a tournament format.<sup>68</sup>

It is in this way that BJJ was following the original format of the early

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<sup>65</sup> Peligro. 80.

<sup>66</sup> Peligro. 80.

<sup>67</sup> Peligro. 80.

<sup>68</sup> Peligro. 81-2.

Japanese pro wrestlers, like Maeda, used to promote their style of martial arts. Then Helio and his sons and nephews followed the same pattern in Brazil during the early and intermediary days of BJJ. Based off of the experiences in Brazil, Rorion believed that a well-publicized and widely viewed exhibition would allow BJJ to reach the largely untapped U.S. demographic. This time, however the exhibition would be backed by a financially powerful entertainment group and shown live on pay-per-view to tens, and later hundreds, of thousands of fans in the United States. The backing of a corporate sponsor (SEG) was important because it provided powerful financial support with a group that regularly conducted business in the U.S. market and knew how to cater the product to a U.S. audience.

After only a couple months the group had enough investors to put on a show. They also decided on an official name for the event, “Ultimate Fighting Championship” (UFC®).<sup>69</sup> The group found different martial art champions from different backgrounds: boxing, sumo wrestling, kick boxing, karate, pancrase, and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu to compete against each other in the first pay-per-view event. The idea of the event was just like the Gracie challenges except that it would be played in front of a much larger audience who would have to pay to watch it. Still, the group had to decide on which family member would actually be the one fighting, and representing BJJ in the first UFC.

Rickson Gracie was living in the United States at the time and training with his older brother Rorion and some other family members. He was one of the most experienced and physically imposing of all the Gracies with substantial BJJ tournament experience and *vale tudo* experience. However, Rorion and Rickson were having some conflicts in regards to training and their California training

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<sup>69</sup> Peligro. 82.

centers.<sup>70</sup> This conflict, combined with Rorion's idea that to truly captivate the audience's imagination, the Gracies should not use their biggest and strongest fighter meant that Rickson would not be BJJ's representative at the event. Instead, Rorion believed they should use one of their smaller less physically imposing members to do the fighting and prove that the smaller BJJ practitioner could beat a bigger stronger opponent, even if that opponent was properly trained in a martial arts discipline.<sup>71</sup>

Rorion settled on Royce Gracie, his younger, less accomplished brother, who was also training with him in California. The first UFC was an eight-man tournament to be aired live on pay-per-view. The tournament style meant that the winner would advance and have to fight a total of three times to win the championship. However, this was not a BJJ sport's style tournament, it was meant to showcase real no-holds-barred combat and self-defense techniques. Royce went on to beat his three opponents very quickly and showed a large audience of 86,000 people that BJJ was a truly effective martial arts form.<sup>72</sup> People were shocked, and impressed, to see Royce submit a professional boxer, an American submission wrestler, and a professional kick-boxing champion, each of whom enjoyed a significant weight advantage over Royce. The first UFC event was a big success and showed America what BJJ was and introduced the United States to the Gracie family.

After only a few years Rorion and Davie sold their shares in the organization, however the UFC is still a very profitable and popular entertainment source that has seen a large increase in popularity and mainstream media coverage in the last five

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<sup>70</sup> Peligro. 83.

<sup>71</sup> Peligro. 83.

<sup>72</sup> Peligro. 83.

years.<sup>73</sup> However the UFC is very different today and is no longer about pitting one style of martial arts against another, instead modern combatants incorporate aspects of many different styles to create well rounded fighters and sportsmen. This is known as Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) because of the mixing of styles. Still, BJJ is one of the staples of the majority of current UFC fighter's styles. Many current practitioners of BJJ, myself included, first discovered the sport by watching the UFC.

The successes of BJJ in the early UFC tournaments were instrumental for the development of the International Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Federation (IBJJF). There were finally more and more high-level practitioners coming out of a country besides Brazil. Before the first UFC there just was not enough interest in BJJ outside of Brazil to warrant the need for an international organization or international tournaments. Still, Carlinhos Gracie, the founder of Team Gracie Barra and the CBJJ decided to take advantage of the new found popularity in the United States, and abroad, to create the IBJJF and run a prestigious international tournament.<sup>74</sup> The IBJJF promotes traditional sport BJJ and is not affiliated with MMA. This allowed for a greater prevalence and move towards sport BJJ in the United States and abroad. Whereas before people wanted to train the self-defense style of BJJ, which included strikes, that they saw in the original UFC.

In 1995, the IBJJF, under Carlinhos' leadership, ran the first annual Pan-American Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Championships at the University of California, Irvine campus.<sup>75</sup> The fact that sportsmen could now compete for an international title promoted further growth for the sport in Brazil and abroad. Brazilians could now come to the U.S. to compete and win prestigious titles that could lead to sponsorship

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<sup>73</sup> Peligro. 84.

<sup>74</sup> Peligro. 97.

<sup>75</sup> Peligro. 97.

and enhance their team or individual reputation. The increase in reputation and money could lead to more students and therefore more cash flow to their academies. While before many people had to work day jobs and then teach and train BJJ in the hours they were not working, now they could potentially devote themselves full time to the martial art and sport they loved. With more people devoting more time to BJJ, it could evolve even faster and become even more effective.

After the success of the Pan-Ams, the IBJJF hosted the first ever Brazilian Jiu Jitsu World Championships in 1996, thus allowing for people to claim the title of “World Champion” for their respective weight class and belt division.<sup>76</sup> This worked to further encourage sponsorship deals and further expanded cash flow to serious practitioners of the sport, allowing BJJ more opportunities to grow and develop. Although the original World Championships were in Rio de Janeiro, they have since moved to California.

The United States economy is larger than the Brazilian economy and possesses a larger combat entertainment industry than Brazil. The result is BJJ is flourishing in the United States. From the United States it has spread to many foreign countries that are helping create a global BJJ community. However, this community is no longer completely monopolized by the Gracie family. In recent years a very large number of incredibly talented and dominant world champions are coming from a variety of teams and organizations. Nevertheless, the Gracies have a large number of schools throughout the world and continue to produce world-class champion fighters and instructors.

Once BJJ spread to the United States it enhanced the economic situation of

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<sup>76</sup> Peligro. 100.

many BJJ practitioners. Because there was a receptive market in the U.S., many instructors left Brazil to teach in the United States. Since the UFC debuted in 1993, BJJ has been closely linked with MMA and the UFC. The UFC is a very profitable company that hosts multiple events a month to an international audience, thus constantly keeping BJJ in the news and in the popular mindset. Now that almost twenty years have elapsed since the first UFC, and therefore the first national exposure to BJJ in the United States, the number of U.S. practitioners is significantly higher than it used to, and has allowed for the movement towards a sport and tournament oriented BJJ culture. Many people in the U.S. now join BJJ not for self-defense reasons but for competitive reasons.

## Chapter 3: Culture and Capoeira in Bahia, Brazil

### Section I: Brief History of Bahia, Brazil

The history of Bahia is markedly different from Rio de Janeiro, where the first Gracie Academy opened and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu began to develop into its own unique martial art largely outside of Japanese influence. Due to cultural, political, and economic differences between the city of Rio de Janeiro, and southern Brazil in general, formalized BJJ was late in arriving to Salvador and the rest of Bahia. The Gracie's did not have strong social connections or ancestral roots in Bahia, and for a long time expressed little interest in bringing BJJ to Bahia. As a result, the BJJ community in Bahia is more distant from the influence of the Gracie family than many other Brazilian states. The reasons for the differences between Bahia and the southern zone of Brazil have their origins in the earliest colonial years in Brazil.

Brazil experienced colonization in much different ways from the rest of Latin America. Whereas the Spanish immediately began investing manpower and resources into their New World holdings, the Portuguese were more interested in their Asian and African maritime relationships than their territorial claims to the eastern coast of South America.<sup>77</sup> They did however, wish to protect their maritime interests after Columbus discovered what he believed, and by extension much of Europe, was the China Sea.

The Vatican solved the Iberian diplomatic conflict with the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, which divided the world into a western and eastern hemisphere. This line was on the South American continent and allowed Spain to receive the territories to the west of the line, and Portugal the territory to the east. The result was Spain could lay claim to the majority of the South American continent, but

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<sup>77</sup> Riordan Roett, *The New Brazil* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2010) , 20.

Portugal could retain its heavy influence in Africa, while still receiving some South American coastal land.<sup>78</sup>

Brazil was divided into land divisions by the Portuguese king, Dom João III. This division created hereditary capitancies where resources from private individuals and families connected with the Portuguese Royal Court would be used to take possession, but not ownership, of the Brazilian land.<sup>79</sup> The Portuguese Crown would retain the actual ownership rights on all the land they granted in the New World. This practice created the general Brazilian trend of land settlement centered around large landed estates run by Portuguese elite who in turn, due to their land acquisitions, became the most powerful social, political, and economic figures in Brazil.<sup>80</sup>

This institution also created the conditions that shaped Brazil's colonial history. The Royal Portuguese Government, especially in the sixteenth century and before had very little administrative control, which instead rested in the hands of the autonomous landed elite. Salvador became the first administrative center, but its presence was not strong outside of the immediate areas surrounding the city. Salvador de Bahia, and the *Recôncavo*, the name of the fertile agricultural land surrounding the Bay of All Saints, was at the forefront of some of the first Portuguese economic expansion into Brazil. The *Recôncavo* was renowned for its fertile soil and tropical climate, each of which was ideal for growing sugar cane.<sup>81</sup> Following a trend that happened in many parts of the New World, European diseases, combined with excessive and abusive labor demands, devastated local

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<sup>78</sup> Roett. 20.

<sup>79</sup> A capitancie was an administrative division, similar in idea to different states or provinces.

<sup>80</sup> Roett. 21.

<sup>81</sup> Matthias Röhrig Assunção, *Capoeira* (London: Routledge, 2005) , 96.



indigenous populations in relatively very short periods of time. The indigenous population that did survive was ill fitted for plantation life. Unlike, for example, the Aztec or Incan Empires, many of the indigenous Brazilians were nomadic and therefore not easily organized into work forces. After capture they would simply escape back into the forest.<sup>82</sup>

The Portuguese landed elite, who owned the sugar plantations and the mills, needed a new source of labor to work the fields and mills. The result was, by the 1580s, African slaves represented the predominant work force on the sugar plantations and in the mills. By the time the officially sanctioned slave trade ended in 1855, more than four million slaves had been forced to Brazil in only three hundred years.<sup>83</sup> They were such a large part of the Brazilian population that by the end of the twentieth century an estimated 120 million Brazilians possessed some form of African heritage.<sup>84</sup>

At the time of sugar dominance in Brazil, there were three main sections of society deeply integrated in sugar production. At the bottom were the slaves who did the manual labor, as well as domestic duties for their social superiors. In the middle were the *lavradores* who were farmers responsible for smaller plots of land on a plantation. They owned slaves and were in charge of different sized groups of slaves depending on the amount of land they were in charge of. However, they were socially, politically, and economically inferior to the large mill owners, who often also owned the land the *lavradores* rented from them.<sup>85</sup> In the beginning the *lavradores* were mostly whites of a lower social status than the landowners, but as

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<sup>82</sup> Roett. 21-2.

<sup>83</sup> Roett. 22.

The slave trade officially ended but illegal slave trading existed after 1855.

<sup>84</sup> Kim D Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-abolition, São Paulo and Salvador* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1998) , 3.

<sup>85</sup> Assunção. 96-8.

time went on they became increasingly mixed race.

This system led to resentment of the mill owners and landed elite by the *lavradores*, who in turn were resented by the slaves who they were constantly in direct contact with. However, because of the heavy intermixing of races, racial divides were not as pronounced as in the United States. Slave owners and the landed elite, who maintained tremendous influence in the North East, used this racial mixture to create a clearly defined hierarchy that impeded the different racial mixtures from organizing or uniting together, thus preserving slavery through manipulation rather than brute force.<sup>86</sup>

By the seventeenth century, Bahia was the number one producer of sugar in the entire world, with its economy dependent on slave labor.<sup>87</sup> The success of sugar was important in solidifying Bahia as an economy based on plantation slave labor, bringing with it specific social implications, especially the demographic dominance of Afro-Brazilians and Mulattos. These groups still dominate the demographic reality of modern Bahia and Salvador. Sugar production was also a large economic institutions that perpetuated class divides in society. It was instrumental in solidifying Afro-Brazilians and others of mixed race as the social inferiors within the region.<sup>88</sup>

Although sugar was largely responsible for the early success of the Bahian plantation economy, in the seventeenth century tobacco also became an important

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<sup>86</sup> Roett. 22.

That is not to say slaves were not treated brutally or violently sometimes. In fact, they were and plantation life was hard and short, which helps explain why so many African slaves were imported even into the nineteenth century. However, it was the coercion and manipulation based on a racial hierarchy that allowed the slave system to flourish without large Portuguese military forces.

<sup>87</sup> Assunção. 96.

<sup>88</sup> John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011) , 188.

cash crop within the *Recôncavo* agricultural area.<sup>89</sup> This had far reaching cultural implications for the state of Bahia and the people of African descent who lived there. For example, most of the trans-Atlantic slave trade followed a triangular pattern, in which, goods, such as steel tools, were brought from Europe and traded for slaves in West Africa. Then the slaves were taken to the New World and traded for the goods that the slave economy produced, like sugar. Those goods were then sent back to Europe and the process continued. Tobacco grown in Bahia, on the other hand, followed a different pattern. It was generally traded right back to Africa in exchange for slaves, thus bypassing Europe altogether. This bilateral trade enabled stronger relationships to exist between Africa and Bahia, and communication was more open for the African population living in the state. Since lines of communication were not completely severed, African cultural elements were, and still are, preserved to a very large extent in Bahia.<sup>90</sup> This is especially true for African religious institutions, which largely manifested as the religion of candomblé in Bahia.<sup>91</sup>

In the middle of the *Recôncavo* economy was the capital city of Salvador. Salvador was the link between all the various ports along the *Recôncavo*, with different regions within the *Recôncavo* tending to specialize in a product essential to the integration and operation of the Bahian economy. For example, one region might specialize in a particular food production, while another region might focus on an entirely different food, the regions might focus on various cash crops, and/or building materials. Thus each region would be dependent on the others to provide goods that were not produced locally. Salvador was the center of this trade and was important administratively, politically, and financially. Due to Salvador's wealth and

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<sup>89</sup> Assunção. 98

<sup>90</sup> Assunção. 98.

<sup>91</sup> Butler. 8.

importance, it served as the Brazilian colonial capital from 1549 until 1763, when the capital was moved to Rio de Janeiro.<sup>92</sup>

Bahia began losing prominence to southern Brazil particularly during the nineteenth century. Coffee became the new cash crop king in Brazil. Its ascent during the nineteenth century was as large as it was fast. In the decade from 1821 to 1830 coffee represented 18.4 percent of the national exports, sugar was substantially higher at 30.1 percent, cocoa was a marginal export representing only 0.5 percent, and cotton was bigger than coffee at 20.6 percent. In only seventy years the numbers had morphed drastically: sugar comprised a mere 6 percent of exports, cocoa had tripled to 1.5 percent, cotton had shrunk to only 2.7 of the national export, all while coffee had exploded to 64.5 percent of the national export.<sup>93</sup> Since the crops were largely regionally specific, this meant that the financial importance of the different regions shifted with the export numbers.

This had serious implications for Bahia and the northeastern regions in general. The southern zone of Brazil, particularly São Paulo and Minas Gerais, became the industrial and financial center of the entire nation. Due to the south's large financial importance, it became the political center of Brazilian government, and politicians from these states continually dominated the Brazilian political scene.<sup>94</sup> Bahia was viewed unfavorably by many of the southern elites, who saw it as rural, backwards, and full of people of poor work ethic: Afro-Brazilians.<sup>95</sup> Much of this racial stigma was perpetuated for decades and still exists to this day.<sup>96</sup> As a

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<sup>92</sup> Assunção. 99.

<sup>93</sup> Hélio S. Silva "Tendências e características do comércio exterior no século XIX," *Revista de História da Economia Brasileira* 1. no. 1 (June 1953): 8.

<sup>94</sup> Butler. 25-6.

<sup>95</sup> Roett. 28-9.

<sup>96</sup> Patricia de Santana Pinho, *Mama Africa: Reinventing Blackness in Bahia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 126-7.

result, Bahia lost political clout as it lost its financial importance. This ethos helped perpetuate the process of whitening in which millions of European immigrants came to Brazil, primarily the Southern coffee producing regions. The European immigrants were encouraged to intermarry with local Brazilians in an attempt to create a more pure, more white, Brazilian nationality.<sup>97</sup> This further fostered racist attitudes towards Afro-Brazilians and the more rural northern populations who did not fit into the white ideal that was stressed at the time.

This has specific implications to Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. BJJ grew out of Rio de Janeiro. For a long time, and to a certain extent even today, it catered to people of the middle class and higher. Moreover, the southern elitist mentality over the northeastern regions was not conducive to cultural exchange between the different regions. This is a possible explanation as to why BJJ arrived so late in Salvador, the economic and cultural capital of the northeast. Furthermore, sports or martial arts, in general, are activities that often require significant time and monetary investments, a reality that would hold back the typical Bahian from training BJJ. Individual Bahians suffered economically when the North East states lost their financial importance to the south. As a result they were poorer, on average, than a resident of São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro. This meant Bahians had less money to devote to a recreational activity such as BJJ, and less time due to high work demands.

Even with the dominance of São Paulo and the southern zone on the national level, the northeast, despite the great numbers of Afro-Brazilians, continued to be dominated by a small number of white landed elite who held great political and social clout. In addition to the white landed elite, a white dominated ecclesiastic

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<sup>97</sup> Roett. 29.

institution exerted great influence in Bahia and the rest of Brazil. Despite the power wielded by these white groups during the colonial period, and later national period, the spirit and way of life in Bahia was predominantly African-based and not European or Iberian.

It is important to understand that this African based culture was not a homogenous culture of one African cultural group. Throughout the four hundred years of slave trade within Bahia, slaves were acquired from different regions in Africa, representing different ethnic groups and cultures that did not necessarily share the same language or even a similar way of life. African slaves were predominantly imported from West Africa, Congo, and Angola, but even these areas are vast and represent a multitude of different cultural groups.<sup>98</sup>

Although African slaves and freedmen tended to stay within their own ethnic community, the boundaries were not rigid but loose and flowing. This is especially true as time went on and interracial mixing created a creolized population, who were no longer bound by the same ethnic background. However, they did tend to hold onto shared cultural values, even if ethnic boundaries were heavily watered down when compared to original ethnic boundaries.<sup>99</sup> This was due to intermarrying and copulation between people of different African ethnic groups. A child of two different ethnic groups would not necessarily identify with one particular ethnicity, but they would retain cultural values from both parents. In this way the cultures assimilated, while distinct ethnic boundaries broke down. However, in Bahia ethnic boundaries, whether real or imagined, were often stressed as means of minimizing internal conflict caused by various factors such as social class, gender and age within identity groups. In this way ethnic boundaries, often

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<sup>98</sup> Assunção. 99.

<sup>99</sup> Assunção. 99.

exaggerated, served to hold the group's identity together during a time of racial and social assimilation.<sup>100</sup>

A key cultural practice that slaves from different regions in Africa retained was their martial cultures and fighting styles. This was true all over the Americas, but is understood better in the Brazilian context due to the sheer volume of slaves that came to call Brazil their new home. Especially after the arrival of European colonizers, who had significant military forces with them, African martial culture developed rapidly and expanded to deal with the new threat the Europeans came to represent.<sup>101</sup> Many African "nations" had considerable professional armies who were very skilled in the use of traditional weapons such as swords, clubs, spears, axes, bows and arrows and shields. However, they also quickly learned the utility of European firearms, artillery, and armor and incorporated these weapons into their martial culture.<sup>102</sup> Still, there are scant sources on the origins of different martial practices in Africa and their dissemination into the Americas.

European and Creole masters repressed martial practices in the Americas, especially in regards to weapons-based combat systems. Total repression was nearly impossible and martial practices continued to exist, albeit in an adapted form, in slave communities in the Americas. Martial practices served important social functions in native African cultures and were usually linked with music and dance.<sup>103</sup>

In the Americas they still retained some of their importance in social functions and rituals, but they also became more pragmatic. Slaves needed a way to

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<sup>100</sup> Pinho. 67-70.

<sup>101</sup> Assunção. 46-7.

<sup>102</sup> Assunção. 46.

<sup>103</sup> Assunção. 47.

It was not always the case that African martial arts were associated with music and dance, but it was common among many different ethnic and regional groups.

fight back, literally and socially, against their masters and the slave system in general. Again, due to the lack of sources describing native African combat systems prior to the nineteenth century, it is almost impossible to concretely determine to what extent Afro-American martial systems originated in a particular African society or social context.<sup>104</sup> That is to say, it is understood that martial systems that existed on plantations and cities in the Americas had roots in African traditions, but scholars lack sources and information to truly identify what specific American practice originated from a specific African practice.

Despite the obfuscation of origin, the colonial period slave culture had clear martial culture and combat games.<sup>105</sup> However, the martial culture followed the general trend of creolization. The result was that after a few generations the martial culture was markedly different than it had been when it first arrived from Africa. This means, in the state of Bahia the martial culture was distinctly Bahian, even if it did possess clear African roots.

In summation, Bahia's beginning as a slave culture focused primarily on sugar led to a significant influx of African slaves whose ancestors helped create a population of color within the state of Bahia, and the city of Salvador that continued to exist well after the slave period was over.<sup>106</sup> A culture with distinct African elements, including martial culture, developed in Bahia to a greater extent than anywhere else in Brazil. However, when coffee, produced primarily in the southern zone of Brazil, dominated the export economy of Brazil, Bahia lost social, political, and economic importance in relation to the coffee producing regions. This created a

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<sup>104</sup> Assunção. 46-9.

<sup>105</sup> Assunção. 59.

Perhaps the earliest account is by Richard Ligon, Ligon describes slaves wrestling each other within a musical context on a plantation in seventeenth-century Barbados.

<sup>106</sup> Butler. 133-5.



mindset of elitism from the southern elites towards the northeastern regions. This elitist attitude hampered cultural exchange from the southern regions towards the northeast. The degradation of the economic reality of the northeastern regions, Bahia included, further hampered the cultural exchange of financially motivated activities, such as Brazilian Jiu Jitsu during the twentieth century.

## Section II: Martial Arts Culture in Bahia-Capoeira

Bahia not only has a distinct regional culture, heavily influenced by African cultural traditions, but it also has a specific martial culture as well. The martial culture of Salvador de Bahia is rooted in capoeira, a distinct martial art from Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, with a different history and different social/cultural importance to the people who practice it. Furthermore, the martial goals of capoeira are different from the martial goals of grappling arts such as BJJ. These differences, when compounded with the legacy of elitism perpetuated by southern Brazilian families of high social status, such as the Gracies, have historically hindered the permeation of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu into Bahian society. In this way, the Bahian BJJ community often sees capoeira as an obstacle that hinders greater public participation of BJJ within Bahia.

The foundation of Bahia's martial art is unequivocally the art of capoeira. Moreover, capoeira has a large influence as a martial art throughout Brazil. Salvador, the capital of Bahia, is also known as the capital of capoeira. People practice capoeira in the streets and on the beach in full public view. There are many capoeira schools throughout the city, catering to either the Angolan style of capoeira or the Regional style. Universities even offer capoeira as a physical education class. The iconic *berimbau* and other capoeira instruments are for sale throughout the historic colonial district, the *Pelourinho*, as are traditional capoeira pants, and numerous works of art depicting *capoeiristas*, the name given to practitioners of capoeira.

Capoeira is often referred to simultaneously as a martial art and a dance. This is because a strong connection exists between performance art, dancing, music, and combat techniques in capoeira, thus blurring the distinction between martial arts in

the traditional western and far eastern idea. In martial arts terms, it is very different from Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, and capoeira played almost no role in the early technical formation of BJJ, and little influence exists in present day. Although there are some grappling elements, such as takedowns, trips, and foot sweeps, particularly in the Regional style of capoeira, there is no aspect of ground fighting. BJJ is primarily ground fighting, therefore few opportunities for overlap exist between the two arts.

There are many myths and urban legends surrounding the history and development of capoeira. Some believe that capoeira has remained relatively unchanged since its creation on Brazilian soil by slaves and former slaves in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>107</sup> In reality, there is no concrete evidence for the formation of capoeira in the terms that it is understood today until the nineteenth century.<sup>108</sup> Capoeira grew as an Afro-Brazilian cultural phenomenon with certain roots in Central and West African martial arts cultural traditions. This makes its roots very different from those of BJJ. Capoeira has its martial roots in Africa, while BJJ has its martial roots in Japan. This creates many differences between the two arts, and may alienate the two art forms.

Like many traditional African martial arts, capoeira is closely linked to festivals or celebrations.<sup>109</sup> This creates a religious as well as social and political function to capoeira that is not a part of BJJ. The social function of capoeira solidifies it within the greater Salvadorian and Bahian cultural institutions. Again, this is different from BJJ, which does not have as long a history in Brazil, let alone Bahia. The festival of Carnaval, which celebrates the days leading up to Lent, in Brazil incorporates both traditional Iberian Catholic ideologies, while also incorporating

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<sup>107</sup> Assunção. 5-11.

<sup>108</sup> Assunção. 100-101.

<sup>109</sup> Green, and Svinth. 131-2

traditional African religious ideologies. Due to the African background in Bahia, the African elements are especially strong and pronounced there.

Capoeira, which is a martial art, is deeply ingrained in the social culture of Salvador and Bahia in a way that BJJ is not. This is not to say that people cannot practice both capoeira and BJJ or people are forced to only practice one martial art in general. The point is that it is harder for BJJ to gain traction and popular participation in Salvador because of the long and dominant history of capoeira and other African based cultural institutions.

Compare this to say Rio de Janeiro, the home of the Gracie family, and in many respects the birthplace of the phenomenon of BJJ. Certainly capoeira is practiced in Rio de Janeiro and was actually partially created in Rio as well.<sup>110</sup> However, Rio does not identify itself with its African ancestry in the same way that Bahia does, which has been heralded as the Afro-Brazilian capital of Brazil. Cities like Rio de Janeiro in the south of Brazil have a more pronounced ethnic mixing consisting of more citizens of white European descent than cities in the northeast. Capoeira, especially the Angola style is seen as a strong African cultural root in Bahia especially.<sup>111</sup>

Following the characteristics of many traditional African martial arts, capoeira is closely linked to music and rhythm.<sup>112</sup> There are specific instruments used to set the rhythm and engage the participants. A typical capoeira *jogo* is “played” by two capoeiristas in the center of a circular group of people called the

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<sup>110</sup> Assunção. 73-83.

<sup>111</sup> Green, and Svinth. 146.

<sup>112</sup> Green, and Svinth. 131, 133-5.

*roda*.<sup>113</sup> The circle is fluid as participants leave and enter the *jogo* as practitioners tire. Capoeira is capitalized by acrobatic movements, such as different variations of cartwheels, to escape or feint strikes against the opponent. The strikes are predominantly different types of kicks. However, in general, during a *jogo*, capoeiristas will not make physical contact and will not attack with force, instead using slow rhythmic attacks and defenses to allow for a flowing style that resembles a dance. The lack of physical contact is part of the reason for the description of capoeira as both a dance and martial art.

Occasionally, if both capoeiristas agree, they will use greater force and speed than usual in their movements. However the end goal is not knocking their opponent unconscious or injuring them, although sometimes they may attempt to knock them to the ground. For the most part, capoeira consists of the slower, rhythmic, movements where neither capoeirista actually gets hurt or falls down. This reality of a lack of traditional combat elements associated with other martial arts forms further blurs the line between marital art and performance art.

Currently, there are two main styles of capoeira, the “Regional” style originally organized and taught by Mestre Bimba and the “Angolan” style originally organized and taught by Mestre Pastinha.<sup>114</sup> Manoel dos Reis Machado, or “Mestre Bimba”, sought to modernize and organize capoeira along sport and combat terms. This evolution of capoeira as a sport followed a general trend affecting martial arts as well as an embrace of African cultural elements within post World-War I society

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<sup>113</sup> The capoeira *jogo* is translated literally as “game”. The term used to describe capoeiristas who are actively engaged in a *jogo* is “*jogadores*”, which translates directly to “players”.

<sup>114</sup> “Mestre” being the Portuguese spelling of “Master”. Both Bimba and Pastinha are still referred to as “Mestre” even when anglicized.

all over the western world.<sup>115</sup> The embracing of African cultural elements in various societies, like Brazilian society, allowed for a more free and open expression of capoeira and a greater chance for it to evolve into a codified martial arts system with rules and specific techniques.

Mestre Bimba's goal was to organize capoeira along more realistic fighting terms. One way of doing this was by adopting kicks and strikes from other European and Asian martial arts, while maintaining the rhythmic context associated with capoeira.<sup>116</sup> Even though Regional capoeira maintains music and rhythm as a central aspect at the heart of its practice, it adopted a faster rhythm to stimulate a more energetic performance in the ring.<sup>117</sup> Again, promoting a more combat or sport-oriented atmosphere.

One of the biggest innovations that Mestre Bimba introduced to his style was the formation of an academy that would have systemized classes for teaching students. He also developed eight specific sequences to be practiced, whereas before capoeira was improvisational and did not have set sequences.<sup>118</sup> This is not to say that capoeira is not heavily improvisational while being practiced, but Bimba introduced a sequence that students had to learn in order to progress through the ranks of capoeira. Still, not everyone was happy with Bimba's innovations and many people flat out rejected the innovations.

Angolan styled capoeira was organized in many ways as a reaction to Mestre Bimba's Regional style. In 1937 Bahia held the second Afro-Brazilian Congress with the goal of celebrating Afro-Bahian culture, particularly its social and religious

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<sup>115</sup> Assunção. 128-131

<sup>116</sup> Assunção. 132.

<sup>117</sup> Assunção. 136.

<sup>118</sup> Assunção. 136.

institutions.<sup>119</sup> Capoeira was chosen as a key highlight of the congress, however the organizers did not care for Bimba's new martial and sport emphasis in capoeira.<sup>120</sup> The congress called the traditional style the Angolan style because it resonated more closely with older capoeira practice, rather than Bimba's "new" style of capoeira. A group of mestres who resisted Bimba's new style created a group of capoeiristas who would train and play Angolan capoeira regularly at a center in the neighborhood of Liberdade in Salvador. In 1941, Vicente Ferreira Pastinha, or Mestre Pastinha, came to the group and the group instated Mestre Pastinha as the head of the Angolan capoeira center.<sup>121</sup> Under Pastinha's leadership the center slowly became more organized and garnered more respect from other mestres and capoeiristas in the city of Salvador. In fact, Pastinha officially created the Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola (CECA) which was officially notarized in 1952.<sup>122</sup> He went on to publish a book about capoeira Angola as well as the "Metaphysics and practice of Capoeira" article which analyzed capoeira on a philosophical and ethical level.<sup>123</sup>

Similar to Bimba he pushed the codification of capoeira Angola as a sport to separate it from the alleged vagrants and petty thugs who used their knowledge of capoeira to cause violence and trouble in various neighborhoods across Salvador. A part of this was his banning of grappling from capoeira and the emphasis of the verb "play" within the context of capoeira.<sup>124</sup> Pastinha was also a great social networker and had a vast social circle that comprised the intellectual elite of Salvadorian and

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<sup>119</sup> Assunção. 150-1.

<sup>120</sup> Assunção. 151.

<sup>121</sup> Assunção. 154-5.

<sup>122</sup> Assunção. 155.

<sup>123</sup> Assunção. 156.

<sup>124</sup> Assunção. 156-7.

Bahian culture from the 1940s to the 1970s.<sup>125</sup> Through the help of his network he continued to expand the good name of capoeira Angola in the city and establish the CECA headquarters in the historic Pelourinho district of Salvador. After solidifying capoeira Angola's reputation in Bahia he branched out and attempted to export capoeira Angola to other parts of Brazil and to Africa.<sup>126</sup>

Although capoeira is currently practiced all over Brazil and has been verifiably referenced to have existed since the nineteenth century many Bahians regard it as their invention and an essential aspect of Bahian culture.<sup>127</sup> During my spring and summer of 2011 stay in Salvador a great number of people who I talked to, both male and female, had some rudimentary capoeira training at some point in their lives. Moreover, many individuals spent many years, or their entire lives, training promoting capoeira. For instance, while I was in Brazil I helped teach no-gi BJJ to young kids and pre-teens. Every one of them knew what capoeira was and many knew some of the basic movements and rhythms associated with it, even if they had never had formal training at a capoeira school. However, none of them knew what BJJ was prior to my teaching. This shows the lack of public knowledge surrounding BJJ and the simultaneous plethora of public knowledge surrounding capoeira. BJJ is a Brazilian invention, however it is not regarded as a Bahian invention or a traditional Bahian activity, and therefore garners less attention within Salvador and the state of Bahia than it does in cities like Rio de Janeiro.

Since capoeira is the martial art that many Bahians are first introduced to they can have a hard time understanding grappling and ground fighting oriented style of martial arts like BJJ. Grappling is a foreign concept and may be difficult to

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<sup>125</sup> Assunção. 162-3.

<sup>126</sup> Assunção. 163-6.

<sup>127</sup> Matthias Röhrig Assunção, *Capoeira* (London: Routledge, 2005).



embrace for that reason. Contrast this to the United States where one of the biggest martial arts/sports people are exposed to at an early age is folk style wrestling. Folk style wrestling, which is practiced in high schools and colleges throughout the country, is itself a martial art that focuses on grappling and forms of ground fighting. Therefore, the early exposure to wrestling makes BJJ a less foreign concept to many people in the United States. This is not to say that BJJ should be the dominant over capoeira, but it helps explain the lack of public excitement concerning BJJ.

Since capoeira is the dominant martial art activity in Bahia it is in a form of contention with BJJ. Despite the obstacle it potentially poses to BJJ, capoeira does bring benefits to BJJ. One has to be in very good physical condition with a strong sense of balance and coordination to execute some of the more complicated movements in capoeira. Although, flips or no arm cartwheels, for example, do not necessarily translate directly to BJJ techniques the strength and understanding of body mechanics necessary to do these techniques does.<sup>128</sup>

My instructor, Eduardo “Duda” dos Santos, in Salvador had trained capoeira for about ten years before he began training BJJ.<sup>129</sup> He has an athletic and physically dominating style of BJJ and his understanding of capoeira movements has influenced some aspects of his BJJ style. Moreover, multiple BJJ world champion in the gi and in no-gi, Ruben “Cobrinha” Charles practiced capoeira for many years as well, and still incorporates capoeira inspired movements into his warm up sessions and solo preparations at his academy.<sup>130</sup> Some other world-class BJJ competitors

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<sup>128</sup> I will note that some high level wrestlers and BJJ practitioners do sometimes execute one footed back flips to defend a single leg takedown.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Eduardo dos Santos. May 7, 2011.

<sup>130</sup> Junior Samurai, "What's Jiu-Jitsu Got to Do with Capoeira?" GracieMag.com. <http://www.graciemag.com/en/2012/02/whats-jiu-jitsu-got-to-do-with-capoeira/> (accessed February 19, 2012).

integrate capoeira training as well because of its physical conditioning benefits.<sup>131</sup>

This does not mean that people are doing capoeira during their BJJ matches or in sparring. BJJ and capoeira are simply different and emphasize different techniques and goals to allow an outright mixing of the styles. Probably the closest one will see of capoeira in BJJ is the use of cartwheel passes, but even that is not necessarily indicative of a capoeira influence because cartwheels are not mutually exclusive to capoeira. Cartwheels are a basic gymnastic movement that existed far before either BJJ or capoeira. Most of capoeira focuses on acrobatic movements, often used to evade, and leg strikes used to maintain distance between opponents. These two concepts fundamental to capoeira are contrary to the goals of grappling which focuses on close physical engagement of an opponent to control their body and dominate them positionally. Evasion and the maintaining distance are not a part of grappling, and are not a part of BJJ.

The saturation of capoeira combined with the lower socio-economic level of many Bahians is probably a reason for BJJ's late introduction in Bahia. The next section describes when and how BJJ arrived in Bahia and Salvador. Although there is no recorded admission of this, the Gracie family was probably reluctant to come to Salvador for such a long time because they would have to compete with the well-established capoeira martial arts system amongst a relatively poor local economy. This would make them more likely to establish academies in more economically prosperous areas or regions with less competition from other martial arts forms. Furthermore, they wanted to retain BJJ as a social institution for the elite, and bringing BJJ to perceived social inferiors, such as the Afro-Brazilians in Bahia, would

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<sup>131</sup> Marcelo Dunlop, "Alliance Moves up in Capoeira," GracieMag.com. <http://www.graciemag.com/en/2009/11/alliance-moves-up-in-capoeira/> (accessed February 19, 2012).

not aid in the retention of social elitism in the BJJ community.

## **Chapter 4: Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil**

### **Section I: Gracie Barra's Influence**

I arrived in Salvador de Bahia in the final week of January 2011. I left July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011. I was there to study abroad, volunteer abroad, and train abroad, all of which I did during my almost six months in the city. While there I was involved in the local Brazilian Jiu Jitsu community, largely with Team Gracie Barra-Bahia. I trained regularly at three Gracie Barra academies primarily with four instructors. However, I also trained at other Gracie Barra academies intermittently and had communication with BJJ practitioners from other teams including team Edson Carvalho in Salvador. As a volunteer I spent two days a week as a No-Gi BJJ instructor at a community center that catered to young children from a favela in Pernambués, a large neighborhood in Salvador de Bahia. Throughout my time there I had intimate access to many senior instructors and to many students of BJJ. I was able to interview them, formally and informally as well as make first hand observations about the culture of BJJ in Salvador.

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu did not enter Salvador de Bahia formally until Charles Gracie, the grandson of Carlos Gracie, relocated there in 1986 with the intent of bringing his families style of BJJ to the city and surrounding area. He is ultimately a part of the larger Gracie Barra Team, however, like many other members of the Gracie family, at this time, he ran his school as a Charles Gracie school rather than under the name Gracie Barra. When Charles Gracie left Salvador, the school lost its namesake and dissolved. The students either branched out to form other academies or quit BJJ.

It is true that some level of BJJ grappling must have been going on prior to 1986. However, this BJJ was not affiliated with the Gracies and no published history

concerning it exists. Helio Gracie became a national celebrity with his publically televised and popular *vale tudo* matches in the first half of the twentieth century. Many of his children and nephews then reproduced the phenomenon that is BJJ. Since people in Salvador had access to the media that showcased the *vale tudo* fights it is unrealistic to believe that no one in the city of Salvador was emulating or training BJJ in some form prior to Charles' arrival. However, many of these training centers must have been largely informal academies that may have only practiced No-Gi submission grappling. In addition, other martial arts were practiced in Salvador and many may have incorporated small levels of ground fighting and grappling techniques into their curriculum. For example, hapkido, a Korean martial art is popular in Salvador. I saw hapkido students performing submissions from BJJ during their training, however they did not focus on ground fighting and relied principally on strikes. Therefore, they could not be called BJJ practitioners, nor could other people who may have incorporated small amounts of ground fighting in their martial arts forms before BJJ formally arrived in Salvador.

Under Charles' leadership and affiliation with the rest of the Gracie family, this was time that BJJ established a solid foundation within the city of Salvador and the state of Bahia. Charles' opened his first academy named Boudokan in the Pituba neighborhood of Salvador. Pituba is located in the southeastern part of the city and runs along the beach. This allowed BJJ to spread around the city and into the countryside of Bahia. For example, when my main instructor, and current Gracie Barra black belt in the city of Salvador, Eduardo "Duda" dos Santos, began training he still lived in a small city in the countryside, called Nazaré das Farinhas. There he trained with a black belt named Lucas Claudios. When he moved to Salvador he no longer trained with Lucas. Duda had started training BJJ in 1999. He was training at

an academy run by a black belt in a relatively minor interior city. Thus BJJ academies had appeared within Bahia, outside the city of Salvador by the end of the twentieth century.

Charles Gracie chose not to live permanently in Bahia, instead choosing to move to California and teach BJJ. However, BJJ did not leave the city when he did. Many smaller teams and organizations were created at different points in time with various people in multiple neighborhoods throughout Salvador. In 2004, a well respected and established instructor and competitor, Master Maurício Robbe, was approached by Carlinhos Gracie, the head of Team Gracie Barra, to form an official Gracie Barra Bahia branch. Due to Maurício Robbe's influence and the international influence of Team Gracie Barra, he was able to get many of the organizations to team up and join forces under the Gracie Barra banner. It is for this reason that, despite the fact that the team has only been officially in Bahia for less than seven years at the time of publication, there are already eleven official Gracie Barra Academies in Salvador and seven more within the state of Bahia.<sup>132</sup> This would not have been possible without Maurício Robbe's unification of some of the various teams. Still, it is important to note that not every team agreed to join under the Gracie Barra platform and Gracie Barra is not the only BJJ Team either within the city of Salvador or the state of Bahia.

Once such team is Team Edson Carvalho. Their team has a history in Bahia dating back to the late 1980s. They are probably the second largest team in Salvador and Bahia. Their main academy is in the Barra neighborhood of Salvador.<sup>133</sup> A

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<sup>132</sup> Rommel. "Endereços Das Filiais Da Gracie Barra Bahia/Sergipe," Barra-Bahia. <http://www.graciebarra-ba.com.br/> (accessed January 23, 2012).

<sup>133</sup> Neighborhoods named "Barra" exist in many Brazilian cities, the Barra in Gracie Barra refers to the Barra neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro, not Salvador. I visited the Edson Carvalho main academy in the Barra neighborhood of Salvador,

Gracie Barra Academy I trained at regularly was just a block away from the Edson Carvalho main academy. There is a bit of a rivalry between the two schools. For example, the Edson Carvalho Academy was right on the beach and the ground floor was independently owned *lanchanette* where I would go often after my afternoon training session to buy a bowl of frozen *açaí* before my nighttime training session.<sup>134</sup> Often, some of the academy members from Edson Carvalho were there eating and tried to convince me to leave Gracie Barra to train with them at their academy. Also, on one occasion, one of their black belts came into the Gracie Barra Academy in Barra to talk to one of the Gracie Barra black belts. When he left, the Gracie Barra black belt told me he did not like or trust the Edson Carvalho black belt, but did not give me a real reason as to why when I asked him.

Even with the rivalry, the relationship is respectful but not amicable. This represents change from the earlier days of BJJ when rival teams would fight each other in the street if they saw each other. BJJ was originally a martial art system of self-defense with no or few opportunities for legitimate sport competition and tournaments. This fact, combined with pride and machismo attitude prevalent in Brazilian society, led to BJJ practitioners picking fights with rival groups on a relatively frequent basis.

From my training partners and instructors I discovered this happened in

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and it was the largest of any academies I personally saw while in Brazil. Despite the size of the main academy, the overall size of Team Edson Carvalho Bahia is smaller than Team Gracie Barra Bahia.

<sup>134</sup> *Lanchanette* refers to a small snack restaurant that typically sold sandwiches, hamburgers, and often fruit smoothies and shakes.

*Açaí* in this case refers to the popular purple fruit of the *açaí* palm tree that is native to northeastern Brazil and the Amazon rainforest, it is advertised as an energy booster.

Salvador, especially before Maurício Robbe started the Gracie Barra-Bahia team.<sup>135</sup>

He is a well-respected man and instructor and frowns upon fighting and public violence.<sup>136</sup> His attitude has helped curb that trend and promote a more positive attitude of BJJ in Salvador in the public's mind. Even though I had members of the Edson Carvalho Team attempt to get me to join their team, I never felt that I was in a position where the conversation would escalate into any form of hostility or violence.

Despite the growth in the sport and the more sportsmen-like attitude that is developing, old habits do not die overnight. I competed at a tournament in Aracaju, which is the capital of the state of Sergipe, which lies directly to the northeast of the state of Bahia. It was at this tournament that I saw my first ever-actual fight between BJJ practitioners, either in the United States or Brazil. I have videos of all my matches at that tournament, and immediately following the conclusion of my quarter-finals match people start running onto the mat and across the competition venue to watch/participate in the fight. This is unprofessional and not allowed, furthermore it negatively effects to the competitors who needed to pause their match until order could be restored.

I was too focused on my own matches to really pay attention to the fight, but I learned it was between two men who had been coaching some of their students or teammates and came to some sort of disagreement. The fight was forced outside of the confines of the venue but the entire tournament was halted until the fight stopped. In total the tournament was halted for about fifteen minutes. I used the

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<sup>135</sup> Professor Eduardo dos Santos, interview by author, 7 May 2011, Salvador de Bahia, video recording, Campo Grande, Salvador de Bahia.

<sup>136</sup> This is also the attitude promoted by Carlinhos Gracie for any member of Gracie Barra to follow, it is also one of the core reasons behind his formation of the CBJJ.



time to rest and recover for my next match, rather than watch how the fight played out. For this reason, I never found out whether the fighters stopped on their own accord or if the fight was broken up. Furthermore, I never found out if any disciplinary action was taken against the two people who fought.

One of Carlinhos' principle motivations for founding the CBJJ was to stop incidents like this and to allow for punishment against individuals and teams who promoted violence and hostility at tournaments or in the street. However, this tournament was being run by a smaller federation, the Sergipe Federation of Jiu Jitsu, and therefore did not have the same backing and reputation to enforce or uphold rules. Although infractions are ruled on by a case-by-case basis, if this had been a CBJJ tournament, at the very least both the people who had fought would have been forced to leave the tournament and the competitors they were coaching may have been forced to leave as well. I said, I never found out if the two coaches were forced to leave or not. In the case of competitors being kicked out it is not necessarily to punish them, especially considering they probably could not stop their coaches from fighting if they tried. However it is used to dissuade the coaches instead. A coach is less likely to break the rules if they know their team/students as a whole will suffer. Additionally, the team or individuals involved may be banned, temporarily or permanently from future CBJJ tournaments. This can usually be reversed if the parties in question issue a formal apology to the CBJJ and the each other.

An enforcement of rules is a very positive practice for sport BJJ. Not only does increasing the reputation of the sport make the public more accepting and receptive to BJJ practitioners, but it also influences more people to join a local BJJ academy. The majority of people do not want to be known as thugs or violent

offenders, and even if interested in training, they may have eschewed the sport for this exact reason. In this way, Gracie Barra-Bahia, under the leadership of Master Maurício Robbe, has been positive for BJJ in the city of Salvador and the surrounding area.

Interconnected with the fact that public opinion of BJJ is being shaped positively in recent years, is the fact that it will ultimately mean more money for the sport. Large tournaments require sponsors to help carry the cost of running a tournament.<sup>137</sup> Although there are now some large, and financially successful, BJJ clothing and uniform companies, they will not want to associate their brands with people who give BJJ a bad public perception. The better a city's reputation, the more BJJ sponsors will come to tournaments hosted by teams in that city.

This is especially true for non-BJJ business sponsors, who might only want to associate their name with positive causes. It is not enough to not have a bad reputation; the sport needs a good reputation. Sponsorship even extends outside of the realm of tournaments. Most BJJ instructors in Salvador have traditional nine to five day jobs. They dedicate their after-work hours to teaching and running BJJ academies. Individual sponsorships can help them financially, which in turn allows them to focus more time on growing their academy and helping their students succeed. This can only be a positive thing for the growth of the sport.

Finally, sponsorship and more money in general will allow more high level Soteropolitano, the name given to a resident of Salvador, BJJ competitors to travel to Rio for the big national tournaments and to travel abroad for the big international tournaments. Currently, Salvadorian BJJ is not well represented on the national and

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<sup>137</sup> For example, renting a facility, paying janitors, paying referees, purchasing medals and t-shirts to give competitors, running a snack stand etc.

international scale.<sup>138</sup> However, I believe this will begin to change as more money comes into the hands of the best schools and instructors in the city. An increased positive association and an emphasis on sport and competition BJJ are the keys to increasing the money flow to the BJJ community in Salvador. The CBJJ already has many affiliations and sponsorships with companies, thus making the presence of Gracie Barra, which itself is affiliated with the CBJJ, important to the local BJJ environment in Salvador.

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<sup>138</sup> However, while I was there one of my instructors a then second-degree black belt (who has since earned his third degree) who taught the night classes at the Barra Academy, Homero “Thor” da Silveira, took bronze for his weight class in the black belt division at the Brazilian National tournament. Also Master Maurício Robbe has many national and world championship titles for the Master and Senior black belt divisions.

## **Section II: The Culture of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu**

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu as an institution arrived relatively late to Bahia and Salvador. The late arrival has helped create a different regional BJJ culture that is unique to Salvador and Bahia. There are three official BJJ federations in Bahia, which differs from many other states that only follow the CBJJ. The existence of the federations has further pronounced BJJ development as a sport activity, rather than a martial arts activity, in Salvador. This is a general trend within the broader BJJ community, but in this regard Salvador is farther behind the states where BJJ has existed for a longer period of time. Women also have a unique role in the BJJ culture of Salvador, but are still not widely represented within the Salvadorian BJJ community. This is slowly changing, but due to specific Brazilian social attitudes many women choose not to train BJJ.

In Brazil the different states each have different federations in charge of running the sport BJJ community. They put on tournaments, register fighters, and are involved with belt promotions. In Bahia there are three separate BJJ federations. None of these federations are officially linked with one another creating an over abundance of mutually exclusive federations. The three independent federations in the state of Bahia put on tournaments but are not required to adhere to the same rule system or tournament format as the other federations.

The three Federations are the Jiu Jitsu Federation of the State of Bahia (Federação de Jiu-Jitsu do Estado da Bahia-FJJEBA), the Bahian Federation of Jiu Jitsu (Federação Baiana de Jiu-Jitsu-FBJJ), and the Bahian Federation of Sport Jiu-Jitsu (Federação Baiana de Jiu-Jitsu Esportivo-FBJJE). The FJJEBA is the official federation run by Master Maurício Robbe and is recognized by the CBJJ as a part of

the Confederation. However, it was not founded until after Maurício Robbe brought Team Gracie Barra to Salvador in 2004, making it a relatively recent federation when compared to the FBJJ. The FBJJ was founded in 1996 by Team Edson Carvalho, and has existed the longest of any of the Bahian federations.<sup>139</sup> The FBJJE was founded in 2005, but it was not actually founded in the capital city of Salvador. Humberto Tavares, the head instructor of another large team named Corpo E Mente, founded the FBJJE in Feira de Santana where his main academy is located.

Having three federations complicates the competition circuit and inhibits the competitors and legitimacy of champions from Bahia. For example, I competed in the FJJEBA championships and won the blue belt division for my weight class. Technically this made me the FJJEBA state champion for my belt level and weight, however only the FJJEBA recognized me as such. Consequently I was also recognized by the CBJJ because it recognizes the FJJEBA. The FBJJE and FBJJ each had their own state championships to determine the winners. Having three state championships takes value away from all of them because now there are potentially three different people all claiming to be state champion for their weight class and belt level.

Although, anyone can compete at any Federation's tournament, they must first register. In Brazil, people must register annually with a federation by providing a passport sized photo, filling out an application, and paying a fee. This costs time and money, and most competitors in Bahia either are not willing, or do not have the money to register for all three. Thus greatly restricting the amount of tournaments they can do each year.

The lack of uniformity between the referees in the different federations is a problem as well. Each federation does referee training and classes individually, so

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<sup>139</sup> Team Edson Carvalho, "Team Edson Carvalho Background." Team Edson Carvalho, <http://www.edsoncarvalho.com>. (accessed January 26, 2012).

differences exist between them. This makes it much more difficult for competitors to compete in their matches if they are playing by one set of rules but being judged by another. I experienced a problem with the refereeing while competing in Brazil. At the end of March I had travelled to the state of Sergipe to compete. There I won the Sergipe state championship at blue belt for my weight class. This was through the Sergipe Federation of Jiu Jitsu (FSJJ), which is recognized by CBJJ. Less than two weeks later I was competing in a FBJJE tournament in Feira de Santana, another city in the state of Bahia. In my first match I passed my opponent's half guard and mounted him. Normally this series of moves would have netted me six points.<sup>140</sup> My opponent escaped my mount relatively quickly and eventually swept me, earning him two points. The match ended shortly after and I thought I had won six points to two. However, the referee had not given me any points for my pass to mount and instead gave me an advantage.<sup>141</sup>

I argued with the referee, but in BJJ their decision is final. For some closure a teammate appealed it to the tournament administrators and showed them the video without telling them who won the match. Everyone who saw the video agreed I had won the match either six to two or it was tied two to two with one advantage to me.<sup>142</sup> Although this may seem trivial, it takes weeks of preparation for a tournament, it is a hassle to register and it costs money to travel to and from the venue. Finally, you have to pay to compete in the tournament, so essentially I lost

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<sup>140</sup> 2 points for passing the guard, and 4 points for the mount.

<sup>141</sup> An advantage is given for certain positional changes that do not garner points. Instead advantages are used in the event of a tie with the points, whoever has the most advantages will then win. However, if one person has more points than the other advantages do not matter, no matter how many the person may have.

<sup>142</sup> I had not held mount for very long before my opponent escaped so some people who saw thought I should have just received an advantage for my mount attempt rather than the full four points. However, I would have been awarded an advantage had this been the case, so I still would have won the match.

time and money purely because of one referees mistake.

My teammates back in Salvador, none of whom had decided to compete in that tournament, told me things like this stopped them from competing in other federation's tournaments. They also made the point to tell me that the referee probably ruled that way simply because I was the only gringo at the tournament, and many Brazilians do not like to see Brazilians lose to foreigners in a BJJ competition. Problems like this could hopefully be avoided if the federations joined together and established stricter referee criteria and training. This would also allow the sport competition scene to grow, which would further increase the reputation of the BJJ community in Bahia.

There are two problems stopping the formation of a confederation or the dissolving of the federations to form one unified federation. First, the title of president of a federation, or any organization, is a status symbol. It commands respect and people are not willing to simply give that up. Brazilian society is very status driven and political, which can precipitates the formation of multiple organizations so that people have access to more titles.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, each of the presidents of the federations is also a high-level black belt instructor with their own schools and teams.<sup>144</sup> Thus BJJ also represents their financial livelihood. They can use their position as a president of a federation as a form of advertising to accrue more students and more money.

The second, and perhaps more important, aspect that is stopping the formation of a confederation or unification of the different ones is the fact that

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<sup>143</sup> Glenn Dealy, *The Latin American: Spirit and Ethos*. (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1992), 53-95.

<sup>144</sup> When I refer to BJJ "teams" that is a group of schools who share the same lineage or team name. Gracie Barra is a team, as is Edson Carvalho. Each team is made up of individual schools, for example, I trained at four different schools who all belonged to team Gracie Barra-Bahia.

tournaments bring money to the people running them. The federations run the tournaments so they receive the revenue from them as well. A well-run tournament can be profitable. Sponsors help cover the cost of running a competition. Besides making profit from the competitors, the federations can also keep left over sponsorship money that was not needed. Money is a powerful motivating force for most people, and I believe this is the real reason that the federations do not join together.

This is hurting the evolution of BJJ in Salvador. Although every person who trains BJJ has different motivations and different goals, many people enjoy competition. These people may be looking forward to competing but the next tournament is still months away. The fact that anyone who trains BJJ also has various personal and professional responsibilities outside of BJJ may mean they are forced to miss a tournament for one reason or another. Then the next tournament is months away and they may spend the greater part of the year training with no opportunity to compete.

For a competitive person this is very stifling and discouraging. Although competitors do not necessarily represent the majority of BJJ practitioners, they do often represent the best of BJJ practitioners. Competition is a way to measure individual and team progress. People can analyze what techniques and positions are working for them against fully resisting opponents who may not be familiar with those techniques. If a technique is very successful, then people at the tournament will notice that and take it back to their own schools to study and refine it. In this way the sport is constantly changing and evolving because of the hard work of competitive athletes. Anything that inhibits the competitive environment indirectly inhibits the growth of BJJ.



While the issue of multiple federations is holding BJJ back, there are still many positive aspects of the BJJ culture in Salvador de Bahia. Perhaps one of the greatest positive trends in BJJ today is the fact that more people are being exposed to it and individuals of lower economic standing have options to train the sport. Originally, working class or even middle class people could not train BJJ. Anyone who trains BJJ has to put in a significant amount of time training if they want to improve steadily or at a fast rate. People working multiple jobs may not have the time to train consistently. Furthermore, it is an expensive activity. It costs money to register for classes, to buy the gi and other equipment, to travel to and from the gym. Even things that are often overlooked, such as laundry bills for constantly cleaning sweat drenched gis add up to large amounts of money every month.<sup>145</sup>

When my one instructor, Duda began training at the end of the 1990s he was the only dark-skinned man training at his school.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, all his other training partners were from the upper middle or upper class. An academy/instructor can only handle so many students at a time. When there were fewer instructors and academies they had to restrict more the amount of people who could train with them. Naturally, many wanted to maximize their revenue and so the price to train with them was high enough that only people of a higher socioeconomic level could afford to train.

As time goes on more people earn their black belt and gain the skills required

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<sup>145</sup> The typical gi weighs between 1.5-3.5 pounds. The gi material is heavy and stiff and made of thick cotton that does not breath well. In even just an hour-long sparring session most people lose over 2 pounds of sweat, and often much more. All grappling sports have to worry about skin infections and rashes like ringworm, which are prevalent when a person does not wash their gi or other clothes.

<sup>146</sup> Professor Eduardo dos Santos, interview by author, 7 May 2011, Salvador de Bahia, video recording, Campo Grande, Salvador de Bahia. This is significant if you recall Bahia's demographics as the Afro-Brazilian capital of Brazil, the majority of the population can trace at least one family member to a person of African decent.

to be a competent instructor. More instructors means more access from the lower classes, because financial competition is lower and people are forced to lower their prices or risk losing students to other academies. However, BJJ is still a relatively new phenomenon in Salvador and Bahia. There may be a relatively high amount of black belts in the city, but not all of them teach and they do not all have their own academies. This means that although BJJ is opening up to more and more people of middle class and sometimes working class background, the majority of practitioners in Bahia are still from the upper middle classes or above.

This also varies from academy to academy, and instructor to instructor. Some instructors are more accommodating to people of a lower socioeconomic level and are willing to make deals with them to allow them to train. Some instructors offer reduced prices if they know the person is struggling financially and/or have them help out at the academy with chores like cleaning the mats and facilities. The neighborhood where an academy is located can also determine price of training. The academy in the neighborhood of Barra I trained at was the most expensive of any that I trained at in Brazil. Most of the students there were light skinned and from well to do families. Most drove cars to train, owned more than one gi, and lived in the affluent neighboring, upper middle class communities of Graça and Vitoria.

The Academy right next to my house in the neighborhood of Garcia, which is less affluent, cost significantly less money to train at and had more dark-skinned students. Many of the students there had to take the bus home, or walk if they were fortunate enough to live within walking distance. Even then, it was obvious that none of the students were from very poor households in the favelas of Salvador.

Still, the situation is changing and BJJ is open to people of lower economic status. The more people who train will only help the sport grow and thrive and

bring more money to it. This is the key to the evolution of BJJ away from its original status as a purely martial form of self-defense into a popular mainstream sport. Hopefully, as Brazil's economy continues to expand more and more people will have access to more wealth, and therefore more BJJ training.

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in Salvador has come a long way since the beginnings in the 1980s. It is now easier to get a black belt than it was in the past. Because getting a black belt can be done in less time than it was in the past, one may assume this has led to a watering down of what it means to be a black belt and a lowering of criteria for what determines a black belt. However, this could not be further from the truth. When many people, especially in the United States, think of martial arts they usually think of martial arts as an activity for the week to gain an upper hand in a fight or confrontation.<sup>147</sup> Many people also tend to think of them as an activity for kids.

Since kids comprise a significant portion of the practitioners, and therefore monetary base of these martial arts institutions in the United States, the instructors and organizations have had to institute policies to increase participation and attendance especially for kids. Kids are especially driven by fast results and fast rewards. This has led to an increased number of belt rankings for the more mainstream martial arts, and a much smaller time remaining within one rank. If you visit a karate school in the U.S. you will often find children who have not even begun puberty walking around with black belts. Originally, Asian martial arts only allowed black belts to people who had truly mastered the arts and could teach the activity. Children were not eligible to receive a black belt. In BJJ one must be at least 16 years old with years of BJJ experience to earn a purple belt, and must be 19 to earn a black

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<sup>147</sup> Green and Svinth, xiii.

belt.<sup>148</sup> Knowing that there are still strict guidelines to receive a black belt in BJJ, there must be a reason why people are able to get black belts faster than they did ten or twenty years ago.

The answer lies in the evolution the sport has taken, especially in the past fifteen years. The increase in the number of practitioners has led to a vast increase in the amount of techniques and movements used in BJJ. This in itself allowed people to focus on learning techniques rather than creating their own. Of course people still do create their own techniques, but they are drawing from a larger pool of techniques as time goes on. Nevertheless, it is not required to develop new techniques or have a completely unique style to become a black belt, in fact, Roger Gracie, one of the most successful contemporary competitors and instructors, is known for his “ultra basic style” of BJJ that he uses to win national and international competitions, including against opponents who use “fancier” and more recently developed techniques.

More importantly than the increase of techniques, is the increase in the amount of practitioners. BJJ is an individual sport, but it requires training partners. Not only can one not spar without a partner, but it is also virtually impossible to practice techniques without a partner. Still, if someone had only one training partner they would develop a very narrow style of BJJ and would only have one other person to draw knowledge and experience from. The best schools are ones with a wide large amount of students with varied styles who all help each other evolve and develop.

Each school tends to develop a certain style and students tend to share

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<sup>148</sup> These ages are according to the IBJJF rankings of which I spoke about in the introduction. Not all schools follow this system exactly, but I personally, in my multiple years involved in BJJ have seen or even heard of anyone younger than 19 years old with a black belt.

certain underlying stylistic themes. This makes sense because students are learning from the same instructor. The more people that train and the more instructors with their own academies there are, the more the styles vary. Currently, Salvador has many academies, and therefore many styles for people to draw from. Even though many students restrict their training to only one academy, the instructors often go train with other black belts from within the team. For example, my various instructors from Gracie Barra frequently traveled to other Gracie Barra academies to train with the black belts and students there. Sometimes people from other teams are welcome and come train as well, although this is less common. This means that knowledge, in the form of the individual practitioners, travels throughout the city and even to other cities in Brazil. People are exposed to many more people and many more unique training opportunities than they were ten or twenty years ago, because there are more academies and more black belts than before.

Furthermore, in the past, because of the lack of legitimate black belts there were lower belts or people from other martial arts teaching BJJ techniques to people.<sup>149</sup> However, they had a limited or incorrect understanding of the concepts and technical aspects of BJJ. This was very damaging because once a new practitioner learns something incorrectly they develop a bad habit and ingrain the incorrect move into their muscle memory. It is hard for anyone, regardless of activity, to change a bad habit once it has developed. The BJJ federations attempt to combat this problem through the use of standardizing and registering black belts so that someone cannot take advantage of new practitioners to the sport. Currently, there are a host of legitimate academies and legitimate instructors so this is not much of a problem anymore in Salvador. In the end, the weeding out of this practice

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<sup>149</sup> Professor Eduardo dos Santos, interview by author, 7 May 2011, Salvador de Bahia, video recording, Campo Grande, Salvador de Bahia.

has allowed BJJ in the city to develop further.

BJJ has also benefited in huge ways from the global phenomenon of the Internet and sites like “youtube”. People can now learn techniques on their computer from strangers or friends in other cities. They then take what they learn online and bring it to class to test it and develop it. It is no coincidence that the rise in the level of black belts in Salvador de Bahia has, in part, coincided with the rise of the Internet in Salvador. Although the Internet’s influence on BJJ is certainly not unique to Salvador or Bahia, it would be erroneous to ignore its importance in helping BJJ in Salvador develop. Every instructor I spoke with told me that they used the Internet to sharpen skills and would sometimes form a day’s lessons based off of techniques they saw on the Internet. Importantly, they also used the Internet to network with black belts from outside the city. This made it much easier for them to have other high level instructors come into their gym or for them to visit another gym even if they had never met that particular individual in person.

The growth of BJJ has led to a more progressive mentality within the martial art. This progressive attitude has allowed women to begin training. Furthermore, women are training alongside their male training partners. They are not segregated into female only and male only groups. However, in the beginning of BJJ’s history women did not train. However, that has since changed and now at high-level competitions there are women’s divisions and women’s world champions. It is becoming more common for women and girls to train BJJ, but they still represent a very small minority of practitioners, especially in Salvador de Bahia. For example, out of over one hundred people I trained with in Salvador over my six months there, only three were female. Of those three, only one was consistent in her training. Contrast this with the United States where I train with roughly seventy people

between my home academy and my Penn State academy. Out of those seventy about six are female, and three of those six are consistent with their training.

I think women are less likely to train in Salvador because there are still more narrowly defined gender roles in Brazilian society. Men are expected to be the public and often patriarchal figures, while the woman's primary sphere of influence is the house. She is a private figure under the supervision of her patriarch.

Furthermore BJJ is a combat sport, combat sports tend to be masculine in nature. The academies therefore tend to be masculine spaces and fewer women are drawn to it.<sup>150</sup> They are posed with the challenge of establishing themselves as a presence in a male dominated space. However, it is not the case that women are unwelcome at the academies. In fact, members of the academy become very warm to female students sooner than they do with male students. Perhaps it is because there are much fewer women in general and the men want to make sure the women feel accepted. Moreover, it probably has to deal with the patriarchal mentality in which men are supposed to protect women, and accepting them into the academy quickly is a way of protecting them.

At BJJ academies in the both the U.S. and Brazil, but especially Brazil, male training partners often call each other "brother." In many ways they have fraternal relationships considering they fight each other and choke each other but at the end of the day they respect each other and support each other in many different circumstances, even with things completely unrelated to BJJ or the academy. This

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<sup>150</sup> It is possible that husbands and fathers also do not allow their wives or daughters to train, but I have no direct evidence of that. This can be somewhat understandable considering because of the lack of female practitioners they have to rely on a majority of male training partners, if not exclusively male training partners. The same problem exists in the United States, where people often do not want their wives or daughters training because they feel it is not appropriate for women to have such close physical contact with non family member males.

sibling mentality often applies to female training partners as well. However, males generally treat sisters differently than they do brothers, and this appears in BJJ as well.

Due to the patriarchal nature of Brazilian society women are often looked at as “little sisters” in the academy. This causes a lot of protectionism from the male students, especially the senior students.<sup>151</sup> It is a biological fact that women and men are physically built differently than each other, and women, on average, are weaker than men. Therefore, the instructors and senior students are often protective of the female students so that the less experienced male students do not hurt the female students during training. This happens as well with new male students, in that the higher-ranking members and instructors make sure the new students, regardless of gender, are not being hurt while training. Still, I found this protectionism was always prevalent in regards to the female students, even if they had been training for a long time.

A large part of this is the “little sister” dynamic, but there is more to it than that. Many people, especially males, when they start training BJJ or a similar grappling art overly rely on strength. In this way they can be extremely rough, especially when they do not gauge their intensity to their training partner. Although competitions have weight classes, academies do not. Therefore people of all sizes and ages train with each other regularly. In this way a new student who weighs over 200 pounds and is over 6 feet tall may be sparring with another student who is shorter and 50 pounds lighter. However, because they are new and do not have as good understanding of BJJ techniques and body movements, they can potentially

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<sup>151</sup> Senior student here denotes a student who has been training for a few years, age is not a factor. There can certainly be very young students who are “senior” to much older students simply because they have been training longer.



injure the smaller person if they get over zealous or over competitive.

This problem is compounded with the ego problems of many new students. BJJ can be a very humbling experience, especially when a smaller weaker person who has years more of experience is able to choke out or literally throw a much larger stronger opponent. There is a saying in BJJ that someone either, “loses their ego or leaves the sport.” The problem of the competitive ego of new students combined with a possible large difference in strength between people sparring is what leads to the most injuries.

This relates to the topic of women in BJJ because there is one aspect of ego that many guys, no matter how long they train, have much difficulty in overcoming: losing to girls. It is this aspect of the ego that instructors and senior students, who usually have gotten past most egotistical aspects of the sport, are trying to protect the female students from getting hurt by overly aggressive male students.<sup>152</sup>

The beauty of BJJ is in the ability for a smaller weaker person to defeat a larger fully resisting opponent. In this sense, it is a great martial art for women to learn especially if they focus on the self-defense aspect of it. However, the self-defense is becoming less important, or at least less emphasized, than sport BJJ. Although there are still fewer women training, and therefore fewer women competing, there are divisions for female grapplers at all the very large tournaments. Also, in the United States every tournament I’ve ever attended has had divisions for women and girls the same day and time as the men’s divisions. However, in Brazil, no tournament I went to had any female divisions or female competitors.

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<sup>152</sup> Everyone always has *some* form of ego and competitiveness no matter how long they train. It is important to maintain, it in some sense, to drive you to keep getting better. The difference here is that people who have been training for a long time usually have much better control of their egos.

This does not mean they do not exist, but they are less common. Also I only competed in the state of Bahia and Sergipe. It is possible, and likely, that the other big BJJ states like Rio de Janeiro have more opportunities for women to compete. Regardless, this is an obstacle Salvador and Bahia need to overcome if they want to attain national and international BJJ prestige. Simply providing more opportunities for women who already train to compete would be a huge step in attracting more women to the sport. As BJJ continues to grow and develop as a sport activity more women will start training.

### **Section III: The Influence of Mixed Martial Arts on Brazilian Jiu Jitsu**

Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) has a specific relationship with Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. MMA is a term coined in the 1990s when the United States-based UFC and various Japanese fighting organizations were gaining in popularity. The Gracie family created the UFC to demonstrate the utility of BJJ against other martial arts styles to a North American and international audience. However, participants in the early UFC fights quickly learned that the most effective combat fighting style was not one single style but a mix of different individual martial arts. The most successful fighters were the ones who incorporated ground fighting techniques and stand up fighting techniques into one cohesive arsenal. Stand up fighting denotes combat between two or more individuals who are standing on their feet and attacking with strikes, such as punches or kicks, to their opponent. Perhaps the most well known contemporary stand up striking in the United States is traditional Western boxing, although many other stand up striking styles exist. It was this “mixing” of different martial arts styles that led to the appropriately name “mixed martial arts.”

The UFC is the largest and most profitable MMA organization. Although it is an organization based in the United States they host events in foreign countries including events in Brazil. Since a large portion of MMA fighter’s ground fighting techniques stem from BJJ, MMA is one of the biggest advertising mediums for BJJ. This is true in Brazil as well. A very large portion of BJJ students, in the last fifteen years, were first exposed to the sport of BJJ after watching the UFC or other MMA events, myself included.

Many very popular and successful UFC fighters are native Brazilians. Currently there are seven weight divisions in the UFC. Of the seven champions in the UFC, three are native Brazilians. Also, the current heavyweight champion, Junior Dos

Santos, fights out of Salvador de Bahia, Brazil.<sup>153</sup> He is the first UFC champion from Salvador and is a source of great pride for the people of the city.<sup>154</sup> A past interim-heavyweight champion, Antônio Rodrigo Nogueira, is also from Bahia as is his twin brother, Antônio Rogério Nogueira, a popular UFC light-heavyweight fighter. Having famous fighters training out of and born in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil motivates fellow Soteropolitanos to start training or try to take their training to the professional level. It is very positive for MMA, and BJJ, in Salvador to have champions or world-class competitors from the city.

Although the average person in Salvador is more likely to be aware of the existence of BJJ than the average person in the U.S., many of my teammates I talked to in Brazil were first exposed to BJJ after watching the UFC. This is important because it shows that in Brazil, MMA, and the UFC specifically, is one of the biggest promoters of BJJ.<sup>155</sup> Because of the great influence MMA exerts on BJJ, it has helped promote the evolution of BJJ as well.

American freestyle wrestling is a huge aspect of MMA, and has therefore become a much bigger part of BJJ. Takedowns in BJJ are much more technical now and much more common than they used to be. This is ultimately a good thing because it creates more well rounded and more efficient ground fighters. Since many people are training MMA as well as BJJ, they bring their wrestling techniques that are vital to MMA into their BJJ classes and their training partners benefit from

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<sup>153</sup> Carlos Eduardo Ozório, "Cigano Tells His Tale," GracieMag.com. <http://www.graciemag.com/2011/11/cigano-tells-his-tale/> (accessed February 15, 2012).

<sup>154</sup> While I was in Salvador, Dos Santos was not yet the champion, but was a rising star. He was featured on many mainstream advertisements displayed at bus stops all over the city.

<sup>155</sup> Since MMA incorporates many styles of fighting, it is also responsible for the promotion of many styles of martial arts, particularly, Muay Thai kick boxing, traditional western boxing, and wrestling. Many people who train BJJ also train MMA or one of these other styles.

their teammate's knowledge and technical prowess.

Leg attacks, or submissions that attack the joints in the leg, particularly the knee and ankle, are also becoming more prevalent in BJJ because of their use in MMA and no-gi grappling. That is not to say leg locks did not exist before in BJJ, but they were less common and leg lock techniques were known overall or taught in the BJJ community. However, due to their dangerous nature many BJJ schools will not allow white belts to use them, and many leg locks are not allowed when competing in the gi, due to the increased friction of the material, thus making it harder to escape the submission and therefore increasing the chance of injury.<sup>156</sup>

Both the increase in the prevalence of wrestling and leg locks are part of a larger and more important general trend in BJJ. The increasing popularity of no-gi submission grappling is largely due to the influence of MMA on the sport. In modern MMA, combatants do not wear a gi. All they are allowed to wear, in terms of clothing, are fight shorts.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, the opposing fighters may not grab their opponent's clothing at all during the fight.<sup>158</sup>

Many people are exposed to grappling and fighting first through the no-gi style of MMA, that is what they are drawn to first and often they want to train no-gi

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<sup>156</sup> Probably the worst injury a grappler can sustain is a knee injury. The tendons in our knees take a long time to heal properly and often do not ever regain their full pre-injury integrity.

<sup>157</sup> Unified Rules and Regulations Section 10. A-B. Section 7 states all competitors must wear a mouthpiece, Section 8.A states all male competitors must wear a groin protector (athletic cup), and Section 9 states all competitors must wear commission approved MMA open-fingered gloves. " Rules and Regulations - Unified Rules and Other MMA Regulations." The Official Website of the Ultimate Fighting Championship® (UFC). <http://www.ufc.com/discover/sport/rules-and-regulations> (accessed February 6, 2012).

<sup>158</sup> Unified Rules and Regulations Section 15.A.xx " Rules and Regulations - Unified Rules and Other MMA Regulations." The Official Website of the Ultimate Fighting Championship® (UFC). <http://www.ufc.com/discover/sport/rules-and-regulations> (accessed February 6, 2012).

submission grappling exclusively. However, new students will often be exposed to the gi by their instructors who require they train with a gi in addition to their no-gi training. Sometimes the academy alternates training days between gi and no-gi. If the academy uses the aforementioned schedule, then a student who only trains no-gi is limited in the days they can train BJJ if they do not start training in the gi as well.

However, there are many people who refuse to train in the gi, and some academies are exclusively no-gi training academies. In Brazil, there are separate tournaments for gi and no-gi submission grappling.<sup>159</sup> In this way the rise of no-gi has been very good for the sport as it allows for more opportunities for sport competition, which ultimately means more money for the federations running the tournaments and more opportunities to attract sponsors.

Also of importance is the fact that no-gi training opens the doors for people of a lower social economic lifestyle to begin training BJJ. A new gi is expensive, especially in Brazil. If someone trains traditional BJJ more than three times a week, they usually invest in two or more gis. On top of the initial investment of the gi is the fact that gis hold onto sweat, fungus and bacteria if they are not washed regularly. It is expensive to constantly wash a gi, and due to their bulky nature they are usually always washed in a washing machine.<sup>160</sup> Many poor Brazilians, especially in Salvador, cannot afford to constantly wash a gi, if they can even afford the gi in the first place. Also many do not own their own washing machine, and the neighborhood Laundromats are very expensive. The no-gi uniform on the other hand can be as simple as a pair of fight shorts. In fact, many people use their bathing

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<sup>159</sup> As opposed to the United States, where there are generally both no-gi and gi divisions going on at the same tournament.

<sup>160</sup> As opposed to hand washing them.

suit as their no-gi shorts, and in a beach city like Salvador even the poorest person usually owns at least one pair of swim trunks. Due to the light nature of the shorts they can be easily washed by hand and will hang dry very quickly under the Brazilian sun. I even heard of men I trained with simply going swimming in their fight shorts afterwards to “clean” them. Technically the salt water would kill bacteria and fungus that may be embedded in the shorts, thus sanitizing them.

However, MMA has, in certain instances begun to trivialize what it means to be a black belt. Some people train MMA exclusively, and after garnering a winning record over just a few years are awarded their black belt in BJJ, even if they do not train traditional gi BJJ or spend the majority of their MMA training focusing on grappling.<sup>161</sup> Still, this is not a rampant problem. If the federations unified in Bahia, this would probably cease to be a problem at all, since a black belt would need to be approved and registered by the federation.

MMA has been instrumental in garnering attention for BJJ. Currently, many new students to BJJ first discover the sport by watching MMA fights, usually UFC fights. This is the case in both Brazil and the United States. Even though BJJ is better known to the average person in Brazil, many people do not begin training until they see MMA fights on television. Since MMA does not use the traditional BJJ gi, people are often drawn to no-gi submission grappling first. However, oftentimes they supplement their no-gi training with traditional gi BJJ because they either want to train more days in the week or their instructor forces them to. Since MMA is continuing to gain in popularity, BJJ will most likely continue to gain in popularity as well.

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<sup>161</sup> Professor Eduardo dos Santos, interview by author, 7 May 2011, Salvador de Bahia, video recording, Campo Grande, Salvador de Bahia.

#### **Section IV: The Future of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in Salvador**

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is still a young sport in Salvador de Bahia, having existed for less than thirty years. No one person can predict the future of the sport, but inferences can be made based on current trends within the city itself and within the larger BJJ community as a whole. However, the fact that it is a relatively recent sport to the city gives BJJ less historical background to study and to make predictions based on past events and circumstances. Despite this, there exists an intimate relationship between the sport of Mixed Martial Arts and BJJ in the greater BJJ community, with Salvador being no exception.

BJJ is not pervasive in everyday media. There are not any regular television programs dedicated to the sport. BJJ exists as a niche activity in the media garnering attention mainly from BJJ oriented websites and a few magazines. Newspapers do occasionally cover tournaments in Salvador in their sports or cultural sections, but the articles are usually brief expository articles taking up a small fraction of the page. BJJ Magazines are generally exclusive magazines catering only to the sport of BJJ and therefore appeal only to practitioners and fans who are already exposed to BJJ. Mixed Martial Arts on the other hand, is much more prevalent in the media and therefore more in the general public's view than BJJ is. MMA events, especially UFC events, are shown on television and Pay Per View multiple times a month. Fighters are featured on billboards and advertisements around the city. Certain high profile fights are awarded large articles in the newspapers, and are often featured as segments in regular sports magazines.

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and submission grappling are still an integral aspect of MMA fights, and the vast majority of MMA fighters spend much of their training with high level BJJ instructors, and often times are very high level practitioners



themselves. The lack of public exposure to BJJ and abundance of public exposure to MMA means that most people are first introduced to BJJ through MMA. This also means that the future of BJJ is closely intertwined with the future of MMA. There are also other future events, namely the 2016 summer Olympics to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, that can potentially contribute to the growth and popularity of BJJ on an international scale.

Mixed Martial Arts is gaining in popularity all over the world, but especially the United States and Brazil, as those are the two countries with the most fighters in the UFC. MMA sparks many people's interest in BJJ, even in the city of Salvador. Since the UFC is the largest and most viewed MMA organization, the UFC possesses much influence over the combat sports fan base. For this reason, the growing popularity of MMA will ultimately lead to the growing popularity of BJJ.

The UFC has recently put on shows in Brazil to exploit the rapidly growing MMA market there. As recently as fall 2011 the UFC sent representatives to the city of Salvador to speak with the Governor of Bahia and the state secretary of sport, in hopes of potentially setting up a fight card in Salvador de Bahia.<sup>162</sup> Besides adding an economic boost to the local economy, this would get more people interested in MMA and push those who already train MMA and BJJ to train harder and become better in hopes of making it onto the fight card. The UFC is known for drawing on local and regional talent to bolster local fight cards and to increase local attendance. If the UFC hosted an MMA fight card in Salvador they would aim to get local Bahian and Soteropolitano fighters on the card. In addition to local talent, many fighters on the card would be big internationally recognized names and many of the attendees

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<sup>162</sup> GracieMag Newsroom, "UFC Holds Meeting in Salvador, Brazil." GracieMag.com. <http://www.graciemag.com/en/2011/10/ufc-holds-meeting-in-salvador-brazil/> (accessed February 24, 2012).

to the event would be from all over Brazil and all over the world.

However, the popularity of MMA also adds a specific question as to what type of BJJ will increase in popularity in the future. Whichever type of BJJ increases in popularity will also lead to an increase in participation. Will it be no-gi submission grappling or traditional gi BJJ? Due to MMA's influence, many people begin training with the original goal of only training no-gi. This is because MMA grappling is no-gi grappling but with strikes allowed. If people are exposed to MMA grappling first, then they often want to train that specific style of grappling before they delve into the broader spectrum of traditional BJJ and no-gi submission grappling. The increase in popularity of MMA would therefore foster and increase the participation of strictly no-gi grapplers in the BJJ community.

Although the increase in MMA may seem to favor strictly no-gi grapplers in the BJJ community, this is not necessarily the case. People who eschew the gi in their training are limiting themselves in multiple ways. First, they are limiting the amount of time they can train by the mere reality of class schedules at the academies in Salvador. For example, a certain academy only has no-gi training two or three days a week. If a new student wants to train more days than that then they have two options. The most probable option would be to start training in the gi so they can supplement their training on the days there is not any no-gi training. The other option would be to attempt to branch out to the different schools and hope that their schedules do not conflict. By this I mean, hypothetically Academy A has no-gi training on Tuesday and Thursday, while Academy B has no-gi training on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The student could then train strictly no-gi submission grappling five days a week at both academies.

The second option is less realistic for a few reasons. Each academy would

require payment to train, thus making this option expensive. Also, logistically it presents a problem. Hypothetical Academy A and B are not necessarily near each other. Salvador is a very large and sprawling city, and with such a large amount of BJJ schools to choose from, most people do not venture more than a few neighborhoods away from their home to train BJJ. Most people simply do not have the time or money to travel thirty or forty-five minutes, one-way, by bus or car to train BJJ. Moreover, if that student were part of Team Gracie Barra, for example, they would almost certainly only train at another Gracie Barra Academy, thus reducing their options further.

Finally, the idea that no-gi grappling would overpower traditional gi BJJ training is hindered by the fact that most black belts, who are also the main instructors, spend at least part of their training in the gi. These black belts are not going to disappear in the near future and be replaced with exclusively no-gi instructors. In fact, the youngest black belt I personally met in Salvador was only twenty-four years old. Not every black belt teaches BJJ, but many do, including the aforementioned twenty-four year old. Assuming he continues to teach BJJ his entire life he still has, most likely, a minimum of forty years left of teaching in him. Since most of these black belt instructors train heavily in the gi, they will most likely continue to do so their entire careers as practitioners of BJJ.

No-gi training is often more athletic and explosive than traditional gi BJJ. Although the athletic aspect of it draws many people in, it also pushes others away. BJJ is currently practiced all over the world by people of all ages, children as young as two or three are on the mats training alongside with senior citizens who are in their eighties or nineties. However, these two groups, young children and the elderly, also typically train mainly in the gi. One of the key reasons for this is the

idea that traditional gi BJJ requires less athleticism and strength than no-gi BJJ. Instructors do not want to lose these students, and therefore lose money, by abandoning the gi.

All these reasons add up to the reasons why gi BJJ and no-gi BJJ will continue to coexist for many years, regardless of the fact that many people will probably initially be drawn to no-gi BJJ due to the popularity of MMA. However, there is still a trend that has begun to happen in the United States that may start to happen in Salvador and the rest of Brazil. That is the emergence of no-gi only schools taught by instructors who do not train in the gi at all and therefore do not follow the traditional BJJ belt system. People in the United States have already begun trying to exploit the popularity of BJJ and MMA by opening schools teaching no-gi grappling with only rudimentary grappling experience. Many of them claim to teach “no-gi BJJ” even though they have no formal BJJ training. This is damaging to the reputation and growth of BJJ, because it creates competition for qualified black belts who have spent years and even decades dedicated to BJJ who may want to open their own academy. BJJ is nowhere near the popularity of sports like basketball or baseball in the United States or sports like soccer in Brazil. This means there is a much more limited number of participants to draw from, so competition is still high between teams or academies who want to teach and spread BJJ.

If someone without respected grappling credentials, like a black belt possesses, opens their own school they can attract students with comparatively lower prices than the black belts, who often, rightly or wrongly, want to charge higher prices because they possess more knowledge and experience that they feel is worth greater amounts of money. Just as a professional tennis player, for example, would charge much more money than a hobbyist for lessons. Financial gain is an

important aspect to improving the growth of an activity such as BJJ. If the money is not there, then people will not be able to devote enough time to truly grow the sport. For these reasons, the future of BJJ is closely tied with the future of MMA. However, there are other institutions that may increase the popularity of BJJ as well.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil is going to be hosting the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. The Olympic committee has the ability to add or discontinue existing sporting events for an upcoming Olympic games. Also, demonstration sports have been common in the Olympic games for the past century. A demonstration sport differs from a regular event in that it is used to showcase a specific sport/event but the medals accrued do not count for the official medal count. It is still too early to tell what, if any, new events or demonstration sports will be added to the 2016 Olympic games, but some sports, including BJJ are being openly discussed.<sup>163</sup>

If BJJ were introduced, even if only as a demonstration as opposed to an official sport, it would have huge implications. It would introduce BJJ to a wider international audience while simultaneously gaining the legitimacy and prestige of the Olympic committee's backing. It would also allow for huge sponsorship deals and better training facilities for the Olympians and their training partners. It would draw the BJJ community as a whole together, at least on the national level.

However, the biggest hindrance to this would be the lack of true international participation of BJJ. Brazil has by far the most black belts, who would undoubtedly be the belt rank participating in the Olympics, with the United States a clear second in terms of black belts. It would not be unrealistic to see Brazil taking the gold medal in every weight class. Still, Olympic demonstration sports are often culturally specific and therefore dominated by the host country, so perhaps this

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<sup>163</sup> Capoeira is also being seriously considered.

would not be a deterrent at all. When including the absolute weight class there are currently ten official weight classes sanctioned by the IBJJF. That is a potential ten gold medals for Brazil, the host country. Perhaps, this would give them more incentive to push for BJJ to be listed as an official sport, but would also be reason for the Olympic committee to be hesitant in allowing it an official sport status, because other countries would not be as willing to participate in the event.

Submission grappling could also be implemented as an Olympic sport. The rule set is a little simpler, so for someone who has never seen BJJ before it would be easier to follow the matches. Also, it is faster paced and more aggressive, which makes it more exciting to people who possess limited exposure to BJJ. Furthermore, since other countries have their own specific submission grappling styles that are fundamentally grappling arts like BJJ, perhaps there would be greater competition from the international community and Brazil would not have as clear a monopoly on the medals. Traditional BJJ would still benefit from the adoption of submission grappling in the Olympics, in much the same way it benefits from the exposure of MMA.

Finally, Olympic recognition of the sport would probably affect the system of Federations in Salvador de Bahia specifically. There are three BJJ federations in Bahia, none of which are directly affiliated with each other. The Olympics have their own international regulatory body, but there are also individual regulatory bodies for the different sports in different countries. Most likely, they would require an official Olympic Regulatory body in Brazil itself, along with other nations wishing to send national representatives to compete in BJJ events. Currently the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Confederation (Confederação Brasileira de Jiu Jitsu) organized and operated by Carlos Gracie Junior unequivocally has the most national influence in Brazil in

regards to BJJ. Furthermore, the CBJJ is directly affiliated with the International Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Federation (IBJJF), which runs the international tournaments including the world championships. It is not unlikely that both of these organizations would be conscripted to form the Olympic regulatory body for BJJ. If this were the case, then the IBJJF would become the international committee and the CBJJ would become the national committee in Brazil.

If these organizations did become affiliated with the Olympics they would gain even more power and prestige, due to the power and prestige associated with the Olympics in general. The CBJJ would most likely exert its influence to unify the state federations. Since Bahia has three, this means either consolidating the three into one confederation or eliminating two of them altogether. The Jiu Jitsu Federation of the State of Bahia (FJJJBA) under the leadership of Mestre Mauricio Robbe is already affiliated with the CBJJ. Therefore, if the CBJJ were part of the Olympic national body, they would almost certainly favor the FJJJBA in the leadership role for the state of Bahia. However, to get all three federations to agree the CBJJ would probably have to consolidate the three into a confederation with co-presidents. For many other Brazilian States this would be a non-issue because there is already only one federation in those particular states.

BJJ has ample opportunity to grow and evolve in both Salvador de Bahia, and the world. However, this growth resides in large part upon other institutions, namely MMA and the Olympics. MMA has been one of the biggest promoters of BJJ in the past twenty years, and the Olympics has the potential to be a huge future promoter. Still, there is no guarantee that Brazil will adopt BJJ into the Olympics either as a demonstration sport or as an official event. What is certain is that if BJJ follows the current path it will increase in popularity and continue towards being

practiced primarily as a sport rather than a system of self-defense. By its very nature as a combat sport it will always have the martial foundation and have real world application for self-defense, but the focus and trajectory of the activity will be towards a sport-oriented atmosphere.



## Chapter 5: Conclusion

This ethnographic study on the culture of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil showed the relationship between the global BJJ community and the regional BJJ community in Salvador and Bahia. This thesis explored the history of BJJ and its development from a martial art purely focused on self-defense to a popular combat sport and the implications inherent within this change. The specific focus on Salvador and Bahia attempted to provide published information concerning the BJJ culture in that city and region that previously lacked academically published information.

The first chapter outlined the history of BJJ in Brazil and the world through the eyes of the Gracie family. The Gracies possess a monopoly on history of BJJ and its evolution from a system of self-defense to a sport. At times their history is that of folklore rather than historiography due to their intentional or unintentional repression of certain aspects of early BJJ history. I attempted to address this issue throughout chapter 1, but it was difficult due to the bias of my main source. I attempted to show that early BJJ promoted by the Gracies was an activity reserved for the social and economic elite of twentieth century Brazilian society, particularly in Rio de Janeiro and the surrounding areas. This had specific implications in regards to BJJ in Salvador and Bahia, namely the late adoption of BJJ.

Chapter 2 of the thesis showed that the specific social and economic culture of Salvador and Bahia, as well as a specific Bahian martial culture centered on the institution of capoeira were in part responsible for the late adoption of BJJ into Salvador and Bahia. BJJ had to compete with capoeira, an already well-established activity, to gain students and an economic foundation in Salvador. Capoeira is a unique mix of martial and performance art that provides a different ethos to the

martial culture of Salvador and Bahia. Furthermore, the lack of grappling and ground fighting make BJJ a foreign concept to a practitioner of capoeira.

My own personal experiences and observations interacting, training, and competing with the BJJ community in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil provided the bulk of the research for chapter 3. However, my research is specific to the time period (January to July of 2011) in which I was a member of that specific community. Furthermore, I became a member of the Salvadorian BJJ community after having spent years in the BJJ community of the United States, and therefore possessed some prior experience with the subject matter. My main focus was with Team Gracie Barra-Bahia but I did interact with BJJ practitioners from other teams and states in Brazil. One of the biggest difficulties in my interactions was the reluctance of Gracie Barra students/instructors to provide an unbiased view of the team when they found out I was doing academic research.

The final section of chapter 3 is largely illative in nature and makes predictions for the future of BJJ based off of current and historical information. A possible future study on the culture of BJJ in Salvador could be done after the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro comparing the culture from 2011 discussed in this thesis and the post 2016 BJJ culture in Salvador de Bahia. This thesis would be of great use to anyone wishing to analyze the changes in the culture and ethos of the BJJ community in Salvador de Bahia.

## APPENDIX A

## TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

## Part 1: Jiu Jitsu Theory

1. What is your full name

Eduardo Dos Santos

2. What is your official rank in jiu jitsu?

I'm a lightweight black belt fighter (70kg-77kg).

3. Why do you train jiu jitsu, and why did you start?

I started training Capoeira, I trained for 10 years but then it started to get boring. Then I met a black belt in jiu jitsu. He lived here in Salvador [de Bahia, Brazil] and I lived in the interior of Bahia. He invited me to train with him, I started training and here I am 12 years later in love with it.

4. How long have you been training jiu jitsu?

For 12 years.

5. Did you start training jiu jitsu in the city of Salvador, if no, where did you start training?

I started training in the interior of Bahia in a small city called Nazaré das Farinhas with Lucas Claudios one of the first black belts here in Bahia.

6. Who was your first instructor, do you still train with them?

Lucas Claudios, but I don't train with him anymore. Now I train with Leonidas Gondim.

7. Are you able to train and teach full time or do you have another job?

No I have another job during the day, an auxiliary person at an orthodontist office. I teach jiu jitsu at night.

8. Since you teach jiu jitsu now do you find it harder to focus on your own training and advancement?

It is a little more complicated now, but I do get to train during the class [that I teach]. You have to choose one or the other on which to focus yourself 100%. I also train at two classes [when I'm not teaching].

9. How has your approach to teaching changed over the years?

Now that the Internet and its technology has arrived it has helped me a lot. I have colleagues who live outside country and they can do a technique and then send me a video via email, or I can do a technique and email them and we can train the same thing. It has helped with the evolution of jiu jitsu, and now I can take a "class" at my house [with the computer] with a black belt. It is very cool.

10. What, in your opinion, is the most important quality for a student of jiu jitsu to have in order to be a successful fighter?

Discipline is very important for someone to learn jiu jitsu. Even if the world of jiu jitsu encompasses many things, with many competitions, with many black belts in various places. If you are truly willing have determination and discipline, then you will go very far. The time of having to be strong, and tall, are over. You need to be willing and determined.

11. What kind of person is the "ideal" practitioner of jiu jitsu?

I don't think there is an "ideal" type of jiu jitsu practitioner. Jiu Jitsu doesn't have limits; everyone in the whole world can train, every type of person. Kids can train, adults, old people, disabled people, all people, an "ideal" person doesn't exist.

12. What is one of the biggest mistakes you see new students of jiu jitsu make?

A lack of humility is a problem, too much arrogance. People think they are better than their training partners and ignore them. However, jiu jitsu is not a solo sport, you always have two or more people. You can't disregard your training partners. ME: *A problem I see with many new practitioners is they focus on very complicated techniques and moves.* This as well, many new students need to focus on the basics and fundamental moves and techniques. It is much better than trying the difficult moves first.

13. Do you believe the rising popularity of submission grappling and MMA are good for the future of traditional jiu jitsu, why or why not?

Yes, yes it is good because jiu jitsu is the base of both those sports. If someone wants to train submission grappling or MMA they have to find a jiu jitsu academy to learn traditional jiu jitsu. There doesn't exist really good submission grappler fighters or MMA fighters who don't also have good jiu jitsu, so they have to go to jiu jitsu academies to train.

14. What is your opinion on gi vs. no-gi training? Could you consider someone a black belt who has never trained in the gi?

There is a lot of controversy around these questions. Today, a blue belt or purple belt in jiu jitsu can start training MMA. They may be good at MMA but they lack true jiu jitsu skills. To be a black belt in jiu jitsu you have to train a lot in traditional jiu jitsu. I wouldn't consider [someone who doesn't] a black belt. Someone can't just have 10 MMA fights and think they are a black belt in jiu jitsu. MMA is "mixed martial arts" and is more than just jiu jitsu, so no I wouldn't consider them a black belt.

15. What is your opinion on the difference between sport/competition jiu jitsu and jiu jitsu as a self-defense system?

In my opinion it has everything to do with jiu jitsu today. First when it was created the primary objective was self-defense, not attack. It has been proving its efficiency through competitions and athletes like Royce Gracie who entered the first UFC and fought 4 people in the same night and submitted them all. This showed it was an efficient sport on and off the mat.

16. What are your thoughts on the evolution of jiu jitsu focusing more on the sport aspect rather than the self-defense aspect?

I think the answer is very similar to the last one. I also think the media has helped a lot in the evolution; television and the Internet have greatly helped the evolution of jiu jitsu. Now an athlete can train a move and have someone film him, so people can analyze when he does something wrong. Also, people can see when an athlete does something correct. This has really helped the evolution of jiu jitsu, because, in the past, many people taught incorrectly. There weren't many black belts and people would train with people who were wrong in their understanding of jiu jitsu. Nowadays, you can go on the internet and see all the academies and where they are, you can see there is one in Barra [neighborhood in Salvador] or another neighborhood. Jiu jitsu has really evolved with the advancement in technology.

17. Do you currently compete in jiu jitsu tournaments, if so how often?

Yes, generally I compete in 3 competitions per year. I focus on world championships, national championships, and state championships. I compete all over Brazil, not just in Bahia.

18. Do you follow a special diet for jiu jitsu?

Not really. Generally around competitions I want to increase my metabolism.

I don't eat carbohydrates at night, but eat lots of protein.

19. Do you have a special strength and conditioning program for jiu jitsu? If so do you think it is necessary for all practitioners to have one?

Yes, definitely. People should definitely work on their power, not solely technique. When someone has technique and strength they have a perfect style. *Me: Only lifting and muscle exercises?* Nowadays there are professionals who can analyze you and tell you what you need to improve and prepare a specific work out routine especially for you.

20. What is your opinion on the use of steroids in jiu jitsu among high-level competitors?

I think it is completely wrong. I think in the near future the jiu jitsu organizations will start Anti-Doping techniques that exist in MMA. I think athletes will start being tested.

21. What is your opinion on the evolution of new or "trendy" positions in jiu jitsu, like the 50/50 guard, cross guard, and reverse DLR guard?

I think the basics are still very important. Personally, I don't teach really difficult "trendy" techniques. I teach the techniques that work the best for me because they work for everyone. For me specifically, I don't like many of the new "trendy" positions.

22. What are the differences for men vs. women learning jiu jitsu?

I think the only difference is that they are men and women. Now, women are dominating jiu jitsu as well. Jiu jitsu is an open sport, and now women are able to compete at the highest level along with men. The only difference is sex, man and woman.

23. In what ways, in general, is a woman's jiu jitsu game/mentality different from a man's?

It is a very complicated question, I'm not sure how to answer. *ME: for example I think it is hard for women to start because they don't have many other women training partners. Also, when they are new they don't have technique [like all new practitioners] and they are also generally weaker than their male training partners.* This is true, but it isn't their fault. There are some teams and regions that have many women training together. In fact, some places have only women training. Generally women move more naturally and rely on technique rather than strength much more than men.

24. What is harder for women training in jiu jitsu to learn than men? What is easier?

I don't think there is anything specific it is more about the individual. There are things that are easy for some people and harder for others. Teaching women is the same as teaching men. *ME: Something I notice is, often, men have a bigger ego. They never want to lose [which is a bad attitude for jiu jitsu].* Yeah, men especially don't want to lose to women. When someone starts to train he starts debilitating himself, but if the teacher is good and has good training partners he will lose his vanity and his ego.

25. In your opinion, can women develop the same high level of skill as men?

Yes, certainly yes.

26. Who is your biggest inspiration in jiu jitsu?

The whole Gracie family is a huge inspiration for me. Especially all the sons of Helio Gracie, I really like them. If you look at jiu jitsu throughout different times, it evolves a lot and keeps evolving and the Gracie family is still on the



top. Even now Gracies dominate submission grappling and MMA too. My current professor, Leonidas [Gondim is an inspiration] as well.

27. What are your future goals with jiu jitsu?

I really want jiu jitsu to become an Olympic sport. I would really like to train and teach future athletes that will represent my country. *ME: Another quick question, do you think that the Olympics in Brazil in 2016 will have jiu jitsu?*

Maybe submission grappling will be, because it is more popular than traditional jiu jitsu and the rules are a little easier for spectators to understand.

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### Historical Analysis

28. Who first brought jiu jitsu to Salvador, and when did they bring it?

Charles Gracie introduced jiu jitsu in Bahia in the 1980's but I'm not sure exactly when. It has only been in Bahia for about 25 or 30 years. He created the first academy named Boudokan in Pituba (neighborhood in Salvador).

29. Who first brought Team Gracie Barra to Salvador, and when?

Mestre Mauricio Robbe brought team Gracie Barra to Salvador in around 2004 or 2005. That was when he created a Gracie Barra (circuit?) here in Bahia, there had already been some other teams but they joined together to create Gracie Barra Bahia.

30. In your opinion, how has the jiu jitsu community changed in Salvador since you first started training?

It has changed very much. Now it is much more professional, before, for example, if a student from Gracie Barra saw a student from another team in the street they would often fight. Nowadays this doesn't happen. The situation has evolved a lot but is still evolving. There are more competitions and they are better organized. Before, sometimes different teams would fight at the competitions, but now it is much more relaxed and peaceful. The behavior of the athletes nowadays is much better.

31. What has changed the least?

I think what hasn't changed is the Federations. They have a conservative mentality and don't have many competitions during the year. I don't think there needs to be multiple federations in Bahia, there should just be 1 strong one that gives various competitions. Here in Bahia there are 3 federations, and that hasn't changed, and is an old style mentality that should change.

32. Do you think someone getting their black belt today is different from

someone who got their black belt 10, 20, or 30 years ago? In what ways?

I think before people had to work harder. There were less techniques, but now there has been a development and evolution [of techniques]. A black belt who was training before I started usually had to train for around 12 years to learn the techniques needed to be a black belt. Today it is much easier techniques are [already developed] and ready for an athlete to train. It is possible to get a black belt in 5 years. Now you can spend 3 years training MMA and receive a black belt. MMA and no gi grappling have helped the evolution, but have also trivialized what a black belt is. A black belt is [supposed to be] a master.

33. In what way is jiu jitsu in Salvador different from jiu jitsu in other parts of Brazil? Has there been a different stylistic element or psychology that has developed?

I spoke of this earlier; I think the biggest difference is how many federations there are. The federations don't promote and organize enough events like in Rio or some other Brazilian states. For this reason the Bahian federations are slowing down the evolution of jiu jitsu in Bahia. People spend one, two, or three months training and don't get to go out [and compete] which isn't stimulating. That is a big difference between Bahia and Rio de Janeiro.

34. Where/In what direction do you see jiu jitsu headed in Salvador in the next 10, 20, 30 years?

I hope that the doors are still open for me. I believe there are many good athletes and teachers here in Bahia. In a few years Bahia will be a reference point for Jiu Jitsu. Now there are important athletes who train MMA, like the Nogueira brothers, Junior Cigano, and Lyoto Machida [all current elite UFC fighters]. With the help of the federation in a few years we will have Bahian world champions.

35. What has been the socioeconomic level of jiu jitsu students and practitioners in Salvador? Has this changed over the years? Do you see changing in the future?

I think when I started jiu jitsu it was more of a sport for people of a better economic position. When I started I was at an academy I was the only black guy and the only person from the middle class there. Everyone else was from the upper-middle class or higher. I think this has changed now with social projects and more athletes getting their black belt and giving classes [to

people of a lower class]. However, people with more money still evolve faster because they do lots of other physical activities like yoga, weight training, and swimming, but you need money for that. Still, nowadays there isn't as much of a socio economic difference.

36. Who are some historically notable competitors and teachers from Salvador?

I think Ricardo Carvalho, of Team Edson Carvalho, has been very important for the evolution of jiu jitsu. *ME: Yes their team exists in the United States as well.* Many people speak badly about him but he is important. Mestre Mauricio Robbe as well, he brought Gracie Barra here. My Professor as well, Leonidas [Gondim], he has been training here for many years and his name is very famous. Many people talk about him in Bahia as well as the rest of Brazil. When I talk with people [outside Bahia] about jiu jitsu in Bahia they always talk about Gracie Barra and Leonidas. I think those are the biggest men in jiu jitsu with the most achievements in Bahia: Ricardo Carvalho, Mauricio Robbe, and Leonidas.

37. What is the most frustrating thing about jiu jitsu in Salvador?

Lack of support and sponsors, the companies don't believe in Bahian jiu jitsu or give it much attention. This is the big problem, people train for competitions but then don't have the money to register.

38. Is there anything else you would like to add, that we haven't discussed?

No, I don't think so. I think these were good questions, very interesting.

## APPENDIX B

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## ACADAMIC VITAE

**NATHANAEL MURPHY**

PO Box 217 • 16 East Broad Street  
Trumbauersville, PA 18970

Cell Phone: (215) 908 1134  
Email: [npm127@psu.edu](mailto:npm127@psu.edu)

**SUMMARY**

Analytical, focused, hard-working individual with well-rounded education and work experience. Superior writing and communication skills. Extensive volunteer teaching experience both domestically and abroad.

**EDUCATION**

Catholic University of Salvador Spring Semester 2011  
Salvador de Bahia, Brazil  
Attended regular University classes in Portuguese

B.A. Penn State University, Schreyer Honors College  
Major: *History*  
Minor: *Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies*  
Minor: *Latin American Studies*

High School Quakertown Community Senior High School 2008

**HONORS**

- Dean's List all 5 semesters at Penn State.
- Paterno Fellow, one of 80 selected for inaugural year of honors program.
- Schreyer Honors College Scholar.
- Golden Key International Honor Society, member 2009 - present.
- Member of Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society

**EXTRACURRICULAR EXPERIENCE**

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu December 2007 – Present

**Assistant Instructor – Renzo Gracie PA**

• Assistant instructor to kids Brazilian jiu jitsu class as well as assistant instructor to beginner adult Brazilian jiu jitsu class when home during the summer and during holidays. Assumes head instructor duties of teaching techniques and supervising sparring sessions when the full time head instructor is away for vacations or is ill. Also travels 50 minutes away to be head instructor at Norristown location once a week. Approximately 15 hours per week.

**Instructor – CPAMMA**

2011-12 School Year

• Head Brazilian jiu jitsu instructor two nights a week at State College location. Also teaches day classes during the week. In charge of teaching technique, supervising sparring, speaking to interested clients, and performing closing duties at the gym in between classes. Approximately 10-12 hours per week.

ProWorld, Salvador de Bahia, Brazil  
[www.proworldvolunteers.org](http://www.proworldvolunteers.org)

February 2011 – July 2011

**Volunteer-Community Development**

• Provided teaching to underprivileged children as well as preteens for exercise and physical activity games and martial arts. 8 hours per week.

Last Chance Equine Ranch, Richlandtown Pennsylvania Summer 2010 – present  
www.lastchanceranch.org

**AM Horse Feeder**

- Helped organize barn for the later shifts. Fed and gave water to dozens of horses as well as goats, pigs, chickens, and other farm animals. Helped take horses from barn to pasture and vice versa. Cleaned barn and stalls. 8 hours per week.

Paterno Liberal Arts Undergraduate Fellows Program Spring Semester 2010-Present

**Charter Member**

- One of 80 selected charter members for the Liberal Arts Honors program. The program promotes ethics, leadership, excellence in communication, as well as intercultural and international awareness.

Golden Key International Honor Society Spring Semester 2009-Present

**Penn State Chapter**

- Inducted during freshman year.

PFEW-Pennsylvania Free Enterprise Week Business Camp June 2006

**Camp Student**

- Weeklong business program for high school students. Helped create fictional business and business plan. Presented project to a panel of real community business leaders.

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

The Dark Horse Tavern, State College PA Fall 2010

**Host/Security**

- Enforced safe drinking and conduct rules among patrons. Part time.

SEDONA Corporation Summer 2009

**Paid Internship – Telephone Surveys**

- Surveyed bankers for commercial lending and loan risk research. Created online survey, completed data entry online in web-based system and Excel spreadsheets. Dialed 50 calls per day across the United States. Temporary full time.

Quakertown Internal Medicine Associates, Quakertown, PA 2006 - 2009

**Medical Records File Clerk**

- Prepared patient visit charts, prepared next day lab reports, filed confidential medical records for Internal Medicine practice (5 doctors plus 15+ staff). Part time 9 hours per week.

Mill Pond Veterinary Clinic, Milford, PA 2006

**Dog/Kennel Handler**

- Handled groups of up to 30 dogs, including vicious dogs. Retrieved dogs from kennel area and interacted with customers. Cleaned kennels and dog play areas. Seasonal work, 8 hours per week.