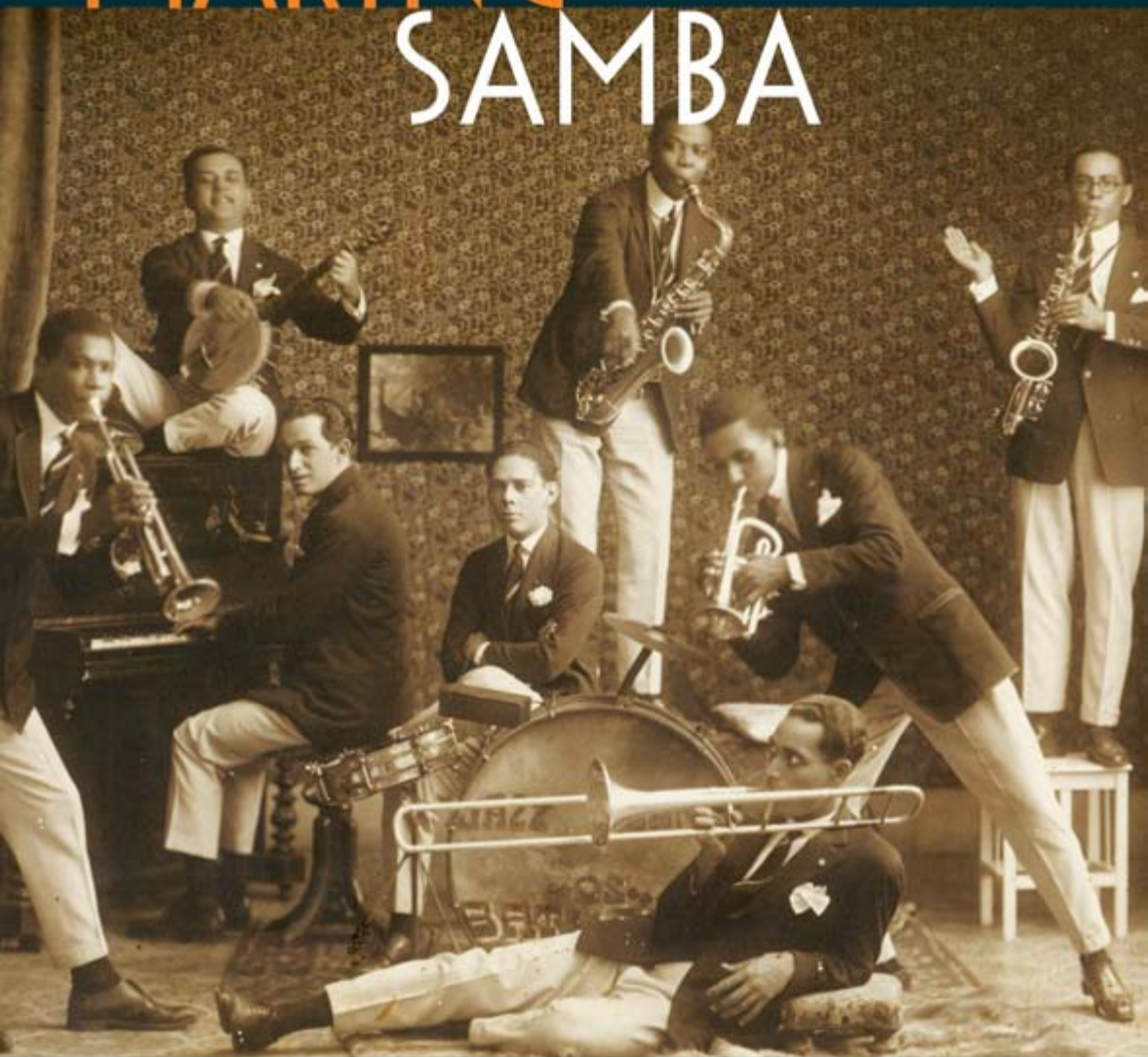


MAKING SAMBA



A NEW HISTORY OF RACE AND MUSIC IN BRAZIL

MARC A. HERTZMAN

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

*Sydney and Sadelle Berger, activists and inspirations
and*

*Marsha Hertzman Blasingame,
for whom I am named*

CONTENTS

*A Note about Brazilian Terminology,
Currency, and Orthography* ix

Abbreviations xi

Acknowledgments xiii

Introduction 1

One. BETWEEN FASCINATION AND FEAR

Musicians' Worlds in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro 17

Two. BEYOND THE PUNISHMENT PARADIGM

Popular Entertainment and Social Control after Abolition 31

Three. MUSICIANS OUTSIDE THE CIRCLE

Race, Wealth, and Property in Fred Figner's Music Market 66

Four. "OUR MUSIC"

"Pelo telefone," the Oito Batutas, and the Rise of "Samba" 94

Five. MEDIATORS AND COMPETITORS

Musicians, Journalists, and the *Roda do Samba* 116

Six. BODIES AND MINDS

Mapping Africa and Brazil during the Golden Age 146

Seven. ALLIANCES AND LIMITS

The SBAT and the Rise of the Entertainment Class 169

Eight. EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE

The UBC and the Consolidation of Racial and Gendered Difference 194

Nine. AFTER THE GOLDEN AGE

Reinvention and Political Change 227

Conclusion 244

Notes 253

Bibliography 299

Index 337

A photo gallery appears after page 168.

A NOTE ABOUT BRAZILIAN TERMINOLOGY, CURRENCY, AND ORTHOGRAPHY

Translating racial labels from Portuguese to English is a challenging task. For example, not all of the terms that Brazilians use to denote some form of African ancestry—*negro*, *pardo*, *preto*, *crioulo*, *mulato*, to name just a few—have clear parallels in English, and racial labels in any language are as messy, clunky, and potentially problematic as racial categories themselves. In the pages below, I frequently use “black” and “Afro-Brazilian,” familiar terms to most U.S. readers and ones with accessible Portuguese equivalents, *negro* or *preto*, and *afro-brasileiro*, respectively. But neither English term represents a pristine reproduction of the language used by the men and women discussed here. Many studiously avoided assigning themselves racial labels. Others described themselves as *preto*, *negro*, *pardo* (brown), *mulato* (mulatto),¹ or even *crioulo*, a derogatory term that one particularly bold musician sought to appropriate and make his own. As much as possible, I have preserved these (and other) labels in direct quotations, and in my own prose I have tried to employ terms that I think strike a balance between Brazilian and U.S. convention: in addition to “black” and “Afro-Brazilian,” I use “African-descended,” “men and women of color,” and so on.²

As if race did not present enough linguistic and conceptual dilemmas on its own, music complicates matters even more. This book’s focus on Afro-Brazilian musicians reflects their central role in creating *samba* and in the development of Brazil’s music market. But their centrality should *not* be taken as an assertion that *samba*, or any other music, may be accurately described as “black,” “white,” or any other racial label. As Karl Miller writes, “There is no *a priori* separation of musical expression according to racial or ethnic identity. Music practices are not ‘white’ or ‘black,’ ‘Mexican’ or ‘Cajun,’ until someone says they are, and even such a declaration opens rather than closes the debate.”³ In this book, I frequently place racialized musical labels (e.g., “black music”) in quotation marks, a somewhat cumbersome practice, but one that provides an im-

portant reminder that for all their power, racially defined musical genres are, like race itself, socially constructed and often misleading.⁴

Currency

During the period covered in this book, Brazil used three units of currency: the *mil-réis* until 1942, the *cruzeiro* until 1967, and then the *new cruzeiro*. (In the 1980s and 1990s, several new units were adopted. Currently the *real* is the national currency.) The *mil-réis*, composed of one thousand *réis*, is written 1\$000. (Six hundred *réis* is written \$600.) One thousand *mil-réis* was called a *conto* or a *conto de réis*, denoted as 1:000\$000. So, for example, the amount 35 contos, 543 *mil-réis*, and 250 *réis* would be written as 35:543\$250. When the *cruzeiro* replaced the *mil-réis* in 1942, one *cruzeiro* (\$1.00) became the equivalent of what had been one *mil-réis* (1\$000), and one thousand *cruzeiros* (\$1,000.00) the equivalent to one *conto* (1:000\$000). In 1967, one new *cruzeiro* (NC\$1.00) became the equivalent of one thousand *cruzeiros*.⁵ In hopes of consistency and clarity, wherever possible and practical I have provided contextual, cost-of-living figures, many of which are summarized in table 6 in chapter 3, and rough U.S. dollar equivalents.⁶

Orthography

Brazilian Portuguese did not have a single set of orthographic standards during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the names of individuals I try to use the spelling that most frequently appeared in the contemporaneous documents that I read. This is, admittedly, an imperfect approach. For example, in the case of Benjamin de Oliveira, whom I discuss especially in chapter 3, most of my information comes from a secondary text published in Brazil in 2007 that employs today's spelling. In the primary sources that I consulted about Oliveira, his name appears as "Benjamim" and "Benjamin." When directly quoting those sources, I preserve the original spelling, whether with an "m" or an "n." (I do the same for place names.) But when I write about Oliveira I have used the 2007 text (and today's convention) to break the tie, so to speak, and therefore I use "Benjamin." For facility in finding references that appear in the notes and the bibliography, I have preserved the original spellings for written and published documents and texts. For proper names of places and all other words not quoted in the original, I hew to today's standards.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABCA

Associação Brasileira de Compositores e Autores

AM-BAN

Acervo de Manuscritos, Biblioteca Alberto Nepomuceno da
Escola de Música da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro

AN

Arquivo Nacional

AUBC

Arquivo UBC

CCB

Clube do Compositor Brasileiro

CEST

A Casa Edison e seu tempo

DIP

Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda

ESXX

Estatísticas do Século xx

GIFI

Grupo de Identificação de Fundos Internos

MIS

Museu da Imagem e do Som

SBACEM

Sociedade Brasileira de Autores, Compositores e
Editores/Escritores de Música

SBAT
Sociedade Brasileira de Autores Teatrais

SBAT-DC
SBAT–Departamento dos Compositores

UBC
União Brasileira de Compositores

UES
União das Escolas de Samba

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My wife and I used to joke that before-and-after-book photos of either one of us would look grim: two young, happy scholars turned old and jaded. While we have said this tongue-in-cheek, there is no denying the fact that my project evolved over the course of what is now nearly a third of my lifetime, a period filled with painful moments and beautiful ones. It is thanks to many around me that I can look back and smile on the preceding years.

First due goes to my mentors at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where I learned how to become a historian. Florencia Mallon advised my dissertation and provided peerless critique, support, and insight. The same is true of Steve Stern, who (along with Florencia) also provided the gift of teaching me how to teach. This book's first seeds were planted during an independent study with Francisco Scarano in 2001, and throughout my career he has been an exceptional (and exceptionally caring) adviser and critic. I was also lucky enough to be formulating this project when Jim Sweet came to Madison. It would be hard to quantify the value of his patience, warmth, and intellectual rigor. And I was blessed to have Ron Radano on my dissertation committee. Like the folks mentioned above, he possesses an uncommon combination of intellectual brilliance and personal warmth.

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In a sense, my research career began all the way back when I was eight years old and went to Mesa Public Library in Los Alamos, New Mexico, to dig up microfilm accounts of the St. Louis Cardinals’ past glory. The following year (1987), St. Louis went to the World Series, only to lose in heartbreaking fashion. With wonderful circularity, the Cardinals won two championships during the time that it took to complete this study, and I enjoyed both of them in person and over the phone with my uncle and cousin, David and Josh Blasingame. My mother, Jeri Berger Hertzman, took me to the library that day in 1986 and has provided an unquantifiable amount of love and guidance. She taught me how to respect, challenge, and investigate. My father has given me so many things for which I

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It is appropriate that I conclude now with a second mention of my wife, Ikuko Asaka; she has been with this project and in my life through its inception, development, and conclusion. In more ways than one it all begins and ends with her.

INTRODUCTION

In November 1916, a young Afro-Brazilian musician named Donga registered sheet music for the song “Pelo telefone” (On the telephone) at the National Library in Rio de Janeiro. Donga’s apparently simple act—claiming ownership of a musical composition—set in motion a series of events that would shake Brazil’s cultural landscape. “Pelo telefone” became a smashing success and helped thrust the word “samba” into the center of the entertainment world. Within little more than a decade, samba was synonymous with national music and well on its way to becoming a metonym for all things Brazilian. The song’s success also embroiled Donga¹ in controversy. A group of musicians claimed that he had stolen their work, and a prominent journalist accused him of selling out his people for profit and fame.

Nearly a century later, another famous Afro-Brazilian musician, Gilberto Gil, set off a controversy that, at least on the surface, has much in common with Donga’s. As minister of culture from 2003 to 2008, Gil publicly embraced Creative Commons, the polemical institution that seeks to loosen copyright restrictions and use the Internet to foster “universal access to research, education, and culture.”² In 2004, Gil became one of the first musicians in the world to make portions of his work available for free via the Internet, an act he previewed several years earlier in his song “Pela internet,” a playful reference to Donga’s iconic song.³

Gil’s actions elicited forceful responses. Fernando Brant, the president of the União Brasileira de Compositores (Union of Brazilian Composers, UBC), a powerful organization whose history is detailed below, was especially vicious. In an angry and wide-ranging opinion piece published in 2007 in *O Globo*, one of Brazil’s most influential newspapers, Brant called Gil “the barbarian minister,” described his approach to intellectual property rights as anathema to modernity and civilization, and likened him to a slave master *and* a slave. On the one hand, Gil was not different from

Thomas Jefferson, who “attacked slavery in his texts, while keeping two-hundred black slaves under his thumb.” On the other hand, Brant derided the minister’s speeches as *ladainhas*, orations used in *capoeira*, a combination of dance and martial art pioneered largely by slaves and free persons of color.⁴ Remarkably, Brant’s column seems almost bland compared to the racist caricature and commentary publicly leveled against Gil in 1988, when he ran for mayor of Salvador, Bahia, and then revived during his time as minister of culture.⁵ As it was for Donga nearly a hundred years earlier, Gil’s success, dark skin, and provocative approach to intellectual property rights became a recipe for public outrage.

If Donga’s and Gil’s experiences suggest unsettling similarities between the early twentieth and twenty-first centuries, myriad differences caution against overdrawing the comparison. The Internet, Creative Commons, the rise and fall of Napster, and the larger, growing world of “digital culture” are just a few of the late twentieth-century developments that separate Gil’s world from Donga’s.⁶ And though both men’s actions prompted similar reactions, the actions themselves were quite different. Donga came under attack for asserting individual ownership. Gil took fire for just the opposite: promoting the kind of open, shared access to creative production that, according to Brant and others, will obliterate the very rights that Donga sought in 1916.

Though the histories narrated below certainly have much to tell us about current debates, I have resisted the urge to draw a straight, uninterrupted line between 1916 and 2013. Instead, I treat the connections between Donga and Gil as an indication that history often moves in circular fashion, with old problems resurfacing in new contexts and forms. The story told here begins decades before Donga’s trip to the National Library (Biblioteca Nacional) during Brazil’s preparations for the abolition of slavery (1888) and concludes in the 1970s, when a military dictatorship implemented the system for defending intellectual property rights still in place today.

WHEN DONGA REGISTERED “Pelo telefone,” he and the nation stood at a historical crossroads. In 1888, Brazil became the last country in the Western Hemisphere to end slavery. The following year, the nation replaced its monarchy with a republic. Less than three decades removed from these seminal events, Donga’s property claims became, intentionally or not, a statement about the related meanings of freedom and the republic, and a

crucial moment in a larger trajectory that saw Afro-Brazilian musicians collectively transform themselves from property—slaves rented, sold, and passed on to heirs—into professionals who mediated cultural debates and gained limited access to the fruits of their labor.

As “Pelo telefone” became a hit, Donga drew fire from multiple sides. On the application he submitted to the Biblioteca Nacional, then the clearinghouse for registering original musical and literary works, he identified himself as the composer but gave credit for the lyrics to Mauro de Almeida, a white journalist. He also sought out other white reporters to advertise the song in the press, a common strategy at the time. Both actions reflect the continued importance, years after abolition, of white patronage. On one level, then, “Pelo telefone” provides entrée into the racialized, uneven power relations that persisted in Brazil long after slavery’s demise. But “Pelo telefone” also offers a window into less obvious and less studied dynamics internal to Rio de Janeiro’s black and mixed-race communities. One of Donga’s most vocal and persistent critics was Vagalume (Francisco Guimarães), an influential Afro-Brazilian journalist, who accused Donga of stealing the song from other black musicians and community members. The incident therefore invites discussion not only about persistent racial inequalities, but also about the complex inner workings of Rio’s black communities and the intricate, often fraught alliances between whites and blacks.⁷

Donga’s property claims also raise interesting questions about race and intellectual property that extend beyond Brazil. While intellectual property has received increased attention in recent years, historians remain behind the curve established in other fields. And though scholars of many disciplines have long been fascinated with the construction of authorship, few have addressed the relationship between intellectual property and postcolonial nation building—especially in the Americas—or the intertwined histories of race, intellectual property, and nation.⁸ To explore that relationship and those histories, I place at this book’s center Rio de Janeiro’s twentieth-century black musical pioneers, a group that defies easy categorization.

Rio de Janeiro and the “Missing Middle”

Many of the challenges that Donga and other black musicians faced were inseparable from slavery and its legacies. But slavery declined earlier and more rapidly in Rio than in most of the rest of Brazil, which meant that a

significant number of free people of color incorporated themselves into the city's economic and social fabric sooner and in ways different from those of their counterparts elsewhere. This distinct trajectory helped produce overlapping circles of commerce and sociability, in which blacks and whites had extensive interactions and built important, though rarely equal, relationships.

Like most countries in Latin America, abolition in Brazil followed a series of gradual steps, including the end of the Atlantic slave trade in the early 1850s; the Free Womb Law, which conditionally freed slave children born after September 28, 1871; the 1885 Law of the Sexagenarians, which liberated slaves over the age of sixty; and the 1888 Lei Áurea (Golden Law), which fully abolished slavery. In 1849, approximately 40 percent of Rio's inhabitants were slaves. Twenty years later, that proportion had been cut nearly in half. Between 1872 and 1887, the city's total slave population fell by 85 percent, far outpacing the national average of 52 percent during the same period.⁹ A number of forces combined to hasten slavery's decline in Rio. Cholera and yellow fever epidemics during the 1850s struck slaves particularly hard. High death rates and low birthrates among slaves further decimated their ranks. Thousands more were sold to coffee planters, many of whom clung to slavery as the larger institution crumbled around them. Manumission was also crucial. Between 1860 and 1869, nearly thirteen thousand slaves secured "letters of liberty" in Rio, about ten times the number who did the same between 1807 and 1831.¹⁰ In 1872, some seventy-three thousand free people of color—more than a quarter of the city's population—lived in Rio (see table 1). Fifteen years later, months before abolition, there were fewer than seventy-five hundred slaves in the city.¹¹

Rio's free people of color found varying degrees of prosperity and stability. Some achieved modest wealth, organized small shops, and even purchased their own slaves. A great many more etched out a fragile existence working as day laborers, peddlers, and itinerant street merchants. "What awaited so many freedpersons," Mary Karasch writes, "was not the golden dream of freedom but rather the nightmare of poverty."¹² Afro-Brazilians lived and worked throughout the city, especially in favelas (shantytowns, also known as *morros*, or hills), the first of which were populated around the turn of the twentieth century; in sprawling, generally impoverished suburban areas (*subúrbios*); and in city neighborhoods such as Cidade Nova (New City), an area that became central to the rise of samba and that was known to some as "Little Africa."¹³

TABLE 1. Estimated Population of the City of Rio de Janeiro (Urban Districts)

	1799* (%)	1849** (%)	1872** (%)
Free people of color	8,812 (20)	13,361 (5)	73,311 (27)
Slaves	14,986 (35)	110,622 (41)	48,939 (18)
Whites	19,578 (45)	144,403 (54)	151,799 (55)
Total	43,376 (100)	268,386 (100)	274,049 (100)

* Urban districts.

** Rural and urban districts.

Sources: Florentino, "Alforrias e etnicidade," 10–11; Klein and Luna, *Slavery*, 183.

The rise of free populations took place during a time of overall population growth. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, migrants from across Brazil and abroad flooded into Rio, and the city's population ballooned from 275,000 in 1872 to more than 1 million in 1920. Many new arrivals met harsh conditions. The first two decades of the twentieth century were particularly rough as soaring inflation deteriorated living conditions and helped provoke strikes throughout Brazil. Long after abolition, race marked and divided the labor market and access to means of production. In 1940, more than half a million people of color lived in Rio and among them 86,854 had stable jobs, and only 846 employed their own workers. Put another way, even the most fortunate and well-off citizens of color—those who could count on constant income—were more than one hundred times more likely to have a boss than to be a boss.¹⁴ Even in hard times, black workers and intellectuals across Brazil formed a range of racially and ethnically based organizations, most famously in São Paulo—where a fast-growing black population created a highly visible web of political and social organizations—and Salvador, where an older, equally vibrant community fought to maintain political and cultural spaces. In Rio, blacks controlled important dockworker unions and syndicates and played major roles in strikes and labor mobilizations. Neighborhood homes provided places for socializing, musical composition and performance, and communal worship, often under the guidance of the female religious and community leaders known as *tias* (aunts). These milieus shaped the lives and careers of Donga and others who would transform Brazil's musical and cultural landscape.

Though some of the individuals discussed below are well known in Brazil, together they represent a spatial and conceptual "missing middle."

The artistic, intellectual, and professional cohorts examined here took shape during a period rarely highlighted by scholars of black Rio. Recent works show that a dynamic relationship existed between the city's overlapping turn-of-the-century working-class and black populations.¹⁵ Others have analyzed the city's explicitly racially conscious cultural and political organizations and movements that formed during the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁶ For all their important insights, these studies leave a gap between the 1910s and the 1940s.¹⁷ This temporal gap is matched by a geographic void between Salvador in the north and São Paulo in the south.¹⁸ While Rio generally receives a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention, the same is not true for the city's black communities, especially in English and especially during the interwar period.¹⁹

If Rio's interwar black communities represent a "missing middle" sandwiched between periods and places that have drawn greater scholarly attention, the city's African-descendant musicians, many of whom functioned as cultural and economic mediators, occupied a set of rarely explored middle grounds and in-between spaces. For much of the early twentieth century, "musician" was a generally irrelevant professional category.²⁰ While plenty of people wrote, played, and performed music, few considered it a means for making a living or for securing the protections associated with other work. Though music served a number of essential functions at religious ceremonies, festivals, bars, and communal and private gatherings, it rarely provided a primary source of income. But the precarious, unstable nature of musical labor hardly prevented enterprising artists from scrabbling together livelihoods that more closely resembled that of the city's emerging middle sectors than its poorest classes. In Brazil and elsewhere, it is often assumed that all black musicians are poor and that their poverty is both a source and a sign of musical authenticity. Many of Rio's Afro-Brazilian musical pioneers were, indeed, destitute. Others were not. Many saw their economic livelihoods fluctuate over time. As is so often the case, here single, static definitions of class belie a more fluid and complex reality. Though it would be misleading to describe most of the musicians discussed in these pages as middle class, so too would it be incorrect to define them all as poor. Instead, most occupied a station somewhere in between.²¹

On the one hand, opportunities for limited financial ascension were the product of a unique historical moment and an unprecedented combination of events and forces—a burgeoning worker's movement, a reappraisal of Brazilian racial and national identity, and technological and

musical innovations that helped create a lucrative music market. On the other hand, black middle and “middling” groups are found throughout Brazilian history, and the upwardly mobile individuals discussed below may be thought of as both predecessors to and part of a larger national middle sector, which began to form after slavery and took definitive shape between the 1920s and 1950s.²²

Black musicians in Rio cultivated professional and personal relationships with wealthy whites and did not always forefront color in their public actions or expressions. The city’s black communities did not produce an independent black press, nor did they publicly refer to themselves as a “class of color” as often as their counterparts in São Paulo did.²³ While many of the individuals discussed here imagined themselves as conveyors and guardians of African culture, a relatively small number embraced or projected identities or labels associated with the well-studied African “nations” in Salvador.²⁴ Despite these important differences, it would be misleading to segregate Rio, São Paulo, and Salvador into hermetically sealed spheres. As Paulina Alberto shows, black leaders and thinkers in all three cities engaged in larger debates and struggled against shared, if locally differentiated, challenges.²⁵ And as Maria Clementina Pereira Cunha, Juliana Barreto Farias, and others remind, many of the migrants who arrived in Rio during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came from Salvador and surrounding areas.²⁶

While individuals in Rio rarely had the kind of sustained contact (direct and conceptual) with West Africa that some of their counterparts in Salvador had, they nonetheless found ways to embrace, shape, define, and domesticate “Africa” and to negotiate the terrain between their communities and the city’s many overlapping circles of intellectuals, artists, and politicians. One important vehicle for doing so was the city’s enormous number of newspapers. The fact that Rio did not develop the kind of black press found in São Paulo may be explained, at least in part, by the fact that Rio’s black communities had allies—some white, some black—in mainstream and niche newspapers that neither claimed nor were assigned explicit racial identities. The popular press provided a crucial arena in which musicians advertised their work and engaged with, expanded upon, and rejected the ideas advanced by authors, politicians, playwrights, and journalists. In addition to newspapers, Donga and other black artists used voice, instrument, dress, and financial self-empowerment to further engage with individuals working in fields more commonly recognized as “intellectual.”²⁷ In doing so, they expanded their influence but

rarely gained the same kind of recognition often afforded to white artists, writers, and dramatuges.

Culture, Commodity, and Professionalization

By studying the “missing middle” and the related, entangled histories of race, professionalization, and intellectual property in Rio, this book provides an alternative to works that are either overly critical or narrowly celebratory of cultural production and the commodification of music. In his influential study of Brazil’s *Movimento Negro* (black movement), Michael Hanchard argues that twentieth-century Afro-Brazilian activism was impeded by a partially self-imposed form of “culturalism,” which he defines as “the equation of cultural practices with the material, expressive, artifactual elements of cultural production, and the neglect of normative and political aspects of a cultural process.” “Within culturalist politics,” Hanchard maintains, “cultural practices operate as ends in themselves rather than as a means to a more comprehensive, heterogeneous set of ethico-political activities. In culturalist practices, Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Diasporic symbols and artifacts become reified and commodified; culture becomes a thing, not a deeply political process.”²⁸

Hanchard’s work, which focuses on post-1945 Brazil, has positively shaped a generation of scholarship, but I strongly disagree with the idea that commodified cultural expressions are by definition bereft of deeper political meaning. The history of Brazil’s early music market, the struggles and successes of Afro-Brazilian entrepreneurs within it, and the explicit attempts by those entrepreneurs to commodify culture suggest the limits of Hanchard’s dismissive treatment of “culturalist” practices. My views here also depart from those of Bryan McCann, whose work has greatly shaped my own. Citing Eric Hobsbawm, McCann emphasizes the fact that most Brazilian musicians “were professionals, or aspired to be professionals.” I fully agree, but I do not necessarily share what McCann calls his own “optimistic interpretation of the commercial nature of Brazilian popular music.” Nor do I agree that by the mid-1930s “isolation was impossible” for most musicians.²⁹ The act of turning cultural symbols into palpable property was a deeply meaningful process, albeit one fraught with tension and unevenness. While commodification, commercialization, and professionalization did not necessarily reduce political meaning, those processes did frequently elevate a single individual or group into a position of privilege and power. Doing so helped create new gate-

keepers, strengthen the power of old ones, and involve musicians in their own policing.

Between the 1910s and the 1940s, Rio became home to the nation's first organizations dedicated to defending theater artists' and musicians' intellectual property rights, referred to in Brazil as author's rights (*Direito Autoral* or *Direitos Autorais*). The new associations were officially designated as *utilidades públicas* (public utilities or entities), a label that situated them awkwardly within Brazil's burgeoning corporatist structure. The state, which had few obligations to the *utilidades*, successfully enrolled them to take on the onerous, though potentially lucrative, tasks of tracking, collecting, and distributing author's rights payments (royalties). The associations, in turn, presented a series of choices and dilemmas for Rio's black artists. On the one hand, they could provide institutional support, professional visibility, and musicians' best hopes for collecting money for their artistic and intellectual creations. On the other hand, the organizations were dominated by whites and often unable to deliver on promises of equitable distribution and support. Ultimately, the system put in place to defend intellectual property rights favored a small cadre of well-connected, enterprising white individuals. That system also effectively bound musicians to the state and formally combined author's rights defense and censorship within a single legislative and institutional package. While some Afro-Brazilian artists thrived within them, the author's rights associations helped subsume Rio's black musicians within a broader, interracial entertainment sector. And though that larger group often depicted itself as inclusive and egalitarian, persistent internal hierarchies and stereotypes about authorship, creative genius, and race helped marginalize Afro-Brazilian entrepreneurs and composers. Meanwhile, easily consumable, one-dimensional caricatures of authentic, spiritual, emotive black musicians flourished.

Scholarly Influences

My understanding of these projects and processes has been influenced by a number of scholars, several of whom deserve short mention here to provide readers with a sense of my conceptual orientation. In 1999, a year before I entered graduate school, *Hispanic American Historical Review* published a seminal forum about Latin America's "new" cultural history. In one essay, Eric Van Young wrote, "Cultural history and economic history, though most often thought separate from each other, or even antithetical,

because of epistemological, methodological, or boundary distinctions, may usefully be united to the benefit of each.”³⁰ In that unifying spirit, I attempt to connect in my work subjects that are still often artificially segregated from one another: “hard” history—politics, economics, quantifiable data—and the supposedly “softer” concerns of culture, discourse, and, in this case, music, racial ideology, gender, and the process of turning something abstract (a song) into legal property.

I have also profited from a handful of texts that discuss, in diverse settings, the related issues of power, race, and culture. Michel Foucault’s delineation of the ancillary and hidden pathways through which discipline, surveillance, and power often flow has been fundamental, and the works of Peter Wade, Homi Bhabha, and Thomas Abercrombie have helped me apply some of Foucault’s insights to the unique realities of postcolonial, postslavery Brazil.³¹ In his study of Colombian *costeño* music, Wade applies Bhabha’s “ambivalent slide” concept—the process of “ideology sliding ambivalently from one enunciatory position to another”—to illustrate how Colombian elites alternately embraced and rejected popular “black” musical forms during the twentieth century. Like many of their counterparts in Colombia, Brazil’s black musicians were tugged and pulled by a public that both adored and scorned them. While Bhabha and Wade provide great insights about elite ideology, they leave less explored the roles and experiences of others situated lower on the social ladder. Rather than counter their works with a history narrated exclusively “from below,” I try to connect actors, events, discourses, experiences, and stories from across the social spectrum.

The strategies and identities that Afro-Brazilian musicians deployed were diverse, complex, and sometimes at odds with approaches that they embraced on separate occasions. Despite this complexity and diversity, and despite internal hierarchies among them, those musicians have almost invariably been reduced to one-dimensional symbols. That reduction resembles a parallel process that occurred in a dramatically different context, described by Abercrombie. In Bolivia, rural Aymara people strategically combined Spanish colonial ideals with their own by defining themselves as “civilized sons of Christ” and “their pre-Columbian ancestors as the defeated satanic race of a prehuman age.” To remain connected but also superior to those ancestors, they worshipped underworld deities, which functioned as a source of potency now properly domesticated by Christian powers. Over time, the Aymara separation of savage and civilized was itself appropriated and distorted by urban Bolivi-

ans, who viewed native rural people “through a sort of cultural pidgin.” That pidgin, Abercrombie shows, flattened the temporally and spatially dynamic Aymara worlds into one dimension: “Prevailing urban notions romanticize Indians, stripping them of their complex understandings of history and power relations and projecting them as living fossils . . . thus taking a version of one-half of [their] own ambivalent identity sources for the whole.”³²

Afro-Brazilian musicians also ordered themselves and their history into hierarchical spheres and strategically claimed connection to both a civilized, modern present and a distant primordial past. Their complex renderings were in turn often collapsed and read by others in one-dimensional terms. As both subjects and architects, Rio’s black musicians were squeezed into rigid categorical boxes but also found ways to shape and make use of the labels, assumptions, and myths attached to samba, race, gender, authorship, and “Brazilianness” (*brasilidade*). The full range and results of their actions are fully visible only when stale divisions among economics, politics, and culture are cast aside, and only when viewed through lenses trained simultaneously on the diverse forms of self-policing and racial domination described by Foucault, Bhabha, and Wade and the kind of unexpected and resourceful modes of resistance and self-identification employed by the Aymara.

The Outline of This Book

The various processes and developments considered here created a rich, often conflictual array of images and ideas, evident in the photograph that adorns the paperback cover of this book. Like many bands at the time, the one in the photo incorporated the word “jazz” in its name. Yet, as we will see, on other occasions some of the same musicians adopted a dramatically different style by dressing in rural costumes and exchanging saxophones for stringed instruments. One of the group’s leaders, Pixinguinha (standing tall at the center of the frame, with saxophone in hand), would choose neither samba nor jazz to describe his greatest works. The many musical hats that he and others wore are a testament to the fluid nature of musical genres and are indicative of the many complex and even seemingly contradictory components that went into “making samba.”³³

During the nineteenth century, long before Donga registered “Pelo telefone,” samba was a somewhat obscure term that referred to a number of different cultural and musical manifestations. The first known printed

reference to samba appeared in 1838 in northeastern Brazil, but it was not until 1917, with the success of “Pelo telefone,” that the term began to embed itself in the music market and the broader public conscience. According to Flávio Silva’s meticulous count, the term appeared in Rio de Janeiro newspapers three times during Carnival in 1916, twenty-two times in 1917 (not counting specific references to “Pelo telefone”), and thirty-seven times in 1918. Between 1917 and 1921, “samba” came to mean almost any “successful Carnival music.”³⁴ As Carlos Sandroni shows, increased use of the word did not perfectly coincide with musical distinctiveness. “Pelo telefone” hewed closely to earlier musical patterns that were popular in Brazil and throughout the Americas during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was not until the late 1920s and early ’30s that musicians in Rio would develop a unique rhythmic paradigm, which came to define the music during its so-called golden age (ca. 1929 to 1945).³⁵

Samba’s rise overlapped with monumental political changes. During the first four decades after abolition and the declaration of the republic, entrenched powers in the state of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Minas Gerais dominated national politics. In 1930, Getúlio Vargas seized the presidency, which he held until 1945 and then, after being elected, served again from 1951 to 1954. In 1964, ten years after the end of Vargas’s influential reign, the military installed a dictatorship that ruled Brazil for the next two decades.

Considering a longer arc that begins well before samba became a unified, recognizable genre and that stretches across abolition, the age of Vargas, and into the 1970s, provides a unique view of the full life spans of Donga and other influential artists whose careers intersected with and helped shape historic transformations in Brazil. The development of samba, Brazil’s twentieth-century music market, and intellectual property law advanced alongside the gradual evolution (and, eventually, the withering critique) of the idea that Brazil was a unique “racial democracy”: a place where black, white, and indigenous peoples mixed peacefully. Scholars have long exposed the myths of racial democracy, and in recent years attention has turned to understanding *how* and *why* the idea gained, and in many ways still continues to hold, validity and strength.³⁶ I provide my own interpretation of the “how” and the “why” through a narrative that unfolds in chronological order but also regularly backtracks and retraces its steps to account for multiple and distinct timelines.

Chapter 1 describes the social and economic worlds inhabited by nineteenth-century musicians, a fundamental starting point for under-

standing the subsequent trajectory of popular music, the music market, and intellectual property rights. Foreign travelers and Brazilian authorities and elites looked upon black and mixed-race musicians with a mix of fear and fascination. Meanwhile, those musicians carved various niches in Rio's urban landscape. Some played for the royal court and at popular celebrations. Others worked as jack-of-all-trades barber-musicians. Though some slave musicians were able to secure a portion of their earnings, they were, by and large, viewed as fonts—not possessors—of wealth. This paradox of slavery, which made blacks sources but not holders of capital, shaped the bases upon which Afro-Brazilian musicians built careers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Any history of samba inevitably must engage with a well-known but rarely researched origins narrative that I call the “punishment paradigm”: the widely accepted idea that samba music was violently suppressed and systematically marginalized before it became a symbol of national identity. To make sense of and ultimately move beyond the punishment paradigm, I place music in a larger framework of policing and social control. After abolition, lawmakers employed anti-vagrancy measures meant to establish and maintain economic and social order. Chapter 2 uses a sample of four hundred vagrancy cases and dozens of individually selected police records to show that Rio's authorities were less concerned with music than they were with more lucrative “vices,” especially gambling and prostitution. Chapter 2 also describes the formal and informal markets attached to Carnival and discusses instances in which the police mediated between rival Carnival groups, a role that contrasts with standard depictions of adversarial musician-police relationships. When music is placed more precisely within the larger contexts discussed in chapter 2 it becomes clear that Rio de Janeiro's police had less interest in repressing music than in asserting control through economic means. My reinterpretation of the punishment paradigm and samba's origins also suggests that the paradigm itself helped erase female contributions to the formation and elevation of samba.

Around the same time that police were enforcing anti-vagrancy laws, advances in sonic technology dramatically transformed the consumption and production of music in Brazil. Chapter 3 discusses Rio's early music market, turn-of-the-century Brazilian intellectual property law, and the opportunities and challenges attached to each. After slavery, popular entertainment served as Brazil's most visible and public stage for black men. In pursuing fame, fortune, and musical property rights they were

often held under the microscope by audiences and critics struggling to define the contours of post-abolition, republican Brazil. Related struggles surrounded the controversial debut of “Pelo telefone,” the entry point for chapter 4, which also explores the rise and success of the Oito Batutas, a band that Donga helped organize. (A later iteration of the group, without Donga, appears on the cover of this book.) The stories of “Pelo telefone” and the Oito Batutas show how palpable legal claims like Donga’s were often intimately tied to less formal, symbolic forms of property. As the actions of samba musicians (*sambistas*), audiences, and critics make clear, “owning” Brazil and its music was often as much a discursive project meant to secure a place within the nation as it was a contest to seize legal control of musical commodities.

Struggles over both legal and discursive forms of property helped create and exacerbate divisions and hierarchies within musician cohorts. Chapter 5 describes how Rio’s Afro-Brazilian musicians engaged with journalists to promote personal and group interests and to secure a foothold in an expanding entertainment world. As cultural and financial mediators, musicians were able to secure new spaces for themselves and their allies. But success often came at the expense of others, especially female artists of color. In chapter 6, we see how the lives and careers of black musicians were shaped and often circumscribed by competing projects to define Brazil, its music, and its racial order. White writers, scholars, musicians, and critics’ attempts to order the past and present often linked up in surprising ways with more formal state-driven projects to control vagrancy, surveil black masculinity, and establish the desired economic order. Meanwhile, Afro-Brazilian musicians and intellectuals put forth their own categories and definitions, some of which lined up in surprising ways with those advanced by their white counterparts.

As Rio’s black musicians were forming cohorts and building careers, a larger entertainment class was taking shape, spurred largely by the 1917 creation of Brazil’s first author’s rights association, the Sociedade Brasileira de Autores Teatrais (Society of Brazilian Theater Authors, SBAT), a group dominated by white playwrights and theater musicians.³⁷ The little-known story of the SBAT, told in chapter 7, is crucial to understanding intellectual property law, the professionalization of popular music, and the crystallization of internal hierarchies within the entertainment world. The SBAT also provides a unique opportunity to explore the origins of proto-corporatist and corporatist structures that eventually bound musicians and other Brazilian workers awkwardly but firmly to the state. Chapter 8

discusses the rise of the UBC, the institution that Fernando Brant eventually came to lead and Brazil's first and most powerful musician-centered author's rights society. Formed by disaffected members of the SBAT, the UBC helped usher in and control an era of great wealth in the music industry. But as money poured in, the disparity between haves and have-nots within the industry grew. Tied to the state and dominated by record executives, the UBC ultimately could not deliver on all of its promises.

The narrative closes in chapter 9 with a brief discussion of the post-golden age era, when Donga and several other influential black musicians dramatically reinvented themselves and found their way back into the national spotlight, often by embracing identities that hardly resembled those crafted decades earlier. To fully understand and appreciate those transformations and to trace the long, winding path from "Pelo telefone" to "Pela internet," we will begin in the nineteenth century, when slavery ruled and when samba was still an obscure, little-known term.



MAP 1. Rio de Janeiro, ca. 1890. During the first half of the twentieth century, Rio underwent dramatic physical transformations—the construction of a new port, the razing of low-rent tenements and entire hills to construct “modern” boulevards, and landfills that changed the city’s shorelines. The map depicted here therefore represents only an approximate snapshot of the city at the end of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the neighborhoods and landmarks provide a general orientation. I am grateful to Bruno Carvalho and Bert Barickman for their assistance in preparing this map.

BETWEEN FASCINATION AND FEAR

Musicians' Worlds in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro

During the colonial (1500–1822) and imperial (1822–89) eras, myriad sounds filled the streets of Rio, the colonial and national capital from 1763 to 1960. Vendors hawked their wares. People conversed in Yoruba, Kikongo, and Kimbundu and played music on European, African, American, and newly improvised instruments. Passersby could expect to hear the sounds of slaves keeping rhythm on drums and rattles, or clapping and singing as they trudged through the city bearing enormous loads of cargo on their backs, shoulders, and heads. The adventuresome, unimpeded paths traveled by those sounds contrasted with the strict codes of conduct that governed the street as well as the home. Some slaves were required to bow or kneel while kissing their master's hand each morning. Outside, etiquette demanded that they cede the walkway to oncoming whites and forbade them from returning blows leveled against them by whites. The city's social hierarchy was marked by dress, hairstyles, and jewelry. Owners often draped their slaves in fine clothing as a display of their own status. Place of residence and consumption practices also helped define social standing. Private music lessons were among the most obvious signs of privilege.

In 1845, a Christian missionary from the United States commented on what he saw and heard in Brazil. "Music has a powerful effect in exhilarating the spirits of the negro, and certainly no one should deny him the privilege of softening his hard lot by producing the harmony of sounds, which are sweet to him, however uncouth to other ears." "It is said," he continued, "that an attempt was at one time made to secure greater quiet-

ness in the streets by forbidding the negroes to sing.” The attempted prohibition ultimately failed when slaves ceased working in protest. The sounds of the street remained etched in the missionary’s mind. “The impression made upon the stranger by the mingled sound of a hundred voices falling upon his ear at once, is not soon forgotten.”¹

Passing through Rio, Thomas Ewbank, a U.S. diplomat, noted how music shaped the workday. There is a “general use,” he wrote, of “a species of melody, regularly executed, morning, noon, and night,” which called slaves to work and signaled the end of the day.² The sounds that filled Rio’s streets often blurred the lines between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. As slaves learned to play European instruments, they often added their own interpretation. Some were said to apply “African imagination” to the seemingly dull task of ringing church bells. Travelers observed slaves humming or whistling the latest songs from Europe and noted their mastery of religious songs with Latin lyrics and of other intricate vocal pieces. Musicians performed on Afro-Brazilian feast days, in elite concert halls, and in the confines of wealthy private residences. An observer estimated that one-third of the members of the orchestra at Rio’s opera house were of African descent. Well-to-do *cariocas* (people or things from Rio) competed to bring the best black and mixed-race musicians into their homes for private concerts.

The number of instruments on which music was played matched the variety of sounds floating through Rio’s streets.³ But no instrument drew more attention or elicited more fear among travelers and elites than the drum. Drums of various shapes and sizes were prominent at the massive gatherings that took place every Sunday at the Campo de Santana, a square where as many as two thousand slaves regularly congregated.⁴ Tolerance for such manifestations fluctuated over time. Before abolition, authorities regulated and often forbade large slave gatherings, especially those with music. In 1817, dances held by the Nossa Senhora do Rosário brotherhood at the Campo de Santana were prohibited. In 1833, a justice of the peace sought to prohibit slaves from playing drums by arguing that the noise attracted slaves from neighboring plantations. In 1849, the police broke up a group of more than two hundred slaves performing *batuque*, a broad term used to describe drum circles and various drum-based performances. In response to repressive measures, slaves played drums surreptitiously and employed other percussion instruments—scraps of iron, pottery, seashells, stones, wood—or simply created rhythms by clapping their hands.⁵

Prohibitions against drum circles and other musical manifestations were tied to fears of slave revolts and marked by confusion about how and where to draw the line between legitimate music and illicit religious devotion. An 1835 uprising of Malê slaves in Bahia stoked fears sparked earlier by the Haitian Revolution, and it sent shocks of panic through Brazil's slave-owning circles.⁶ The fact that many African-derived religious rites involved musical accompaniment made it difficult for outsiders to distinguish between entertainment and what elites deemed to be savagery or subversion. As part of larger measures to prevent slave rebellions during the 1830s and 1840s various towns and provinces prohibited slave carnivals and certain religious practices.⁷ Popular perceptions that linked blackness, music, and *feitiçaria*, a broad term used to refer to "witchcraft" and "devil worship," endured long after those laws expired or ceased to be enforced.⁸

As did local elites, travelers looked upon slave music and religion with a combination of fascination and fear. Ewbank described a file of furniture-porting slaves. "While looking on, a yell and hurlement burst forth that made me start as if the shrieks were actually from Tartarus. From dark spirits they really came. . . . Chanting only at intervals, they passed the lower part of the Cattete in silence, and then struck up the Angola warble that surprised me."⁹ The performance of a band of black musicians produced similar consternation in the French artist and traveler Jean-Baptiste Debret. The combination of instruments (clarinets, a triangle, a horn, and two types of African drums) and a repertoire that included waltzes, marches, and *lundus* created what Debret called a "horrible racket produced by shrill and out-of-tune music." "That unexpressable 'imbroglio' of style and harmony," he continued, "irritates the nervous system with its revolting barbarism [and] imprints a feeling of terror in the heart of man, even a well-disposed one."¹⁰

The massive gathering he witnessed at the Campo de Santana tantalized Briton J. P. Robertson. "If slavery were not to be seen in any other form than the one in which it was exhibited to me there," he wrote, "I should be forced to conclude that, of the many conditions in the world, that of the African slave is one of the most happy." In the performance he found "a singular spectacle of African hilarity, uproar, and confusion, as is not perhaps to be witnessed, on the same extensive scale, in any other country out of Africa itself." Robertson was particularly intrigued by the elaborate dress worn by many of the participants. Their suits and hats contrasted the "almost naked" black workers he saw elsewhere. Ulti-

mately, it was the performers' bodily displays that most fascinated him. To the furious sounds of rattles and drums, "eight or ten figurantes were moving to and fro, in the midst of the circle, in a way to exhibit the human frame divine under every conceivable variety of contortion and gesticulation." Some participants "seemed wrapped in all the furor of demons." The frenzy continued until nightfall, when participants collapsed in a sweaty, exhausted heap:

Every looker-on participated in the sibylline spirit which animated the dancers and musicians; the welking rang with the wild enthusiasm of the negro clans; till thousands of voices, accompanied by the whole music on the field, closed in a scene of jubilee which had continued nearly all day, under the burning rays of a tropical sun, and which had been supported by such bodily exertions on the part of the several performers, as bathed their frames in one continual torrent of perspiration.¹¹

Robertson's fascination with sounds and bodies is indicative of a larger obsession with the physicality of race, prominently on display in the pages of nineteenth-century Latin American travel writings, which commonly included descriptions of local flora and fauna alongside intricate and sensational illustrations and descriptions of body shape, piercings, and markings of "savage" African and American peoples. His observations also resonated with long-standing tropes linking blackness, Africa, musicality, and rhythm.¹² As was true elsewhere, in Brazil the mix of fear and fascination expressed by travelers like Robertson dovetailed with definitions of race and music already centuries in the making and which would remain in place for many years to come.

The Tangled Roots of Lundu

Brazil's vast area and regional power cleavages hindered full cultural or political cohesion, but that did not prevent observers (domestic and foreign) from treating single musical genres as representatives of the entire colony or nation.¹³ One such genre, which in fact can refer to a dance and several styles of music, was lundu. Lundu (also often *lundum*, *landu*, *lundu*, etc.) is often referred to as Brazil's first black or African national music. The word apparently derives from *calundu*, a Central African healing ritual featuring drums, scrapers, and a circle of adherents surrounding one or two leaders.¹⁴ Many of *calundu*'s characteristic elements—collec-