

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

FUNK, FIGHTING, AND FRATERNITY IN RIO DE JANEIRO'S CORRIDOR EVENTS:  
SPACE AND UNSTABLE GOVERNANCE IN A FRACTURED CITY

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## Abstract

This dissertation is a study of funk and urban space in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Specifically, the dissertation concerns *galeras*, groups of dozens, if not hundreds, of youths who represent blocks, streets, or, more commonly, *favelas* throughout Greater Rio. During the 1990s, the *galeras*' main activity was attending funk-fueled events called *bailes de corredor*, or corridor events. Funk, not to be confused with funk from the United States, is the first Brazilian style of danceable electronic music—derived principally from 1980s Miami bass, but also from electro, rap, and freestyle. Reaching the height of their popularity in the 1990s, corridor events spotlight particular kinds of Rio funk called *montagens de galeras*, style which features lyrics about individual *galeras*; utilize sampled beats from Miami bass, electro, and/or freestyle; make prominent use of echo; have ornamental sounds called *pontos*, or points; and feature chants sung by *galeras*. Alongside *montagens de galeras*, corridor events also feature the association of each *galera* with one of two larger groups assembling multiple *galeras*, which participants have termed *Lado A* (A-side) and *Lado B* (B-side) and, also, organized fighting between these two sides—sides separated by an empty space called the corridor. I show that both *galeras* and corridor events emerged out of two essential circumstances. The first was the consolidation of *favelas* as ineradicable parts of Rio, a series of now-permanent spaces which became further rooted in the city through continued infrastructural development. The second condition is the expansion of violence throughout Rio with the infiltration of criminal organizations into *favelas*—violence amplified by the particular configuration of Rio, in which a few criminal organizations compete through territorial control. These two conditions, although certainly not the only ones, were crucial for supporting developments in *galera* formation and the widespread popularization, in the 1990s, of corridor events.

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## Introduction

Talking to Japinha was not an easy task. Japinha and his colleagues of the Terceiro Comando Puro, one of the city's criminal organizations, were responsible for overseeing who entered and left the *favela* they controlled. Videira, one of my key interlocutors, had arranged the conversation; he was an old friend of Japinha who had brought me to Para Pedro to talk about Japinha's experiences with *bailes de corredor* (corridor events). The conversation, however, kept stalling. We were constantly interrupted by Japinha's portable radio, which spewed out news about people's movements in and out of the favela and, also, about the police cars which patrolled its periphery. As we chatted, young men walked back and forth, bearing assault rifles on their backs, stopping on occasion to quietly relay something to Japinha. But Japinha wanted to talk about his *galera* (crew or group) days, and to show that he was busy he removed the clip from his pistol and placed it on the table, telling his colleagues that "he was on a break to give an interview." Perhaps noticing my discomfort, he discreetly told his colleagues he did not want them intruding and, soon enough, they stopped approaching him altogether. As we continued talking, more people circulated in the area controlled by Terceiro,<sup>1</sup> the commanding criminal organization in Para Pedro which has transformed daily life in several favelas throughout Rio.

Our conversation went well into the afternoon, when it was time for Videira to return to Morro do Diabo, the neighboring favela where he had been raised. As we left, Japinha got on his motorcycle and told us he had to rush home—his cooking gas was about to arrive and he didn't want to miss the delivery. As he left on the smoothly-paved road, he passed a plaza where children played games, surrounded by kiosks selling food and beverages. A few children lingered near the

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<sup>1</sup> Interlocutors referred to Terceiro Comando Puro as, simply, "Terceiro," a reference I will preserve throughout the text.

local day care center, accompanied by parents, while young adults, some in work clothes, made their way past the several concrete houses. Once outside the favela, Videira and I heard yelling coming from the favela, indicating that one of the city's major soccer clubs had scored a goal. Walking towards Morro do Diabo, Videira remarked that Japinha would never abandon his line of work. Japinha didn't have many options, and his continued association with Terceiro restricted him to Para Pedro. Videira then said that Japinha has always enjoyed the thrills he feels as part of the criminal group, keeping him tied to this line of work. After a few more minutes, we arrived at the *pé do morro*,<sup>2</sup> and Videira was greeted by his galera—a group of friends who continued to attend corridor events even after their criminalization in 2000.<sup>3</sup> Beckoned by the group, Videira went off to the favela which, much like hundreds more in Rio, features stable infrastructures, essential services, and lasting communal bonds.

Videira and Japinha are not alone in their experiences of Rio. Since the 1980s, inhabitants have witnessed the expansion of criminal organizations in favelas—groups which commandeer territory through the imposition of surveillance and might. Favelas, however, have also undergone key improvements in their infrastructures. During the same period, major state initiatives supported the expansion of essential public services in them, such as electricity, sewage, and plumbing. Similarly, favela-dwellers also took to improving their own living arrangements, a time in which Brazil was transitioning from an authoritarian military regime to a representative democracy which gave favela-dwellers the power to vote, a new political framework which discouraged state initiatives to eradicate favela spaces and incentivized government authorities to

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<sup>2</sup> Foot of the hill.

<sup>3</sup> Japinha and Videira, interview by Patrick Murphy, September 20, 2024, Para Pedro favela, Rio de Janeiro, RJ. All interviews done by Patrick Murphy, unless otherwise noted. Locations only in first footnote.

improve these areas, initiatives which indicated the possibility for greater favela rootedness in the city.

It is at this critical juncture, between the expansion of criminal violence and the strengthening of permanent residence in favelas, that Rio youth began to develop a culture linked to what are called, in Rio, galeras. Galeras are groups of dozens, if not hundreds, of youth which represent blocks, streets, or, more commonly, favelas throughout Greater Rio. Necessarily linked to areas in which they were born and raised, galera members hold childhood bonds with one another (Cecchetto 1998: 150; Coelho 2016: 223; Rosa 2024: 4), and territory stands as an important element for the affirmation of a persistent group identity (Cecchetto 1997: 98). Galeras mostly comprise men, who join based on where they live, their prestige, kinship with other members, and physical strength, while a female minority participates based on place of residence, family, family ties, and/or romantic relationships with male members (Herschmann 2005: 169; Cymrot 2022: 146). Galeras emerged as part of the developing Rio *funk* (pronounced “FUN-key”) culture of the 1980s, and by the 1990s there were hundreds of such groups, each representing their respective places of origin.<sup>4</sup> During the 1990s, their main activity was attending funk-fueled events called bailes de corredor, or corridor events, parties which, although criminalized in 2000, have never truly disappeared and persist as of 2025. Funk, not to be confused with funk music from the United States, is the first Brazilian style of danceable electronic music (Palombini 2009: 50-1)—derived principally from 1980s Miami bass (Palombini 2009: 37; Eissinger 2005: 110), but also from electro, rap, and freestyle (Cymrot 2022: 27). The local style retains the name “funk” based on its lineage with the “Bailes Black” of the 1970s, parties which included soul and funk from the

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<sup>4</sup> Carla Mattos shares a similar definition of galera. See “O Funk Proibido como Política de Integração Marginal,” *Vozes á Margem: Periferias, Estética e Política*, ed. Giordano Barbin Bertelli and Gabriel Feltran, 67.

United States (Palombini 2009: 37). Reaching the height of their popularity in the 1990s, corridor events spotlight particular kinds of Rio funk called *montagens*, *rap de galera*, and *montagens de galera*, which stand in contrast to other Rio funk substyles such as *proibidão* (forbidden music), *funk putaria* (orgy funk), and *funk melody* (melody funk) (Palombini 2009: 52). *Montagens de galeras*, the style most clearly associated with corridor events, feature lyrics about individual galeras; utilize sampled beats from United States electro, freestyle, and/or Miami bass; make prominent use of echo and delay effects; have added ornamental sounds which are called *pontos*, or points; and feature chants sung by the galeras themselves. To add their chants to songs, galera members participated in the production process by recording their chants in the sound system teams' studios, to which the sound system teams would then add the verses to the *montagens de galeras* they produced—verses which usually underscored neighborhood names and galera fighting prowess. Alongside *montagens de galeras*, corridor events also feature the association of each galera with one of two larger groups assembling multiple galeras, which participants have termed *Lado A* (A-side) and *Lado B* (B-side) and, also, organized fighting between these two sides—sides separated by an empty space called the corridor.

Each galera independently represents its own area, and every galera has always been associated with either the A-side or the B-side, remaining linked to that side indefinitely. As a general rule, galeras never switch sides in a setting which reinforces longstanding allegiances and feuds. In the early 1990s, galeras decided their side associations based on affinities with other galeras or, more frequently, their rivalries with neighboring groups. Since galeras living in close proximity with each other may have crossed paths in their routines or, even, while playing pick-up soccer matches, attending social gatherings, or in schools and work environments, neighboring galeras are usually on opposite corridor sides, and at corridor events held bitter rivalries. The

resulting A-side/B-side arrangement, then, results much more from contiguity among rival groups than from a spatial scission between the sides by, say, large zones, such as a north side/west side split (Cecchetto 1997: 97). Galeras, moreover, mostly comprise working-class people, and groups are usually linked to areas in the suburban west and north sides of the city; the Baixada Fluminense (Rio de Janeiro lowlands) to the north of the Rio de Janeiro municipality; or São Gonçalo, area to the east of Rio, across the Guanabara Bay. The south side, associated with the city's middle-classes, housed just a few groups, and even so most, if not all, of the area's galeras were linked to favelas, such as the galeras from Rocinha (between São Conrado and Gávea), Cantagalo (between Ipanema and Copacabana), and Vidigal (between Leblon and São Conrado). A notable exception was the now-disbanded Praça Hilda-Maracanã galera, a group linked with the mostly middle-class Tijuca and Maracanã neighborhoods, at the southern end of the city's north side. Although in their territorial arrangements galeras may identify only with favelas, such as the Galera da Caixa d'Água (Water tank galera), in the Baixada Fluminense, groups can also be linked to streets and city blocks, such as the aforementioned Galera da Praça Hilda-Maracanã or, also, to a mixture of areas, such as the Irajá galera, which encompasses the entire Irajá neighborhood, including Morro do Diabo; an enclosed condominium complex called 1059; and a group called Quarteirão, residential area encompassing residential blocks.<sup>5</sup>

This work is about the Rio de Janeiro galeras and their participations in corridor events. I show that both galeras and corridor events emerged out of two essential circumstances of the 1980s. The first was the consolidation of favelas as ineradicable parts of Rio, a series of now-permanent spaces which, beginning in the 1980s, became further rooted in the city through

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<sup>5</sup> Concerning the Praça Hilda-Maracanã galera, Tatá, March 26, 2024, barbeque at friends' home in Pilar in Duque de Caxias, RJ; Mauro, Dinho, and Quaresma, from Praça Hilda, May 19, 2023, bar in Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro, RJ. For Irajá, Videira and Cueca, November 26, 2022, bar in Irajá in Rio de Janeiro, RJ.

continued infrastructural development and the cancellation of state eradication projects. Favela fixity was strengthened by Brazil's return to democracy in 1985, a political transformation which supported greater initiatives for material improvement in these areas, both from the public and private sectors. The second condition is the expansion of violence throughout Rio with the infiltration of criminal organizations into favelas, the first being Comando Vermelho in the 1980s (Garmany 2023: 288; Cavalcanti 2009: 71; Gay 2015: 106), both to sell and store their product (Arias 2006: 53)—violence amplified by the particular configuration of Rio, in which a few criminal organizations compete through territorial control (Lessing 2018: 158-9). Sometime during the mid-1980s, Comando<sup>6</sup> splintered, inaugurating a period of intense confrontation which continues to this day (Misse 1999: 315 and Cruxen 2020: 46), and which includes other criminal organizations, such as the aforementioned Terceiro Comando Puro. These two conditions, although certainly not the only ones, were crucial for supporting developments in galera formation and the widespread popularization, in the 1990s, of corridor events.

### *1980s Rio de Janeiro*

Galera formation and their regular disputes in corridor events were activities linked to territory. Representing communal bonds between *funkeiros* born and raised in the same areas of the city, galeras supported members' identifications with favelas, residential areas which, starting in the 1980s, were increasingly integrated into Rio de Janeiro. For Jefferson Souza, secretary of culture for the state of Rio and an ex-corridor-event funkeiro himself, galeras attended corridor events to

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<sup>6</sup> Interlocutors referred to Comando Vermelho as, simply, “Comando,” a reference I will preserve throughout the text.

exalt their own locales of residence. They reworked, without knowing, a question of belonging ... I am Cruz Vermelha and I will defend my name and my flag, but no one had an idea of a political vision of belonging, of anything, it was simply a group of neighbors who went out to fight, no one had a sentiment or conscience of territory, of belonging to a particular place or history. It was a question of love, involuntary passion or, simply, something natural.

Other funkeiros relayed similar views. Nicolas interpreted corridor events as fighting competitions in which galeras epitomized location, while Edu spoke to the importance of fighting in the name of his own Morro do Diabo, clamoring for the importance of being “*o mais brabo e não ser taxado como um comédia*” (the meanest and not considered a laughing stock). Some attendees, moreover, spoke of the immutability of galera identities. For Charles Brigada, while criminal organizations may swap control over territories in their constant warfare with each other, galeras never switch corridor sides in what, for Charles and, also, Videira, is a fixed identity linked to their own neighborhood of Irajá and the larger A-side. For Josiane, finally—one of the few women who partook in corridor fighting in the 1990s—corridor brawls not only served to “release stress and to have dignity through hitting others,” but to also “become famous in your own area, and unite the neighborhood galera” in what also emphasized the importance of location.<sup>7</sup> Representing their places of origin, galeras fought over venue territories in the name of their spaces, further consolidating communal bonds among themselves in what reinforced a sense of group belonging.

Galera formation and their initiatives to represent their areas emerged during the 1980s, alongside important political shifts in Brazil and Rio de Janeiro. If during the military regime (1964-1985) few efforts had been made by state officials to improve favela conditions (Arias 2006: 25)—and important state programs had eliminated favelas and dislocated thousands of people

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<sup>7</sup> Jefferson Souza, April 11, 2023, WhatsApp conversation; Nicolas, July 16, 2023, party in Irajá, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; Edu and Videira, July 29, 2023, restaurant in Irajá, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; Charles Brigada, July 18, 2024, hangout in Irajá, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; Josiane, July 17, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ.

(Fischer 2008: 79; Arias 2006: 25; Cavalcanti 2009: 73)—Brazil’s democratization, in 1985, contributed to a clear shift in policy (McCann 2014: 5; Perlman 2011: 79). Restoring foundational political rights, the shift discouraged political candidates and elected officials from undertaking eviction projects since favela inhabitants held the power to vote (Perlman 2011: 272-3; Donaghy 2015: 75). A new constitution, passed in 1988, also guaranteed the acquisition of rights over property to those who possessed, even without documentation, an “urban dwelling, of up to two-hundred and fifty square meters, for five years, uninterrupted and without opposition and using it as a home.”<sup>8</sup> Another constitutional article declared that the federal government would, as one of its objectives, “order the full development of the social functions of the city and guarantee the well-being of its inhabitants”<sup>9</sup> in what stood in opposition to previous authoritarian directives. Establishing voting rights and a new constitution, the new setting buttressed favelas as part of the urban fabric, mitigating the possibility of eviction projects and magnifying state interest in improvement projects.

Political shifts in the state of Rio also supported greater favela rootedness. Elected governor twice—for a four-year term in 1983 and, again, in 1991—Lionel Brizola implemented strategies early in his first term to bring water, sewage, and garbage collecting services to dozens of favelas throughout the state capital (Burgos 1998: 41-2; Cavalcanti 2009: 73). His project was allied to a plan to also provide day care and electricity (Arias 2006: 27) and to establish model schools which, alongside all-day classes, would provide students with three daily meals, cultural activities (McCann, 2014: 92), and, at some schools, swimming pools.<sup>10</sup> During Brizola’s second term, the

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<sup>8</sup> Article 183. Translated from “...possuir como sua área urbana de até duzentos e cinquenta metros quadrados, por cinco anos, ininterruptamente e sem oposição, utilizando-a para sua moradia ou de sua família, adquirir-lhe-á o domínio.”

<sup>9</sup> Article 182. Translated from “...ordenar o desenvolvimento pleno das funções sociais da cidade de garantir o bem-estar dos seus habitantes.”

<sup>10</sup> *Jornal do Brasil*, October 20, 1992, 13.

municipality of Rio launched, in 1995, the Favela-Bairro project. Similar to the governor's first-term policies, the program sought to extend services while creating official records establishing property ownership (White 2013: 320-1). Supported by a robust budget, the program further spread the electric service while establishing individual bills for residences—bills which could be used to prove residency—and supported the use of concrete in lieu of the stucco and wood previously used for construction (Cavalcanti 2009: 70). Although land titling remained unresolved (White 2013: 320-1; McCann 2014b: 119), the program further supported the assurance, for favela-dwellers, that they would not be relocated (Perlman 2011: 280), even though, for some authors, the project did not eliminate the distinctions between favelas and the so-called “formal” city (McCann 2014b: 175; Perlman 2011: 281). Spearheading projects which further supported the consolidation of favelas as irremovable spaces in Rio, Brizola's policies showcased state initiatives to further incorporate favelas into the city and, also, amplify resident access to basic services. Emerging alongside these transformations, galeras and their participation in corridor events both served as a response to these shifts and, also, as a way to further root the favelas as part of Rio.

The 1980s also inaugurated a moment of economic decline and escalations of violence. Although poverty is not a standalone factor for determining a rise in criminality, the desolate economic conditions encouraged a minority of youths to take part in the burgeoning drug trade (Zaluar 1996: 39). As youths watched the older generation toil for paltry wages; work long hours; and submit to arduous and, oftentimes, humiliating circumstances (Goldstein 2003: 143; Zaluar 1996: 9), some became increasingly resistant to the formal job market. The setting, moreover, divided the generations as working-class parents were spending more and more time at their jobs, while teens were increasingly raised by neighbors or extended family members and, often, exposed to the influence of local criminals (Zaluar 1994 [1985]: 96-8). Association to criminal

organizations, moreover, remained attractive because of members' conspicuous consumption (Adorno 2013: 416; Zaluar 1996: 31, 77, and 230); their power to solve local problems at a moment's notice; and their brandishing of guns (Penglase 2014: 110/ Zaluar 1996: 10), all features which drew a small portion of male teenagers and young men to these groups (Mattos 2016: 2). Part of the development circumstances of the 1980s along with the major political transformations in government, the rise of criminal organizations in Rio also contributed to changing the cultural setting of the city.

### *Galeras, Corridors, and Violence*

To be clear, galeras are not divided by their territorial associations with criminal organizations. Although the A-side/B-side split may bring up associations with criminal territorial logics (Cecchetto 1997: 147), galeras do not reproduce these exact divisions. Given the similarities in their treatment of territory, however, it is perhaps unsurprising that media sources have claimed that the corridor sides corresponded with two of the city's main criminal organizations<sup>11</sup>—Terceiro Comando Puro to the A-side and Comando Vermelho to the B-side.<sup>12</sup> For former attendee Rodrigo Ferrete, the criminal organizations are unrelated to galera affiliations, since several galeras are allied despite their associations with areas controlled by different groups (Cecchetto 1998: 152; Herschmann 2005: 167), something which becomes clear, also, by attending contemporary events and observing the galera divisions themselves. Tesoura, another funkeiro, further distinguished

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<sup>11</sup> For such articles, see *O Globo*, 1992; *Jornal do Brasil*, 1993; *O Globo*, 1994; and *Jornal Extra*, 1999.

<sup>12</sup> None of the corridor events I attended during fieldwork had a division associated with criminal organizations. However, a few events have been provisionally split based on galera associations with a territory controlled by a criminal organization, important exceptions which, rather than showing galera links to criminal organizations, demonstrate the influence criminal organizations have on culture and identity formation among people living in areas under their control.

between criminal organizations and galeras since the latter participate in corridor events if and when they so desire, and corridor fighting is much more of a game than anything else, while contests between criminal organizations involve serious amounts of capital and bloodshed.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to criminal groups, galeras base their structures on leisure; do not feature absolute leaders; and violence is not the chief element for the demarcation of group differences (Herschmann 2005: 51; Cymrot 2022: 147).

Conversations with funkeiros who have participated in the city's criminal organizations also show that the forms and meanings of violence between the two groups are extraordinarily different. For Japinha, corridor events are a city-wide game which include participants who *choose* to attend, whereas disputing territory as part of a criminal organization is a matter of life and death, which he has continued to partake only to pay his bills. Germano, a former funkeiro and an ex-member of Comando Vermelho, further claimed that the thrills he felt during corridor events stood in stark contrast to the rushes he experienced while battling over territory for the criminal group. For him, corridor excitement was full of life, whereas the excitement he felt as a combatant was part of a mere struggle to avoid death; during corridor events he felt free, part of a group of trusted friends, and events were restricted to a fixed start and finish, whereas his association with Comando seemed endless, the enemy always present, in every car that passed and in every person who walked by, and life seemed restricted solely to survival in what was an endless rush. Similar to criminal organizations in their associations with violence, territory, and excitement, galeras however enjoy their chosen activity, a communal moment which stands in stark contrast to the

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<sup>13</sup> Rodrigo Ferrete, October 16, 2022, kiosk in Barreira do Vasco, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; Tesoura, February 12, 2023, Tesoura's home in Honório Gurgel, Rio de Janeiro, RJ.

grim warfare of criminal groups, which put life itself on the line in a seemingly interminable horror.<sup>14</sup>

And funkeiros are proud of their distinctions from such groups. Cueca, for instance, distinguished funkeiros from members of criminal groups in claiming that “funkeiros know how to take a slap on the face; the criminal does not. The criminal kills while the funkeiro knows how to lose.” Cueca then shared an experience to explain why, in 2018, he chose to abandon corridor events altogether.

We [Lado A] were unbeatable in my last baile. But we were in an area associated with Lado B and dominated by *milicianos*,<sup>15</sup> and milicianos don’t accept defeat. Once it was clear that we had crushed Lado B, they [the milicianos] started shooting to the air to interrupt the event. They then made us stand in silence and started to humiliate us, slapping us in the face while holding their guns. I thought we wouldn’t leave that day. That’s when I decided to stop attending. I’m not leaving my house to have to endure cowardice.<sup>16</sup>

According to Cueca, the milicianos’ response was dishonorable, a feature which, along with the situation he was compelled to endure, brought him to abandon events. In this sense, the ludic element of corridor fighting stands in stark opposition to the territorial warfare associated with the criminal organizations in Rio, and once corridor fighting was transmuted into coercion that day, Cueca chose to abandon an activity which he had embraced as part of his identity—an identity he did not want fettered to the cowardly initiatives he associated with criminal groups.

Corridor events have also served as essential spaces for attendees to hone skills which have served to respond to the eventual violence of criminal organizations. Some funkeiros wield their

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<sup>14</sup> Cueca, November 26, 2022; Japinha, September 20, 2024; Germano, August 23, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ. Carla Mattos draws a similar conclusion. See Mattos 2021, 72-3.

<sup>15</sup> *Milícias* are composed of corrupted police who turn to crime, laying claims over favelas. Members extort local businesses, establish corrupt affiliations with state institutions, and consolidate a structural relationship with the state. See Hirata, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Cueca, November 26, 2022.

aggressive personas, partly constructed in corridor events, to defy eventual demands from such groups, an important skill for those who have had no choice but to habitually interact with criminal groups. Tatá, for instance, recalled a 2018 corridor event in a favela controlled by Comando Vermelho when a few of its members were firing warning shots and harassing attendees. On that occasion, Tatá confronted the group, stating that its provocations could eventually lead to generalized chaos and, consequently, attract unwanted police attention—something both the criminal organizations and the galeras seek to avoid. Tatá later claimed that “if I hadn’t stood up to the *bandidos* (bandits), if I hadn’t spoken like a man, they would have overrun us that day.” In a follow-up chat, Tatá stated that criminals and funkeiros are in constant tension since “criminals like to order people around while funkeiros hate to obey.” Alex, another attendee, relayed that during a corridor event at Morro do Dezoito (Eighteen’s Hill), a favela associated with a galera part of the B-side, an armed criminal approached him with an assault rifle in an attempt to intimidate him. Under the circumstances, Alex claimed he had no choice but to stand up to the man, falsely claiming he knew someone important in the area. Regarding the problem, Alex later stated that “if in your response you hesitate, demonstrate fear, or stutter, you’ll promptly receive a slap on the face, and in all likelihood suffer escalating consequences.” Concerning the incidents, both funkeiros noted that they were fully aware that neither of their harassers would ever follow through with their threats, since hurting or killing must be discussed among the criminal organizations beforehand since such actions could attract media and police attention. And while Tatá and Alex were certainly challenging violent harassers, their decisions were far from reckless. Both funkeiros maneuvered while using their own understandings of what it is to live in a city

which features powerful but not omnipotent criminal organizations, and using their aggressive dispositions—partly developed in corridor events—to navigate in the fraught conditions.<sup>17</sup>

Criminal groups and galera participation in corridor events, however, have influenced each other, even if tacitly. There is some truth to the notion that corridor events and their participating galeras “recreate the codes of violence in the scope of leisure and youth sociability” (Cecchetto 1997: 114) in their symbolic representation of the antagonism, territoriality, and warfare of the criminal orders (Cecchetto 1997: 114), or even that corridor fighting represents a tacit negotiation and acceptance of codes of violence associated with the city’s criminal warfare, recreated in the spaces of leisure and youth sociability (Cecchetto 1997: 98). According to a few *funkeiros*, corridor fighting has also supported, at times, eventual entry into criminal organizations. For Henrique Príncipe, fighting at events served, for a minority of *funkeiros*, as early developments of what he called a “crime portfolio,” a claim former-attendee Cueca supports in his statement that his own ferocity helped establish what he called “Cueca enterprises”—a reputation for violence which eventually attracted the attention of a vigilante group in his area. Other corridor event practitioners claimed to have established their reputations or have seen friends accumulate prestige in corridor fighting to then join criminal groups, usually one of the two largest criminal organizations of the city. Davi and Buda and, on a separate occasion, Jacaré all claimed that the criminalization of corridor events in 2000 also helped push a few attendees, especially those with leadership positions in their galeras, towards criminal organizations. For them, the sudden dampening of prestige and adrenaline surges encouraged a few prominent leaders to join criminal groups—groups which may also support the accumulation of prestige and participation in activities which stimulate

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<sup>17</sup> Tatá and Alex, March 26, 2023.

adrenaline.<sup>18</sup> Holding similar characteristics in their associations with territory; group formations with informal hierarchies; and adrenaline-fueled activity, corridor events and the city's criminal organizations bear important parallels which buttress the possibility of influence, even though influence has remained decidedly oblique.

Although a minority of funkeiros may have joined criminal organizations, it is important to stress that most funkeiros who have persisted in their attendance at corridor events are *not* associated with criminal organizations, while most galera members who at some point *did* join such groups abandoned corridor event attendance altogether. After Japinha joined Terceiro, for example, he never again attended a corridor event out of fear of being caught by a rival from another criminal organization or, even, the police, and along with another ex-funkeiro friend who also joined the criminal group, they became extraordinarily hesitant about leaving Para Pedro altogether. Urso similarly claimed that he witnessed a few of his galera colleagues join Comando in order to make quick cash, only to then abandon corridor events out of fear of being caught when attending one. In that particular case, Urso claims one of the funkeiros later became the *dono do morro*,<sup>19</sup> and in order to keep in touch with his former galera's routines, he would pay members' bus fares or, at times, even pay for chartered buses.<sup>20</sup>

Galeras, finally, have also produced societal changes in their own right, and the story of the corridor event is much more than, merely, its participants telling stories to themselves about

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<sup>18</sup> Henrique Príncipe, February 26, 2023, bar in Palmeirinha favela in Honório Gurgel, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; Cueca, February 25, 2023, bate-bola meeting in Rocha Miranda, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; For joining criminal organizations, Videira and Helinho, September 1, 2023, bar in Irajá, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; Japinha and Videira, September 12, 2023, bar in Irajá, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; Roger Magrinho, August 18, 2023, restaurant in Irajá, Rio de Janeiro, RJ. Jacaré, February 12, 2023, Amarelinho favela in Irajá, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; Davi and Buda, December 4, 2022, funk party in Jardim do Ipê, Belford Roxo, RJ.

<sup>19</sup> Translated as "owner of the hill," or the person at the top of the criminal organization's hierarchy in that particular area.

<sup>20</sup> Japinha, September 20, 2024; Urso, September 1, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ.

themselves (Geertz 2000[1975]: 448 and 114-5) or, as one author claimed, a juvenile cultural expression serving as a “mirror of its times” (Herschmann 2005: 17). Indeed, although galeras reenact some of the violence and forms of socialization displayed by criminal groups, which can be at times brutal, galera activity and fighting holds a ludic character (Mizrahi 2014: 105; Novaes 2017: 78; Ventura 1994: 125) in an environment bearing tacitly defined rules and codes (Cymrot 2022: 163; Coelho 2016: 216-7; Cecchetto 1998: 148-9). To an extent, there is some truth to the notion that galeras reincorporate the stigma associated with their condition and place of origin, reworking signs and signifiers linked to violent competition into culture and music (Cunha 2002: 139), while catharsis and territoriality support the building of self-esteem for its participants (Herschmann 2005: 150). Part of a fraught societal context which includes a major influence from criminal organizations, galeras succeed in resignifying a vicious setting into a controlled environment which treats violence as part of leisure (Mattos 2012: 653) rather than as a decisive tool for territorial arrogation among criminal groups, valuing themselves through the codes available to them. In this regard, galeras and criminal organizations, although they share important traits, are starkly different, and galeras not only establish a communal identity which contrasts to criminal groups, but maintain communal bonds and places of origin as major identifying traces in a subtle but foundational distinction with criminal groups.

### *Galeras and Masculinity*

Another overarching theme throughout this work is masculinity. Corridor events have served as cultural arenas for male practitioners to portray a dominant masculinity founded on aggression (Connell 2005), performances which could be understood as hypermasculine (Cox and DeCarvalho 2016: 818). Ritualized violence in corridor events, although having a connotation of

“serious play,” supports the development of a warrior *ethos*, a condition which has persisted since the emergence of events (Cecchetto 1998: 151; Herschmann 2005: 138; Coelho 2016: 216-7). During corridor events, violent attitudes are perceived as decidedly manly (Harris 2000: 785; Corprew et al. 2014: 106; Penglase 2010: 321), and dangerous dispositions—invading the opposing side, taking on the ablest of fighters, and never surrendering—are sources of both pride and pleasure (Beesley and McGuire 2009: 266). While fighting, attendees regularly showcase anger and zeal, partaking in a system which “exalts male dominance by assuming masculinity, virility, and physicality to be the ideal essence of real men” (Mosher and Sirkin 1988: 64); as both a ritual of violence and of masculinity, the corridors support the impression that the connection between the two is natural (McDonald 2010: 193). Such masculinity is not necessarily stable but rather developed through participation in trials and rituals—such as the regular bouts in corridor events themselves—and can be lost (Cassino 2018: 49). An activity which is far from static, corridor events attract men drawn to taking pleasure in fighting and showcasing these stereotyped attributes, stimulating, in the process, further pleasure and performances which become increasingly ingrained in attendee subjectivities.

Attendee displays of hypermasculinity are particularly clear in contemporary corridor events—events attended solely by men. During most contemporary events—and all events that I attended while conducting fieldwork—one of the corridor sides quickly ousts the opposing side from the venue. When a side is expelled, organizers attempt to bring back the sacked side by shutting off music and, through their sound systems, exhorting the winning side to allow them reentry—calls which are seldom acknowledged. As galeras continue to fight at venue gates and further outside the clubs, fighters chant in participatory music-making involving sounding and moving together in synchrony (Herrera 2018: 474-5). As a collective activity which minimizes

individual expression (Lahoud 2017: 54), chanting fosters a sense of group belonging (Van Hiel 2007: 172), and it is perhaps no surprise that, during these moments, fighters take greater risks in the name of their groups and sides (Newson 2019: 436). Contemporary corridor events also foster hypermasculinity in the regular presence of criminal organizations. As galeras rarely respond to organizer demands, organizers procure criminal groups in attempts to restore order. For this, criminals usually fire warning shots, a feature of nearly every contemporary event, to commandeer attendee listening as a way to orient events their way in what is a mechanism of control (Parker 2019: 72). Most attendees, however, continue fighting, even claiming, afterwards, to not have even *heard* the shots. In conversations days after events, both Videira and Washington displayed indifference or, even, outward pride in their desensitization to these sounds, holding these displays as badges of honor (Daughtry 2015: 78). Their confidence and, perhaps, even skill at reading acoustic environments not only serves to make sense of place through sound (Feld 2004: 185), but also shows that they have developed particular listening techniques in their experiences of both corridor events and the city they inhabit—listening techniques which, while certainly not shared by every attendee or city dweller, supports a greater understanding of the local auditory culture (Kane 2015: 15). Intimately attuned to both the city and events, attendees may foster displays of hypermasculinity through their interactions with these sounds.<sup>21</sup>

Corridor events, however, are just one of several cultural spaces in which people from Rio de Janeiro cultivate masculinity. While attendees have certainly been partaking in corridor events since the 1990s, they have also enjoyed activities linked to fighting and thrill-seeking such as *bate-bola* (ball-hitters) groups, graffiti spraying, and train surfing; organized soccer fan clubs called

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<sup>21</sup> Attendance at corridor events, January 14, 2023, Complexo da Alma, São Gonçalo, RJ; April 15, 2023, Campos Elíseos, Duque de Caxias, RJ; July 27, 2024 in Morro do Castro, São Gonçalo, RJ.

*torcidas organizadas*; access to globally circulating commodities such as Hollywood movies, popular music, and consumer goods; body building and martial arts; church life; and funk expressions beyond corridor events, such as *bailes charme* (charm events), *bailes de comunidade* (community events), and *bailes de mulão* (mule events). Similar to some masculine performances linked to galera culture and corridor events, *funkeiros* have cultivated important values and behaviors linked to local masculinity which emerged as recurring characteristics—bravery, fighting prowess, and claims for dominance over other groups of men who are placed in opposition to their own. In these settings, discussed in chapter three, although masculinity is certainly nourished, masculine displays and heterosexual relations are fostered in alternate iterations in what produces plural subjects. In this regard, local masculinity does not exist as a monolithic block, but is rather performed or represented in a multiplicity of forms (Almeida 1995: 97/ Connell 2005: 147), and galera culture remains as but one cultural expression within a network of displays—an expression, however, which male corridor attendees readily embrace. Indeed, the popularization of corridor events and the widespread emergence of galeras was part of a wider cultural scenario in Rio de Janeiro. Sharing important characteristics with the galeras, some of these cultural activities also fostered, to different degrees, group bonding, quests for adrenaline, displays of fighting skill, and, importantly, links between group identity and territory. Important here is the valuation of a particular kind of masculinity which is shared in some of these activities, with fighting prowess, bravery, and thrill-seeking as recurring variables.

### *Racial Democracy and Galeras*

Racial formation in Brazil is another concern which runs through this work. Of crucial importance here is the Brazilian notion of a “racial democracy.” Those advocating for racial

democracy draw on a number of beliefs: Brazilian race relations have been historically fluid; Brazil displays heightened racial intermixture in what has brought multiple ethnic groups closer together; and interethnic relations during slavery were, to some degree, benign—at least in comparison to the United States (Alberto and Hoffnung-Garskof 2018: 264-72). Associated with Brazilian intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s—Gilberto Freyre most prominent among them—the expression emerged alongside an authoritarian state which utilized this ideology to justify a supposed democratic national scheme (Guimarães 2007). The concept proved especially useful for the authoritarian Vargas regime which, in 1937, turned to a frankly fascist framework—a regime which instrumentalized the logics of racial democracy to support the image of a nation free from racial injustice in what, conveniently, further justified the state’s increasingly authoritarian rule (Alberto and Hoffnung-Garskof 2018: 276). Tied to nation-state formation, the invented notion of a Brazilian racial democracy has persisted even after the Vargas regime, falsely celebrating harmonious race relations while suppressing official dialogue over racial issues in Brazil.

This imagined racial logic fit well the nation’s military regime (1964-85). The authoritarian government failed to properly acknowledge the plight of black Brazilians, and black populations were further silenced in a country which continued to hold the legacies of enslavement (Moraes Silva and Paixão 2014: 180). The problem was magnified by the subsuming of race under class—a practice which, along with conflating blackness and poverty (Lamont et al 2016: 168), has usually accompanied the problematic concept of racial democracy (Schwartzman 2014: 549). Among the most pressing problems was that racial democracy supported a governmental culture of silence with regard to race relations (Sheriff 2001: 60), a condition which persists to this day. Its coexistence with racism not only suppressed discussions over racial tensions, but also masked the problem (Fry 2002: 8; Da Costa 1985: 240), and the scarcity of organized groups associated

with racial justice, at least in comparison to the United States, was perhaps a display of this setting. Linked to black musics from outside the country, Rio de Janeiro funk and, previously, Brazilian soul and the Black Rio movement of the 1970s, were linked to alternative Afro-diasporic cultures which, by entering Rio, challenged the local setting, supporting outward expressions associated with racial pride (Lamont et al 2016: 140), and penetration of external sources stimulated the questioning of a myth which supported the shrouding of racial problems (Da Costa 1985: 237). With Brazil's democratization in 1985, these shifts were further buttressed by institutionalized race-based policies which supported greater ethnic inclusion (Paschel 2016), dampening the problems of racial democracy in their support of broader societal discussions concerning race. The term, however, has continued to serve as a tool among policy makers to spuriously deny racial oppression in the country, an all-inclusive ideology which, paradoxically, supports exclusion in a country which has persistently featured problems with race relations (Wade 2005: 241). Black diasporic cultures entering from the United States, soul and, later, funk contributed to the questioning of this myth—developments which, even if obliquely, have remained ingrained in galera culture.

Some of these problems associated with racial democracy emerge as part of galera discourse, most notably silence. Interviewing galera members, Micael Herschmann (2005: 70), a white academic, claimed that during his research funkeiros discussed social exclusion in general terms, claiming it was the poor who were marginalized in Brazil. However, to the degree that the funkeiros deepened their testimonies, they increasingly raised ethno-racial categories as important elements for explaining their own social condition. Olívia Cunha (2002: 115), a black researcher, stated that during her conversations with galera members skin color almost never emerged as a primordial referent for funkeiros in their own placement of their socio-cultural locations. But for

Cunha, this did not mean that references to skin color were necessarily absent, and as she grew closer to some galera members, she noticed that their allusions to race and, especially, conversations with regard to experiences of racism emerged in particular contexts and to explain certain circumstances: when they were watched while walking through stores; when police officers targeted them for questioning; or, even, when they were *not* harassed by robbers during eventual mass muggings (2002: 121-3). Likewise, funkeiros who were consulted once for my own research rarely referred to race during their initial testimonies, and when explicitly asked about race, they usually claimed racism was not a central problem. DJ Ouro, for instance, claimed that it was the clothes he wore and his conspicuous behavior alongside his galera—heckling strangers and seeking fights, for instance—that captured police attention. When specifically asked about race, Ouro further stated that skin color was never a factor since he and his galera were, in fact, usually causing trouble. Another funkeiro, Carlos Alberto “Gato Preto,” claimed that while the police indeed targeted funkeiros based on their appearance, their attention was directed, however, at the bleached hair and menacing looks he and his colleagues normally demonstrated, also omitting skin color in his response. It was only after specifically being asked about race that Carlos Alberto stated that most of his galera friends were young black men—a response, however, which was not followed by any commentary.

Funkeiros who I spoke to several times and with whom I established a regular rapport and accompanied their daily routines, however, were different. Urso, for instance, who I regularly met at parties, corridor events, and even for walking and driving around the Baixada Fluminense, claimed that an important factor for police interventions among his galera was their “funkeiro biotype,” which he placed in opposition to a “police biotype.” When I asked him what that meant, he said that a “police biotype” is a safe biotype for circulating in Rio since both the police and

criminal groups will avoid disturbing such a person—a biotype which, for Urso, was of a tall, slim, bald, and white man much like myself. And Tatá showed a similar pattern. A funkeiro I became close to and who I spent afternoons with nearly everyday for a period, Tatá repeatedly claimed, when I asked him about galeras and race, that “in corridor events there is no racism,” a short and usually blunt response when I brought up the subject—a subject I soon avoided given his curtness. However, during a conversation about an upcoming corridor event, which the organizers scheduled for a holiday weekend, Tatá claimed that the event was being cancelled, to which I asked if the reason was due to the possibility that many of the funkeiros would be travelling for the long weekend. To this, Tatá responded, without much deliberation:

Of course not! Funkeiros are all black and *favelado* [live in favelas]. You think we travel during holidays? They are cancelling the baile because I told them we [the A-side] would not go to [the neighborhood of] Curicica. There it's all Lado B and milícia. I don't enter places controlled by milícia.

Similar to experiences relayed by previous researchers, Tatá refers to race in a particular context (Cunha 2002: 115), even though, in previous conversations I had directly asked about the theme. Sharing thoughts marked by a pervading racism which remains concealed, galera experiences demonstrate the harmful effects of the ingrained myth of racial democracy—implicit racism, silence, state persecution, to name a few.

Although most interlocutors omitted race, a select few funkeiros did, however, explicitly talk about race relations in Brazil. A black man in his forties, Helinho was one of the few interlocutors who spoke on the subject with some length, even though, once more, only after being explicitly asked about it. According to Helinho, part of the reason he attended corridor events was because

I liked to fight, wanted to have some renown, feed my self-esteem, and be able to go out with the girls. I was *neguinho* [short and black], didn't have any money, but

I was good at fighting... In the corridors there is no racism, everyone is the same ... we were black, we couldn't go anywhere we wanted, and in the corridors, everyone was equal, and we threw all our hatred in there. We have to be twice as good as them, we are *nequinhos*. When we were younger, we were discriminated at other peoples' homes, especially when we went to the houses of girlfriends who had lighter skin.

More explicit than most Brazilians in his accounts of local racism, Helinho points not only to discrimination, but also to segregation, inequality, and frustration. For Helinho, moreover, these problems could be provisionally mitigated through his participation in corridor events, where there he felt there was even playing field; where he could gain some recognition; and where he could release tension.<sup>22</sup>

Some aspects of *galera* formation challenged the Brazilian notion of racial democracy, and this is especially clear in *galera* movements through the south side of Rio—a topic explored in chapter four. Attending beaches as large groups, *galera* members made themselves conspicuous in quintessentially upper-class spaces—spaces which, while free and public, are far from the city's suburbs where most *galeras* lived. The result of such movements was a debate concerning the beaches themselves, with middle-class groups claiming that the beaches should be restricted; the police organizing roadblocks to restrict movements during weekends; media outlets suggesting direct associations between *galeras* and criminal groups; state representatives passing measures to curb public transport during weekends; and, finally, the *galeras* finding ways to access beaches regardless of the public uproar. An aspect of *galera* culture which obliquely questioned racial democracy, *galera* mobility is, perhaps, the clearest activity which encouraged a much-needed conversation over race in the city.

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<sup>22</sup> DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; Carlos Alberto “Gato Preto,” September 9, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; Urso, September 1, 2024; Tatá, WhatsApp conversation, June 5, 2023; Helinho, September 1, 2023, restaurant in Irajá, Rio de Janeiro, RJ.

## *Ethnography in Rio*

For this research, I conducted fieldwork in Rio during two separate periods, between October of 2022 and September of 2023 and, in 2024, between July and September. During the first period, after about a month of cold-contacting *funkeiros* recommended by friends and relatives, I encountered Tatá and Videira, who became key interlocutors. Both men, in their early 40s when we first met, began attending corridor events in the 1990s and have continued to attend events as leaders of their *galeras*. Three months into my fieldwork, we established a routine whereby we would meet and they would introduce me to acquaintances who had, in some way, participated in corridor events—*galera* members, DJs, organizers, security personnel, and others. During these encounters, I conducted intensive interviews (Gray et al 2007) which could last a few hours or, even, several hours and warrant future encounters. Accompanying Tatá and Videira—and a few other people I met through them—I observed and/or participated, about once a week, in either contemporary corridor events; events linked to *galera* culture which did not feature corridor fighting, such as *resenhas* (reminiscence events) and *bailes das antigas* (old-time events); and friendly gatherings such as barbeques, soccer matches, parties unrelated to *galeras*, and on-the-fly *galera* meet-ups. Among other things, my experience alongside Tatá and Videira expanded my knowledge of the city, and both downtown Duque de Caxias and Irajá, the two locations where I consistently met with them, became familiar to me, places where I also eventually became well known by people who frequented them.

My main form of gathering materials was through fieldnotes consisting of jotted notes, which I then extended into larger narratives immediately upon arrival at my residence in the Tijuca neighborhood (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011). Usually after a first encounter, I asked interlocutors if they were comfortable if I recorded our conversations on a smart phone, which I

usually placed on a table in full view while I also took notes. In some conversations, some of the interviewees said things that they would have preferred not to have said, and on these occasions I erased the entire recording in front of them, relying, then, on the jotted notes as the materials for that conversation. Most of the block quotes featured throughout this work stem from those recordings, while a few others are from audio recordings which were relayed to me in conversations through WhatsApp. During attendance at corridor events, parties, and friendly gatherings, I usually did not record conversations but rather kept a field notebook in the car of a trusted interlocutor, and whenever something which I considered important occurred, I would go back to the car and take note. As the research unfolded, I developed new questions and prompts based on recurring themes and access to the literature on the subject (Tavory and Timmermans 2014)—including the themes of urban space, violence, masculinity, and race relations, major themes which run through this work. During my second stay in Rio, we maintained our original routines but intensified the interviews as Tatá was able to set up conversations nearly every day in Duque de Caxias—conversations which could, at times, develop into day-long hangouts and eventual attendance at parties or gatherings. I have maintained contact with several interlocutors—although it is Tatá and Videira who remain the closest—who keep me updated on developments concerning corridor events and galeras.

My field research was not without its limitations. The majority of people I spent my time with were corridor funkeiros, and my connections with corridor DJs, singers, security personnel, event organizers, members of criminal organizations, state officials, and others were usually through afternoon-long chats accompanied by Tatá or Videira. My early connections were also formed with galera members part of the A-side, and given their networks, they usually set up further conversations with A-side funkeiros. Noticing that the focus was skewed, we eventually

made a concerted effort to seek B-side funkeiros, but even so the B-side members with whom we met were all on friendly terms with Tatá and Videira. Funkeiros from the B-side Olaria galera, for instance, were not only avoided but consistently lampooned as both funkeiros have maintained a strong rivalry with funkeiros from the neighborhood. Because of these connections with the A-side, Videira even began to claim that I had become a member of the A-side myself, since not only was I living in a neighborhood which had been associated with the A-side, but I was also always seen with A-side galeras. Another limitation was my limited interaction with women funkeiras—present in 1990s corridors but who remain mostly absent from contemporary corridor events. Much like with B-side funkeiros, we had to actively seek female galera members for conversations, and even so I was only able to have extended conversations with a few women. The outcome, in this regard, is a story strongly associated with A-side galera members who are men and continue to attend corridor events, even though several other interlocutors were contacted and included.

One of the questions colleagues and students frequently ask me, during conference presentations or lectures, and especially after I share footage of contemporary corridor events, is with regard to my own safety in conducting this research. Alongside the events themselves featuring fighting and, at times, other forms of violence, the city of Rio also features multiple areas under the sway of criminal organizations. Local media outlets have also focused a considerable amount of time reporting on certain areas as dangerous—favelas, the suburbs, the Baixada Fluminense (Holloway 1993; Perlman 2011). What is clear to me after conducting this research, however, is that the majority of people in Rio are not at all affiliated with any of the criminal organizations—quite on the contrary, they suffer under these groups. Perhaps more importantly, I came to learn that corridor practitioners and criminal organizations direct their violence in oftentimes deliberate and specific forms. Corridor event fighters have reserved their fighting and

violent bouts for, well, corridor events, while members of criminal organizations, seeing my association with locals, either greeted us from a distance or ignored us altogether. In my research, I found it to be the case that, using reasonable caution, I could move throughout the city without much problem since I was always accompanied by a funkeiro who knew the area we happened to be in and, also, I always had good reason to be wherever I happened to be.<sup>23</sup>

Another question I get asked frequently is whether I participated in corridor fighting. After attending a few events, I considered the possibility of moving to the A-side frontlines while accompanied by trusted interlocutors. Videira, however, convinced me otherwise, stating that for as much as he and his galera would do their best to keep me from getting hurt, they could not be held responsible if I was punched, kicked, or even dragged into the B-side throng, and my lack of experience in corridor fighting and, even, my lack of fighting skill altogether meant I would likely get injured. It was perhaps fortuitous I spoke to Videira before approaching Tatá, who tried to convince me otherwise, claiming that he would introduce me to corridor fighting by leading the way to the frontlines and, after clobbering a B-side opponent to the ground, would get me into the corridor space as to put in a few good kicks to then pull me out to safety. But by then I had made up my mind, and I was happy to stick to solely accompanying the galeras, chatting with any of the hundreds of people attending events, and actively observing the corridors as they unfolded.

### *What Comes Next*

In the pages that follow, I draw on my time in Rio to show the ways in which galeras and corridor events emerged out of particular conditions and, also, how the culture has contributed to

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<sup>23</sup> A similar experience is relayed by Arias, *Drugs and Democracy in Rio de Janeiro*, 2006, xi.

further shaping the city. The subjects of urban space, violence, masculinity, and race relations run through the work as recurring themes. But Rio de Janeiro funk, galera formation, and corridor events are also cultural manifestations close to the themes of transnational cultural exchange, notably between Brazil and the United States; developments in electronic musics part of the black Atlantic; and popular culture in Rio de Janeiro and fraught governance and cultural policy—governance which may be state or criminal.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters. Chapter one outlines the development of Rio funk culture beginning with the Bailes Black of the mid-1970s, moving through the emergence of funk in Rio and, finally, the development of what were called bailes de mulão (mule events) during the 1980s, the latter commonly relayed, by funkeiros, as precursors to corridor events. Part of a wider lineage which harkens back to events which featured soul and funk from the United States, 1990s corridor events retained aspects of these manifestations while, also, transforming some of their elements. Here the focus is on local developments of transnational musics; the development of identities among participants linked to urban space and globalized signifiers associated with race; and the early formation of galeras as they engaged with, more and more, communal formations for their attendances in events.

Chapter two focuses on the corridor events of the 1990s. I provide a detailed history of events up to 1999, year when an event, in its tragic outcome, spelled the decline and eventual criminalization of corridor events in 2000. Running contrary to the notion that corridor events solely held fighting as their main feature, I show the importance of territorial identity among the participating groups; the concerted efforts among sound system teams to organize events; and the multiplicity of activities during events beyond corridor formation and fighting. In this chapter, I also analyze the *festivals de galeras* (galera contests), the rap de galeras, and the montagens de

galeras, essential components of corridor events. Festivais, rap, and montagens strengthened a sense of permanence among galeras through their competing and singing in the name of their own places of origin—activities and musics which were sung and performed by the galeras themselves.

Chapter three explores galera culture outside of corridor events. Among the examined topics are Rio de Janeiro funk events beyond corridor events; participation in soccer fan clubs, engagement with martial arts, access to designer clothing; intergenerational relationships and affiliation with Evangelical churches; engagement with radio and television; and participation in excitement-fueled activities such as graffiti tagging, Carnival, and vehicle surfing. An important thematic thread which runs through the chapter is how galera men develop their masculinities outside corridor events, masculinities which may both be similar and contrastive to the type of masculinity fostered in corridor events. In general terms, cultural activities linked to galeras share the search for thrills and excitement through dangerous activities; the strengthening of communal bonds; and, importantly, identity formation through territorial affiliations as important markers in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Chapter four continues to examine galera culture outside the corridor venues, focusing on urban space and its relation to racial dynamics in Brazil. Here I examine the often-fraught galera mobility as galera members traversed the city during the 1990s, sometimes through areas associated with their opposing side and which, oftentimes, led to public brawls. But galeras also moved to and through the south side of Rio—region associated with wealth, tourism, and the city's famous beaches. In their movements, galeras not only introduced their spatial scissions linked to an A-side/B-side split to the beaches themselves, but also displayed a larger severance associated with Brazilian racial divisions and Rio de Janeiro's tacit segregation. In their movements, galeras accused the imagined notion of a Brazilian racial democracy and reworked the city's spatial divide.

Alongside exposing the burgeoning funk culture on a public stage and stimulating public discussions concerning race, galera movements catalyzed state initiatives with regard to the growing funk culture, supporting, in 2000, the prohibition of corridor events throughout the city.

## 1: Soul, Funk, and Bailes de Mulão

Brazilian funk music developed in the city of Rio de Janeiro, in clubs and venues throughout the suburban north and west sides of the city; the Baixada Fluminense, just north of the Rio de Janeiro municipality; and São Gonçalo, region to the east of Rio across the Guanabara Bay. As early as the 1970s, black suburban youth began cultivating a musical culture, known today as black Rio or black soul, that borrowed from the North American soul style. Black Rio came to influence the development, during the 1980s, of a music called funk (Herschmann 2005: 22; Cymrot 2022: 25). During the 1980s, groups of young people began to attend funk parties as representatives of their own locales. Regular presence at these parties led to rivalries between *galeras*—groups linked to attendee places of origin—and, during the 1980s, dancing, fighting, and competition between *galeras* grew more and more commonplace. Regularly attending events, *galeras* also joined together in larger groups called *mulas* or *mulões* (“mules” or “big mules”). Linked to this history, 1990s *bailes de corredor* stem from developments in soul and, during the 1980s, funk parties linked to *mulas* called *bailes de mulão* (mule events).

This chapter traces the history of black Rio and the *bailes de mulão*. The first section outlines the black Rio movement, which featured parties fueled by soul music. Although buoyed by the economic growth of 1970s Brazil, soul adherents were stymied by right-wing state intervention, and the second section examines the black Rio movement in its relation to state actors and the notion of a Brazilian racial democracy widely embraced by the right. The section also examines black Rio in light of accusations—mostly from left-leaning commentators like periodical *O Pasquim* and musicologist José Ramos Tinhorão—of commodification and alienation in its importation of cultural signifiers from outside the nation. The third section looks at the *bailes de mulão*, parties which consolidated the so-called *mulas*; incorporated musical styles beyond North

American soul; and featured regular fighting and competition between attending groups. Descended from this lineage, *bailes de corredor*, or corridor events, retain some of the features of these events.

### *Black Rio and Soul Music in the 1970s*

Brazil's economic growth and the military regime's (1964-1985) repressive directives were crucial conditions shaping popular culture in 1970s Rio de Janeiro. The decade known for the nation's *milagre econômico* (economic miracle) brought together the opening-up of Brazil to foreign investment; the development of modern communications technologies in metropolitan areas; and an increase in gross domestic product (Oliveira 2018: 14). The conditions were particularly important for the north side of Rio, a traditionally working-class region, as the increased circulation of capital and employment opportunities set the stage for greater access to imported goods (McCann 2002: 84). The greater influx of foreign records in particular amplified local access to musical styles from the United States, and the consumption of long-playing (LP) discs and cassette tapes grew throughout the decade, and by 1979 the sale of these goods had reached 52.6 million units, an increase of 491% compared to 1970 (Machado 2006: 3-5). The city's suburbs also saw the growth of a small but influential black middle-class, a group which increasingly organized cultural events (Oliveira 2018: 77)—an exception for a period marked by the perpetuation of inequality despite development (Santos 2001: 135). Also, the military regime's repressive policy towards national artists, who were mostly critical of the government, stimulated radio playtime of foreign hits while encouraging the diffusion of international albums for private consumption—recordings without costs for recording the artists and lucrative to sell (Oliveira 2018: 140). Young consumers on the north side increasingly purchased records linked to North

American funk and, also, records and fashion associated with soul. For many of its adherents, James Brown was the principal musician and interlocutor of black Rio (Hanchard 1994: 112), but the soul and funk-infused music of such groups as Kool and the Gang, Parliament, Isaac Hayes, and Curtis Mayfield were also widespread (Essinger 2005: 33). Although soul was the style which most widely circulated, funk music from the United States also readily diffused in a process which muddled different styles, with the word “soul,” throughout the 1970s, serving as an umbrella term for black popular music from the United States (Domingues and Petrônio 2024: 4). An incipient culture during the late-1960s, by the beginning of the 1970s African-American popular musics from the United States clearly flourished throughout the city (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 31), and working-class youth began to attend more and more parties associated with soul (McCann 2002: 84).

Four figures were essential for popularizing soul in Rio: DJ Big Boy, Ademir Lemos, Mr. Funky Santos, and Dom Filó. Known for his knowledge of international styles and for his skillful “crate digging,” Big Boy diffused international rock, pop, and soul through his popular program on the traditional Rádio Tamoio and, after gaining some recognition, went on to lead parties as a DJ and MC alongside Ademir Lemos at the famous Canecão club in the Botafogo neighborhood (Essinger 2005: 16-7). Big Boy and Ademir’s events were called “Bailes da Pesada,”<sup>24</sup> and their DJing popularized soul and funk musics alongside progressive rock (Treece 2021: 418), a juxtaposition which, however, frustrated some attendees who were increasingly interested only in soul and dancing (Gularte 2014: 14-5). Although these parties were short lived, some of the more enthusiastic attendees, influenced by Big Boy and Lemos, founded their own sound system teams to play at other events (Vianna 1988: 25), an important development which further spread soul

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<sup>24</sup> Translated loosely as “Heavy-Duty Parties.”

throughout the city. Seeing the rising popularity of the style, another DJ, Mr. Funky Santos, began hosting parties entirely dedicated to soul, inaugurating, in the downtown Clube Astória, what were soon known as *festas black* (black parties) (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 57-8). With his growing success, Santos formed the sound system team Curtisom, encouraging other prominent DJs to establish their own well-equipped sound system teams—groups such as Black Power, A Cova, and Cash Box (Oliveira 2018: 106). During this period, soul parties were usually hosted in small venues, and attendance grew, mostly, by word of mouth (Domingues and Petrônio 2024: 7). The spread of soul throughout the city, especially on its north side, contributed to the consolidation of several sound system teams—both big and small—which were entirely dedicated to the growing style.

Noticing the growing market, club Renascença, a club with a primarily black middle-class board of directors and clientele, supported weekly Sunday parties entirely dedicated to soul, parties which were led by Dom Filó (Essinger 2005: 16-7). Originally founded in the Méier neighborhood, in 1951, by the 1970s Renascença had moved to the north side Andaraí neighborhood, and its proprietors sought to attract the local black middle-class while highlighting black contributions to popular culture (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 56). By the 1970s, however, a new clientele started frequenting the club, showcasing soul's afro hairstyles and high-heeled shoes while attending Filó's parties in what was a clash with the club's more traditional values (Hanchard 1994: 112). Increasingly popular, Filó's parties were soon rivalling Renascença's own samba events which the club had been hosting every Sunday (Giacomini 2006: 213). From his speakers, Filó blasted soul music while projecting, simultaneously, images from the movie *Shaft*<sup>25</sup>—a movie with an assertive, though, and streetwise black detective as its protagonist—in what further linked local

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<sup>25</sup> *Shaft*, directed by Gordon Parks (1971; New York, NY: Criterion Collection 1130, 2022), Blu-ray.

attendees to Afro-diasporic culture beyond soul (Oliveira 2018: 108; Bocskay 2017: 67). During events, Filó also announced, intermittently, that the attending youth should stay in school, remain close to family, and stay away from drugs and violence (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 62-3), while at other moments Filó also declaimed Black Power mottos—in English—such as “I am somebody” or “black is beautiful” (Oliveira 2018: 109). Soon known as *Noites do Shaft* (Shaft Nights), these events grew to the point that Renascença could no longer accommodate the crowds that converged on it (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 63). With their success, moreover, Dom Filó and a few other organizers left Renascença to form their own sound system team—a group called Soul Gran Prix (Hanchard 1994: 113)—which instituted the projection of images of black personalities as a regular part of their events (Cymrot 2022: 26). Retaining some of Filó’s previous interventions, Soul Gran Prix also held competitions such as cash prizes for the best soul dancers or for the attendee whose attire most closely resembled that of Isaac Hayes (Oliveira 2018: 117). Perhaps epitomizing early developments in Brazilian soul, Soul Gran Prix’s initiatives further connected Rio de Janeiro to Afro-diasporic signifiers, a contribution which stimulated novel forms of expression in the local setting.

The period between 1974 and 1976 was the high point for black Rio. Along with the widespread diffusion of international soul, the period also saw the emergence of local singers, and among the most popular were Tim Maia, Toni Tornado, and Wilson Simonal. Maia borrowed from artists part of the Motown and Stax labels, and his group regularly featured heavy bass and staccato fills in a way that recalled the music by some of those labels’ artists (McCann 2002: 69). Toni Tornado had not only established direct contact with soul music during his stay in the United States during the 1960s, but also learned about the Black Panther organization and some of the ways in which race relations manifested in the United States (Nacked 2012). Perhaps the more conservative

of these artists, Simonal was a singer opposed to the left and its anti-capitalist tenets, and displayed affinity with messages of racial uplift more aligned with Martin Luther King than with Malcolm X (Treece 2021: 430). Along with performing their own shows, local soul artists also made live performances alongside sound system teams at major venues (Oliveira 2018: 135), and such performances attracted larger audiences at parties whose popularity continued to grow. The popularity of soul was such that some of the more popular sound system teams hosted events nearly every day (Vianna 1988: 26-7; Herschmann 2005: 23). Some sound system teams, such as Furacão 2000, even abandoned rock and other musical styles altogether, provisionally dedicating their repertoires entirely to soul (Essinger 2005: 26-7).

By mid-decade, soul had reached its height in suburban popularity, comprising not only black popular musics from the United States but also local singers and artists who also adhered to the imported style, bringing together anything between ten and fifteen thousand people every night (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 23-4)—attendees who, in their adoption of soul fashion, were also wearing puffed sleeves, bell bottom pants, pointed lapels, and deep necklines accompanied by bold colors, sparkles, and textures (Oliveira 2018: 213). Regular attendees also began to call themselves, in English, “blacks” or “brothers,” personalizing their greetings in what further singularized the movement. Soul’s expansion also stimulated greater circulation of media and magazines linked to soul (Domingues and Petrônio 2024: 7-8), and at a party at Império Serrano, in 1976, Soul Gran Prix screened the movie *Wattstax*, documentary of a soul and funk festival organized by Stax to memorialize the 1965 Los Angeles racial uprisings (Alberto 2009: 15). For some black attendees, the experience was such that they were left crying on the dance floor after the slides had passed, relating the images to their own experiences (Hanchard 1994: 113). The expansion of the public also meant that sound system teams began to seek larger venues, and by

the second half of the 1970s not only had hundreds of sound system teams emerged (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 23), but the more popular groups were also renting comparatively larger clubs—clubs which sometimes hosted large samba parties and which, in the coming years, would be hosting bailes de mulão and corridor events.

The widespread popularity of soul also encouraged a greater organization among the more popular sound system teams. Sound system teams consisted of up to six people, and their members were responsible for choosing and changing records; installing and monitoring loudspeakers; setting up lighting and decoration; and carrying equipment. Likely influenced by Soul Gran Prix's success, DJs also grew increasingly responsible for leading competitions and uttering a few words on racial consciousness. At other moments, sound system teams distributed prizes to dancers, black celebrity impersonators, and attendees dressed in soul fashion (Oliveira 2018: 122-3; Essinger 2005: 35), setting the mood, animating parties, running contests, and stimulating dancers in what highlighted their prominence (McCann 2002: 82). As soul grew in popularity, larger events began to include multiple sound system teams in what were called *festivals de equipe* (team festivals), and as many as seven sound system teams could alternate performances on a single night (Oliveira 2018: 130). The popularity of soul also encouraged the further sophistication of the sound systems themselves, and some of the major teams invested in state-of-the-art equipment in efforts to overshadow rivals. The competing teams also intentionally sought obscure records to garner prestige among attendees in their contentions for unique hits. Some DJs even travelled to the United States to acquire rare or recently-released records, coming back to Rio with dozens or even hundreds of items to play at their own events or, even, to sell in the domestic market (Herschmann 2005: 27). The importance of a connection with the United States was such that DJ Nirto, of Soul Gran Prix, stated that “what used to happen in Harlem we would play over here” in yet another

display (Essinger 2005: 24), clearly, of Brazilian soul's proximity to African-American culture from abroad. In further attempts to remain unique, some sound system teams also removed labels and other distinguishing mark from their records to conceal song and record names, and DJs also chose obscure songs to represent the teams themselves (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 74-5).

The intense circulation also stimulated changes in the domestic market. During the early-1970s, DJ Big Boy helped establish a link between recordings made outside the country and local record production (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 49), while Ademir Lemos, of Furacão 2000, closed record deals with companies from the United States in order to have some control over the local production of records which featured releases from New York City or Miami. For this, Lemos took advantage of the import restrictions which had limited the ability of U.S. independent labels like Motown and Stax to penetrate the Brazilian record market, favoring instead multinationals with Brazilian affiliates. With these limits set up in Brazil, multinationals acquired the rights to distribute independent U.S. singles in the country with an eye toward the local release of compilation albums. Lemos then marketed the brands of the top soul sound system teams to the record companies and served as “producer” for collections of U.S. soul singles, such as in the case of a collection under the name *Soul Gran Prix*, based on the sound system team with the same name—a record which generated sales profits for both Lemos and the sound system team itself. Sales were further boosted as sound system teams began to distribute LPs as part of their contests, increasing their reach among soul dancers who regularly attended events (McCann 2002: 49). Soon sound system DJs were compiling LPs with the most popular songs, all from the United States, and some DJs even began to add sound effects and extend the length of some pieces before the compilations were released into the local market (Oliveira 2018: 239 and 256). A dynamic culture,

by the late-1970s, sound system teams were deliberately handling songs and records in order to transform the music.

The consolidation of soul meant much more than simply the establishment of a foreign music in Rio. The musical style grew more and more synonymous with an international modernity and may have signified, for coming-of-age youth, an embrace of global blackness (Oliveira 2018: 201). The popularity of soul also consolidated the sound system team as an important actor for hosting parties throughout the suburbs. Some venues grew increasingly identified with the burgeoning culture, and a few of these clubs—Império Serrano, Bohemios de Irajá, and Guadeloupe Country Clube, among others (Oliveira 2018: 130-1)—would continue to host events as soul gave way to other musical styles and cultures during the late 1970s.

### *Commodification, Alienation, and Racial Democracy*

Along with introducing a new musical style into Rio de Janeiro, black soul was also important for valuing an afro-diasporic culture from outside Brazil. In the case of soul's circulation in Brazil, the United States played a decisive role in the diffusion of black power and civil rights ideas as sources of “cultural and political raw material” for the local black community (Gilroy 2013: 171). In Rio, this was a rare occasion in which the population identified with a black culture which was neither African nor Brazilian (Hanchard 1994: 112)—a cosmopolitan blackness which differentiated soul from other national musics (Giacomini 2006: 216; Oliveira 2018: 13). In the Brazilian context, this differentiation—especially for some Marxist thinkers, samba musicians, and mainstream media outlets in Rio—indicated that soul somehow lacked “authenticity” since it infiltrated a nation with an already rich cultural heritage linked to black popular musics, notably samba (Fontaine 1985). Criticisms of the legitimacy of black Rio were further amplified through

accusations that soul was part of a commodification process—a process which supposedly mitigated the transformative importance of the style (Steinitz 2019: 89). Soul and its associated symbols, however, created new ways of experiencing race, serving as a tool for the development of new identities during a period of increased circulation of ideas linked to race and (Fry 1982), importantly, in a society which some—especially those associated with the military regime—continued to suggest was a racial democracy. However, in its diffusion throughout Latin America, including Brazil, soul empowered local African diasporic communities; challenged racial hierarchies; and forged bonds of solidarity among dancers who continued to meet week after week at venues (Steinitz 2019: 100). This process of creative transformation, especially within the Brazilian context of an authoritarian regime, was of great importance regardless of the accusations of a presumed lack of authenticity or, for that matter, of an importation of what some considered harmful racial dynamics from the United States—accusations which flatly supported the notion that soul was, somehow, a spurious culture.

In what perhaps symbolized the growing tensions between the styles, samba and soul famously split the weekends at club Renascença, with Soul Gran Prix's attendees joining the Saturday soul parties while samba fans attended, on Sunday evenings, the club's weekly *rodas de samba* (samba jam sessions). Claiming for a break from values supposedly attached to samba, some black Rio attendees demonstrated their outward disdain for the traditional style by claiming that samba did not rework a black position in society; it reproduced, rather than attempted to change, the racist status quo in Brazil; and expressed a desire for black social improvement through black subordination and adherence to hegemonic values. For these same attendees, however, soul supported black pride in opposition to a racist legacy; and reinforced social mobility through the affirmation of blackness (Giacomini 2006: 213). For these youth, this assertiveness was supported

by soul's cosmopolitan signs which, importantly, transformed local race relations through their engagement with international symbols (Domingos and Petrônio 2024: 19). A club which displayed the lingering tensions between soul and samba, Renascença showcased important cultural tensions in 1970s Rio de Janeiro, tensions which spurred responses from the state and civil society.

Noticing changes in the market, sambistas grew resentful of soul's takeover of rehearsal spaces previously reserved for samba schools and musicians (Treece 2021: 422). As soul grew increasingly popular, sound system teams began to host, more and more, black parties in major samba schools (Domingues and Petrônio 2024: 14), venues which were prepared to receive the thousands of black Rio adherents who continued to gather at parties. By the mid 1970s, traditional samba schools and musicians, led by an artist called Candéia, began to claim that black soul was an invasion on their turf (Hanchard 1994: 114), stating, in their defense, that the music was a corruption of tradition in its lack of cultural authenticity (Oliveira 2018: 170). For Candéia, black Rio adherents were the “driving force” of a movement which preyed on a group of “useful innocents” who, in their consumption of soul, supported a questionable foreign culture which lacked legitimacy or political expression in its local manifestation (Alberto 2009: 26-7). As one of his responses, Candéia even composed, alongside samba musician Ivone Lara, a song called “Sou Mais Samba,” a 1977 *partido alto* with lyrics stating that “I am not African, nor American, to the sound of the guitar and pandeiro, I’m more for the Brazilian Samba,” or that “to end this thing called soul, all you need is a bit of macumba” (Essinger 2005: 41) in a reference, also, to Afro-Brazilian religion. But for all of his resistance to foreign styles, Candéia also displayed some affinity to foreign musics, including soul itself. In the late 1970s, Candéia had been integrating outside influences in some of his songs (Bocskay 2017: 70)—even experimenting with funk-soul

riffs in his own “Saudação a Toco Preto” in what (Treece 2021: 422). Candéia and Soul Gran Prix were also under contract with the same record label, WEA, and it may have been that in his criticisms of soul Candéia sought to deliberately create controversy in an attempt to amplify the interest over artists under the same label (Oliveira 2018: 170; Treece 2021: 422). In an interview after Candéia released “Sou Mais Samba,” Dom Filó even claimed that the rivalry had been incited by the media and, perhaps, the recording company itself in a bid to encourage sales—of both soul and samba records (Domingues and Petrônio 2024: 14). Filó also claimed, at a later moment, that he and Candéia were friends who shared musical ideas whenever they met at Renascença, where they both performed (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 116). Sharing a market with soul while competing, also, for performance spaces, cultural relevancy, and record sales, samba artists claimed for a nationalist position; chastised soul’s presumed commodification and alienation; and pushed inflammatory rhetoric in bids to highlight their own contributions and retain importance.

If sambistas were ambivalent about soul, important artists and intellectuals in the Rio de Janeiro context were outright critical of black Rio. For Roberto Moura, music critic for the left-wing periodical *O Pasquim*, soul was “an insidious, neo-colonialist publicity campaign [...] to create subjects who will consume the excess of what is produced abroad,” while for lyricist Aldir Blanc, in an article entitled “Safari”—also for *O Pasquim*—soul dancers idolized record executives who acted as the “white gods of soul.” Lélia González, a Marxist thinker linked to the Brazilian black movement, claimed soul “[did] not represent a clear position on the part of *negros*, but simply an identification provoked by the phenomenon of mass culture, which Americans do very well” (Alberto 2009: 26-7). Another devout Marxist, musicologist José Ramos Tinhorão stated that soul’s adherents were merely “ceasing to be explored workers in an underdeveloped context to become the image of explored workers in a hyperdeveloped context,” while for bossa nova artists

Vinícius de Moraes and Nara Leão, some soul artists, notably Wilson Simonal, performed music which was complicit with consumerism and, even, the military regime's "economic miracle" (Treece 2021: 431). Similarly critical of soul's supposed lack of authenticity, conductor Júlio Medaglia criticized the movement for "its attempt to impose a rhythm, a harmony, and a sound which have nothing to do with our own musicality. And the worst part is that they are taking advantage of a band of useful innocents, who barely know how to evaluate the importance of their musical treasure, which they inherited from Africa." For Abdias Nascimento, finally—Afro-Brazilian scholar, artist, and politician—although soul adherents certainly utilized black symbols to display their dissent, their initiative was "also to evade the feeling of frustration, even at the cost of recurring to alienated models, whose ostensive origins are the blacks from the United States" (Oliveira 2018: 162-5). Focusing on soul's foreignness, these artists and intellectuals claimed the music's lack of standing in an already-established setting.

The mainstream press was harshly critical of soul. In a piece focusing on consumerism, the *Manchete* periodical accused soul's public of a sheeplike fidelity not only to the "recording studios, shoe sellers, and record stores," but also to the producers of "walking canes, pipes, hats, glasses, berets, jewelry, and combs" in what also targeted its fashion (Alberto 2009: 26-7). Similarly, the *O Globo* newspaper claimed black Rio introduced an "alienated view of society" which "cannot be considered authentic."<sup>26</sup> Then, on its influential show *Fantástico*, the Globo television network aired a piece which showcased the supposed contention between soul and samba, interviewing soul dancers and sambistas who were presented in opposition to one another. At the end of their piece, the reporters displayed a massive group singing Candéia's "Sou mais Samba" in what may have signaled the network's implicit preference. But among all the news reports, it may have been

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<sup>26</sup> *O Globo*, 26 April, 1977.

a piece by journalist Lena Frias which stood out as the most significant. Writing for the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* in 1976, Frias asserted that adherents to the black Rio movement were

A population whose eyes and whose interests turn outwards to non-Brazilian models. [...] [W]hose anthem is a song by James Brown or a song by the Blackbyrds; whose Bible is Wattstax, the black counterpoint to Woodstock; whose language has incorporated words like “brother” and “white”; whose flag holds the images of James Brown or [Rufus] Thomas, of Marva Whitney or Lin Collins; whose slogan is ‘I am somebody’; whose model is the black American, whose gestures they copy, even though upon the copy there are originalities.<sup>27</sup>

Frias encapsulates the criticisms over black Rio’s supposed commodification, even though she also claims, in passing, that in Brazil the movement held its originalities. For Frias, Rio was allowing a foreign music to infiltrate its own suburban traditions—a foreign music accompanied by symbols modelled on black America—in a way that warped Brazilian local culture. For all of her concerns, Frias also highlighted the territorial dimensions inherent to the racial dynamics of Rio de Janeiro in an interview with a white rock fan, who claimed that

There are a lot of *blacks* that curse at *whites*, hit them and everything, just like what occurred at the Império Serrano [samba school]. [...] We [rock fans] heard that they [soul fans] are going to debut at the Mourisco, and that they want to take over the South Side. I think it’s tough. Because who likes rock doesn’t go to soul, and the South Side is all rock.<sup>28</sup>

Important here is the connection between racial identification and musical style, with rock fans identified as white while black suburbanites are linked to soul. And the interviewee also sheds light on the city’s territorial divide—a crucial claim. Associating rock and whiteness to the city’s south side, the interviewee expresses concern over the possibility of soul moving into the area or, even, over the possibility of rock fans attending soul events. Also telling is the interviewee’s not-so-

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<sup>27</sup> Lena Frias, *Jornal do Brasil*, 17 July, 1976, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Lena Frias, *Jornal do Brasil*, July 17, 1976, 6.

veiled claims regarding race. Although the rock fan initially speaks of skin color, those references are quickly saddled onto musical styles and city spaces, displaying an important feature of the typical Brazilian discourse concerning race within the context of racial democracy. Indeed, along with highlighting the culture of silence associated with Brazilian race relations (Sheriff 2001: 60), the discussion is masked behind signifiers which are, at first, seemingly unrelated to race (Fry 2002: 8), in this case music and city zones. Revelatory in its on-the-ground reporting, Frias' article not only demonstrated the recurring discourse of soul's assumed commodification and alienation, but also highlighted Rio's racial segregation, a subject which is reworked by soul adherents and, importantly, would be retained by the funk galeras in their later movements throughout the city.

If spokespeople on the left obliquely referenced race in Brazil, the more conservative sectors of society placed race relations front and center in their discussions over soul. As black Rio gained recognition, actors linked to the state—a state identified with a right-wing military regime—began to take notice of the movement. For Rio de Janeiro's municipal secretary of tourism, Pedro de Toledo Pizza, black soul was a “commercial movement with a racist philosophy” which (Oliveira 2018: 161), via its entrance into Brazil from the United States, could disturb the supposed harmonious environment unique to the South American nation. Similarly, foreign relations minister Mário Gibson Barboza viewed black Rio as spurious since there was no need to “ensure the equality of races in Brazil,” a country which, for the diplomat, had never displayed racial discrimination in the first place (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 104). But the loudest outcry would come from none other than Gilberto Freyre himself,<sup>29</sup> the pioneering figure of the racial

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<sup>29</sup> In his famous monograph “Masters and Slaves,” Freyre claimed that Portuguese colonization, in contrast to Anglo-Saxon colonization, consolidated a much more fluid racial relationship among the races. The author's thesis, originally published in 1933, would later be considered largely responsible for the coining of the term “racial democracy.”

democracy paradigm. In a 1977 article for the Recife-based newspaper *Diário de Pernambuco*, the author asks:

Have my eyes tricked me? Or have I really read that from the United States would arrive to Brazil—if they haven't arrived already—coming from the traditionally very friendly Republic of the United States of North America, colored americans in charge—by whom?—of convincing Brazilians, also of color, that their afrobrasilian [sic] dances and chants should be of 'melancholy and revolt'? And not, how they are today, modinhas and samba almost always joyful and fraternal.<sup>30</sup>

The quote resonates with Freyre's views concerning race relations in Brazil. With the importation of black American musics of "melancholy and revolt," the author continued, racial tensions from North America could complicate what had always been an otherwise benign tradition of racial harmony—a tradition, perhaps, in line with Brazilian black musics which were "almost always joyful and fraternal." Perhaps the very fact that Freyre himself was criticizing soul was a telling sign of black Rio's importance in its circulation through Brazil—a display of the growing exchange of global ideas linked to race which challenged the invented notion of a Brazilian racial democracy. Far from a racial paradise, local race relations had never been "joyful and fraternal," and soul's movements throughout Rio, during the period, were transformative in their importation of signs and symbols from the United States, catalyzing discussions. Indeed, at the very least black Rio reworked one of the most damaging consequences of racial democracy: the difficulty among some Brazilians, in a context of silence, to conspicuously recognize problems linked to discrimination, violence, and inequality (Hanchard 1994: 47). In his response, then, Freyre inadvertently displayed the powerful effects of soul's mobility—a global force which, in its engagement with local culture broke silences; introduced new ideas concerning ethnicity; and, finally, stimulated discussions concerning local race relations.

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<sup>30</sup> Gilberto Freyre, "Atenção Brasileiros!" *Diario de Pernambuco*, May 15, 1977, A-13.

Despite criticisms from both the left and right, some artists, however, did praise soul, and it is perhaps unsurprising that such praise came from the more progressive artists in Brazil. For Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, musicians linked to the then-recent Tropicalismo movement, soul could help Brazilian popular music move beyond the national imperatives which other artists continued to stubbornly prioritize. Veloso, for instance, endorsed the idea of Brazilian negros identifying with blacks from the United States, claiming that they were “affirming themselves more as blacks than as Brazilians”—a nod to the importance of global blackness (Dunn 2013: 75 and 84). Similarly, Gilberto Gil claimed his own affinity with Brazilian soul artists because of their shared goals to challenge state-sanctioned forms of national culture and (Alberto 2009: 35), also, confront a military regime which insisted on the rhetoric of racial democracy. Gilberto Gil even produced an album called *Refavela* which, influenced by Brazilian soul, moved away from Brazilian traditions towards what he called “black” which, for Gil, meant a “consciousness that is connected to the international sphere and isn’t just Brazilian” (Alberto 2009: 3). Modern artists who themselves were drawn to foreign cultures, Veloso and Gil saw in soul an important means to change in Brazilian music, which these artists understood as insulated.

Political groups, associated with black empowerment, also saw in black Rio opportunities to further their agendas. Formed in 1975, the Instituto de Pesquisas das Culturas Negras (IPCN)<sup>31</sup> was a group which focused on spreading discussions concerning race relations in Brazil, and members were known for compiling reading lists, staging teach-ins and rallies, and publishing newsletters. A group which tried to avoid the political tensions between the left and right, IPCN also opposed what they claimed were equally totalizing ideas about Brazilian race relations pushed forward by both the left and right. For IPCN activist Carlos Alberto Medeiros, black Rio could

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<sup>31</sup> Translated loosely as “Institute for Research into Black Cultures” (IPCN). *Movimento Negro Unificado*, another important group, may be translated as “Unified Black Movement” (MNU).

“contribute to the emergence of a black Brazilian identity that was attempted [...] through samba, but without success” and could provide for a new black distinctiveness in the Brazilian context (Alberto 2009: 32-34). Established in São Paulo in 1978, the Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU) was a devoutly leftist organization which, while engaged with party politics, also tackled racial issues in Brazil (Hanchard 1994: 124). Much like IPCN, the group contributed to the organization of soul parties and, also, sent its members to events in attempts to recruit new members (Oliveira 2018: 76). At some parties, such as Filó’s *Noites do Shaft*, activists even distributed copies of Stokely Carmichael’s *Black Power* and Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* to stimulate discussions concerning racism (Hanchard 1994: 115). Noticing black Rio’s potential to support, in Brazil, global questions concerning race, activists saw in black Rio the possibility to expand a conversation on local race relations and amplify their own organizations.

The growing involvement of political groups in black Rio and the importation of black American musics—allied with the underlying theme of blackness which pervaded parties—grabbed the attention of military leaders, and members of the state began investigating events. For some in the military, the fact that Brazilians were singing black American musics and repeating, in English, phrases such as “black is beautiful” was seditious (Oliveira 2018: 19). For police chief Antônio Gomes, in a state report on black Rio, soul “[provided] an incentive for separation, through the emergence of several *exclusivist* [sic] social activities.” Directly referring, then, to Freyre, the chief claimed it was essential “to remember that in our country there was always harmony among Brazilians”—a miscegenation which “is according to Gylberto Freyre [sic] in ‘*Casa Grande e Senzala*’ [The Masters and the Slaves], a privilege” (Alberto 2009: 22). In a separate report, another officer claimed that “Negro Brazilians, due to atavism, display remarkable sensitivity to said ‘soul’ music,” something which, seemingly, could further support an “intimate

relationship with the American ‘Black Power’ movement” (Alberto 2009: 30). Embracing the invented notion of a Brazilian racial democracy, state officials sought to minimize United States influence in efforts to shelter Brazil from this assumed harmful culture.

Some officers also grew increasingly preoccupied with the possibility of the Black Panthers founding a chapter in Rio. For them, the establishment of the group could mean the crystallization of American-style racism and segregation in a country which, seemingly, was at the forefront of racial democracy (Oliveira 2018: 174). Along with IPCN’s growing interest in the Black Panthers, soul singer Toni Tornado, in a televised show alongside bossa nova star Elis Regina, raised a clenched fist in reference to the group after a performance in which he imitated James Brown. For military censors, the gesture was considered dangerous for it could “cause a racist wave, an open conflict between whites and blacks” in what was a presumed importation of racial tensions and (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 41; Naked 2012). For his actions, the state not only warned Tornado about “conveying false images of reality,” but also brought the singer to the Departamento de Ordem Política e Social (DOPS) for questioning (Treece 2021: 432-3).<sup>32</sup> Tornado, however, was not the only artist arrested by the state. The police also detained and interrogated some of the more renowned black soul DJs (Assef 2003: 55-6), who in a context of suspended *habeas corpus*, could be arbitrarily arrested. Dom Filó, for instance, was captured, blindfolded, and brought to a humid room for interrogation, with a blinding light shining on his face in a condition analogous to torture, while DJ Nirto and members of sound system team Black Power were questioned whether groups from the United States had been financing black Rio parties (Domingues and Petrônio 2024: 15-6). Military suspicions over sound system teams were further amplified since some of the team leaders had shown prior support for left-wing causes, such as João Baptista of Grupo Black, who

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<sup>32</sup> Translated loosely as “Department of Political and Social Order.”

had promoted leftist propaganda during the Goulart administration in the early 1960s and Mister Paulão, of Black Power, who had signed a petition in favor of the Communist Party in the 1970s (Alberto 2009: 14). Although some soul artists had been certainly involved with local politics and interest groups, black Rio was far from a political movement which sought to root Black Panther ideology or extreme left-wing rhetoric into Rio de Janeiro. Indeed, the political dimension of black soul never really left the confines of its clubs and venues (Hanchard 1994: 138). As the state continued to investigate black Rio, sound system teams also began increasingly to deny any links with political movements, claiming, instead, that their parties were held for enjoyment and nothing more (Cymrot 2022: 26). Partly as a result of the explicit repression from state agents linked to the right wing and a lack of support from left-wing actors, black Rio's political potential began to wane by the late-1970s.

Societal actors identified with the left were similar in their accusations that soul somehow lacked legitimacy in the Brazilian context—an important claim which opens up questions regarding the notion of cultural “authenticity.” A problematic concept, authenticity may imply the existence of essentialized identities linked to purity (Tanikella 2003: 156)—racial, ethnic, class-based, to name a few—in what fails to recognize that cultural expression is already the result of a selection or combination of sources which are in a process of constant renewal and exchange (Canclini 2006: 141). The concept of authenticity, moreover, may further imply the existence of expressive sources which are somehow autonomous or internally coherent—a fallacy given that exchange between people and behaviors is virtually unavoidable, even if such exchange is suffused with inequality, power, and domination (Rosaldo 1988: 87). As Edward Said reminds us (1994: 217), “the history of all culture is the history of cultural borrowing” since it is “never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of

appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures,” in what the author has called “a universal norm.” Authenticity, moreover, also presumes the existence of cultural products which may be somehow spurious or, even, devoid of meaning, and in this regard if the term is to retain any significance at all, it is that music is authentic whenever it engages with society in some meaningful way, which it virtually always does (Rice 2004: 101). In the case of black Rio, the problem is amplified since local musics are not, by definition, more empowering or efficacious than those informed by transnational cultures (Dunn 2013: 73)—another important assumption linked to the invented notion of authenticity which cultural actors associated with the Brazilian left championed. Accusations of soul’s lack of authenticity in the Brazilian context failed to recognize that not only did the music transform the new societal setting, but the new circumstances also supported further changes for a musical style which was in constant global flux. And although there may be some truth to the notion that soul circulated in Rio de Janeiro as a commodity linked to North American consumerism, this particular form of exchange, finally, does not annul its importance in transforming society, claims which were advocated, especially, by actors associated with the left.

If on one side soul was criticized for its presumed commodification and alienation and actors to the right vilified the style for its supposed opposition to racial democracy. The reality was that local race relations had never been harmonious. In fact, the abstract idea of a racial democracy historically hindered broad discussions of race (Hanchard 1994: 57). The 1964 dictatorship, which itself featured repressive directives in stark contrast to the very notion of racial democracy (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 43), also made open discussions on race ever more difficult, encouraging further reliance upon expressive culture as a vehicle for discourse (Hanchard 1994: 120). During the period, racial democracy was utilized by policy makers to deny racial oppression through

exclusion of expression (Wade 2005: 241)—a paradox since, in the case of black Rio, such exclusion deliberately targeted black populations. It was through black Rio, an international movement associated with foreign Afro-diasporic cultures, that local blacks were able to challenge the Brazilian setting (Lamont et al 2016: 140), questioning a racial myth which, as a lingering condition, rooted a culture of silence (Sheriff 2001: 60); masked the problem of race (Fry 2002: 8); and hindered developments of black consciousness (Da Costa 1985: 237-240). A narrative which has persisted at least since the Vargas regime—important period for Brazilian nation-state formation—black Rio further eroded the notion of racial democracy as it questioned the somehow pacific interaction between blacks and whites, a narrative which continued to crumble as funk took over the suburban context (Palombini 2009: 52). Persisting as part of funk culture even after the decline of black Rio, local black challenges of the racial status quo are exemplified particularly well in the incidents involving the galeras in the city's south side beaches during the early 1990s, events which highlighted Rio de Janeiro's unofficial segregation.<sup>33</sup> Crucial for coming to terms with 1970s Rio de Janeiro, the localized expression known as black Rio partly emerged out of the conditions of racial democracy; produced important shifts with regard to race in Brazil; and, importantly, consolidated important elements linked to race relations which would persist as part of funk, even if implicitly.

As the police continued to target events, sound system teams and attendees also grew increasingly fearful of police aggression; their confiscation of sound system team records; and their arbitrary detainment of DJs (Oliveira 2018: 132). In 1978 disco began in Brazil, and sound system teams began to withdraw musics by artists such as James Brown in favor of musicians such as Donna Summer (McCann 2002: 88). For Dom Filó, as disco grew increasingly popular, it

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<sup>33</sup> These events are the central topic of chapter four.

“divided up the sound system teams” in what led to fewer events focused solely on soul (Essinger 2005: 54). Disco’s boom also attracted, for a brief period, a cross-class and mixed-race crowd (McCann 2002: 88), mitigating the racial dimension of black Rio (Herschmann 2005: 24). Disco would soon follow the same path as soul in its movements throughout the suburbs, becoming a symbol for local blackness at parties which were increasingly playing “funk” (Fontanari 2022: 66)—a new term for identifying popular musics from the United States.

### *Dispersal of Soul, Rise of Funk, and Bailes de Mulão*

The disco trend and the decline of black Rio lay the foundations for sound system teams to begin incorporating multiple styles into their repertoires. During the late 1970s, Brazilian DJs began to produce albums with compilations of danceable musics, with the term funky-disco generalizing North American funk, soul, disco, and, late in 1979, the newly-arriving rap music, all under the same name. One DJ who produced several of these albums was Cidinho Cambalhota, who in his *The Best Funky in Town Vol. 2*, for example, brought together artists such as Kurtis Blow, The Bar-Kays, and Curtis Mayfield. Importantly, at the bottom of the cover Cambalhota added that “the rhythm of the moment is the ‘funky-disco,’ [...] term widely used by DJs and all the people who attend the events throughout all of Brazil.”<sup>34</sup> Out of all the styles, it was perhaps rap which grew the most during this transitional moment, with songs by Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa becoming particularly popular as the 1980s got under way. With the arrival of rap, soul dancing also began to give way to hip-hop’s group-oriented dances, and attendees also

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<sup>34</sup> Cambalhota, Cidinho. *The Best Funky in Town Vol. 2*, Mercury 6448 028, released 1980.

began to abandon soul's afro-hairstyles and bell-bottom pants in lieu of caps and Bermuda shorts (Essinger 2005: 64).

Besides funky-disco, north side parties were soon also featuring rhythm and blues, which began to make its way into Rio during the early 1980s. While the most notable addition to the repertoire was Marvin Gaye's "Sexual Healing," songs by artists such as Glenn Jones and Sybil were also widespread in what further diversified the music. Also entering from the United States, these songs had a comparatively slower tempo—at around 100 beats per minute (BPM)—and encouraged dancers to provisionally abandon their individualized or group dancing to join the floor as couples. The most well-known DJ associated with the style was DJ Corello, who in his parties inserted rhythm and blues songs between his series of funky-disco hits, announcing to the crowd that "the time for *charminho* has come, so move your body really slow" in what encouraged couples' dancing (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 190-1). Soon rhythm and blues songs were being called *charminho* or, simply, *charme* (little charm or charm), and with the growing popularization of the style, Corello and a few other DJs began to organize events focused mostly on rhythm and blues called *bailes charme*, events which grew in parallel along with parties dedicated to funky-disco.

Alongside the broadening of styles, the period also saw the emergence of novel sound system techniques, all entering the city from abroad. One innovation was live mixing, or the blending of different tracks into what seemed like one continuous string of songs, a technique likely introduced by DJ Marlboro (Peixoto and Sebadelhe 2016: 195). Another DJ, Ricardo Lamounier, brought phasing, which is executed by alternating two copies of the same record, played simultaneously, but at slightly different times to produce an echo effect (Assef 2003: 81). Sound system teams also began to utilize scratching, moving records back and forth as a rhythmic

tool or, simply, to produce the characteristic sound. But out of all of the techniques it may have been repeating particular parts of records which stood as the most significant. For this, DJs played two identical records, manually sounding one record while silencing the other, backtracking in the silenced record in order to repeat, afterwards, particular parts of songs. During the early 1990s, this form of repeating would be a technique exhaustively used for the production of the *montagens de galeras*, which DJs executed by utilizing electronic samplers (Essinger 2005: 57-61). Important techniques which further shaped the music, these innovations further supported shifts in the music experienced at parties in the Rio de Janeiro suburbs.

As the decade progressed, foreign musics continued arrive in the city and expand party repertoires. For Rio, the introduction of electro, Miami bass, and freestyle during the mid-1980s was particularly important, and songs such as Pretty Toney's "Fix it in the Mix," Stevie B's "Pump Up the Party," and DJ Battery Brain's "808 Volt Mix" became widespread (Assef 2003: 60). Particularly popular in Rio, these styles emphasize low frequencies and, also, beats and timbres produced by the Roland TR-808 drum machine, and their widespread popularity contributed to the establishment of the drum machine's characteristic sounds as part of suburban events. Perhaps the most influential of these pieces, DJ Battery Brain's "808 Volt Mix" is a Los Angeles electro song with a beat which would soon be tirelessly sampled by Brazilian DJs, only to be replaced as the most common sample at the turn of the century (Palombini 2019: 73). Widely known in Rio as, simply, "Volt" or "Volt Mix," the beat was a foundational part of many of the *montagens de galeras* produced for corridor events. The popularization of this wide range of musical styles, along with rap and disco, also supported the rise of sound system teams which focused on wide-ranging repertoires, and team Furacão 2000 in particular rose to prominence during this period (Oliveira 2018: 185). Featuring lyrics focusing on sexuality and pleasure (Essinger 2005: 66)—which stood

in stark contrast with black Rio's racial themes—electro, freestyle, and Miami bass also contributed to further dampening the involvement of groups linked to the black movement in suburban parties. Finally, at around the time of the addition of these styles, the plethora of musics played at suburban parties also began to be referred to as funk (Essinger 2005: 61-2), a style of danceable electronic music—featuring more and more changes by local artists—which retains the name “funk” based on its lineage with black Rio and (Palombini 2009: 50-1 and 37), perhaps, its linkages with American funk, a style which was never center-stage but which was nevertheless always present.

As new materials made their way to Rio, attendees—or rather, *funkeiros* (funk adherents)—and DJs soon began to transform the imported musics. Listening to English-sung songs while dancing in the clubs, crowds translated lyrics and titles into Portuguese phrases which sounded like their original iterations, but were often absurd. Called *melôs*, these pieces could feature new melodies (Palombini 2019: 78), usually similar to those in the original compositions. Run D.M.C.'s “You Talk Too Much,” for instance, became “Melô do Tomate” (Tomato “mellow”) since the title sounds like “taca tomate” (throw tomatoes) in Portuguese (Bezerra and Reginato 2017: 63). Love De-Luxe's “Here Comes that Sound,” another popular piece, was renamed *Melô da Conceição* (Conceição's mellow) as the singer's utterance of “comes that sound” resembles the surname Conceição. During the 1980s, DJ Marlboro also began hosting a daily radio program which, along with advertising upcoming events and playing the newest in funk (Vianna 1987: 2-3 and 62), received live calls from listeners who suggested names for the foreign pieces—names which typically referred to an idiosyncratic part of the song or which sounded, in Portuguese, similar to

the English-sung lyrics.<sup>35</sup> DJ Marlboro would then *batizar* (baptize) the pieces with the most humorous or creative names, which attendees could then request during parties. Soon DJs were also producing their own pieces by sampling the instrumental versions of songs while adding, also, new melodies and lyrics—melodies and lyrics which had been inspired by what the crowds had sung at venues. When these versions were played at parties, then, the crowds would sing the lyrics they had heard on the radio or, even, that they themselves had invented in what continued to generate new materials in an increasingly localized creative process.

But it was perhaps in their shift to attending parties as groups associated with areas of the city—blocks, neighborhoods, favelas—that attendees most deeply altered events. Called *galeras*,<sup>36</sup> these groups began to attend funk events as late as 1984 (Cecchetto 1998: 152)—if not slightly earlier—and their persistent attendance consolidated the *galera* as a recurring unit at funk parties. *Galeras* which regularly patronized the same venue eventually claimed a space for themselves within the locale, a space which was then associated, week after week, with that particular group. Once this was established, the larger *galeras* began to challenge other groups' claims on space in venues, and rivalries emerged. As the weeks went by, *galeras* also began to move away from rivalling groups or, more commonly, towards those whom they shared rivalry, and soon friendly *galeras* were coming together to dance and socialize. As *galeras* congregated with one another, their concerted efforts gave them more control over decision-making and intimidation, encouraging rival *galeras* also to coalesce. These assembling *galeras* were soon called *mulas* (mules) or *mulões* (big mules) (Cecchetto 1998: 152). Events featuring *mulões* grew increasingly common as the decade progressed, and such events were regular features in the venues *Magnatas*,

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<sup>35</sup> For repertoire on radio, Urso, September 9, 2023, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; For advertisement of upcoming events, DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022, conversation at the DJ's house in Rocha, Rio de Janeiro, RJ.

<sup>36</sup> Outside of funk, the word *galera* usually refers to a group of friends or acquaintances.

Mackenzie, and Ginásio Madureira on the north side of the city; Top Sol in the Baixada Fluminense; and Clube Mauá and Brasa Viva in Niterói and São Gonçalo.<sup>37</sup> The importance of galera participation and their growing interest in forming mulões was such that, by the second half of the 1980s, these events were being referred to as bailes de mulão.

As galeras increasingly disputed space in venues and leadership roles, deliberate fighting also grew more commonplace. The largest mulas were the groups which usually sparked these fights, openly colliding with other mulas or galeras. Some galeras, however, planned surprising onslaughts, with members flanking other groups; changing venue floors to ambush rivals; or simply rushing through the venue to attack other galeras. Although women could certainly join these fighting mulas, however, who were more associated with fighting, and the brawling mulas were usually comprised mostly—when not entirely—of men. These fights usually lasted just a few minutes, and when fighting erupted, the hired security personnel—more and more numerous as mulão fighting became more ingrained—expelled a minority of fighters to defuse tensions. Incidental fighting was also common, especially when excitement grew and the dancing bodies unavoidably clashed, with such fighting between men being just as common as between women (Vianna 1987: 94-112).<sup>38</sup> And outside the clubs, there was also fighting. At the end of events, groups continued to brawl when crossing paths, and while leaving on municipal buses, attendees might also harass the drivers. Some drivers, once they knew about events, even began to alter

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<sup>37</sup> For Marlboro on radio, Urso, September 9, 2023; For DJ production processes, DJ Terra, April 18, 2023, record shop in downtown Rio de Janeiro, RJ; For *galeras* claiming venue spaces, Sagat and Tubarão, May 27, 2024, Shopping Pátio Alcântara, São Gonçalo, RJ; For *galeras* bullying each other, Fox, September 17, 2024, restaurant in Irajá, Rio de Janeiro, RJ.; for galeras coalescing, Sagat and Tubarão, May 27, 2024. For these venues and their hosting of bailes de mulão, Videira, July 29, 2023; DJ Terra, April 18, 2023; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; Tubarão, October 29, 2022, bar in Jardim Catarina, São Gonçalo, RJ; Jacaré, February 12, 2023; Roger Magrinho, August 18, 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Concerning women dancing and attending together, Bia August 3, 2024 in bar Arsenal in São Gonçalo, RJ, and Ricardo July 19, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ. For mulão comprised of men, Jaspion July 15, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ.

routes to avoid encountering galeras (Vianna 1987: 94-112)—groups which might demand drivers take particular roads or avoid certain stops to reduce their chances of encountering rival galeras.<sup>39</sup>

Dancing was another important element of bailes de mulão. Although some men certainly enjoyed group dancing, the activity was more associated with the attending women. In the clubs, groups of same-sex dancers performed choreographies called *passinhos* (small steps) in what were tacit competitions with other groups. Prior to arriving at events, some women practiced their choreographed *passinhos* in their own areas. If their choreographies were well-performed and easy enough to follow, men and women linked to other galeras sometimes joined, imitating the choreographies in displays which involved more people. Couples' dancing, usually accompanied by the slower styles such as rhythm and blues, was an exception at bailes de mulão (Vianna 1987: 90-96), and people drawn to the activity usually chose to attend bailes charme. More and more associated with galeras, bailes de mulão prioritized group performances, with the mulas and the choreographed *passinhos* also displaying important gender divisions.

Although galeras were usually associated with particular areas inside the venues, attendees also moved through clubs as identifiable groups, and a popular way of doing so was by forming what were called *trenzinhos* (small trains). Here funkeiros held onto each other's hips or shoulders to then move along as a line in ludic displays of group solidarity (Herschmann 2005: 159); exhibitions of a galera's presence; and communal moments which further cemented group identities. Gender divisions could be part of *trenzinhos*, even though some of these formations included both men or women. While parading through the venues, funkeiros sought to open up space for themselves among the crowds (Vianna 1987: 96). *Trenzinhos*, moreover, were also necessarily linked to galeras. Whenever Sagat saw a *trenzinho* moving through a club he

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<sup>39</sup> For descriptions of fights during events, DJ Terra, April 18, 2023; Tubarão and Sagat, May 27, 2024; Jaspion, July 15, 2024. For galeras and buses, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023.

immediately associated it with galera formation—whichever galera it may have been—and not, for instance, with scattered individuals who may have fortuitously met at the events themselves.<sup>40</sup> Jaspion, another funkeiro, further claimed that while moving as part of a trenzinho he took the opportunity to strike at rivals in ways that further amplified galera discord, avoiding retaliation by continuing to move alongside his group. A common feature in bailes de mulão, trenzinhos showcased group unity and served as a playful moment to move and dance throughout the crowded venues.

Galeras also deliberately collided with each other while taking part of trenzinhos. For Urso, the more aggressive trenzinhos became outright locomotives given their force and drive, and sometimes sparked all-out brawls with galeras or, even, other such trenzinhos. And attendees also sang as they paraded. While moving through the venues, funkeiros chanted original words to the instrumental portions of songs,<sup>41</sup> and while they sang, galeras could glorify their own areas or ridicule rival groups, competing with other groups to produce the wittiest lyrics (Vianna 1987: 104). Sagat and his friends yelled songs of honor about themselves and friends or, conversely, chants of scorn about their rivals—chants and songs accompanied by the songs which DJs continued to blast from their sound systems. During the song “Funky Little Beat,” by freestyle singer Connie, for example, galeras sang such lyrics as “I felt firmness with the Manguinhos galera, but who really shakes it up is my own Jacarezinho”—swapping the neighborhood names in accordance with their own feuds and friendships. At other times, groups endorsed the illicit drug trade in their own areas. Over Trinere’s “How Can We Be Wrong,” attendees replaced the lyrics “how can we be wrong, to be holding on / If we both let go, we’re gonna fall” with “at Acari there’s dust, at Jramento there’s dust, but the dust from Mineira is by far the best,” switching, once more,

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<sup>40</sup> Sagat and Tubarão, May 27, 2023; Jiraya, July 15, 2024.

<sup>41</sup> Sagat and Tubarão, May 27, 2023; Fox, September 17, 2024.

the names of locations in accordance with their own rivalries and places of origin.<sup>42</sup> While singing, dancing, and parading, attendees also lifted and displayed consumer goods—Redley sneakers, Cyclone t-shirts, Citizen watches, among others—to taunt rivals. Moving ever closer, members then bumped and clashed to provoke further brawls—brawls interrupted by the hired security personnel. Split but rarely ousted, galeras and mulões then reconvened in their own spaces inside the venues and planned another *trenzinho*, dancing and singing in events increasingly linked to group cohesion, conflict, and participatory music-making.

As *bailes de mulão* and their associated brawls continued to spread throughout the city, organizers soon began to find ways to manage their fighting. Some DJs played lesser-known songs or songs with slower tempos. If a party was losing steam, however, DJs might play the more popular and faster pieces to stimulate *funkeiros*, and some DJs spread the popular songs throughout the evening to consistently keep attendee spirits somewhere in between (Vianna 1987: 101-3). When necessary, DJs might also utilize their influence over the *galeras* to curb fighting. In his attempts to reduce conflict, DJ Terra would invite attendees to the stage for them to showcase their dance moves or, simply, to joke around with him. At other moments, DJs used their equipment to warn the security personnel where a brawl was taking place. In turn, guards also approached DJs to ask them to lower the volume or, even, play slower songs when events seemed like they were getting out of hand (Vianna 1987: 101-3).<sup>43</sup> Sound system teams, moreover, also partnered with *galeras*. Prior to their funk events, Soul Gran Prix would invite *galera* members to discuss entrance fees while demanding, in turn, that they curb their aggressivity. DJs also announced dance competitions, hosted during the events themselves, to temper *galera* hostilities. At club Canto do

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<sup>42</sup> “Dust” as slang for cocaine.

<sup>43</sup> For *trenzinhos*, Sagat and Tubarão, May 27, 2023 and Urso September 9, 2023; For the translated lyrics, DJ Terra, April 18, 2023. For security interrupting brawls, Sagat and Tubarão, May 27, 2023; For DJs and security guards in conversation, DJ Terra, April 18, 2023.

Rio, for instance, DJ Marlboro not only distributed prizes to the best dance choreographers but also to the galeras which got into the fewest fights (Vianna 1987: 108-9). These features—the handling of music; DJ influence over attendees; security personnel initiatives; the appointment to leadership roles to galera leaders; and the establishment of competitions—were all tools utilized by organizers to control the bailes de mulão and would, in just a few years, also be incorporated into the corridor events for the same reasons.

But for all their initiatives, galera fighting persisted. Soon some sound system teams began to designate a specific moment for fighting—moments called *quinze minutos de alegria* (fifteen minutes of joy). Usually during an event’s final moments (Cecchetto 1998: 155)—although it could also be when events held the highest attendance—DJs mixed excerpts of the most popular songs to intentionally stimulate excitement (Cecchetto 1998: 100-1). Then, after the sound system team announced the beginning of this period, security personnel would step aside and allow galeras to brawl, returning to the central spaces of the venues after the DJ called an end to the session (Cymrot 2011). During the early days of the ZZ Disco sound system team, in the late 1980s, owner Zezinho would announce, simply, “*Vou liberar ein?!?*” (I’m going to set it free, ok?!) before commanding that the security personnel step aside while ordering the DJ to play the most popular songs.<sup>44</sup> Soon, some organizers implemented these moments as regular aspects of parties, popularizing the practice across the city (Cecchetto 1997: 100-1). Noticing the rising interest among galeras in group conflict, it was only a matter of time until a few sound system teams realized that, rather than trying to eliminate fighting altogether, they might capitalize on it.

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<sup>44</sup> For the fifteen minutes being hosted when attendance was at its height, Urso, September 9, 2023; For what Zezinho would say, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023.

## *Conclusion*

The black soul movement of the 1970s was foundational for developments in Rio de Janeiro funk. A cultural movement linked to Afro-diasporic cultures from outside Brazil, black Rio likewise emerged in a local setting of economic growth alongside an authoritarian right-wing regime. A culture associated with the north side suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, its adherents attended parties while dressed in fashion which was imported from the United States, an importation which, alongside the music which continued to enter Brazil, brought Afro-diasporic signifiers into Brazil which reworked local race relations. Not only did foreign musics infiltrate the city, but local singers and musicians also emerged, linked to the diffusing influences and embracing soul. The widespread popularity of the style also supported the ever-growing sound system teams, groups which not only multiplied throughout the dozens of venues which hosted soul parties, but also continued to bring into the city new records, styles, techniques, and influences. Contrasting with other local styles linked to blackness, notably samba, soul grew synonymous with an international modernity and increasingly signified, for its attending youths, as an embrace of a racial identity linked to the United States, an identity which served to question the increasingly stale notion of a Brazilian racial democracy.

By the early 1980s, however, black Rio and soul music clearly began to give way to a broader range of styles. Called by some funky-disco, this expansion included disco, rap, and rhythm and blues along with the funk and soul of the previous decade. At around the time, DJs also began to introduce sound system techniques such as scratching and looping, important innovations which not only transformed the parties, but also began to change the ways in which these imported musics were locally presented. But it was perhaps with the introduction of electro, Miami bass, and freestyle that a pivotal change occurred—an expansion of styles which not only

introduced even more music into the city, but also added sounds linked to the TR-808 drum machine. Throughout the 1980s, DJs and attendees also began to transform the imported songs themselves, translating lyrics; altering recordings; and producing new musics which featured lyrics in Portuguese and sampling. As the 1980s got underway, these new musics began to be called funk, and as funk events became consolidated throughout the suburbs, events soon witnessed the formation of galeras—that is, groups of attendees linked to their own places of origin. As the galera became the defining unit of attendance at these parties, their modes of competition over venue spaces grew increasingly more widespread, and galeras began to join forces into what were called mulões. The consolidation of the galera as a recurring unit and their formation of mulões, finally, established the baile de mulão, parties which not only featured funk, galeras, and trezininhos, but also group brawls which grew more and more systematized as the 1980s came to its final years. These events—popular, suburban, packed to the brim—were essential for the eventual consolidation of the corridor events, funk events which congregated dozens of galeras into either Lado A or Lado B and which are the topic of the next chapter.

## 2: The Corridor Event

Corridor events reached the height of their popularity in the 1990s. Every week, *galeras* linked to blocks, neighborhoods or, more commonly, favelas (Cunha 2002: 98-9; Mattos 2017: 67) could convene at a range of clubs in the north and west sides of Rio; the suburban municipalities part of the Baixada Fluminense (Cecchetto 1998: 146); and São Gonçalo, to the east of Rio, across the Guanabara Bay. By the early 1990s, *galeras* which had been attending *bailes de mulão* were aligned with either the A-side or the B-side, choosing their sides based on affinities and feuds with other *galeras* and not switching sides. *Galeras* not only continued to fight and dance in groups as they had been doing in the *bailes de mulão*, but also were participating in increasingly well-organized competitions; and even taking part in the production process of the musics played during events—funk pieces called *montagens de galeras*. Popular throughout the 1990s, corridor events, however, abruptly declined at the end of the decade, stimulated by a tragic incident in 1999 at a club called Chaparral; criminal group interference in *galera* alignments; state legislative efforts to outlaw events; and, in 2002, the death of Zezinho, head of the ZZ Disco sound system team and major corridor event organizer.

This chapter examines the corridor events of the 1990s. The first section outlines important characteristics of events; the ways in which sound system teams organized events; the roles played by different actors associated with corridor events; and the overall attendee experience. Alongside featuring corridor fighting, events also held *festivals de galera*, weekly competitions which pitted *galeras* against each other regardless of side affiliation. Perhaps the most important competition was the *etapa do rap* (rap stage), when *galeras* competed with regard to the best rap de *galera*. Composed and sung by *galera* members themselves, *galera rap* was also recorded and sampled by sound system teams for the production of *montagens de galeras*—a crucial component of corridor

events. Montagens de galera combined samples from 1980s Miami bass or electro songs; pontos (points), or sonic snippets from popular culture and music; and, essentially, *gritos de galera* (galera cries), chants composed and sung by the galeras themselves. Finally, I examine the decline of corridor events, taking a closer look at club Chaparral, a now-extinct venue which hosted events every Sunday afternoon. As a major phenomenon, 1990s corridor events were an activity in which galeras resignified Rio de Janeiro's violence as part of leisure (Mattos 2012: 653), with the galeras valorizing themselves through the signs and codes available to them while reincorporating the stigma associated with their condition and place of origin (Cunha 2002: 139)—a process which further rooted their presence and permanence in the city.

### *1990s Corridor Events*

It is uncertain exactly when and where the first corridor event took place. For ex-attendee Urso, the first event occurred in 1991 at Maracanãzinho (Little Maracanã), a gymnasium part of the Maracanã sports and entertainment complex. According to Urso and, also, Jaspion, Maracanãzinho hosted an isolated event in which galera leaders split the venue into two large groups based on affinities and rivalries, further consolidating alliances and feuds between different galeras. After the event, sound system teams began to implement the separation of galeras into two larger groups (Cecchetto 1997: 100-1)—perhaps as a mechanism of control (Mattos 2017: 67)—in what eventually consolidated a division which split galeras into two sides. For both Tesoura and Ralf Victor, however, it was at samba school Império Serrano, in 1992, that the first corridor was formed. At events at the samba school, as galeras continued to participate in the club's bailes de mulão they would join other galeras based on affinities and rivalries in what eventually

consolidated two large blocks (Gularte 2014: 368-70 and 777-8)—blocks which were separated by an empty space.

Other attendees claimed that the difficulty in pinpointing the first corridor event shows precisely that in place of an inaugurating moment there was a gradual emergence. Buda, for instance, stated that when groups attacked each other during *bailes de mulão*, defeated *galeras* would join forces with other groups to retaliate in greater numbers. Defeated groups then formed larger *mulas* until, eventually, there were only two groups. Ex-attendee Henrique Príncipe similarly hypothesized that as *bailes de mulão* went on, *galeras* arrived at venues and naturally gravitated towards friendly groups. As feuds and friendships continued to form, two large groups eventually consolidated—groups which, in due time, were separated by an empty space. Both Buda and Henrique Príncipe, along with Roger Magrinho, claimed that although Império Serrano and Maracanãzinho may have hosted the first few corridor events, it would only be at the north side club Bohémios de Irajá, late in 1992, that a corridor space finally consolidated as a recurring characteristic, week after week.<sup>45</sup>

By the mid-1990s corridor events were assembling thousands of attendees at dozens of venues throughout Greater Rio every weekend. In the Rio de Janeiro municipality, a typical event lasted about eight hours, starting somewhere between six and eight p.m., while in the Baixada Fluminense events could go on for extended periods, beginning at around the same time and ending close to five a.m. As *galeras* arrived, DJs played *melôs* and funky-disco songs—Rio funk pieces which, by the 1990s, were being called *funk rasteiro* (“crawling” funk) for their slower tempos when compared to the *montagens* (Essinger 2005: 190). During these first few hours, security

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<sup>45</sup> Urso, September 2, 2023; Jaspion, November 16, 2022; Tesoura, February 12, 2023; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; Buda, December 4, 2022; Henrique Príncipe, February 26, 2023; Roger Magrinho, August 18, 2023.

personnel remained rooted in the corridor space to keep the sides from fighting (Cecchetto 1998: 147; Herschmann 2005: 137; Mattos 2012: 663). Venues usually had a stage for the sound system teams and their several speakers, while a few venues also featured mezzanine-levels and outside spaces which were treated as neutral zones (Cecchetto 1998: 147). About two hours into an event, DJs would substitute funk *rasteiro* for *montagens* inaugurating the most intense moments of the evening (Rosa 2024: 4; Coelho 2016: 34). Once the sound system teams began to play these pieces, hundreds of men moved to the front-lines of the corridor space to fight the opposing side.<sup>46</sup> At a few venues, dozens of women also established corridors which were either contiguous to those formed by men or established in the venues' neutral zones.<sup>47</sup> With only the security guards between the fighting groups, corridor spaces constantly narrowed and widened as the two throngs of fighters pushed and retreated as they brawled (Ventura 1994: 122). Holding individual feuds, some *galeras* deliberately sought out other specific *galeras* for hours-long fights, such as in the case of Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas (Herschmann 2005: 137), adjacent neighborhoods on the north side of Rio which had a bitter rivalry. Attendees who did not wish to fight remained either several feet behind the corridor lines; in the neutral zones; or in the mezzanine-like areas—the latter sometimes reserved solely for women (Herschmann 2005: 140; Cymrot 2022: 154)—as they observed the fighting from afar. Immediately behind the fighting, hundreds of *funkeiros* pushed their way forward, while the front-line fighters threw kicks and punches as they also danced and swaggered. Some hurled insults at the opposing side (Cymrot 2022: 164; Herschmann 2005: 137), while others

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<sup>46</sup> For event times, Ferrete, October 16, 2022; Tatá, Visconde, Jaspion, and Mateuzinho, November 16, 2022, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ. For funk *rasteiro*, DJ Flagelo, October 10, 2022, Flagelo's house in Recreio dos Bandeirantes, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; Tatá, November 16, 2022, supermarket in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; For guards in corridor, Carlota, June 8, 2023, Shopping Madureira, Rio de Janeiro, RJ. For men in frontlines, Ferrete, October 16, 2022.

<sup>47</sup> For segregated fighting, Carol Lau, December 4, 2022, funk party in Jardim do Ipê, Belford Roxo, RJ. For women corridors in neutral zones, Mariana, April 29, 2023, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ.

tried to *sequestrar*, or capture, rival fighters (Cecchetto 1998: 148). Other attendees, to provoke opponents, lifted and showed off their own brand-name shoes and clothing as if they were trophies (Essinger 2005: 119; Ventura 1994: 125)—objects which, if stolen, could be deliberately destroyed before they were returned to their rightful owners. Fighting as groups, funkeiros looked out for each other, rescuing friends if they were grabbed or taking them aside if they were hurt. After brawling for several minutes, funkeiros usually retreated to their sides to rest, drink, and talk, relaying their experiences to their galera colleagues. But as those fighters backed away, others would take their places, dancing, fighting, and taunting rivals in what seemed like an endless battle. Above all, most funkeiros sought catharsis (Minayo et al 1999: 57), adrenaline rushes, a sense of honor linked to their own areas; an invasion of the opposing side, although claimed as the objective (Cecchetto 1997: 148-9; Herschmann 2005: 138), remained secondary to the production of an “enjoyable tension” or “ludic excitement” for all of those involved (Cecchetto 1997: 156).<sup>48</sup>

DJs and their sound systems were essential components of corridor events. Blaring their music from *paredões de som* (sound walls)—arrays of speakers aligned and stacked one on top of one another—DJs played at deafening volumes while deliberately highlighting the lower frequencies of songs. For some funkeiros, the music was so loud and the bass so prevalent that the songs penetrated their bodies to the point that they had trouble drinking or speaking. Important for some rituals of excess (Quintero 2019: 148), loudness here also fostered a feeling of immersion for the attending youth (Lippman 2019: 22). Allied with the strobe lights and fog machines which many of the venues also featured, the music and its loudness amplified attendee excitement and

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<sup>48</sup> For retreating, Thiago Bermuda, July 8, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; For destroying belongings, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; Sagat and Tubarão, May 27, 2023.

contributed to a generalized sense of chaos, and some attendees claimed to have had little choice but to surrender to such a state.<sup>49</sup>

Sound system teams brought multiple sub-teams to perform at major corridor events, alternating the several teams throughout the night. For this, each team usually set up its own equipment on opposing ends of venues, and each teams' DJs performed for about forty-five minutes. Galeras enjoyed this setup since DJs usually competed for attendee approval, giving galeras some influence over the repertoire; the heads of sound system teams, attentive to DJ performances, could monitor their artists and evaluate their skill at controlling events. Sound system teams usually hired DJs who had experience with *bailes de mulão* and who showed that they were able to keep events both exciting and under control (Herschmann 2005: 153-4; Cecchetto 1998: 163). Seeking to please both their bosses and attendees, DJs were careful about their choices of repertoire since certain songs could excite or, conversely, calm the attending crowds (Cymrot 2022: 156-7; Minayo et al 1999: 57). For DJ Terra, this meant that the best DJs not only had to be quick at reading attendee moods, but also had to be dynamic in choosing songs and moving from one piece to the next. When seeking to stimulate galeras (Cecchetto 1998: 156 and Cymrot 2022: 151), for instance, DJs played the *montagens de galera* of groups which were conspicuously jumping and loudly singing as a way to motivate other groups to do the same, but if fighting seemed to be getting out of hand, DJs could play pieces with slower tempos; choose musical styles alien to the galeras, such as children's songs; or, even, shut off the music altogether.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> For sensorial experience, DJ Flagelo, October 10, 2022; Jaspion, November 16, 2022; Jefferson Souza, April 11, 2023.

<sup>50</sup> For organizers monitoring DJs, Sagat and Tubarão, May 27, 2023. For DJs tempering dispositions, Jaspion, November 16, 2022; Japinha and Videira, September 12, 2023; Urso and Inseto, September 2, 2023, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ. For DJ dynamism, DJ Terra, 18 April, 2023; For DJs motivating galeras, DJ Flagelo, October 10, 2022; For slower songs, Sagat and Tubarão, May 27, 2023; For

Sound system teams usually assigned two or three guards for every fifty or so fighters (Herschmann 2005: 139-42). Organizers sought security personnel not so much to eliminate fighting as to keep the fighting from spiraling out of control (Coelho 2016: 34). Sound system teams picked guards based on their experience with police work, the military, or vigilante patrolling, and their reputations in these lines of work, along with their dispositions, kept funkeiros from attacking them, even though some funkeiros claim that, on occasion, disgruntled attendees sought revenge against particularly brutal guards. Some security personnel were employed based on recommendations from other guards, and most guards usually worked multiple venues throughout a given week. For an event, sound system teams paid each guard anything between R\$30 and R\$70.<sup>51</sup> Novice guards were usually assigned the role of patrolling venues and, during the early evening, frisking attendees at one of its two entrances—one entrance for each corridor side (Herschmann 2005: 137).<sup>52</sup>

For each event, the team of guards was led by a head of security. According to former guard Fabiano, the head of security usually oversaw fifteen guards in total, although some events could have as many as fifty guards on duty (Herschmann 2005: 137). Prior to the start of an event, the head of security assigned tasks: three guards to frisk attendees and (Herschmann 2005: 137), later on, patrol the venue; five to remain in the corridor space at all times; and seven, also rooted in the

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children's song, Jaspion, July 15, 2024. For stopping music, Ricardo, July 19, 2024. For DJs from *bailes de mulão*, DJ Terra, April 18, 2023.

<sup>51</sup> Adjusted for inflation, these values amount to, more or less, R\$200–450 in a comparison between 1999 and 2024. In current dollars, this would amount to about \$40–85.

<sup>52</sup> For choosing guards, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; Fabiano, July 30, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; Michel, August 20, 2023, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; For guards sheltered, Fantoche, June 21, 2023, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024; Garoto do Pilar, August 7, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; Fabiano, July 30, 2024; Carol Lau, December 4, 2022; Michel, August 20, 2023; For revenge, Jaspion, November 16, 2022; Napoleão, July 24, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; For payments, Michel, August 20, 2023; Napoleão, July 24, 2024; Fabiano, July 30, 2024.

corridor, responsible for rescuing funkeiros from captures. If a fighter was captured, three or four guards entered the capturing side to rescue the funkeiro, while the remaining guards continued on the lookout. For Fabiano, the most important part of the job was indeed to avoid captures since they usually led to severe injuries (Herschmann 2005: 138), and the more experienced guards were usually assigned to safeguard the corridor space and rescuing funkeiros. If the security personnel took too long to rescue a funkeiro, those who were badly injured could be taken outside and put into taxis left on standby by the organizers—taxis which would then take the funkeiro to a nearby hospital.<sup>53</sup>

Corridor guards also kept an open dialogue with galeras. Although in their first experiences both Napoleão and Fabiano were quick to utilize force, they soon realized that talking to the galeras was, at certain times, more effective for controlling events. Each guard claimed he even formed friendships with a few groups, especially those which resided in or near his area or, alternatively, gave him drinks or petty cash. In exchange, Fabiano protected these galeras and advised them during brawls, such as when to attack the opposing side or which rival fighters were the fiercest. Fabiano also insisted that funkeiros refrain from capturing adversaries and, at times, also agreed to watch out for funkeiros who planned on provisionally invading the opposing side. Michel, another ex-guard, warned the visibly smaller or less-skilled fighters to refrain from invading the opposing side altogether since they would likely end up getting hurt twice—once by their rivals who would capture them and a second time by the guards, who would have no choice but to forcefully pull them out. When approached by stronger attendees, however, Michel usually agreed to step aside and let them advance, since it was likely they would not be overtaken by rivals.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> For frisking, Fabiano, July 30, 2024; For entrances, Daniel, July 21, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; Urso and Inseto, September 2, 2023; DJ Flagelo, October 10, 2022. For experience, Fabiano, July 30, 2024; For taxis, Napoleão, July 24, 2024.

<sup>54</sup> For dialogue, Henrique Príncipe, February 26, 2023; Napoleão, July 24, 2024; Fabiano, July 30, 2024.

Each galera also had its leaders, chosen based on their charisma and social skills; ability to assemble funkeiros in their areas to attend events; capacity to inspire or calm other members; and/or their ferocity in corridor events (Herschmann 2005: 139-40). Each galera had a few leaders who shared these roles, with some serving as leaders during the events themselves while others held these positions in their respective neighborhoods. Event organizers maintained an open dialogue with galera leaders and granted them some benefits, such as free entry to events; invitations to discuss problems concerning future events; and permission, on some occasions, to move from one corridor side to the other. In exchange, organizers expected leaders to share information with their own galeras about upcoming activities; share their thoughts and concerns over the galera's overall behavior; and serve as mediators between their galeras and the organizers.<sup>55</sup> When a funkeiro from a particular galera got into trouble, organizers and security personnel usually summoned a leader from that galera to discuss the problem, informing the leader what the funkeiro had done to then determine whether the attendee should be kicked out of the venue (Herschmann 2005: 140). And sound system teams could also contact leaders in efforts to ensured evenly matched brawls. According to Jaspion, when ZZ Disco owner Zezinho noticed that one of the two sides was being regularly ousted from a particular venue, week after week, he would place a call to another venue to get the organizers to convince a few leaders to move their galeras to those clubs. For this, organizers told them they were necessary for the reestablishment of corridor equilibrium and that, since they were fierce, they would be able to do so. Filled with pride, most leaders would then quickly and readily relocate their galeras to these venues in what, usually,

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<sup>55</sup> For charisma, Thiago Bermuda, July 8, 2024; Jacaré, February 26, 2023; Carol Lau, December 4, 2022; For leadership, Helinho, September 1, 2023; Sargento, December 12, 2022, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; Jaspion, November 16, 2022; MC Lua Cheia, October 22, 2022, Niterói port, Niterói, RJ; For inspiration, Tesoura, February 12, 2023; Urso, September 2, 2023. For ferocity, Ferrete, October 16, 2022; For dialogue, Urso, September 2, 2023; Sargento, December 12, 2022; Ferrete, October 16, 2022.

indeed balanced the corridor fighting. Far from seeking to eliminate fighting, event organizers tried to keep events going for as long as possible.<sup>56</sup>

Corridor events also featured gender divisions beyond the separation of men and women in the fighting itself. Whenever they chose to join the front lines, men left their belongings with trusted associates called *cabides* (coat hangers)—associates who could be men in their first corridor attendances, but were more commonly female members of their galeras. Some men took their shirts off prior to fighting, and along with leaving wallets, watches, and other belongings with their *cabides*, they also handed over their name-brand shirts. Men usually chose women in whom they had a romantic interest to hold their goods, while female *cabides*, in turn, usually sought to hold the belongings of men who displayed the greatest fighting prowess. Through this, men and women maintained a link throughout the brawls—links which could later develop into romantic relationships and which reinforced gendered roles (Herschmann 2005: 141).<sup>57</sup>

Women at corridor events also enjoyed greater freedom of movement when compared to men—a freedom which, ironically, contributed to their subordination a masculine environment (Herschmann 2005: 160). According to Mariana and Ralf Victor, women could freely move to and through the opposing side and, while doing so, were seldom attacked by rivals. Mariana, for instance, used to walk through the men’s corridor space while making her way to speak to opposing *funkeiros*, free from blows which would have otherwise targeted rival men. According to Carol Lau, however, only women held leadership roles who could move without fear of being beaten. Carlota further claimed that women could remain in venues even after their own sides were ousted, something which men could not do. Some women even became romantically involved with men

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<sup>56</sup> For relocating, Jaspion, November 16, 2022.

<sup>57</sup> For *cabides*, Jacaré, February 12, 2023; For taking off shirts and leaving particular items, DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024. For romantic relationships, Carol Lau, December 4, 2022; Mariana, April 29, 2023; Pamela, May 16, 2023; Carlota, June 8, 2023; Daniel, July 21, 2024.

on either side, convincing them to pay for drinks while men remained oblivious to their multiple relationships.<sup>58</sup> As some women moved from one corridor side to the other, men were quick to steal the belongings of rival fighters, especially the name-brand shirts and other prized possessions. Some women cabides even used the opportunity to deliberately give such goods to their friends, later to claim that they had been robbed themselves.<sup>59</sup>

Corridor events, however, were not solely about corridor fighting. Behind the front-lines, funkeiros danced and formed trezininhos (Herschmann 2005: 137), singing their own chants despite whatever the DJs played. Galeras jumped in unison, parading past other groups which comported themselves similarly. Some galera members attended events simply to listen to the new songs and the composite pieces the sound system teams had recently produced, while others went to meet romantic partners or to hang out with friends (Herschmann 2005: 140).<sup>60</sup> A few attendees, mostly women, also performed group dances much like those they had done during bailes de mulão, showcasing their choreographed work to other dancers (Cecchetto 1998: 150). In the venues, couples came together and attendees flirted (Herschmann 2005: 141), and as the funkeiros fought and danced, montagens played non-stop. But it was, above all, in participating as galeras that funkeiros made their greatest mark. Featuring not only brawls but also music, choreographies, and group camaraderie, corridor events rallied tens of thousands of funkeiros every weekend in packed clubs and venues—funkeiros who, crucially, displayed their sense of community as galeras, even if in an often violent and fraught social setting.

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<sup>58</sup> Mariana, April 29, 2023; Carol Lau, December 4, 2022; Carlota, June 8, 2023. For romance across corridor lines, Mariana, April 29, 2023; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023.

<sup>59</sup> For women gifting, DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024.

<sup>60</sup> For listening, Jefferson Souza. April 11, 2023; For romance and friends, Jefferson Souza. April 11, 2023; Josiane, July 17, 2024.

## *Galera Festivals*

An important aspect of 1990s corridor events were the *festivals de galeras*. Approaching the latter part of an evening, sound system teams would interrupt the music and announce the beginning of the festival, when the week's attractions would take place—live musical acts, dance routines, playful competitions. Organized by the sound system teams themselves (Cunha 2002: 118), *festivals* would begin with the teams calling out the names of attending *galeras*, which would then march through the club as they sung their own *gritos de galera*, all while fighting would be suspended (Herschmann 2005: 143). These cries would exalt the names of *galera* territories and belittle rival groups, while some *galeras* would also exalt their alliances on their respective sides (Cecchetto 1997: 151). Some *galeras* would also bring flares, balloons, confetti, and other adornments, singing and dancing while DJs played their songs. Organizers would also summon *galera* members to the stage for them to make announcements; call out the names of friends; and sing cries and chants through the sound systems. *Galera* members would sometimes sing to the accompaniment of DJs, and groups of dancers would also perform rehearsed dance routines while onstage. During these moments, each *galera* would freely move throughout the venues as their own *bonde* or *bondão* (Mattos 2014: 646)—that is, their own “electrified trolley.” As the *galeras* would parade through the club, the security personnel remained stationed between the two corridor sides to guarantee their separation (Herschmann 2005: 143). If caught fighting, attendees could be ousted from venues; see their *galeras* lose points in the festival rankings; or be scolded by the security personnel. To make their mark, smaller *galeras* would approach larger groups to march along with them.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> For week's attractions, Tatá, November 1, 2022; Ovambo, April 18, 2023, bar in downtown Mesquita, RJ; Pamela, May 16, 2023; For suspended fighting, Jaspion, November 16, 2022; Tatá, November 1, 2022. For organizers calling up *galeras*, DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022. For singing and dancing on stage,

Sound system teams introduced competitions between galeras sometime during the 1980s, during bailes de mulão. During this period, festivals were restricted to the distribution of prizes based on solely one event and did not feature the accumulation of points over several weeks as was the case during the 1990s. In contrast to the bailes de mulão of the 1980s, corridor event competitions pitted dozens of galeras against one another in weekly contests, regardless of side affiliation. Each week featured a different competition called an *etapa* (stage), worth small prizes and points which accumulated over a two- or three-month period called a *temporada* (season). Etapas often had an absurdist element, and galeras competed, for instance, over which group had the member with the largest foot; could drink soda the fastest; or had the longest hair. At other times, competitions featured group contests, such as which galera could bring the most balloons; which group brought the most people; or which group was the strongest at tug-of-war. Although galeras accumulated points throughout the weeks, the sound system teams usually kept the rankings concealed,<sup>62</sup> even though, at times, the last page of the *Povo do Rio* newspaper published the rankings of the festivals at major venues.<sup>63</sup> On the last day of a festival season, then, sound system teams announced the official rankings, and the two or three galeras with the most points won prizes such as trophies, cash payouts, or the possibility of hosting an event—not necessarily a corridor event—with the same sound system team. Some galeras, favoring one prize over

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Pamela, May 16, 2023. For fighting restriction when parading, Jefferson Souza, April 11, 2023; For security between sides, Ricardo, July 19, 2024. For punishments if caught, Tesoura, February 12, 2023; For smaller galeras approaching larger, Urso and Inseto, September 2, 2023.

<sup>62</sup> For festival stages, prizes, and length, Tatá and Jorge, August 29, 2023, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; MC Lua Cheia, October 22, 2022; Claudinho, July 27, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias. For foot game, Tesoura, February 12, 2023. For games and ranking concealment, Tatá, November 1, 2022.

<sup>63</sup> *O Povo do Rio*, July 11, 1997, 9; *O Povo do Rio*, Maio 25, 1997, 5. According to several interlocutors, this newspaper was the only media outlet which reported on corridor events under a positive light. For some time during the 1990s, the paper shared news on galera rankings and culture on the last page of every Sunday issue. The exact dates are unclear.

another, swapped prizes among themselves, while galeras which had formed alliances had to choose which prize would be awarded to which galera, with the prize of hosting an event usually being the most popular. After winners were announced and the prizes distributed, the winning galeras celebrated by singing, dancing, and parading through the venues, shooting flares and releasing balloons.<sup>64</sup>

A crucial aspect of 1990s corridor events, festivals were hosted by one sub-sound system team from beginning to end. Prior to starting a festival, sound system teams held weekly corridor events while sub-teams rotated to determine whether galeras would, in fact, regularly attend events at particular venues. After these preliminary events, organizers then announced the beginning of festival enrollment and, based on performances, decided which sub-team would play the entire festival; which would be moved to smaller venues; and which would repeat the process in other up-and-coming clubs.<sup>65</sup> To enroll, galeras appointed a *líder de galera* (galera leader) to approach the sound system team to add them to the competition without cost, and once a galera decided to participate, it could not sign up for other festivals hosted by the same sound system team on the same day of the week. Some of the more active galeras enrolled in festivals organized by different sound system teams and on different days, competing simultaneously in several festivals. Linked to a festival, galera leaders were then responsible for purchasing lump sums of tickets from organizers and distributing them to their own galeras. Urso, an ex-leader for the Vigário Geral galera, claimed leaders bought tickets at a lower price compared to the gate tickets to then sell

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<sup>64</sup> For announcing rankings, Tatá, November 1, 2022. For content of prizes, MC Lua Cheia, October 22, 2022; Tatá, November 1, 2022; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023. For swapping prizes, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; For start of new season, Tatá, November 1, 2022.

<sup>65</sup> For rotation, DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022. For which and where, Ricardo, July 19, 2024; DJ Terra, April 18, 2023. For montagens of present/absent galeras, Urso and Inseto, September 2, 2023; For children's music, Jaspion, July 15, 2024. For shutting off music, Ricardo, July 19, 2024. For teams playing based on performances, Sagat and Tubarão, May 27, 2023; Ferrete, October 16, 2022; MC Lua Cheia, October 22, 2022.

them to their own galeras for the same low price or, at times, to other galeras for a small profit. Panda also stated he would arrive at venues a few hours prior to events to have enough time to make sure all members of his galera had, in fact, safely arrived and held tickets. Holding onto dozens of tickets, some galera leaders also used the opportunity to make extra cash, whether by selling tickets at higher prices to their own galeras or by hoarding tickets to sell at the gate. Galera leaders were also given a few free tickets, which they usually gave to their fiercest fighters—a practice which persists in present-day corridor events.<sup>66</sup>

Hoping to exploit the festival format for personal gain, some attendees created *galeras fantasmas* (phantom galeras). According to Inseto, these attendees who planned to attend festivals held on the same day of the week and, also, sought to receive the privileges of galera leaders, notably the free tickets. To trick organizers, funkeiros named their phantom galeras after places not associated with any galera (the Ipanema galera), city landmarks (the Canecão galera), or, even, added descriptors to existing galeras (Asfalto de Santo Antônio, or the “Asphalt of Santo Antônio”). When the sound system teams called out their names, then, these funkeiros would prod friendly galeras to chant and yell in order to feign having a larger group, and when it came time to participate in an etapa—say to present a member with a large foot—one of the few members would get up on stage hoping not to get caught. If caught, event organizers would strip their privileges and disqualify the phantom group, allowing the funkeiros, however, to remain in the venue. Some attendees succeeded in maintaining the ruse to the point that some sound system teams even produced montagens linked to the phantom galeras, ignorant of the fact that they had solely been created by a few funkeiros to access privileges.

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<sup>66</sup> For announcing enrollment and restricting galeras, Urso, September 9, 2023; For signing up with different teams, Tatá, August 5, 2024; For galeras and tickets, Urso, September 9, 2023; For free tickets, Tatá, November 1, 2022; Lacan, May 6, 2023, corridor event in Campos Elíseos, Duque de Caxias, RJ; Corridor event, May 6, 2023.

Festivals also increased overall attendance at corridor events—a clear benefit for the sound system teams. For Inseto, the festivals were an effective way for organizers to persuade galeras to keep returning to their events since the competitions went on for several months and, thus, called for a regular attendance. Helinho’s galera felt compelled to regularly attend the club Pam do Pilar for an extended period since they wanted to win a festival, and he went along even though he and other members of the galera would have preferred to go to other venues. The festivals were particularly attractive since some galera members sought fame and stature, and the competitions could buttress prestige, either among members of one’s own galera or among funkeiros at large. The more popular stages, finally, also attracted larger publics—such as the *etapa da embaixadinha* (soccer kick-up stage) or the *etapa da rainha* (most beautiful woman in attendance) (Herschmann 2005: 152)—and some funkeiros chose venues based on the featured stage, even when they were not participating.<sup>67</sup> A regular and popular element of corridor events, festivals attracted large attendances, and galeras were drawn to the enjoyable activities; the featured prizes; and the resulting status that could emerge from their participation in these competitions.

Another reason sound system teams hosted festivals was their hope that the format would reduce fighting, transferring galera animosities to its weekly contests (Bragança 2020: 145; Mattos 2017: 67). For some attendees, however, the increased competition stimulated even more hostility between galeras. Some DJs even claimed the festivals were one of the sound system teams’ gravest errors since they amplified galera competition and, concomitantly, galera fighting at large (Essinger 2005: 118). While competing in festivals hosted near their own locations, for example, galeras sought to win at all costs in what was, perhaps, a display of galera pride (Bezerra and

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<sup>67</sup> For phantom galeras and festivals to keep galeras coming back, Inseto, September 2, 2023; Helinho, September 1, 2023; Rivaldo, July 23, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias; For the specific stages, Josiane, July 17, 2024; For galeras choosing based on stages, Claudinho, July 27, 2024.

Reginato 2017: 100). Tatá, on the other hand, claimed that when the sound system teams announced the festival stage, galeras would interrupt fighting in order to participate in or properly follow the night's competitions, while for Tesoura, the festivals were useful for organizers to control behaviors by deducting points from galeras which broke rules. The importance of festivals was such that funkeiros went as far as claiming they were an essential part of the events, and for some, contemporary corridor events are no longer enjoyable since the festivals no longer take place.<sup>68</sup>

The festivals also attracted the attention of the city's criminal organizations, and some of these groups, through their own links to galeras, saw in the festival format a way to accumulate status and advantage for themselves. During a festival in 1998, for instance, it was rumored the criminal group ADA approached event organizers to push for the Coréia galera—from a favela ADA controlled—to win a festival, which indeed happened that evening. Some members of criminal groups also distributed money to galeras in their areas, while others paid for galera transportation to events to elevate the locations they controlled. Others invested in galera participation in festivals in exchange for a promise that the galera would host the party they eventually won in their area—lucrative events which were both financed by the sound system teams and massively attended by several galeras. One such criminal, who had influence over several favelas in the city, even financed galeras from both the A-side and the B-side in an attempt to maximize the chances of bringing an event to one of the areas, succeeding after the B-side Corte Oito galera earned first prize. Other criminals, previously part of a galera themselves, also financed

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<sup>68</sup> Tatá, November 1, 2022; Tesoura, February 12, 2023; Urso and Inseto, September 2, 2023; Helinho, September 1, 2023.

groups as a way to remain close to friends without, however, taking the risk of leaving their own areas and being spotted by the police or enemies.<sup>69</sup>

The festival moment, however, was not limited to corridor venues. Even after the rise of corridor events, festivals continued to be hosted in the rare *bailes de mulão* which persisted throughout Greater Rio, such as in club Recreativo Caxiense, one of the few clubs which did not transition into the corridor event format. Some clubs and favelas, moreover, hosted festivals in parties which brought together *galeras* while not featuring corridor formation. In the Borel and Mangueira favelas, for instance, parties assembled A-side and B-side *galeras* to compete in festivals, even though participation was limited to *galeras* linked to areas under the tutelage of the criminal group which controlled those areas.<sup>70</sup> Although some festivals were held outside of corridor venues, by the time corridor formation became widespread, the main festivals were hosted in corridor clubs, where the largest *galeras* competed for prizes and prestige.

### *Galera Rap*

The festivals and their etapas were an essential part of *galera* culture. But among all the stages it was perhaps the *etapa do rap* (rap stage) which stood out as the most important. The rap stage was the only one which could last for more than a week; was usually the final stage of any festival; and awarded the most points. When it was time for the rap competition, DJs called each *galera's* singer up on stage to perform an original song. After paying homage to their own *galeras*

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<sup>69</sup> For Coréia, Jaspion, November 16, 2022; For criminals distributing money, Germano, August 23, 2024; For criminals investing in festivals, Germano, August 23, 2024; Carlos Alberto, September 9, 2024; For Corte Oito, Carlos Alberto, 9 September, 2024; For remaining close, Germano, 23 August 2024.

<sup>70</sup> For corridor and festival format, Rivaldo, 23 July, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias. For festivals in *bailes de mulão*, Ricardo, July 19, 2024. For parties without fighting, MC Irmão do Pedaco, September 16, 2024, restaurant in Irajá. For limitations based on crime, Josiane, July 17, 2024.

and to the sound system team, singers would then either begin singing a cappella, to which the sound system team would eventually introduce a beat, or signal the DJ to start playing a beat to then begin singing. The beats, instrumental versions usually found on B-sides of imported singles (Palombini 2019: 74), were typically sampled from the songs “Pump Up the Party,” by Stevie B (a.k.a. Hassan), “They’re Playing Our Song,” by Trinere, or, more commonly, DJ Battery Brain’s “808 Volt Mix”—samples called, respectively, “Hassan,” “Trinere,” and “Volt Mix.” During performances, DJs sometimes switched from one beat to another, or even provisionally dropped the beat altogether to open up the opportunity, once more, for a cappella singing. The sound system teams, at times, also added some improvised segments from other songs or sections which called out the name of the sound system team itself in what was a live performance and, also, a moment of advertisement.

Original compositions helped to make each galera memorable. While singing, rappers repeated their galera’s name and place of origin; called for peace among funkeiros; and/or presented a narrative or message linked to current events, such as the police-led Vigário Geral massacre of 1993. Some singers, in order to get their own galeras to sing along with them, printed the lyrics of their songs and distributed them throughout their area (Essinger 2005: 101). Sometimes multiple galeras would choose a person or group of people to represent them collectively. For this, two or more galeras appointed a singer or singers to represent an alliance, and the songs referenced all of the galeras involved. Some of the singers who achieved heightened popularity, such as Pamela—or rather, MC Pamela—could later be invited by sound system teams to sing during festivals as attractions at other events in what was, for some, the beginning of a funk

career (Cecchetto 1998: 158; Essinger 2005: 102).<sup>71</sup> Once a singer or singers finished their rap, DJs would then call upon another galera, and the process would repeat itself.

Singer preparations for the rap stage varied from one rapper to the next. Some singers wrote lyrics and melodies prior to the competitions, while others improvised. Sometimes one galera member wrote the lyrics while another composed the melody,<sup>72</sup> and on occasion two singers from the same galera joined the stage to sing together. For MC Perna Longa, who wrote rap for his galera of Morro do Barroso, the process involved listening to the widely-played beats and singing the verses he wrote alongside Vidal, his partner from the neighboring B-side Morro do Pinto. Perna Longa bought cassette tapes with the “Volt Mix,” “Hassan,” and “Trinere” beats to play at home, changing the melodies and lyrics as he practiced. When he was with Vidal, they played one of the tapes while, on the same sound system device, they recorded their voices. Then, they would listen to their own recordings and repeat the process (Essinger 2005: 175; Ribeiro 1996: 291). After a few sessions, the two *funkeiros* began attending *bailes de comunidade* (community events) in their areas, performing their songs with DJs who agreed to play one of the beats while they performed their own compositions—a typical beginning among singers who could later reach some degree of career success (Herschmann 2005: 254). As audiences grew more and more appreciative of their performances, the duo began circulating cassette tapes, asking friends and colleagues which

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<sup>71</sup> For when and how many points for festival, Tatá, November 1, 2022; For homages, DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022; For repeating name and place and calling for peace, Urso, September 9, 2023. “Rap do Pirão” and “Rap da Cidade Alta” are examples which claim for peace; For Vigário Geral, Urso and Inseto, September 2, 2023; Davi, December 4, 2022, funk party in Jardim do Ipê, Belford Roxo, RJ; For representing alliances, MC Lua Cheia, October 22, 2022. An example is the montagem “Reta Velha, Tribobó e Boavista,” MC Pamela, May 16, 2023.

<sup>72</sup> For writing before singing, Sargento, December 12, 2022. For improvising, MC Lua Cheia, October 22, 2022; For splitting lyrics and melody, MC Mandinga, August 17, 2023, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias.

versions they preferred. With their having achieved success in their own areas, their galeras soon formed a coalition and appointed the duo as their representatives for an upcoming festival.

When the corridor event in which they were finally going to perform came along, the excitement around the duo was such that the Morro do Pinto and Morro do Barroso galeras filled six chartered buses with around one-hundred funkeiros each, tripling the amount of funkeiros they usually brought to club Pavunense, where a major festival season was being held. And their performance was a success. Relaying his experience some thirty years later, Perna Longa claimed he and Vidal asked the DJ to play a section of the “Hassan” beat as a loop—essential since, with a loop, the duo would not have to fit their rap into the exact duration of the original recording. Then, after a short introduction in which the DJ echoed the beat while slightly altering its pitch and tempo, they began singing. In a similar fashion to most galera rap, Perna Longa and Vidal structured their piece in a verse-chorus form, with a recurring melody featuring different lyrics to each verse and a contrasting chorus with repeating melody and lyrics. During the verse sections, the duo alternated their singing, while during the chorus the two singers sometimes sang one line each or sang in unison—all while the DJ added some excerpts advertising the sound system team. Along with repeating the names of their galeras, Perna Longa and Vidal also sang about the persistent problems of violence and poverty in Rio; claimed for the ferocity of their group; and declared the unity between their galeras—all recurring themes in galera rap. When they finished their song, the DJ interrupted the loop, leading to animated applause from the B-side in general and, especially, their two galeras.<sup>73</sup>

With their success, the duo broadened to other performance opportunities. Soon other B-side galeras were calling them to sing and compose rap, and sound system team ZZ Disco also

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<sup>73</sup> MC Perna Longa, August 8, 2024, restaurant in São João de Meriti, RJ.

began to invite them to perform as an attraction at other venues. ZZ Disco also brought them in to record at the sound system's studio—a common invitation made to singers who won the rap stage.<sup>74</sup> Perna Longa and Vidal went to the ZZ Disco studio one morning and after one complete run through, producers dismissed the duo and spent the rest of the day mixing the recording. By afternoon, their rap was being broadcast on *Rádio Imprensa*, a radio station entirely dedicated to funk music and, especially, rap and montagens. The duo then hired a career manager and registered their song with the National Copyright Collection Agency (ECAD), leading to royalty payments every time their song was played on the radio. Their manager, then, set up a performance schedule, and soon the duo was rapping alongside major sound system teams between ten and twelve times a week, either at corridor events, night clubs, or other funk parties—a schedule quite similar to that of other artists with similar trajectories (Herschmann 2005: 254). The duo maintained this schedule for a few more years, before Vidal chose to interrupt their performances out of exhaustion.

Perna Longa's account, quite common among performers of the period (Souto 1997: 66-7), is one of many stories of galera members participating in the production process of corridor music—a process which also involved music managers and sound system teams. Once successful galera rappers hired a manager, music managers were important for consolidating record contracts; pushing for air time on radio; and lobbying sound system teams to play their songs during corridor events—and this is well represented in the early career of funk duo Claudinho and Buchecha. Claudinho and Buchecha were partners who composed and rapped as representatives of the B-side Salgueiro de São Gonçalo galera. In 1992, the duo participated in a festival at Clube Mauá, in São Gonçalo, singing “Rap da Realidade” which was later awarded third prize (Bragança 2020). In

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<sup>74</sup> For invitations to record, MC Pamela, May 16, 2023; For winners, DJ Orelhudo, July 8, 2023, funk party in Jardim Sumaré, São João de Meriti, RJ.

1995, the duo once again won a prize at a festival, performing to a “Volt Mix” beat their “Rap do Salgueiro,” bringing them further fame. With their rising success, Claudinho and Buchecha contracted a manager who registered their songs with ECAD and began pushing for air time on local radio, while at ZZ Disco corridor events their manager insisted that DJs play the duo’s songs prior to corridor fighting. In 1996, the duo also signed a contract with the *Universal Music* label and released an album which sold over one million copies. But as soon as they achieved national stardom, the manager sued ZZ Disco, claiming royalties for each time the sound system team had played their songs at events. Seeing his legal bills rise, Zezinho began to demand from galeras, just minutes prior to performing, that rappers sign over the rights to their songs—something which other sound system teams also began to do (Palombini 2009: 53). In the process, ZZ Disco not only avoided legal problems, but also began to accumulate the rights to galera rap and their live recordings, facilitating the incorporation—especially throughout the second half of the 1990s—of these pieces into their montagens de galera.

### *Montagens de Galera*

As galera rap began to be regularly recorded in the early 1990s—either live or in the studio—sound system teams soon began to play the recordings during corridor fighting. For Urso, galera rap encouraged corridor brawls since, when the recordings of galeras present at the events were played, their words “brought the galera’s weight into the event.” Alongside playing the recorded rap, DJs also developed what were called montagens, interspersing, during corridor fighting, such pieces with galera rap while relegating, in the process, funk rasteiro, melôs, and other pieces to moments which did not feature fighting. In their basic format, montagens layer a sampled beat from one song, “Volt Mix” the most common, with so-called pontos (points), or

sampled fragments of melodies from songs or popular culture (Rosa 2024: 7), echoing the beats and points in what were, at times, also live performances. Examples of pontos are sections from DJ Samuel’s freestyle song “Open Your Eyes;” the opening theme song from the television show *Bonanza*; or dubbed dialogue from the Indiana Jones films—the latter part of a piece called “Montagem do Indiana Jones” (Indiana Jones montage). During this period, DJs began to regularly use of samplers, which assisted them to play uninterruptedly while adding and dropping musical elements, all while maintaining one of the same underlying beats—Volt, Hassan, Trinere—from one song to another, a process facilitated by equipment which offered memory slots which could store up to twenty-four seconds of sound (Palombini 2019: 77). According to Urso, these innovations “gave the music more velocity and stimulated even more fighting” since corridor music became faster; featured more echo; maintained the same familiar beats and tempo for hours on end; and seemed to be a string of songs rather than a succession of independent pieces, features which, for Urso, further excited the crowds.<sup>75</sup> Also, since the montagens and rap often featured the same underlying beats, DJs could move even more easily between these pieces.

Galera rap and montagens were also essential for the development of montagens de galeras, the defining funk style of corridor events during the second half of the 1990s. Similar to montagens, montagens de galera feature “Hassan,” “Volt Mix,” or “Trinere” as the underlying beat, as are they also ornamented with pontos. But for the montagens de galera, sound system teams also added two-line galera cries which typically highlighted, in the first line, the galera’s ferocity and, in the second, its name, side affiliation, and place of origin. For Ralf Victor, montagens de galera magnified fighting since they added melodies composed and sung by the galeras themselves—a crucial new feature which, however, differed from the galera rap as the montagens

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<sup>75</sup> Urso, September 9, 2023. For DJ Terra, who performed throughout the 1990s, the first were produced by DJ Fabinho of Cash Box; For performing live, DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022.

privileged shorter cries rather than narratives (Rosa 2024: 4). For Ralf Victor, the *montagens de galera* inflated *galera egos*, further rooted *galera* names in collective memory, and granted groups, via live performances, even greater visibility in corridor culture.<sup>76</sup> Also, *montagens de galeras* also inserted *galera* youths into the production process of funk pieces, expressing the relationship between these youths with their own territories and the corridor events themselves (Rosa 2024: 12). *Montagens de galera* supported a sense of communal history and memory, buttressing a sense of rootedness in a specific place (Lurie 2000b: 647; Herschmann 2005: 161). An integral part of events by the mid-1990s, *montagens de galera* became the definitive sound track of corridor events, and the songs are played, to this day, during contemporary corridor events.

Although most *montagens de galera* referenced only one *galera* and, in their lyrics, praised that group's fighting prowess, some *montagens* featured different elements. For *galeras* which had formed coalitions, the sound system teams sometimes put together *montagens* which featured one or two lines from each *galera* (Rosa 2024: 10). At other times, sound system teams did just the opposite, adding cries and chants sung by rival *galeras*—such as *Vigário Geral* and *Parada de Lucas*—in what were *montagens de confronto* (confrontation montages), pieces which encouraged those *galeras* in particular to fight in separate corridor spaces. A few *montagens de galera* highlighted the *galera's* dress and access to consumer goods rather than their fighting prowess, such as the *Parque São Vicente* montage, while others called out municipal bus-line route numbers in reference to the transportation which brought members together in its routines, such as the montage “472-Borel.” A few *montagens*, moreover, also referenced the city's *torcidas*

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<sup>76</sup> For added two-line cries, DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; For hollers over narratives, Sargento, December 12, 2022; For ego, memory, and visibility, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023.

organizadas (organized soccer fan clubs).<sup>77</sup> Although different from the usual montagens de galera, these pieces nevertheless persisted in stating the galera's places of origin and the fighting superiority of the associated galeras.

Sung by the galeras themselves, montagens de galera emerged after sound system teams began to record galera rap. For the production of montagens de galera, sound system teams made two separate recordings of live rap performances onto different Mini Disks (MD) (Rosa 2024: 7): one featuring performers singing along with the underlying beat, and another solely capturing their voices. Since there were several festivals occurring at the same time, and multiple sound system teams could be recording the same galera, each team produced its own montagens de galera potentially generating multiple pieces for a single group. During the week after a rap stage, teams sampled a few lines from each rap—usually one line featuring the group's name, origin, and side affiliation; and another highlighting the galera's fighting prowess. At this time, producers could replace the sampled beats which had been recorded during the live rendition with a studio recording, even though the underlying beat of the studio recording would usually still be “Volt Mix,” “Hassan,” or “Trinere.” If the rap had, for some reason, been poorly recorded—i.e., if other sounds compromised its intelligibility—the sound system team could invite galera singers to the studio in order to re-record whatever the team needed. At other times, the galeras themselves wrote extra material specifically for their montagens de galera, which they would then record at the invitation of the sound system teams. Sound system teams took about forty minutes to produce each piece in a process which involved, along with choosing the sections from each rap song, the addition of points; the prominent use of echo; and added emphasis on the low frequencies of the

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<sup>77</sup> For coalition, Urso, September 9, 2023. For confrontation, Garoto do Pilar, August 7, 2024; For Parque São Vicente, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; For bus-lines, Josiane, July 17, 2024; For 472-Borel, Ferrete, October 16, 2022; For Vila Operária, Fantoche, June 21, 2023.

rapper's voice to, according to MC Pamela, "make their voices sound more aggressive." After recording the montagens, sound system teams then sent them to the radio station *Rádio Imprensa* which played the pieces in broadcasts dedicated to corridor culture.<sup>78</sup> By the following weekend, most galeras had already listened to their own montagens de galera on the radio, and the sound system teams were playing what were familiar songs to the public.

After recording rap and montagens de galera, the sound system teams also pressed CDs for distribution, a process which emerged in 1994 (Rosa 2024: 4). Although the featured montagens and montagens de galera had been polished in the studio, the rap themselves were usually released on CDs as barely altered live recordings. These CDs typically featured pieces solely identified with one of the two corridor sides; were linked to only one of the major sound system teams; and could be found both in official record stores and in pirated versions in any of the city's informal markets.<sup>79</sup> The target audience for these CDs were the funkeiros themselves, who usually listened to the recordings together with their galeras. Holding the rights to the tracks sung by the galeras, sound system teams kept most of the profits themselves. According to DJ Paulo José, his sole payment was a lump sum of two-thousand reais after a CD had been distributed, while for MC Lua Cheia—a galera rapper—maintains that neither he nor any other rappers he knew ever made any money.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> For two recordings, Visconde, November 16, 2022, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; For each team producing, Ferrete, October 16, 2022; Taking rap into studio, DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022; DJ Terra, April 18, 2023; For replacing beats and popularity, MC Lua Cheia, October 22, 2022; For inviting if improperly recorded, DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022, DJ Terra, April 18, 2023, MC Mandinga, August 17, 2023; MC Pamela, May 16, 2023; For galeras writing cries, MC Mandinga, August 17, 2023; MC Perna Longa, August 8, 2024; For time to produce, addition of points/echoes, DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022 and DJ Terra, April 18, 2023; For bass, Pamela, May 16, 2023; For radio, MC Lua Cheia, October 22, 2022.

<sup>79</sup> These CDs, surprisingly enough, might still be found in these spaces as of 2024.

<sup>80</sup> For CDs and live, DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022; DJ Terra, April 18, 2023; For sides, sound systems, and piracy, DJ Flagelo, October 10, 2022; For pirated CDs found presently, visit to "Uruguaiana," July 20, 2024; For listening nowadays, Carlota, June 8, 2023; Lacan, May 6, 2023; DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022; MC Lua Cheia, October 22, 2022.

For attendees, the montagens de galeras transformed their corridor experience. Alongside the rap (Lopes 2011: 104-5), montagens de galeras were the first local funk pieces which named favelas and other important residential areas, connecting artistic production to territory and identity in what further rooted galeras as part of the burgeoning funk style. Shedding its dependency on foreign influences, Rio de Janeiro funk music, during this period, was also growing more and more local in its creative process, and the montagens de galeras, in this regard, served as foundational pieces for the localizing of the music (Rosa 2024: 5). Reminiscing about events, moreover, some ex-attendees claimed that the montagens de galera motivated them to engage more readily in the brawls, especially when their own pieces or those associated with rivals were played. For MC Irmão do Pedaco, the montagens de galeras represented the areas themselves and the friendships the galeras had established in their own neighborhoods in what epitomized communal bonds. A regular DJ at corridor events throughout the 1990s, DJ Terra claimed he played the pieces to stimulate attendees, focusing on the montagens de galeras of attending groups. Some galeras, in order to make grand entrances, even asked DJs to play their own pieces as they made their way into venues, while security personnel, when controlling corridors was difficult, asked DJs to lower the volume or even provisionally shift from montagens de galera to other styles. The short verses sung by galera; the familiarity of the few beats tirelessly sampled by DJs; and the collective memory associated with corridor culture imbued montagens de galera with an immediate impact on attendees, who assimilated their sounds and messages at the physical level (Rosa 2024: 17)—a musicosonic appeal which triggered, perhaps, affective responses which then facilitated the incorporation of their messages (Pieslak 2015: 196).<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> For adrenaline, Japinha, September 20, 2024; Daniel, July 21, 2024; Charles Brigada, July 18, 2024; Carlota, June 8, 2023; Cueca, December 3, 2023; For representing areas, MC Irmão do Pedaco, September 16, 2024. DJ Terra, April 18, 2023. For montagens of excited groups, DJ Flagelo, October 10, 2022; For warfare and the devil, Cabelinho, April 29, 2023, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; For

The galeras played a central role in the production process of rap, montagens, and montagens de galeras. Either on stage or on recordings, it was the galeras themselves which rapped about their locations, choosing the lyrics, beats, and rappers who would record their songs. After recording, then, those same galeras and rappers would listen to those very recordings during events, dancing in the packed venues or brawling in the corridors at the sound of their own voices and compositions. Back in their neighborhoods, the galeras also listened to their own rap and montagens over the radio or on CDs they may have purchased. Integral to any corridor event, the montagens de galera were a crucial element of corridor culture which situated the attendee as both a producer and consumer of the music played at events, placing the funkeiro center stage in what was a major cultural manifestation of 1990s Rio de Janeiro.

### *The Decline of Corridor Events*

Corridor fighting, festival competitions, and rap and montagens de galera were all plentiful during the 1990s. But by late decade, corridor events began to decline, a fall, perhaps, which runs parallel to the brief history of a corridor venue called Chaparral. Known as “O Palácio do Funk” (The Funk Palace), the club hosted events on Sunday afternoons when most attendees were free; was located on Avenida Brasil (Brazil Avenue), which crosses the north and west sides of Rio while skirting along the Baixada Fluminense; and was renowned for competitive fighting—all features which attracted as many as seven thousand attendees every night. The venue’s reputation for receiving the city’s fiercest galeras stimulated massive attendance since some galeras sought to stand out in the corridor brawls, and competing against groups renowned for their fighting

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terrorism and temerity, Carlos Alberto, September 9, 2024; For throbbing bodies, Jaspion and Visconde, November 16, 2022; DJ Orelhudo, July 8, 2023; For rival montagens, DJ Terra, April 18, 2023.

prowess could bolster their reputations (Cecchetto 1998: 159). Also, prior to going to Chaparral late in a given afternoon, funkeiros could enjoy the city's beaches or soccer stadiums—locales in which galeras also assembled.<sup>82</sup>

Chaparral's location and ambiance set it apart from other corridor venues. The club was surrounded by B-side galeras, a circumstance which made it particularly hostile for A-side groups. The problem was amplified by ZZ Disco's decision to reserve the club's main entrance, on Avenida Brasil, for B-side galeras, while the A-side would always enter through the back, on a dark and secluded street. During arrivals and, especially, departures, A-side galeras were vulnerable to ambushes. During events, moreover, organizers deliberately kept the club dark and constantly blinked strobe lights (Ventura 1994: 122), regularly spewing fog from machines set throughout its club's warehouse-like space. Taking advantage of drastically reduced visibility, some funkeiros captured opponents or attacked them surreptitiously.<sup>83</sup>

The club's location in a region associated with conflict between criminal groups further amplified tensions (Rosa 2024: 10). The problem was such that a minority of attendees, involved with the surrounding criminal groups, went to Chaparral not so much to honor their galeras but to bolster the reputations of criminal organizations (Mattos 2012: 662), preferring to represent Comando Vermelho or Terceiro Comando in the brawls rather than their areas. The tension was intensified by the fact that the galeras which surrounded Chaparral were not divided according to the spatial logics of the criminal groups themselves. Although the galeras in the club's immediate surroundings were all part of the B-side, two of them—Nova Holanda and Parque União—were

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<sup>82</sup> For galera beach attendance, see chapter four of this dissertation.

<sup>83</sup> For attractiveness, Café, July 16, 2023; Jiraya, November 16, 2022; Tatá, November 1, 2022. For standing out, Jefferson Souza, April 11, 2023; For activities prior to Chaparral, Tatá, November 1, 2022; For B-side surrounding Chaparral, Jorge and Tatá, August 29, 2023; For entrances, Urso and Inseto, September 2, 2023; For ambushes, Mariana, April 29, 2023; For fog and frowning upon ambushes, Ferrete, October 16, 2022; Tatá, November 1, 2022.

in areas controlled by Comando Vermelho, while three others—Vila do João, Vila do Pinheiro, and Baixa do Sapateiro—were all in areas controlled by Amigos dos Amigos (Friends of the Friends) and, by late-decade, the Terceiro Comando. This misalignment encouraged, in 1998, Comando Vermelho representatives to call a meeting with galera leaders associated with areas they controlled—the aforementioned areas but also the B-side Kelson and A-side Cidade Alta galeras—to consolidate these and other nearby galeras as part of the B-side. In the process, the criminal group would align the areas under its control as all part of the B-side, while areas not in its domain—usually identified with Terceiro Comando—would be pushed to the A-side (Mattos 2012: 669; Gularte 2014: 1039-40). Through this strategy, Comando Vermelho leaders sought to reduce the animosities between galeras in their areas—and hence police attention—and stimulate greater attendance at *bailes de comunidade* (Cymrot 2022: 155).<sup>84</sup> These events, on the rise during the late 1990s, were necessarily hosted in favelas; did not include fighting; featured a funk music called *proibidão* (forbidden music), which could glorify criminal groups; and, crucially, generated income for criminal groups—income which would increase if all galeras in areas they controlled attended events without the intention of fighting.<sup>85</sup>

Criminal intervention produced immediate changes in galera alliances. Initially, it confused some galeras, at first unaware of the shifts, who soon noticed that rival galeras were no longer targeting them in fights during the corridor events themselves. Meanwhile, those same galeras, previously part of the opposite side but associated with the same criminal group, were now approaching them in a conciliatory fashion (Mattos 2012: 669-70; Gularte 2014: 1078). These

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<sup>84</sup> For a more detailed discussion on *bailes de comunidade*, see chapter three.

<sup>85</sup> For area and criminal warfare, Jaspion, November 16, 2022; For exact affiliations, Jorge and Tatá, August 29, 2023. For Tatá, the A-side Morro dos Macacos, in an area controlled by the Terceiro Comando, and the A-side *Cidade Alta*, under Comando Vermelho, also did not get along due to these rivalries; For seeking to reduce animosities, Popó, February 4, 2023, Juramento Favela in Rio de Janeiro, RJ.

realignments not only produced changes concerning galera side associations, but also dampened galera involvement with corridor events altogether. According to Jorge and Tatá, attendees who resisted criminal intervention suffered violent backlashes; while others, perhaps out of fear, simply abandoned events altogether (Cecchetto 1997: 110).<sup>86</sup> Indeed, for galera members, corridor events had translated their territories into emblems of recognition conquered through alliances and displays of might, symbols which were being broken by criminal organizations which warped these identities (Cunha 2002: 136). If at first galeras had superimposed their behaviors and territorial distinctions onto the criminal logics of the city, in the late 1990s the galeras were becoming subordinate to the city's criminal groups (Cymrot 2022: 186). Above all, criminal involvement severed the connections which had been previously established by the galeras themselves into alignment which were to favor the criminal groups, shifts which changed a crucial component of corridor culture—the sense of belonging among galeras who attended events not in the name of criminal groups, but representing their own blocks, neighborhoods, or favelas.

Finally, Chaparral was also where three attendees died during an event in October of 1999—a crucial turning point which stimulated significant media attention. According to ex-attendee Ferrete, who was at Chaparral that day, the deaths resulted from the fact that the B-side had been relentlessly pushing forward that evening and that the gate behind the A-side throng was not opening properly, leaving only a sliver of a passage for attendees to squeeze through in order to leave. As the B-side continued to push and as members of the A-side became more and more packed, A-side members began to stumble and fall. Soon fallen A-side members were being trampled underfoot, and two attendees were injured to the point that they died hours later, while a third died after a few days (Gularte 2014: 1056). Also present that day, Urso adds that what caused

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<sup>86</sup> Jorge and Tatá, August 29, 2023.

the injuries was that attendees fell over each other, smothering and suffocating those who had fallen first, all while the security personnel refused to open the A-side gate. For Sargento, the B-side's push had been spurred by the A-side's attempts at capturing rivals, while for Cabelinho, a ZZ Disco employee throughout the 1990s, the day's undoing was the result of lackluster organization by security personnel. Whatever the case may be, the evening's unraveling further discouraged many *funkeiros* from attending future corridor events and, perhaps more importantly, stimulated state legislators to propose a law banning corridor events, a law which passed in 2000.<sup>87</sup> Allied to the burgeoning involvement of criminal organizations in *galera* culture, state intervention further spurred the decline of corridor events throughout the city of Rio (Mattos 2017: 67).

The events at Chaparral suppressed corridor events. With fewer events available—and none of them legal—many attendees sought alternate activities. Some turned more intensely to *torcidas organizadas*, while others moved to the burgeoning *bailes de comunidade*, and some dropped out of funk altogether. A significant minority, however, persisted. Indeed, immediately after the ban, ZZ Disco continued to host corridor events, even though attendance was clearly waning. These events, however, suffered another blow when, in 2002, ZZ Disco owner Zezinho died from a heart attack during a corridor event at club Inocentes de Belford Roxo, in the Baixada Fluminense (Essinger 2005: 194). His death, combined with criminal intervention over *galera* culture and the state's prohibitive legislation, spelled the end of the most popular era of corridor events. But as much as event popularity plummeted from these circumstances, corridor events have persisted, even if in different forms.

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<sup>87</sup> For tramplung, Ferrete, October 16, 2022; Urso, September 2, 2023; Sargento, December 12, 2022; Cabelinho, April 29, 2023; This event was widely reported by the newspapers of the time. See, for instance, *Jornal Extra*, October 26, 1999, 3.

## *Conclusion*

Corridor events reached the height of their popularity in the 1990s. By early decade, most *bailes de mulão* had been replaced by corridor events, and as the decade progressed, corridor events continued to grow in popularity. While corridor events inherently featured ritualized fighting, throughout the decade they also included *festivals de galera*, moments when sound system teams included attractions and, importantly, held weekly contests in which *galera* disputed points. An essential part of each festival was the *etapa do rap*, when *galeras* rapped their own compositions while competing with one another despite their side affiliations. During each presentation, sound system teams recorded their rap, and these recordings were later sampled for the production of *montagens de galeras*. Essential for corridor events, *montagens de galeras* featured *galera* cries and chants which highlighted each group's fighting prowess and place of origin; *pontos*, or samples taken from popular songs to be added as ornamental sounds; and underlying beats linked to 1980s musical styles from the United States, with "Volt Mix" serving as the most popular. Above all, *montagens de galeras* inflated *galera* egos; rooted each *galera* as part of corridor culture; and highlighted each group's own ferocity.

But *galeras* did not restrict their activities to attending corridor events. Although the corridor event certainly strengthened communal bonds as attendees continued to compete in the name of their own areas, *galeras* also fostered friendships in a plethora of other activities. Some *funkeiros* also attended *bailes charme* and *bailes de comunidade*, events also linked to funk which featured an entirely different setup, while others delved deeply into their *torcidas*. Some *funkeiros* also enjoyed martial arts, Carnival, and adrenaline-fueled activities such as tagging and vehicle surfing, while others, perhaps attempting to move away from fighting, abandoned corridor events to attend church. Importantly, these activities were part of a wide-ranging popular culture in the

city of Rio, which youths followed simultaneously, and, also, cultivated values which were in relation to values linked to the galeras. These activities, and their links to galera culture at large, are the subject of the following chapter.

### 3: Galeras and Popular Culture beyond the Corridors

An important cultural activity of the 1990s, corridor events brought together thousands of galera members to venues all throughout the city. Moving to clubs by the dozens or, even, by the hundreds, the attending galeras not only fought each other but also came together to perform elaborate dance choreographies; compete in month-long *festivals de galeras*; and participate in the recording and production processes of rap and *montagens de galeras*. A culture and music tied to Black Rio and American soul, corridor events and *montagens de galeras* were crucial for further inserting local populations into the larger stage of global modernity; supporting galera expressions linked to their own places of origin; and further rooting each galera as a conspicuous group within funk culture at large. But corridor events were not the only cultural activity which galera members engaged in—far from it. Part of an expansive city, *funkeiros* also participated in alternate activities which, much like their participation in their own galeras, stimulated adrenaline thrills; fostered communal bonds and deep relationships with friends and family; and, importantly, further strengthened their ties with urban territory.

This chapter examines galera activities and popular culture in Rio de Janeiro beyond the corridor event. Although several aspects of galera culture are examined, there is an important emphasis on masculinity. This is partly due not only to the larger presence of men in the galeras, but also on the methodological limitations of this work. The first section examines funk culture beyond the corridor event, looking at *bailes charme* (charm events), 1990s *bailes de mulão* (mule events), and, to a greater extent, *bailes de comunidade* (community events). Differing from corridor events in their absence of corridor fighting, these funk parties fostered funk which differed from the *montagens de galeras*; supported gendered identities in contrast to galera expressions; and, in the case of *bailes de comunidade*, reworked identities linked to territory. The following

section examines the city's torcidas organizadas (soccer fan clubs). Organizations which had many of its members also part of the galeras, torcidas similarly valued aggressivity and fighting prowess among attendees, while territorial associations have also been important. The following section looks at relationships between galera members and martial arts. Important spaces for developing fighting skills and fitness, martial arts have been important for some galera men in their drives to accumulate prestige through skill. In the following section, I analyze the ways in which galeras relate to family members. Worried about their participation in events, family members are often concerned over the health of funkeiros, even coming to, in some cases, propose alternate activities which may seem to be on polar opposites, such as church-going. After this, I discuss galera consumption of designer clothing. Seeking to attend events while wearing particular brands, funkeiros made concerted efforts to purchase specific pieces and, on occasion, also took to robbing and destroying consumer goods owned by rivals in what were bouts to, also, accumulate and destroy prestige. The following section details galera access to radio and television. Throughout the week, galeras tuned into radio to listen to montagens de galeras and learn about upcoming events while also communicating among themselves in often humorous ways, while in their access to television, galeras not only consumed funk culture but also, on some occasions, presented themselves in studio environments alongside the corridor sound system teams. The last section, finally, examines funkeiro associations with graffiti spraying, vehicle surfing, and Carnival bate-bola. Associated to group formation and movement, tagging and vehicle surfing were similar to corridor events in their associations with participant quests for adrenaline and excitement, while bate-bola groups, part of Carnival, fostered similar values associated with territorial identity and communal bonding. Part of a large cultural field which included corridor events, galera members, especially men, participated in activities which shared in common quests for adrenaline, drives for

accumulating prestige, and, importantly, the establishment of identities throughout associations with territory.

### *Funk Beyond Corridor Events*

Corridor events are not the only events linked to Rio funk, and galera members have also attended bailes de mulão, bailes charme, and bailes de comunidade. Throughout the 1990s, a few sound system teams continued to host bailes de mulão throughout the city, even though in decreasing numbers when compared to the 1980s. For these events, sound system teams featured a wide-ranging repertoire of Rio de Janeiro funk music—charme, funky-disco, melôs—but also amplified their repertoires to also include *axé* and *pagode*,<sup>88</sup> torcida mottos, and the rap de galera part of the ever-increasing corridor events. Not as numerous as corridor events, these parties received galeras in what was a competitive environment which did not feature corridor formation, highlighting, instead, couples' dancing, romance, and socialization between the sexes (Herschmann 2005: 145-7). Fighting, however, was not so much absent as it was strictly controlled by organizers and security personnel (Cecchetto 1998: 146), who preserved the “fifteen-minutes of joy” period of fighting which had been established in the late-1980s (Cecchetto 1997: 113; Cymrot 2022: 149). Although galeras continued to brawl sporadically during some of these bailes de mulão (Ventura 1994: 121), at some events organizers vetoed fighting altogether (Herschmann 2005: 174-5), stimulating MC presentations and galera competitions as central features. At the end of events, then, sound system teams announced the winning galeras and distributed prizes based on their performances (Herschmann 2005: 146-8). Although not as popular as they had been in the

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<sup>88</sup> Axé is a popular musical style associated with the state of Bahia. Pagode is a Rio de Janeiro style similar to samba.

1980s, bailes de mulão retained several aspects of the previous period while cultivating, also, the competitive etapas which flourished as part of the festivais de galera of corridor events.

A popular venue which hosted bailes de mulão throughout the 1990s was a club called Recreativo Caxiense, in the Baixada Fluminense, persisting with the format despite the widespread popularization of corridor events. Ex-attendee Rivaldo recalls that sound system teams played galera rap and funk melody songs during events at Recreativo, while another ex-attendee, Gisele, relayed how she and her funkeira colleagues attended events always as a group, performing dance choreographies side by side in events which, also, featured a balanced distribution of the sexes. According to ex-attendee Ricardo, moreover, by the mid-1990s the bailes de mulão at Recreativo were also regularly hosting galera competitions and, even, a few festivais de galera, activities which the sound system teams Pipo's and Águia Disco regularly held. At these events, Águia Disco was the venue's main sound system team, responsible for hosting the fifteen-minute fighting period and, also, the lengthier galera competitions. Borrowing from corridor event etapas, competitions at Recreativo included ranking the galeras based on which one showed up in the greatest numbers; which could display the most elaborate galera flag; and which could introduce to the stage the most attractive woman.<sup>89</sup>

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, some galera members also attended bailes charme. Bailes charme joined young men and women in clubs and, also, alternative spaces—parking lots and under major viaducts—in events which focused on dancing and romance, and fighting was decidedly absent (Cecchetto 2004). Bailes charme featured music which funkeiros have considered lighter and more melodious—funky-disco and funk melody, for example—in comparison to other

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<sup>89</sup> For musical styles at Recreativo, Rivaldo, July 22, 2024; For women at Recreativo, Gisele, September 18, 2024 Gisele's bar in Jardim Sumaré, São João de Meriti; For sound system teams and competitions at Recreativo, Ricardo, July 19, 2024;

funk styles, including *montagens de galeras* (Essinger 2005: 55). Importantly, *charmeiros* (adherents to these events) cultivated a profile which was in opposition to galera members—that is, if galera members fought each other in the corridors, *charmeiros* deliberately held an interest in dancing and meeting members of the opposite sex. Dressed elegantly, *charmeiros* reinforced values linked to beauty and politeness, and in their interest to display poise, the attending men performed a style of masculinity which stood in stark opposition to the galeras, who were generally viewed by *charmeiros* as poorly dressed, churlish in manner, and violent in their dispositions (Cecchetto 2004). Although there were clear contrasts between *charmeiros* and galera members, corridor events, however, continued to feature *charme* music in the few hours which preceded corridor formation, a setting which, to some degree, persists in contemporary corridor events. Indeed, during the first part of corridor events throughout 2024 and 2025, DJs played songs associated with *charme* while *funkeiros* arrived and socialized among themselves during a moment which preceded *montagens de galeras* and, consequently, corridor formation. Events which fostered alternative forms of socialization in comparison to galeras, *bailes charme* nourished values associated with politeness, romance, and elegance in what contrasted with galeras, especially in their values linked with masculinity.

Another important funk event is the *baile de comunidade*. Perhaps the most popular type of funk party after the criminalization of corridor events, in 2000, *bailes de comunidade* are held in outdoor areas of favelas and privilege dancing and socializing in a context in which criminal groups dictate event rules and security policies (Herschmann 2005: 162; Cymrot 2022: 149). During the 1990s, when corridor events were widespread, criminal groups prohibited fighting at *bailes de comunidade* in the interest of keeping the police from investigating parties; stimulating attendance among those who had no interest in fighting; supporting the criminal groups' own

prestige in their displays of control (Mattos 2017: 75; Cymrot 2022: 207); and for generating profits from drug sales (Mattos 2012: 656). Criminal groups may also bribe local police forces to guarantee events and, importantly, may prohibit the attendance of people associated with areas controlled by rival criminal groups under the rubric of maintaining the peace (Mattos 2012: 659). Importantly, this restriction is not based on whether attendees are part of the criminal groups themselves, but rather on their residence in areas controlled by rival groups. In this sense, *bailes de comunidade* share an important similarity with corridor events in their link to a territorial identity. In the case of *bailes de comunidade*, however, the focus is not on origin and communal bonds but rather on which group holds, over particular favelas, criminal governance—a localized governance which is maintained through force; is held in areas with a low state presence; is embedded within a larger domain of state power (Lessing 2020); and, also, may shift as a result of criminal warfare.<sup>90</sup>

*Bailes de comunidade* feature a funk style which differs from the corridors' *montagens de galeras*, a style called *proibidão* (extremely forbidden). Although *proibidão* songs usually thematize a hegemonic masculine ethic, much like the *montagens de galeras*, the style centers on conflict between the city's criminal organizations (Mattos 2017: 65). By the mid-1990s, some *proibidão* songs were glorifying specific criminal groups, resignifying *galera* expressions such as *alemão* ("German") and *invasão* ("invasion")—which hold a different connotation in the *montagens*<sup>91</sup>—into contexts which championed the extermination of enemies rather than the fighting prowess and group ferocity of *galeras*. And while the *montagens de galeras* were the

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<sup>90</sup> A clear example of changes in criminal governance is the *Juramento* favela, located in a privileged spot for drug distribution and which has been in constant dispute between at least three criminal groups since 1993. Under the circumstances, it is perhaps unsurprising that the area's *galera* has also swapped sides a few times as a result of the coercion of criminal groups. For *Juramento*, Popó, February 4, 2023 and *Tesoura*, February 12, 2023.

<sup>91</sup> For a brief discussion of these words, see the section on radio and television part of this chapter.

musical foundation for proibidão music early in its development (Mattos 2017: 72-3)—with both styles featuring the same sampled beats and pontos—by the turn of the century, proibidões abandoned “Volt Mix” and “Hassan” as their underlying beats and replaced them with a beat called *tamborzão* (“big drum”), which features the *atabaque* drum (Brazilian hand-drum). For some, this shift instilled into funk a local sound which further legitimated the style as a music rooted in a national context and (Essinger 2005: 260; Palombini 2019: 77), also, in an Africa-Brazil connection (Essinger, 2005: 260). Such a connection, moreover, may also be assumed to have been part of the montagens, albeit not as explicitly, in their featuring of *berimbau* sounds part of *capoeira* (Palombini 2019).<sup>92</sup> This widespread replacement also reduced the producers’ emphasis on the upper pitch regions—highlighted in the montagens—and influenced, also, the usage of *tamborzão* in a small portion of montagens de galeras (Palombini 2019: 73 and 79). The production process of proibidão songs, especially throughout the early-2000s, usually involved live recordings, with ambient sounds sometimes being part of the recordings themselves, while studio production remained secondary—when utilized at all—in a process similar to the production of galera rap. Throughout the early-2000s, moreover, the music circulated on pirated CDs in informal markets, and some MCs have also admitted to have composed and sung proibidões commissioned by criminal members (Cymrot 2022: 210). Among other things, proibidão music may diffuse a romanticized imaginary associated with criminality and, also, showcase the city’s geography regarding which criminal organizations control which areas (Cymrot 2022: 247-9), a display, once more, of funk’s association with urban territory.

Criminal groups’ management of *bailes de comunidade*, importantly, may transform attendee identities in what demonstrates the effects of criminal governance over territory, local

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<sup>92</sup> This is a contentious debate which is outside the scope of this dissertation—a dissertation focused on *montagens de galeras* and *bailes de corredor*. For deeper debates, see Essinger 2005 and Palombini 2019.

culture, and individual identity. This is an important facet of *bailes de comunidade* since *funkeiro* identity with territory is a central aspect of galera culture, and with the popularization of *bailes de comunidade* some *funkeiros* reworked their own subjectivities as the societal context shifted. Jefferson Souza, an ex-galera member and a current cultural secretary for the state of Rio, sheds light on the matter:

The galera from the Favela da Mineira was under the control of the same criminal group as the Morro da Providência, even though they were opposite sides in the corridor, and either favela held *bailes de comunidade* during the weekends. It was a hostile environment; those who were from Mineira could not go into Providência even though they were under the control of the same criminal group, and all because of corridor fighting. Criminal group rivals were also on the same side during corridor events. What then diminishes corridor event frequency is drug group interference, since you had on the same side of the corridor people from different criminal organizations fighting against people of their same group on the opposite side of the corridor. With the drug dealers' hand, the corridor problem began to diminish.

Along with supporting the decline of corridor events and an increase of *bailes de comunidade*, the setting also contributed to a rising identification among attendees with the criminal organizations which hold sway in their areas of residence. This does not mean that attendees necessarily joined these organizations, but rather that criminal groups served, for some, as one of the many signifiers available for individual and group identity. A conversation with Tatá highlights this important shift:

**Tatá:** I used to live in Morro da Caixa d'Água, but I had to leave after the *milícia* took it from the Comando in 2008. After the change, the *milicianos* kept their eyes on me, and my friends would tell me that they wanted to kill me because I'm always talking back. I had to move to Jardim Gramacho because of that, [which is controlled by the Comando Vermelho,] because I am Comando.

**Researcher:** Wait, you never told me that you are associated with the Comando.

**Tatá:** I'm not.

**Researcher:** So why did you move to their area?

**Tatá:** Because I am Comando.

**Researcher:** But you just said you don't associate with them.

**Tatá:** I don't.

**Researcher:** So why do you feel safe?

**Tatá:** Because I am Comando.

**Researcher:** But how can you *be* Comando if you don't associate with them?

**Tatá:** Because I am Comando! I was raised in an area they controlled; I know how they are; I know who they are; I know their rules. I can only feel good in their areas.

The conversation continued—perhaps unnecessarily—with questions concerning his association with Comando Vermelho despite his seeming lack of association with the group. But soon the point was clear. For Tatá, the influence of criminal governance is such that it serves as an important marker of his identity and, even, survival. Concerning this relationship, Alex, another galera member, claimed that favela dwellers end up embracing the criminal group rooted in their areas even if they are not themselves associated with criminality, a problem which only seems to grow. For him, if in the past such groups held control solely over the drug trade, they are evermore invested in a range of activities, exerting control also over the consumption of electricity, gas, and other services, all while they persistently flaunt assault rifles day and night in what are extravagant displays. Along with controlling goods and services and, also, claiming for the prerogative to violently intervene to solve local problems, these conditions also show that criminal governance may affect the sense of identity among people living in areas controlled by these group, even though they themselves are not part of the organizations. In this regard, the expansion of *bailes de comunidade* not only dampened galera culture, but also reworked some *funkeiro* identities by resignifying important territorial associations.

In contrast to *bailes de mulão* and *bailes charme*, *bailes de comunidade* have grown since the 1990s. Although there is no concrete evidence that criminal organizations sponsored *bailes de comunidade* throughout the 1990s (Essinger 2005: 183), at least some of the contemporary events are, to some degree, funded and organized by criminal groups. Lulu and Claudiosom, for instance—funk DJs who have worked these events—claimed that in order to perform at *bailes de*

comunidade it is always a member of a criminal group who calls, a caller who never relays their name or how they got their numbers. After agreeing to perform, then, Lulu claimed he would

Bring my equipment to the public space. I then played pagode and some famous funk. People started showing up at the *quadra* [central sports court] to dance, eat, and drink, usually all night. They [Comando Vermelho] usually pay R\$600 [about 120 dollars], which is nothing for them. The movement they get and the drug sales they make brings so much profit for them.

But the criminal groups are not involved in *bailes de comunidade* solely through their financing. Openly flaunting their weapons, it is not uncommon for men part of these groups to fire their guns to the air in commemorative gestures,<sup>93</sup> displays which, according to Urso, may attract the attention of a minority of women who end up flirting with them (Cymrot 2022: 207).<sup>94</sup> Some attendees not linked to criminal groups, usually men, may also provisionally brandish guns and assault rifles which they borrow from friends and acquaintances part of the criminal groups (Cymrot 2022: 207).<sup>95</sup> In this regard, *bailes de comunidade* and corridor events may foster similar masculine displays as men in either environment attempt to accumulate prestige and seek pleasurable thrills through exhibitions of power and virility, displays which may frighten some people, including Lulu:

I gave up on these events the day I saw the police arriving at a party and the *bandidos* [criminals] begin to move restlessly. After a moment, I noticed that they were just moving to pay the police, but I got scared. If there had been gunshots, I think I would be dead. And at the end of the party, the *frente* [“front-man,” drug manager for that favela] asked me to play his song. So I played the funk songs of the Comando and they began shooting to the air. The party only ended in the morning when the police battalion on standby was replaced, since they were the ones who had received the bribe. I never did another party again.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Urso, September 2, 2023; Lulu, February 17, 2023, kiosk in Barreira do Vasco, Rio de Janeiro, RJ.

<sup>94</sup> A self-proclaimed *funkeiro* who repudiates *funk* which is not associated with *galera* culture, Urso’s remarks, however, should be taken with a grain of salt.

<sup>95</sup> For local criminals, Urso, September 2, 2023, For attendees borrowing weapons, Urso, September 2, 2023 and Tatá, May 20, 2025.

<sup>96</sup> Lulu, February 17, 2023.

If Lulu began to limit his performance at events after feeling threatened by the hiring group, Claudiosom, however, restricted his DJing to events solely hosted by one of the city's few criminal groups. Once more, this does not mean that Cicasom was in some way part of the organization, but rather shows the influence criminal groups have on city-dwellers, especially when it comes to delimiting mobility and accessibility. According to Claudiosom,

I used to only do bailes in Comando Vermelho areas. A friend who used to do Comando and did, one time, a baile for Terceiro, had problems in going back to doing parties in Comando areas. If it weren't for the *facções* [criminal organizations], I would do bailes anywhere.

But Claudiosom's decision to perform in the area implied much more than simply his restriction to performing in spaces controlled by that particular group. While the opportunity may have meant, for Claudiosom, as simply another gig, within the context of Rio de Janeiro's criminal setting it also implied that the DJ had tacitly aligned himself with Comando Vermelho, even if he himself had no interest in this alignment. The effects of this decision are, perhaps, illustrated by a later incident:

After organizing a baile one night in a Comando favela, which was right on the border with a Terceiro area, Terceiro members blocked my truck as I left with my equipment on the avenue which divides the two areas. They then confiscated my equipment saying that I was Comando.<sup>97</sup>

Once the DJ chose to perform in an area claimed by one group, rivals from another group intervened in such a way that displays, importantly, recurring characteristics of the city's criminal governance. Circulating in a contentious space with low state presence, Claudiosom found himself in a territory permeated by an underlying tension established by the proximity shared between the two criminal groups—groups which compete over localized governance and claims over the use

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<sup>97</sup> Lulu, February 17, 2023; Claudiosom, August 10, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ.

of force. Important here is Terceiro's intervention on an avenue which serves as the boundary between the two rival groups, and in this regard, the incident may epitomize the fragmentary aspect of criminal governance—authoritarian and localized. Finally, Claudiosom's experience also shows, once more, the importance of territory in its role as an identifying trace in funk, an identity which, in contrast to the galera bonds linked to origin, is reconfigured here by the city's increasing problems with competing criminal groups which claim authority through control over urban territories.

Bailes de mulão, bailes charme, and bailes de comunidade are important events which have featured, at different moments, multiple iterations of Rio de Janeiro funk culture. Persisting throughout the 1990s in reduced numbers, bailes de mulão continued to bring together galeras in events which retained aspects of the 1980s, amplifying their focus on galera competitions. Perhaps influenced by transformations in corridor events, bailes de mulão saw festivais de galera and their etapas become more diversified throughout the 1990s, and organizers decided to include a multiplicity of etapas in their events. During the 1980s and 1990s, bailes charme served as an alternative for youths who sought to avoid corridor fighting, valuing, instead, couples' dancing, elegance and poise, and romantic involvement with members of the opposite sex. Important here is the stark distinction between charmeiros and galera members, groups which are both linked to funk but radically differ in their interests. Finally, bailes de comunidade, while fostering similar displays of masculinity when compared to corridor events, value the extermination of rivalling groups in contrast to the ferocious competition championed by galeras. And although the territorial theme is part of both corridor events and bailes de comunidade, bailes de comunidade signified territory in new ways—that is, if galeras assemble based on communal bonds in their places of

origin, bailes de comunidade support identities associated with the criminal organizations, even though most attendees are not themselves part of these groups.

### *Soccer and Torcidas Organizadas*

Galera members may also associate with torcidas organizadas (organized fan clubs, or simply torcidas), fan associations which support a major soccer team. Much like the galeras, torcidas are linked to territory, and hold bravery, fighting skill, and group solidarity as important values (Coelho 2016: 42; Monteiro 2003: 55). Although the city's clubs are not associated with particular areas—that is, their fans permeate the entire city—torcida headquarters mark spaces as connected with certain groups, while certain parks, squares, and plazas serve as recurring points for the different torcidas to meet. During match days, it is common for members of a same torcida to assemble in these spaces hours before kickoff, marching, then, towards the stadiums. The police are especially concerned with matches called *clássicos* (derbies), which feature two of the four major clubs—Flamengo, Fluminense, Botafogo, Vasco—and are more likely to lead to public brawls which, similar to corridor events, serve for members to accumulate prestige (Coelho 2016: 42 and 87). In contrast to the corridors, however, fighting between torcidas usually occurs on the streets and, for some funkeiros, fights are not as structured as they are between galeras. According to these funkeiros, torcidas carry guns, knives, and other weapons which may prove deadly, while the absence of the security personnel and delimited spaces associated with corridor venues contributes to a chaotic setting. These differences are such that, for Alê, “corridor events are for those who enjoy fighting, whereas fighting among torcidas are for those who are not afraid of dying” while, for Alex, “*briga de torcida é coisa de animal* [torcida fighting is the thing of

animals]” since “everything is allowed: guns, stones, death.”<sup>98</sup> Although adherents of either activity support similar values, the distinct setup of torcida fighting repels some funkeiros who prefer the tacit rules associated with corridor events.

While parading through the city and attending matches, torcidas also chant. Torcida chants are usually directed at opposing groups, taunting them through the use of catchy and, oftentimes, homophobic verses (Bandeira and Seffner 2013: 247-53). Chanting songs of scorn about their rivals, opposing groups may meet at crucial junctions of the city—often deliberately—in what usually leads to fighting. A particularly lurid experience was relayed by Sagat, a galera member and fervent Vasco da Gama fan.

In clássicos, we usually move in procession from São Januário [Vasco da Gama stadium] to Maracanã [the country’s main stadium], and in our last match against Flamengo we were a small group. It was only when we got to the Maracanã train station that we noticed the *Flamenguistas* [fans for Flamengo] were throwing stones at us. But I told everyone to keep going and to not show any fear. So, when we were about ten meters from them, I noticed that they were afraid because they gave out a *canto tímido* [timid chant], and it was then that I knew we could take them, even though we were clearly in a minority.<sup>99</sup>

A crucial element in Sagat’s account is his perception of the sonic elements part of the rival group’s chant. In this regard, his intimate reading falls in line with what Granstrom (2011: 138) coined—in research on hockey fandom—a “taxonomy of cheers,” a classification which indexes distinct utterances which may indicate, depending on the context, support for the team; attacks on the referee; or challenges to opposing groups. Similarly, for Sagat, chants and shouts signal distinct

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<sup>98</sup> For fighting on the streets and its dangers, Sagat, May 27, 2023; For greater danger and conditions in torcida fighting, Sagat, May 27, 2023; Helinho and Videira, September 1, 2023; For quotes, Alê and Alex, July 26, 2023. For socializing and then moving in processional form and, also, bus caravans as social moment, Tatá, June 21, 2023. For socialization in bus en route to contemporary corridor event, corridor event, March 23, 2024.

<sup>99</sup> Sagat, May 27, 2023.

crowd temperaments, and this is not restricted to the torcidas. When asked to elaborate on his experience, Sagat claimed that

a canto tímido is low in volume, has few repetitions, doesn't resonate, and just feels discreet. This type of group chant also appears in the corridors. That's when you know you have to go into your enemy, even if you're in a minority.

For Sagat, listening functions as a tool for gauging the fighting disposition of rival groups, a tool which, in his movement alongside his torcida, supported his decision to lead the group to fight their rivals. While moving through the streets, Sagat unavoidably screened his rivals' chants even though this was not his primary concern, establishing, through sound, that something was off and, quickly, acting accordingly. An experienced brawler, Sagat engaged in what Supper and Bijsterveld (2015: 130) have called "monitory listening" and, soon afterward, "diagnostic listening," first establishing that his rivals were not quite singing as expected to then determine that his own group could take them in a fight. Chanting, as exemplified by Sagat's experience, may then hold a presentational function—alongside its participatory element—eliciting anxiety in onlookers through perceived displays of aggression and physical synchrony (Turino 2008; Jack 2021: 34-5), or, in this particular case, highlighting a notable absence of those qualities. Recurring in the torcidas and, also, in contemporary corridor events, chanting features sonic qualities which may serve for listening participants to make decisions concerning fighting tactics.

Along with participating in both activities, some funkeiros also claimed that with the outlawing of corridor events in 2000, many of their friends moved to the torcidas in order to continue to regularly fight (Coelho 2016: 206). Videira and his brother Edu, for instance, founded a Flamengo headquarter in Irajá to rally their galera friends to attend matches just to fight, even though they themselves have always cheered for Fluminense. A minority of galeras, moreover, such as the funkeiros of Vila Operária, have linked their identities not only to the location of their

groups, but also to the teams that the galera leaders support in what, also, may influence their montagens. In the case of Vila Operária, their montagem de galera not only references the group's ferocity, but also mentions their Flamengo headquarter number and the *Nightmare on Elm Street* character Freddy Krueger, a figure which, along with evoking terror, references Flamengo as his shirt resembles the team's jersey.<sup>100</sup> An important activity which also brings together youths based on territory and fighting skill—although in different forms—torcidas and galeras share important commonalities which have kept these groups close throughout the years.

But for some funkeiros, torcida membership may clash with their galera identities. Indeed, specific alignments to galeras and torcidas are a source of tension among members of a same corridor side who support different teams, while funkeiros who support the same team may also be linked to different corridor sides. On such occasions, the decision to fight usually comes down to the given setting—that is, if they are at a corridor event or a soccer match—and, also, by the eventual affinities and disagreements between the individuals involved. Galera meet ups usually suspend torcida rivalries (Coelho 2016: 209), something which also usually happens when torcidas meet and galera rivals are part of the same group. Some, however, may choose to abandon one of the two activities in order to avoid confronting friends altogether.<sup>101</sup> Also, during corridor events, funkeiros from either side may provisionally switch sides on the rare occasions that DJs play songs associated with a team, fighting those who were allies just moments prior, a process which is similar to when DJs played proibidão songs during corridor events. With the criminalization of

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<sup>100</sup> For Irajá and Flamengo, Videira and Edu, July 29, 2023; For Vila Operária, Tatá, November 1, 2022.

<sup>101</sup> For moving to torcidas to fight regularly, Videira and Cueca, November 26, 2022; For attending matches just to fight, Videira and Edu, July 29, 2023; For Vila Operária, Tatá and Fantoche, July 21, 2023; For provisional side-switching, Carol Lau, December 4, 2022; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; For fighting based on individual affinities, Sagat, May 27, 2023; Fantoche, July 16, 2023; For suspension of *galera* rivalries in *torcida* meet-ups and abandoning one of the activities, Wladimir and Tatá, May 12, 2023, supermarket in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ.

events in 2000 and, also, the rising popularization of *bailes de comunidade*, DJs sometimes played *proibidão* pieces during the few corridors which were organized. Similar to what would happen with songs referring to *torcidas*, attendees could quickly switch sides to match the criminal organization rooted in their neighborhoods, fighting *funkeiros* identified with areas controlled by rivaling criminal groups. Attendees, moreover, have also formed corridors which align with criminal associations *within* previously-established corridor spaces, and such was the case with the now-extinct Cidade Alta and Morro dos Macacos *galeras*. While both *galeras* were linked to the A-side, they were each in an area controlled by a different criminal group, and for those *galeras* in particular that rivalry overshadowed their corridor allegiances. When these groups then met in the corridors, they would establish a division which ran perpendicular to the main corridor, with both *galeras* simultaneously fighting each other *and* the opposing B-side. The *funkeiros* who engaged in this activity, however, were not necessarily linked to criminal groups—although they could be—but rather held the criminal organizations as identifying traces which stood stronger than their *galera* and side associations.<sup>102</sup> In the same manner, the frontiers of the *galeras* themselves may be remade by the presence of *torcidas* in these groups (Cunha 2002: 119), and much like in the side-swapping linked to criminal groups, switching sides further displays the fluidity of identities in their identification with different groups and activities. In this regard, it is not one or two activities which root identities, but it is rather a variety of identities available which are in constant negotiation by people who have access to a multiplicity of signifiers—*galeras*, *torcidas*, criminal groups, and otherwise.

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<sup>102</sup> For *galeras* switching sides, Carol Lau, December 4, 2022. For *galeras* forming corridors within corridors, Tatá, November 1, 2022. For more on criminal organizations and *galeras* see, for instance, Mattos 2012.

### *Martial Arts*

Some funkeiros also practiced martial arts. Through practicing different styles—the most popular being Brazilian jiu-jitsu—some funkeiros developed their strength and fighting techniques. In contrast to corridor brawling, jiu-jitsu fighters claim to practice a responsive rather than active engagement in conflict; seek to strike back in moderation rather than explicitly attack their rivals; take advantage of opponent weaknesses instead of overpowering them through brute force; and seek to spend as little energy as possible in their efforts. Practitioners also claim their use of violence holds a moral commitment, such as helping those who find themselves at a disadvantage during an ongoing fight or, more commonly, to protect women from unwanted or invasive attention from other men. As part of a widespread moral code, practitioners also understand their own aggressive interferences as important for keeping the peace or, even, as a “sanitizing violence” for maintaining order, even though it is widely considered, among media outlets and city-dwellers, that jiu-jitsu fighters are usually on the lookout for a fight (Cecchetto 2004).

Drawn to developing fighting skills, some galera members established training routines. Regular practice may provide fighters a competitive edge, especially in their engagements in what is called *mano-a-mano* (one-on-one),<sup>103</sup> widespread throughout the 1990s corridors and which persist, to a lesser extent, in contemporary events. In *mano-a-mano*, a member of one of the sides challenges a rival to an individual fight, and if accepted, the two fighters are then surrounded by a crowd while part or even the entire event comes to a halt. A *mano-a-mano* comes to an end when a fighter *pede arrego* (taps out), or if onlookers consider that one of the fighters is injured to the point that they feel the need to interrupt. *Mano-a-mano* is usually fought between those holding

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<sup>103</sup> “Mano” is slang analogous to “brother” in the United States.

bitter rivalries—such as opposing funkeiros part of galeras in proximity to each other or who frequently attended similar venues—or, more commonly, between fighters known to be the fiercest. Skilled fighters may reject bouts with untrained funkeiros out of the fear of seriously injuring them or since such fights would not garner much prestige.

Bearing clout, skilled fighters were targeted in the collective brawls of the 1990s, sometimes unfairly. Reminiscing about their regular encounters with the B-side galera Asfalto do Penhã, a few members of the *Juramento* galera recalled a fighter named Magú, famous for his fighting prowess. According to a few attendees, Magú's training in Muay Thai made him unbeatable, and some Juramento funkeiros eventually tried to bring him down with a firearm in an attempt to balance their weekly corridor fights. According to one of the funkeiros,

One of the corridor guards was from our favela, so one day we asked him to bring a weapon and, during the event, to pass it to our galera. We then started to show it to our rivals to intimidate them. In a later event, we brought the weapon and tried to shoot Magú. He was the best fighter. We missed and everyone started to run back and forth. Zezinho [owner of ZZ disco and event organizer] decided to frisk everyone at the exit, but before that we gave the weapon back to the guard, who had permission to bring it in. No one ever found out about it, and we continued to attend the corridors.<sup>104</sup>

At first, the galera utilized the firearm to subdue rivals through intimidation. After a few more events, then, someone from Juramento finally decided to shoot Magú. More than an attempt at seriously injuring or even killing Magú, the failed attempt highlights the galera's drive at accumulating prestige through balancing corridor fighting and, also, the value of training in martial arts in an environment in which fighting skills were at a premium.

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<sup>104</sup> Tesoura and Djair, February 12, 2023.

Along with accumulating prestige in the corridors themselves, skilled fighters may also garner benefits outside of corridor events. Videira, for instance, trained in jiu-jitsu, told a story about a *mano-a-mano* which later brought him opportunities. According to the A-side *funkeiro*,

There was this corridor a few years ago which the A-side lost, and everyone ran away except for me. When they saw I hadn't left, the B-side showed respect to me. So instead of beating me up their best fighter challenged me to a *mano-a-mano*. We fought for about ten minutes until it was deemed a tie, but the truth was that he beat me. But after that, the guy started calling me up, wanting me to work security jobs with him, and they were all high paying jobs.

In his account, Videira wins over the respect of his rivals through his fighting skills but, more importantly, his bravery—valued traits in *galera* culture. The fight which played out, then, was not so much about destroying a rival as much as it was about accumulating prestige through fighting an opponent who himself also seeks to garner sway. The end result is a tacit respect between the two prestigious fighters, who end up working together in a setup which benefits both.

Fighting skills can also support the accumulation of prestige for those who simply associate with skillful fighters. In a revealing story, Cueca—a jiu-jitsu black belt—shows the extent to which his association with a world class fighter buttressed the respect among others at a funk party. According to Cueca,

I went to a funk party at the Castelo das Pedras one day and I saw Victor Belfort [retired Ultimate Fighting Championship competitor]. Without thinking, I went up to him and hugged him, even though I had never even seen him. He was confused, but he hugged me back. After that, all the people at the party were impressed with me because they thought I was his friend.<sup>105</sup>

Cueca's story shows both his admiration for the professional fighter and his belief that, in hugging Belfort, he would garner prestige for himself—something which, in his claim, indeed occurred. In this regard, the incident also exhibits the typically Brazilian behavior epitomized in the popular

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<sup>105</sup> Videira, March 11, 2023; Cueca, February 25, 2023.

phrase “*você sabe com quem está falando?*” or rather, “do you know who you’re talking to?” uttered by those who may be seeking to display a societal position in a top-down perspective—a societal symptom linked to Brazil’s rigid hierarchical setup and not exclusive to a particular group, class or category (DaMatta 1997a: 193-4). In this case, Cueca attached his own prestige to Belfort by publicly displaying a presumed proximity to the successful fighter, a prestige which lingered as he remained in the party throughout the evening.

Training in martial arts fosters values which were also championed by galeras, notably the accumulation of respect and prestige through displays of fighting skill. Also, training in martial arts contributes to the development of fighting skills themselves among galera fighters, important for skillfully treading fights part of corridor events. Training, moreover, may also generate benefits through opportunities outside the venues. A clear benefit for fighters is the prestige they produce through their displays of technique, and some funkeiros even leech upon others for garnering prestige, something which Cueca’s story illustrates—after all, he embraced what was perhaps the greatest fighter of all.

### *Designer Clothes*

Citizen-brand watches, large and shiny in their displays; Bad Boy caps with their mean-looking logos; Cyclone and TCK shorts with their colorful mosaics; and Redley sneakers, high and heavy as military boots, were all abundant during bailes de mulão and corridor events (Vianna 1988: 73-4; Gularte 2014: 369 and 398). Working all week, young men spent their wages on these products to attend events in style. Showing off their wares, funkeiro men sought to be noticed by friends and, especially, the attending young women. For the attending women, the more attractive men were those who not only displayed ferocity in the corridors but also flaunted these brands

while strutting through the venues—signs of wealth and well-being which attracted their attention. But the attending women also wore particular brands and styles (Vianna 1988: 73-4), showcasing Redley shorts, usually tight and denim; Melissa-brand sandals, transparent and slightly heeled; elastic Gang pants, revealing of their body contours; and strapless shirts and dresses, bright and often showing off their stomachs. Wearing these outfits, women performed their collective choreographies which captured the attention of the attending men (Mizrahi 2007: 241)—men who sought prestige in the corridors and the attention of the attending women.<sup>106</sup>

Designer clothes were also instruments of provocation during the brawls. While fighting, funkeiros oftentimes lifted their brand-name shoes and shirts as a way to taunt opponents, showing off their prized possessions in what often stimulated the opposing side to do the same (Ventura 1994: 125). Such clothes and objects, however, could also be captured—such as sneakers ripped away from a poorly executed kick—to then be lifted in full view and thrown to the back of a corridor side, returned, later, completely ruined. Shoes and shirts taken in such a way were usually passed from one funkeiro to the next as they took their turns at tearing these prized possessions, delighted at hurting reputations by destroying prestigious objects. At other times, funkeiros captured foes to then strip them down to their underwear, taking their clothes in what was both a humiliating act and, once more, a claim over valued goods.<sup>107</sup> Badges of honor, designer clothes were brandished and disputed in the corridors, buttressing funkeiro rank and value for those who joined the brawls.

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<sup>106</sup> On spending wages on clothes for attending events, Tatá, July 31, 2023; Café, July 16, 2023; For attracting women with clothes, Visconde and Alex, July 26, 2023. For women attracted to clothing and women clothing, Pamela, May 16, 2023. For women dancing with designer clothes and attracting men, Pamela, May 16, 2023; Tatá, August 5, 2024; DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024.

<sup>107</sup> For showing off, Sagat, May 27, 2023. For destroying objects, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023. For stripping opponents, Cueva and Videira, November 26, 2022.

But some funkeiros could not afford these prized possessions, and a few galera members found illicit forms to access these prized possessions. Some committed robberies throughout the week, while others found ways to scam their own employers to quickly garner wealth. Zappa and some of his galera friends, for instance, staged a phony robbery while Zappa himself was returning to the office in which he worked, carrying an envelope full of his employer's money. Robbed by his own galera, Zappa and his colleagues later spent their cash on designer clothing before attending an event in the highest style considered by galeras. On their way to venues, galeras could also stop the buses which they took, fighting and robbing opposing groups they may have spotted in what continued galera feuds even outside the venues. Others, in efforts to bolster their own reputations, robbed their rivals, in both the street and venues, to then distribute goods to friends, claiming favors and prestige within their own galeras as part of these transactions. Those who were particularly skilled at fighting were usually given clothes and goods in exchange for their attendance at the events themselves—that is, as long as they promised to fight for their galera. Some funkeiros also sold such goods to have some cash for upcoming events, while at other times these possessions became tickets to the events themselves, with funkeiros handing over caps and shirts to security personnel in exchange for entry. Some guards, taking advantage of their positions, extorted funkeiros in exchange for personalized security or, even, for favoring their galeras during bouts.<sup>108</sup> Much more than simply objects, designer clothes and goods were also sought after based on what they could produce in the corridors, events linked to prestige and fame.

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<sup>108</sup> For robbing to buy, DJ Flagelo, October 10, 2022. For phony robberies, Zappa, February 4, 2023, bar in Juramento favela, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; For robbing by stopping buses, Tatá, July 31, 2023; Roger Magrinho and Videira, August 18, 2023; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; Pamela and Tatá, May 16, 2023. For robbing to gift, Cueca and Washington, December 24, 2023; For goods to fight, Cueca, January 24, 2023; For selling to attend, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; For goods as tickets, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; Urso and Inseto, September 2, 2023; For extorting, Napoleão, July 24, 2024.

And galera robbing was not limited to rivalries between galera sides—a minority of galeras also took to stealing from allied groups. A particularly well-known case among funkeiros was the A-side Tomazinho galera. Tomazinho funkeiros had a reputation for stealing Citizen-brand watches along with other goods which were left unattended by other A-side galeras as they fought. The problem was such that some A-side groups resented Tomazinho, and on a few occasions some attendees even witnessed an extra corridor form within the A-side itself, splitting groups as they simultaneously fought the B-side and among themselves. The Manguinhos galera, also part of the A-side, was particularly bitter towards Tomazinho, and the two groups regularly fought. But Tomazinho usually stole goods from A-side groups situated in areas distant from their own neighborhood, robbing galeras with which they had little contact.<sup>109</sup> Tomazinho's actions not only displayed the importance over the accumulation of prestige through the possession of objects, but also showed the detachment between the hundreds of allied galeras which, although they may have been part of the same corridor side, were not necessarily friendly among themselves and could even fight each other during corridor events.

Consumer goods were also highlighted in some montagens de galeras. A montagem linked to the galera from Parque São Vicente, for instance—rather than emphasizing fighting prowess—features lyrics claiming its members are the “Baixada playboys, the best cut of meat / Parque São Vicente two-hundred reais on our feet,”<sup>110</sup> vouching for their wealth and elegance rather than their fighting skills. According to Ralf Victor, a leader for the galera, while his group was certainly relevant in the corridor brawls, they were better known for their attire and conciliatory demeanor,

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<sup>109</sup> For stealing from friendly *galeras*, Tatá, November 1, 2022; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023. For Tomazinho friendly groups, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023. For Manguinhos, Tatá, November 1, 2022. For Tomazinho stealing from far *galeras*, Tatá, November 1, 2022.

<sup>110</sup> Translated from “Playboys da Baixada, nós somos os filé / Parque São Vicente duzentos reais no pé.”

something which elevated both the galera and Victor to a leadership position in the A-side.<sup>111</sup> In this regard, access to consumer goods and the galera's choice to deliberately link these objects to their own prestige supported the development of a group identity which favored presentation, charisma, and dialogue over fighting prowess.

Galeras also wore brand-name clothes while moving through the city. Clothes and styles associated with galeras were important as identifying markers for funkeiros, and moving alongside their own galeras it was common for funkeiros to solely address those who sported particular brands of clothes. Prying into side affiliations, funkeiros greeted and invited eventual allies to tag along if they found out they were part of the same side. If they learned funkeiros were part of the opposing side, however, fighting usually erupted in what usually brought the spotted rival to retreat. Taking city buses in groups, galeras could also integrate allies into their singing, while rivals were pushed off the buses in what were claims over the vehicles themselves. But such clothes and collective movements were also conspicuous to the police. For DJ Ouro, those who wore the typical dresswear associated with galeras were regularly approached by cops, quick to stop them not only based on clothing but also on their behavior and demeanor. When spotting groups of people moving in these attires, police could demand or fire warning shots as to disperse galeras, especially in busy areas such as bus terminals or open markets. To this, galeras would then coalesce at another nearby site to then move, once more, through the streets together<sup>112</sup>—a mobile group which could be, moments later, stopped by cops once more. Both facilitating and hindering group mobility, brand-name clothes supported funkeiro identities as they traversed the city.

But for as much as clothes and other adornments may have served as identifying traces for corridor funkeiros throughout the 1990s, some of these brands shifted in their meanings. By late

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<sup>111</sup> Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023.

<sup>112</sup> For shots at terminals, DJ Ouro, 3 August, 2024. For dispersal, Bruno Pretinho, August 18, 2024.

decade, TCK and Cyclone shirts were each representative of a major criminal organization rooted in the city. This association supported the quick decline of these brands among galera members, who soon abandoned them out of fear of being associated with these groups. Thiago Bermuda, for example, while attending a baile de comunidade during the late-1990s, was approached by criminals of Terceiro Comando Puro for simply wearing Cyclone-brand clothing—then associated with Comando Vermelho. On the occasion, representatives of the former asked Thiago about his association with criminality, which he had none, to be only interrupted by his cousin who intervened to state that they were leaving. From that point on, Thiago abandoned Cyclone clothing altogether and, also, began to move with greater awareness out of fear of crossing paths with his interlopers.<sup>113</sup> Partly out of the initiatives of criminal groups, by the late-1990s funkeiro clothing had been resignified, severed from the corridors themselves.

### *Family, Faith, and Fighting*

Galera members are also, unsurprisingly, part of their own nuclear and extended families. Attending public—and often dangerous—events, corridor funkeiros radically cross into what Roberto DaMatta has called the *rua* (street)—that is, the larger world with all of its passions, accidents, and unpredictabilities. For the author, the street contrasts with the *casa* (home), a controlled environment where all things remain in their expected places (DaMatta 1997a: 92-3). Leaving their homes and areas to attend events, funkeiros have consistently faced the scorn of worried family members, especially their mothers and romantic partners, always concerned about their safety.

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<sup>113</sup> Thiago Bermuda, July 8, 2024.

As a teenager who regularly attended events throughout the 1990s, Tatá always left his home under the protests of his mother. Attending events despite her cries, Tatá not only frustrated his mother's pleas, but also chose to consistently fight in the front-lines of every corridor. Returning home, Tatá would then spread old newspapers on his bed and lay down, bloodied and sore while pleading for his mother to take care of him. Angry, she would then yell at her injured son to take care of himself for she had warned him, and now he would have to suffer on his own. More recently, Tatá has also had to abandon a few romantic relationships out of his continued attendance at events. Along with worrying about his physical well-being, the now-former girlfriends have all claimed Tatá prefers the corridors over their company as he has always chosen to attend the increasingly-rare events hosted a few times every year.<sup>114</sup> An activity with dangerous implications, corridor attendance has persistently caused tensions between preoccupied women and thrill-seeking men, highlighting an often-tense gendered dynamic in some suburban households.

If women who relate to galera men are often opposed to their corridor attendances, men, on the other hand, were many times the ones who introduced funkeiros to the corridors. DJ Mandinga, a current funk DJ and former corridor fighter, was first brought to an event by an older cousin, while Carol Lau, a woman fighter who abandoned corridor fighting in the early-2000s, began to attend events alongside her older brother. A devout attendee to this day, Videira was first brought to events by an uncle nine years older than him—an uncle who, however, restricted their attendances to events held in their own neighborhood of Irajá. Concerning these first experiences, Videira stated that his uncle did not want to bring him to events outside of Irajá fearing he was not yet ready to travel far from where they lived. After attending a few events, however, Videira felt

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<sup>114</sup> Tatá, July 31, 2023.

the urge to free himself from his uncle's tutelage and began attending events outside the neighborhood, alongside friends and colleagues. Another regular attendee, Helinho also claimed that throughout his late-teens and young adulthood he would introduce young teenagers to the corridors, but would only allow them to fight in spaces provisionally reserved for younger fighters. For Helinho, this was to shelter the younger fighters from injuries until they gained experience, to then join the more mature corridor lines.<sup>115</sup> Initiating friends and siblings, older funkeiros brought younger colleagues to the corridors—colleagues who went through an important rite of passage as they developed familiarity with the corridors.

And contemporary corridors feature similar dynamics. In his mid-forties, Sagat consistently brings his twenty-five-year-old son to events, who Sagat claims enjoys the brawls and “can learn a lot about fighting by attending the corridors.” Sagat, however, only allows his son to fight while by his side, stating, also, that they both look out for each other, even though it is Sagat who ends up looking out for his son. Regularly attending events for the past thirty years, Videira continues to struggle with the tensions that arise with his closest family ties, especially his wife and younger daughter. Just a few hours prior to an event, which he had been excited about for weeks, Videira felt he had no choice but to spread the word to his galera that

I'm not going to the event. I'm in this huge war with my wife, a really huge war because of these corridors, you understand? So I'm choosing not to attend, you understand?

Even though Videira did not attend that corridor, he remained adamant about going to the next one—an event which, expectedly, his wife and daughter insisted he should avoid. Just a few days prior to the event, Videira once again shared his family disagreements, claiming that

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<sup>115</sup> DJ Mandinga, August 17, 2023; Carol Lau, December 4, 2022; Videira and Helinho, September 1, 2023; Sagat, May 27, 2023.

Everyone is calling me, asking about the upcoming corridor. It's been insane, so many people calling. In the past I have had to separate from my wife because of corridor events, you understand?

When asked to develop on his troubles, Videira further claimed that, even in his insistence, his wife was unyielding about restricting his attendance, eventually calling on their ten-year-old daughter who then cried while telling Videira that she did not want to see him hurt. But for all of his frustration, Videira is—perhaps surprisingly—quite understanding about their concerns. While discussing his two daughters at another moment, the *funkeiro* relayed that he would pray for his wife to never have a boy. For Videira, fathering a son would be extraordinarily difficult as he knew a son of his would certainly attend corridor events and fight for their *galera*, and much like his wife he would be worried.<sup>116</sup> Knowledgeable about the risks associated with *galera* feuds, *funkeiros* are in constant tension with concerned families who worry about their safety.

Concerned about corridor fighting, family members may also try to convince *funkeiros* to stop attending events altogether, suggesting, in the process, alternate activities. At these moments, Evangelical churches are commonly understood as institutions which could redress the issue of fighting since the churches are a site which may cultivate a masculine ideal in opposition to the *funkeiro* ideal. Indeed, the Evangelical churches may support a masculinity which encourages followers to convert their oftentimes difficult social circumstances into “perseverance” and “victory,” values which are consequently championed by church attendees. Throughout Rio de Janeiro, Evangelical churches may nourish the *trabalhador* (laborer) persona—a societal construct associated with hard work; continued financial and emotional support for one’s family; and an unwillingness to seek “easy money” through violence or illicit activity (Novaes 1997: 128; Lima

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<sup>116</sup> Videira, January 12, 2023, March 6, 2023, and September 23, 2023.

2012: 361-8). The relationship between the churches and their followers is usually maintained by reciprocity—that is, to receive the divine grace which will support the *trabalhador*, devotees are instructed to “live according to faith” and regularly deliver their tithes (Lima 2012: 361-8). An important societal construct which runs through Brazilian society, for many concerned family members church attendance is understood as an activity which may substitute some *funkeiro* behaviors.

And some *funkeiros* have, in fact, replaced the corridors with church attendance. After a long conversation with his family, Cueca decided it was time to start attending a church and abandon the corridors altogether. After joining, he began to avoid his neighborhood’s *galera*; changed his dress style; and even took to spreading the good word. But soon Cueca became annoyed by the constant envelopes the church kept sending him in their bids for ever-increasing tithes. Allied to this concern was his difficulty to not act out aggressively when a problem seemed to demand that from him. According to Cueca,

it was all the time that the church sent me envelopes, always with a different name. It was the liberation envelope, then the salvation envelope, then the adoration envelope. It was envelopes which never ended. Then one day I was walking back home in my church clothes and a rival *funkeiro* recognized me from an event and wanted to fight. I yelled back at him that Jesus was the way while I pointed to my Bible. But when I got home, I saw all those envelopes and I got angry. I was so frustrated that I put on my Cyclone shorts and t-shirt, left my house, and went to meet my *galera* and go to an event.

In contact with differing contexts, Cueca eventually chose to return to the corridors and abandon the church altogether, wearing clothes he associated with corridor attendance in what perhaps epitomized his choice. But his decision also implies a shift in his masculine display. Confronted by a former rival, Cueca saw in physical conflict the more proper solution to the problem he was presented, an action censured by the Evangelical church’s masculine framework. Allied to this was his frustration concerning the ever-increasing tithes, another feature which contrasted with *galera*

culture. Indeed, if while part of his galera he had been robbing rivals—usually on the way to events—in his new role he felt like he was relinquishing his resources.<sup>117</sup> Torn between two masculine constructs, Cueca chose to embrace his funkeiro self and forsake the Evangelical framework.

Family and faith are important for delimiting or, even, restricting funkeiros in their initiatives to indulge in fighting. Although family members, usually men, may introduce funkeiros to events, they also express concerns over the risks involved in fighting and may impose limits. The figures of the wife and mother, in these moments, assume a relational aspect which is quite basic to a Brazilian ideological structure, mediating between spaces of care—in this case the home—with what lies outside (DaMatta 1997b: 129). However, when men decide to attend the corridors despite the pleas from wives and mothers, these same women are quick to abandon their often-stereotyped roles of care, leaving the stubborn men to their own resources. Another important institution, Evangelical churches also hold a regulating role, many times fostering a masculine persona which stands in opposition to the funkeiro experience. These identities may even seem to be on polar opposites, a heuristic spectrum which sheds light, perhaps, on Rio de Janeiro's gender dynamics. This is not to say that such a spectrum is necessarily true, but rather that the funkeiro as a societal construct holds important traits which are part of a larger cultural context, in constant dialogue, also, with gendered roles in the Brazilian city.

### *Radio and Television*

Throughout the 1990s, galeras also accessed radio as one of their group activities. In central parts of their own neighborhoods, funkeiros assembled to listen to select radio programs and learn

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<sup>117</sup> Cueca, December 3, 2022.

about upcoming events; communicate among themselves in interactive shows; and access news and materials linked to galera culture. By the mid-1990s, some radio stations—the most widely-accessed called *Rádio Imprensa*—had shifted their focus entirely to funk, and the major sound system teams associated with corridor events, ZZ Disco and Furacão 2000, held daily shows on the station. These shows presented DJs mixing and playing galera rap and montagens while also announcing the times and locations of upcoming events. Broadcasted live, hosts also took audience calls from galera members who requested their groups' rap and montagens and, also, sent messages to their friends. At the end of calls, funkeiros would then *convocar* (convoke) their groups to venues—Heliópolis, Renascer, Chaparral, for instance—which they then claimed they would *invadir* (invade) during the upcoming weekend. During these calls, galera representatives also glorified their groups and ridiculed opposing galeras, motivating rivals to do the same.<sup>118</sup> These broadcasts were an important site for galeras to express themselves; provoke each other in a public forum; and learn about upcoming events, all at a safe distance from each other.

Funkeiros also tuned in to *Rádio Imprensa* to learn about the plans of other galeras, either friend or foe. An ex-attendee, Jaspion mostly tuned in to learn exactly which clubs neighboring galeras would be attending, essential for when he wanted to hitch a ride to an event. Radio broadcasts also encouraged galeras to attend events which rival groups claimed that would attend. Japinha, for instance, stated that he and his own Irajá galera enjoyed listening to the radio on afternoons and learning about their rivals' movements. Concerning the matter, on one occasion they learned that

The [B-side] Miguel Couto galera [neighborhood in the Baixada Fluminense] called *Rádio Imprensa* to say that nobody from Lado A would be entering Heliópolis Club on their anniversary day, so we decided to go. We got our galera

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<sup>118</sup> For the content of radio programs, Tatá, August 5, 2024. For exchanges between *galeras* through the radio, Japinha, September 12, 2023. Also, recording of ZZ Disco program *Baile na Rádio* on *Rádio Imprensa*.

here in Irajá to attend the event, and we arrived skipping over the turnstiles and beating everybody up. By the end of the event, we had taken up the entire club and they had been expelled.

Japinha and his associates chose to attend Heliópolis based on the rival group's provocative announcement, motivating Japinha and his galera to attend the club to thwart their plans, accumulating prestige and humiliating rivals on their anniversary. At other moments, however, Japinha and his galera called radio hosts to deliberately announce that they would be attending one venue only to then go elsewhere, frustrating rivals who planned their weekends according to rival galeras' movements. When they then met up the following week, Japinha and his friends would laugh and commemorate when rivals complained, on the radio shows themselves, that Irajá never showed up. To this, they would then plan, once more, their next moves and place further calls.<sup>119</sup> A forum for funkeiros, radio programs further brought galeras together in what was a centralizing media outlet.

The sound system teams also used *Rádio Imprensa* to announce news and market their upcoming corridor events. In a particularly infamous case, attendees and ZZ Disco employees claimed to have seen an apparition dashing through Clube Heliópolis during a corridor event, immediately after organizers released the venue's festive smoke; turned on their strobe lights; and instructed the DJ to play montagens de galera—all indications that corridor fighting was about to begin. According to Cabelinho, ZZ Disco employee who had helped organize that event, the rumor was that the apparition emerged out of the smoke and quickly approached the sound table, ordering the DJ to "tell him [Zezinho, the owner of ZZ Disco] that he is in debt with me," to which the DJ immediately lost his speech, fainted, and had to be rushed to the hospital. Throughout the following week, then—and after the rumor had quickly spread—ZZ Disco launched an advertisement

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<sup>119</sup> For radio as source of galera plans, Jaspion, November 16, 2022; Japinha, September 12, 2023.

campaign with a vignette announcing “do you want to see the devil himself? Then come to *Gigantão!* [‘Huge Giant,’ Club Heliópolis’s nickname,]” utilizing the buzz and uproar to fill the venue—a strategy which, according to Cabelinho, was indeed effective.<sup>120</sup> Sometimes leaning on gossip and urban legends, organizers and sound system teams utilized radio and galera lore to stimulate attendance at their already popular venues.

Alongside radio, television was another important outlet. Throughout the 1980s, broadcast television’s diffusion of Hollywood movies portraying Nazis as antagonists, such as the first and third installments of the Indiana Jones franchise (Aube 1998: 73-97), inspired funkeiros to use the term *Alemão* (German) for referring to those associated to the opposing side. In fact, the Indiana Jones films were so popular among funkeiros that a montagem featuring DJ Battery Brain’s “Volt Mix;” the famous musical motif from the film’s musical score; and dubbed dialogue from the movie became a staple during the early-1990s in a piece called, unsurprisingly, *Montagem do Indiana Jones* (Indiana Jones’ Montage). The popularity of Hollywood movies was partly an effect of the entrance of foreign goods and services into Brazil, part of the federal government’s economic plan in the 1970s which supported the broadcasting of Hollywood movies on television (Oliveira 2018: 14). For corridor funkeiros, the entrance of foreign goods and, specifically, the galeras’ own consumption of music through vinyl records also contributed to the naming of the two corridor sides themselves, Lado A and Lado B, named after the record sides which DJs played at venues throughout the 1980s and early-1990s.<sup>121</sup>

Funk’s growth during the 1990s also encouraged major television networks to include the local style in their programming. In 1994, Xuxa, a national star who hosted a children’s variety program on the major *TV Globo* network, invited DJ Marlboro to have his own segment on her

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<sup>120</sup> Cabelinho, April 29, 2023.

<sup>121</sup> For A-side and B-side naming, Tatá and Urso, September 2, 2023.

show, and the DJ used the opportunity to also invite other funk artists to showcase their new musical productions—pieces which were not, however, the rap and montagens associated with corridor events (Coppetti 2023: 47), but rather the more palatable funk melody pieces (Cymrot 2022: 48). DJ Marlboro’s participation in television shows stimulated a wider diffusion of funk and (Carvalho 2015: 52), partly as an effect, later in 1994 major sound system team Furacão 2000 debuted their own show on the minor *CNT* channel, called “O Melhor da Furacão 2000” (The Best of Furacão 2000). Inspired by the United States’ show “Soul Train,” sound system team owner Rômulo Costa and his wife, Verônica Costa, led a show with an auditorium filled with galera members; promoted the careers of up-and-coming MCs; featured funkeiro messages to friends and family; and announced their weekly agenda, all while the sound system team also played montagens de galera to a crowd of excited dancers (Essinger 2005: 137-8). The show also featured publicity for recent Furacão 2000 CD releases; broadcast interviews with DJs and MCs; announced community service initiatives; and promoted the cult of celebrity of Verônica and Rômulo Costa, all while corridor fighting was conspicuously absent (Lurie 2000a: 83). The show was so successful among funkeiros that, after about a year, the sound system team moved to the major broadcast network *TV Bandeirantes*, hosting a show following a similar formula but with better production quality (Essinger 2005: 137-8). Along with promoting their events and merchandise, Furacão 2000’s TV show placed galera culture center stage in what further buttressed the notoriety of the galeras.

Following their competitor’s lead, in 1997 ZZ Disco premiered their own television program, also on the *TV Bandeirantes* television network. The show was headed by Zezinho and ZZ Disco MCs in an auditorium filled with galera members, who jumped and danced while DJs played montagens de galeras. Similar to Furacão 2000’s show, ZZ Disco featured galera members

and MCs singing rap; showcased dancers on their stage; and held mock festival stages which also advertised upcoming corridor events. The show, which lasted for about a year, also highlighted female eroticism by displaying women galera members, often minimally dressed, dancing on elevated platforms while ZZ Disco representatives presented the sound system team's merchandise. Much like its competitor, ZZ Disco omitted corridor fighting from their show even though they advertised upcoming events in venues which were known for hosting brawls.<sup>122</sup>

As part of the show, Zezinho also insisted on inviting galeras to the program to dance and display homemade banners with their own messages. For this, early each week ZZ Disco employees called a galera leader to tell them to assemble their group in their own neighborhoods on the upcoming Thursday morning, and ZZ Disco would then send a chartered bus to bring the group to their studio. Holding balloons and flares, galera members would then dance and sing while the week's attractions—MCs, DJs, advertisements, galera announcements to their friends and rivals—were featured on their stage. Once the recording ended, ZZ Disco would then send the invited galera back to their area to then repeat the process with another galera the following week.<sup>123</sup> In this way, ZZ Disco not only promoted itself and its upcoming agenda, but also placed the galeras themselves front and center on a major TV network, attracting the attention of other galeras who then sought to be on the show.

Radio and television were important for galera expressions and consumption. Through radio, funkeiros tuned into shows and programs which featured the newest musical hits; learned about upcoming events; and placed live calls as to highlight their own galeras and provoke their rivals. Far from simply establishing a one-way communicative line, galeras also made their own announcements; maintained contact with each other; and spread news concerning galera culture at

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<sup>122</sup> Tatá, May 20, 2025.

<sup>123</sup> DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024.

large. Much like with radio, funkeiros also accessed galera culture through television. Foreign movies were foundational for the establishment of the term *alemão* as a form of referring to rivals—rivals who were placed, much like in these movies, in a Manichean opposition (Aube 1998: 73-97). By the 1990s, funk was also part of mainstream television, and not only did national stars feature the music on their shows, but the organizers themselves also began to promote their products and events. Once more, the galeras were integral to such expressions, taking part in the television programs by singing their own rap and *montagens de galeras*; dancing and competing in what were mock festivals; or by, simply, showing up as a massive group to represent their areas.

### *Tagging, Carnival, and Vehicle Surfing*

Some funkeiros also participated in graffiti tagging, *bate-bola*, and vehicle surfing. Called *xarpi* in Rio de Janeiro, tagging involves spraying symbols on urban surfaces. To begin tagging, novice practitioners usually joined an experienced group linked to their neighborhoods. Accompanying the group, initiates then came up with their own four or five letter names as their signatures, and after some practice, taggers would begin attending weekly meetings—in squares, parks, and skateboard ramps, for instance. In a similar fashion to galeras, *xarpi* practitioners sought pleasure through risk, in their drives to tag hard-to-reach areas, and also moved in groups—or *bondes* (trams)—linked to their places of origin (Facina et al 2021: 154-65). Traversing Rio, *bondes* inscribed on buildings their initials and bus line numbers associated to their neighborhoods—numbers which, much like the galeras, could serve as identifying markers. By the 1990s, moreover, *xarpi* was also focused on territory, a shift which partly occurred with *xarpi*'s rising association with the galeras themselves (Val 2020: 68-74). Cultures which featured a fertile

exchange, xarpi practitioners and galeras shared a focus on mobility; quests for adrenaline; and territorial affirmations in their activities.

Along with tagging urban surfaces, xarpi practitioners also developed their own language—a language which inverted syllables to confuse outsiders. In fact, the word xarpi itself is a syllabic inversion of the verb *pichar*, which means “to spray.” The coinage of the word was part of what practitioners have called *Gualin do Tetecá*, a form of communication which practitioners developed during the 1980s as part of attempts to keep state authorities from understanding their conversations (Val 2020: 67). Like the word xarpi, Gualin do Tetecá is also an inversion, which unscrambled means *Língua do Catete*, or rather, the Catete language—name which was given based on the neighborhood in downtown Rio where xarpi practitioners assembled. There, groups discussed tagging techniques; talked about places for spraying; and shared their own signs and drawings in what was a communal space (Val 2020: 72). For some practitioners who were also galera members, the language differentiated xarpi practitioners from funk since it brought the bondes together—groups which, in contrast to galeras, did not habitually fight each other.<sup>124</sup>

Some funkeiros also participated in the Carnival bate-bola groups. Bate-bolas are Carnival figures which wear colorful and extravagant costumes accompanied by masks, and participants, linked to neighborhoods, blocks, or favelas, also carry a stick with a balloon attached to it by a string. Parading while flaunting these instruments, bate-bolas bang the balloons on the ground in what produces loud sounds which are amplified by their communal banging. Although bate-bolas only circulate during the Carnival season, costume design takes place year-round since preparation is expensive and time consuming, a process which routinely assembles neighborhood groups who

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<sup>124</sup> For *galeras* practicing xarpi, DJ Paulo José, December 7, 2022; Urso, September 9, 2023. For pleasure and movement, Urso, September 9, 2023 For absence of fights, Urso, September 9, 2023.

also pay monthly fees for materials. Then, during Carnival, each bate-bola group presents itself during what is called the *saída de turma* (the group's debut). Here each group noisily takes to the neighborhood streets while wearing their costumes, dancing and banging their balloons while accompanied by funk and the setting off of firecrackers (Gualda 2008: 7-12). Music is particularly important for bate-bolas as some funk songs—much like the *montagens de galeras*—feature lyrics highlighting the groups' power and ferocity. Marching as bate-bolas, rival groups and neighborhoods may ridicule each other, focusing their insults on a presumed lack of beauty of the costumes themselves (Coelho 2016: 182). Its practitioners, moreover, also seek thrills and excitement through their activity, which is perhaps shown in their choice of group names, such as the group *Adrenalina* (Adrenaline), organized by Edu, a bate-bola leader in Irajá who is, also, part of his own neighborhood's galera.<sup>125</sup>

Much like the corridor galeras, bate-bolas are also in constant tension with rival groups, especially those linked to adjacent areas. Jaime, a teenager associated with the União de Rocha Miranda (The Unity of Rocha Miranda) group, claimed that each bate-bola is responsible for deciding whether it is a *bate-bola da paz* (peaceful bate-bola) or a *bate-bola da guerra* (warring bate-bola). Jaime's group is devoutly peaceful and competes only with regard to the sophistication of costumes and group displays, refraining from any type of violence. André, the group's leader and a former galera member himself, claims that fighting among bate-bolas is not as common as the media portrays and is something his group avoids since the expensive costumes could be ruined as a result of fighting. Also, in contrast to galeras, children and families participate in bate-bolas, and André does not want to be held responsible for any injuries. In recent years, however, criminal

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<sup>125</sup> For *bate-bola* preparation, André, February 25, 2023, bate-bola meeting in Rocha Miranda, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; for *bate-bola* descriptions and activities, André and the accompaniment of *Unidos de Rocha Miranda*, February 25, 2023. For *Adrenalina*, Edu and Videira, July 29, 2023.

groups have been known for taking advantage of the fact that *bate-bolas* wear masks and circulate during the busy Carnival season to carry out anonymous executions, and *bate-bolas da guerra* have also been reported to schedule, through the internet, fights among themselves which they then stage on the city streets. André, finally, also claimed that with the criminalization of corridor events in 2000, many *funkeiros* joined *bate-bola* groups in efforts to find new spaces for fighting; to continue as part of a cultural performance featuring rivalry between groups or, simply; to maintain a regular forum for socialization.<sup>126</sup> Similar in their links to territory and group rivalries, *funkeiros* and *bate-bolas* share important affinities which supported cultural interchange between these groups.

Some corridor attendees also engaged in train surfing. While on top of moving trains or subways, surfers executed maneuvers similar to those of beach surfers in what was, much like corridor event attendance, a dangerous activity (Grandino 2016: 145). A deadly pursuit, train surfing involved escalating degrees of peril in a practice which valorized risk and bodily control (Florenzano 2019: 115; Peralva 2000: 166). According to Tatá, a *funkeiro* who engaged in the practice throughout the 1990s, in order to surf the vehicles, he and others would wait for it to depart to then exit through a window and climb to the top to accompany other surfers (Gularte 2014: 806). On top of the moving train, then, Tatá and others would start avoiding the approaching beams and girders, also throwing objects at the train's electric batteries to trigger a loud noise which amplified their excitement. Bruno Pretinho, another *funkeiro* who used to surf trains, claimed these electric batteries had a magnetic pull which dragged him and other surfers towards the batteries—a pull which also stimulated excitement. Those who were just starting out would lie down on the

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<sup>126</sup> For peace and war *bate-bolas*, Jaime, February 25, 2023; For *bate-bola* fighting regularity and criminal groups and *bate-bolas*, André, February 25, 2023 and *Jornal Extra*, February 8, 2008, 12; For *galeras* transitioning to *bate-bolas*, André and Cueca, February 25, 2023.

top of trains, completely avoiding the obstacles in what were their first attempts at the activity. Others, who practiced *xarpi*, spray-painted the trains with their personal signs or the bus line numbers they associated to their places of origin. When the train was approaching the station, then, the train surfers would all return to the inside of the vehicle to avoid being seen by security personnel or law enforcement. When the train departed once again, the surfers would repeat the process. Arriving at their destinations, finally, train surfers usually turned their shirts inside-out to hide the sediment their clothes had accumulated, concealing the traces of the practice prior to arriving at their appointments. On their way back, train surfers could repeat the practice, returning to their neighborhoods only to do the same the following morning. A practice which emerged at around the same time as corridor events, train surfing and *galeras* shared the search for adrenaline and risk as common variables.

Reminiscing about their days of train surfing, some *galera* members recalled crossing paths with other *funkeiros* in their routines. While train surfing, Tatá came into contact with people he noticed also at corridor events, and those who were associated with the same side were usually saluted. When spotting *funkeiros* linked with the opposing side, however, train surfers did not engage in conflict, and when they crossed paths at corridor events, they usually kept a respectful distance from each other based on their recognition atop the trains. Also, while the activity joined several people, train surfing was not an activity which necessarily formed strong communal ties between practitioners. Tatá, for instance, claimed he did not form lasting friendships while train surfing, and only engaged in the practice when he was going from one place to the next, and most train surfers he got to know did the same. For Tatá, even though he made some friends during his time as a train surfer, his interest in the activity was much more out of an individual thrill than anything else. After a few years of train surfing, however, he abandoned the practice after both

seeing a few people suffer serious injuries and, also, after he was caught by the police. Comparable to the corridors in its relationship to risk, train surfing was another practice which joined mobility and adrenaline, even though an aspect of corridor events—group bonding—was largely absent.

Some *funkeiros* also surfed buses, an activity which was usually executed while accompanying their *galeras*. Recalling times when his *galera* took buses to events, Michael remembered how some colleagues emulated surf moves while on top of the vehicles. Concerning the matter, Michael claimed that part of the reason he abandoned the corridors, in the late-1990s, was due to a friend falling off a bus and passing away.<sup>127</sup> The activity, despite its serious consequences, was however fervently supported by some groups, such as the Olaria *galera*, which celebrated the practice in one of its songs, a piece called “Montagem 484.” Along with referring to a bus line number the group associated with their, the *montagem de galera* clamored for the *galera*’s skill in martial arts and their ferocity when invading the opposing side which, alongside bus surfing, reinforced the group’s mettle and ferocity—common themes, once more, in *montagens de galera*.

Xarpi, *bate-bola*, and vehicle surfing all shared the search for adrenaline as a core value. Similar to funk, *xarpi* and *bate-bola* held group cohesion and affirmation through territorial claims as essential, even though the *xarpi* *bondes* did not engage in fighting, and most *bate-bola* groups, with exceptions, also did not seek fights. Another thrill-seeking activity, bus surfing was clearly associated with the *galeras*, and *funkeiros* not only partook in the activity to stimulate excitement, but also nourished group cohesion as they made their way to venues. In contrast to these activities,

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<sup>127</sup> For valorizing risk, Urso and Inseto, September 2, 2023; For climbing windows, Tatá, August 5, 2024; Bruno Pretinho, August 18, 2024; For battery noise, Tatá, August 5, 2024; For magnetic pull, Bruno Pretinho, August 18, 2024; For repeating the process and abandoning the practice, Tatá, August 5, 2024; For abandoning corridor after accident, Michael, August 17, 2024.

train surfing, however, held almost no ties to group formation, an activity much more related to a search for adrenaline.

### *Conclusion*

The popularization of corridor events and the widespread emergence of galeras was part of a wider cultural scenario in Rio de Janeiro. Sharing important characteristics with the galeras, these cultural activities also fostered, to different degrees, group bonding, quests for adrenaline, displays of fighting skill, and, importantly, links between group identity and territory. Important here is the valuation of a particular kind of masculinity which is shared in some of these activities, with fighting prowess, bravery, and thrill-seeking as recurring variables. Once more, criminal groups also become involved in some cultural activities, an involvement however, which may dampen some expressions—such as in the case of designer clothing—or reconfigure essential features linked to territory—as is the case with the popularization of *bailes de comunidade*. Indeed, while the widespread establishment of galeras and some popular cultures here described served to further root some cariocas as part of the city, in their expressions of identities associated with territory, the quick rise of criminal organizations warped some of those identities in their similar claims over urban space, even if these claims were of an entirely different order.

As galera culture and corridor events grew in popularity, so did media and state attention. Throughout the 1990s, media outlets began to, more and more, cover galera culture—a culture which also included galera partitions of city-spaces which could, at times, also include violence. As galeras grew increasingly conspicuous to the public gaze, major media outlets began to cover their movements to and through the city's south side beaches, located on the most prosperous part of the city. And as media coverage grew, state authorities began to limit galera movements. By the

end of the 1990s—and with the tragic deaths at Chaparral—corridor events had been criminalized, a criminalization which, while it was partly associated with corridor violence, was also associated to some of the ways in which galeras reconfigured public space and, perhaps more subtly, tacitly upended the Brazilian notion of an imagined racial democracy—topics discussed in the following chapter.

#### 4: Funk and the City: Galeras and Urban Space in 1990s Rio de Janeiro

Corridor events were associated with territorial arrogation among participating galeras, which fought each other while staking claims over venue spaces. But galeras, linked to neighborhoods, blocks, and favelas (informal communes), also lay claims over spaces outside these clubs. Alongside their territorial distinctions in venues, galeras partitioned neighborhoods, streets, and blocks in what altered group identities and mobility patterns throughout the city based on galera and corridor side distinctions. This meant that galeras associated with one of the sides avoided neighborhoods linked to the opposite side, with the punishment for breaking these tacitly-established rules usually being a severe beating. Under these fraught conditions, however, galeras also found ways to amplify their movements, taking buses to access faraway venues, neighborhoods, and beaches while, also, moving in groups as to remain protected from rival galeras. Finally, funkeiros also moved as large groups towards the city's prosperous beaches on the south side, partitioning those spaces among themselves as well in what was both an expansion of suburban movement and restrictions among the galeras themselves. Far from limiting their activities to funk venues, galeras partitioned the city according to their own territorial logics; circulated as groups in an often violent and contentious city; and engaged in activities which magnified their group identities—identities, once more, linked to places of origin.

This chapter is about the ways in which funkeiros handled urban space throughout the 1990s—the heyday of the corridors. The first section examines galera territorial distinctions and movement outside corridor venues. Along with partitioning the corridor venues themselves, galeras also tacitly split the city into two sides. The second section analyzes the ways in which galeras utilized buses. Moving through the city despite the oftentimes difficult setting of Rio, galeras found in buses, both municipal and chartered, a useful tool for circulating the city. The

final section details galera movements to the city's south side to attend beaches. Taking to an upper-class stage, funkeiros showcased corridor culture in an important public forum, catalyzing societal tensions which, by the late-1990s, contributed to the criminalization of corridor events along with the tragic deaths at Chaparral in 1999. Part of a broad cultural stage, galeras took advantage of the resources at their disposal in the expansive city of Rio, broadening the galera experience in what was also a divided metropolis.

### *Galeras and Territory*

Galeras did not restrict their fighting to the corridor venues. Representing their own areas even outside events, groups clashed with rivals who circulated in their own self-proclaimed domains, and funkeiros, knowledgeable of the setting, avoided spaces associated with the opposing side (Cunha 2002: 131; Rosa 2024: 11). Throughout the 1990s, not only did funkeiros divide venue spaces, but also city streets, shopping centers, markets, schools, and bus terminals in what was an extensive division of areas, and funkeiros who broke these obliquely established rules were susceptible to a severe beating.<sup>128</sup> For some, spotting a rival in one's own area was truly a prize, and galeras often chased their foes while wielding sticks and rocks—especially if said rival had a reputation for being *brabo* (fierce) or had, on a previous occasion, ganged up on one of their own (Cecchetto 1998: 146).<sup>129</sup> Some funkeiros, looking for a thrill, actively sought for opportunities in which they were at a disadvantage to both feel adrenaline surges and, also, brag about their skill and bravery for fighting foes while in fewer numbers (Cunha 2002: 131). Fighting in groups, funkeiros also sought to foster their own sense of belonging as part of their galeras, groups which

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<sup>128</sup> Concerning divisions, Sagat and Tubarão, May 27, 2023; Davi, July 10, 2024. Concerning beatings, conversations with Cueca and Videira, November 26, 2022; Jaspion, November 16, 2022.

<sup>129</sup> Also Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; Tatá, November 1, 2022; Davi, July 10, 2024.

supported displays of bravery, while in certain areas, regular bouts amplified galera territories as they tacitly claimed further city spaces (Cymrot 2022: 147). Not limited to the events themselves, galera territorial distinctions altered funkeiro mobility and territorial arrangements, restricting movement throughout Rio even while events were at a respite.

Recalling their galera days throughout the 1990s, funkeiros shared stories of both pursuing rivals and, also, being chased by foes. On one particular occasion, Cueca claimed a funkeiro from an adjacent neighborhood transferred to the high school he attended. On the first day of class, after spotting the funkeiro, Cueca and his friends drove off his rival just as he was introduced in the classroom, ending the student's short tenure at the school. Tatá claimed he was beaten by a group of rivals while running an errand in a B-side neighborhood—a neighborhood which he never again visited, while Urso relayed an experience of having to wait in line at a public forum in a rival area—the only available forum to solve a bureaucratic problem—only to be attacked by four rivals in what was the last time he accessed its services.<sup>130</sup> Restricted in their movements in both the corridors and in their day to day circulation, funkeiros quickly learned to keep out of certain places while also maintaining a watchful eye on rivals.

But some funkeiros did move through rival areas despite these divisions. Funkeiros who walked in opposing territories usually held familial ties in such areas; had previously granted passes to rivals themselves; and/or approached rival leaders in a conciliatory fashion. Rivaldo, a funkeiro linked to the B-side, freely walked the streets of Vila Operária, a neighborhood claimed by the A-side, since not only did he have friends and relatives in the area, but had also lived there a few years prior to moving to Lixão, a neighboring B-side favela. Rivaldo's association with both places even helped to set an armistice between the groups, and both galeras would shy away from

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<sup>130</sup> Cueca, November 26, 2022; Tatá, November 1, 2022; Urso, September 2, 2023.

the other when crossing paths in corridor fights. Ralf Victor, a leader to his own galera, was another funkeiro who could move through the city with some freedom. A charismatic leader, Victor prided himself of his conciliatory demeanor outside the corridors, and when spotting rivals, he always granted passes. For Victor, his insistence on avoiding fights outside the venues not only mitigated violence, but even saved him on a few occasions as rivals usually gave him passes precisely based on his reputation.<sup>131</sup> Another way of extending movement was to humbly approach rivals. Interested in joining a gym in the Vista Alegre neighborhood adjacent to his own Irajá, Cueca once approached a rival leader for permission to practice martial arts at a local dojo—the most resourceful dojo in the area. Eventually granted a pass, Cueca soon began to attend the local gym under the watchful gaze of rivals, always suspicious of his intentions. Ever-so flippant, Cueca however also found moments to knock into rivals while passing by, testing their limits while deliberately keeping tensions high. Although restricted by the territorial dispositions they themselves established, galeras could negotiate among themselves to amplify circulation, usually holding each other to similar standards.

Some areas of the city, however, were not linked to either side, a condition which also amplified galera anxieties. Downtown Duque de Caxias, for instance—a central area in the Baixada Fluminense, with an expansive commercial zone—was not inhabited by any galera, and for this reason concentrated regular galera fights (Mattos 2012: 653). For some galeras, the area was particularly important since it had shops and stores which sold designer clothes from the Redley and Bad Boy brands—brands funkeiros valued. Galeras, however, weary of crossing paths with rivals, moved through downtown Caxias only as large groups, fearing fights with adversaries who also moved in the same way. But crossing paths in downtown Caxias was fairly common and

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<sup>131</sup> Rivaldo, July 23, 2024; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023.

resulted, more often than not, in public brawls and fights—fights which, for ex-funkeiro Claudinho, reduced galera initiatives to return to those areas. In this regard, although galeras split up urban territory based on galera sides and affiliations, movement in what were understood as neutral territories featured a heightened degree of danger which could, also, be decisively claimed by the different sides as galeras continued to clash.

Dating could also shift funkeiro movements, even though this varied based on gender. Concerning the matter, both Mariana and Pamela claimed they felt welcomed by galera rivals when meeting up with romantic interests linked to the opposing side, something which, according to both women, the men simply could not do (Cunha 2002: 124). Mariana, for one, noted that the rival galeras she accompanied usually enjoyed the fact that she was dating someone from their area; while her galera, frustrated that one of their own was going out with a rival, disapproved. Dating for men, however, was different. Tatá, for instance, relayed an experience in which he accompanied a date to her home after a corridor event only to leave the favela he had visited by jumping from one rooftop to the next after the local funkeiros spotted him the next morning. And although he and his romantic interest started a relationship despite the incident, Tatá still had to find ways to avoid rivals whenever he visited his girlfriend, ever so fearful of being caught in what was forbidden territory.

Women could also attend events while temporarily associated with their partner's galera. Mariana and Pamela claimed they attended some events as representatives of the opposite corridor side, switching back to their original sides when they then chose to attend alongside their original groups. On some occasions, dating and side-swapping could even reduce animosities among galeras, establishing truces between groups which had previously been at each other's throats. In one case, Cenoura, a leader for Irajá, began dating a funkeira from the neighboring Vaz Lobo

neighborhood, provisionally suspending corridor fights between the two groups for as long as their involvement lasted. Concerning the relationship, Jacaré claimed that his own galera was very much relieved that the romance had started since they could finally access the neighborhood's shopping center—the most popular in the region—to finally purchase designer clothes since the galera from Vaz Lobo, which had previously claimed the area, allowed them to enter. Once the relationship was over, however, the groups returned to their brawling in the corridors and circulation was, once again, restricted.<sup>132</sup>

But for as much as women may have had some freedom, such liberties still came with a price. With regard to dating, Pamela stated she constantly felt like a trophy since the men usually approached her to buttress their own prestige—something which she claimed continues to this day. Some women also stated that corridor events were places which were only to be attended alongside friends or romantic partners—that is, always as a collective activity and never alone since it could be dangerous (Cunha 2002: 124). In this regard, although female attendees may have enjoyed some freedoms when it came to dating and mobility, the treatment they received from both their rivals and associates bore a masculinist logic which objectified women—women fetishized by funkeiro men.

### *Buses*

For all the limitations galeras imposed upon themselves, the period also saw an expansion of mobility—an expansion made clear with the introduction of galera chartered buses. Throughout the 1990s, the ZZ Disco and Furacão 2000 sound system teams paid for buses to bring galeras to

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<sup>132</sup> Mariana, April 29, 2023; Pamela, May 16, 2023; Tatá, November 1, 2022; Jacaré, February 26, 2023.

and from events they hosted, something which began during the early-1990s and, according to Tatá, became routine sometime in 1995. For this, the sound systems usually contacted galera leaders (Rosa 2024: 7), telling them to go to venues or designated bus companies to meet a driver several hours prior to events.<sup>133</sup> Upon arrival, leaders could purchase lump sums of tickets, bought at a discounted price, which they could then distribute to their own galeras once they returned, on a chartered bus, to their own neighborhoods. Returning to their neighborhoods, then, leaders would sell tickets in what was a moment to organize the galera to attend an event. The sound system teams, however, only chartered buses to the galeras which were sure to fill vehicles—vehicles which carried about one-hundred funkeiros. To fill up buses, some galeras planned itineraries in their own areas to pick up members linked to different parts of their neighborhoods. The larger galeras, which could include as many as five or six hundred members, could be given five or six buses, while smaller galeras, which could not even fill one bus, would sometimes be charged a fee by the sound system teams. To avoid such fees, these galeras could join other galeras linked to their own sides as to fill up buses. When chartered buses were designated to more than one galera, the leaders of each group would then discuss the exact itinerary that the buses were to take to avoid areas associated with the opposing side.<sup>134</sup> In this way, galeras not only had regular transportation to corridor venues, but also traversed the city while accompanied by friends and colleagues.

Along with helping galeras move back and forth from neighborhoods and venues, chartered buses were crucial for funkeiros to crystallize friendships, either among members of their own

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<sup>133</sup> Helinho and Videira, September 1, 2023; Ferrete, October 16, 2022; Urso, September 9, 2023; Tubarão, October 29, 2022; MC Lua Cheia, October 22, 2022; DJ Flagelo, October 10, 2022.

<sup>134</sup> For lump sum purchases, Urso, October 9, 2023. For chartering buses only to fill buses, Jaspion, November 16, 2022. For maximum occupancy of buses, Cabelinho, April 25, 2023. For multiple buses for large galeras, Cueca and Videira, November 26, 2022. For fees charged to smaller galeras for buses, Tubarão, October 29, 2022 and MC Lua Cheia, October 22, 2022. For friendships established by galeras sharing buses, Tatá and Lacan, March 22, 2023. For friendly galeras discussing itineraries, Ferrete, October 16, 2022.

galeras or accompanying groups. Travelling as units, galeras bonded, sang, and strategized for the upcoming brawls and competitions, jumping up and down on buses and banging on its sides as they crossed the city. When joined by other galeras, partnerships between groups could be formed in what established alliances. The more musically-inclined funkeiros could come up with lyrics for montagens, and some composed short melodies while proposing, also, cries and chants which would then become collective efforts. If two or more galeras were on the same bus, chants could be composed by funkeiros from different galeras in what usually generated songs about the unity of those groups. Nearing the venues, galeras hollered their chants as to indicate the group's arrival, and as the galeras came off the bus and entered clubs, such cries and chants were bellowed once again. Noticing their entries, DJs often played the montagens of those very groups, pieces which always featured cries composed by those galeras. Some DJs, playfully seeking to spark some tension, sometimes played montagens linked to bitter rivals, stimulating the arriving galeras to chant their songs even louder as to dampen the songs that they were playing.<sup>135</sup> Many times composed on chartered buses—and always sung while on these trips—galera cries strengthened group cohesion and reinforced galera bravado once they arrived at venues, an intense mobilization supported by collective movement.

But it was not only the galeras who were drawn to taking communal vehicles—the sound system teams also had a vested interest in offering such buses. According to Cabelinho, responsible for setting up the bus logistics for ZZ Disco throughout the 1990s, the teams were constantly preoccupied about galeras being caught by rival groups while moving back and forth. For him, although organizers paid for buses only when they were sure to fill, organizers also made an effort to assign vehicles to as many galeras as possible as to reduce the likelihood of ambushes or chance

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<sup>135</sup> For bonding on buses, Pamela, May 16, 2023. For description of bus trip, Tatá and Claudinho, July 27, 2024.

encounters since they had some control over routes (Cecchetto 1997: 104). In his role, Cabelinho designed intricate bus itineraries in order to keep rival groups from crossing paths and fighting, also planning bus arrivals at opposite ends of clubs as to further reduce possibilities upon arrival. Cabelinho, finally, also determined the times each bus would leave the venues in what was another initiative to reduce the chances of fighting, deliberately keeping galeras in the venues while rivals made their way home.

But for all their efforts, sound system teams simply could not contain all the fights between the travelling galeras. While traversing the city, some galeras demanded from drivers that they stop the vehicles in order to get off and brawl with foes they may have seen. At other times, galeras demanded drivers change the bus route in order to avoid confrontations or, conversely, increase the chances of encountering rivals if members sought another feud (Cecchetto 1998: 159). When spotting buses—usually while travelling in fast-paced cars (Ribeiro 1996: 288)—some galeras targeted the vehicles, hurling rocks or shooting guns in attempts to intimidate, hurt, or even kill their rivals (Cecchetto 1998: 159).<sup>136</sup> Galeras who were defeated in corridor fights were particularly motivated to attack rival buses, especially if said defeats had happened in clubs inside or near their neighborhoods. To avoid injury, some funkeiros monitored all public activity while taking buses to be prepared to duck and dodge from incoming projectiles either coming from other galera buses, funkeiros in private cars, or even rivals camping out on streets. Such onslaughts eventually discouraged some funkeiros from taking chartered buses or attending events altogether, such as the Cruz Vermelha galera. After the galera was attacked by a rival group, killing two funkeiros, the galera dropped from about one hundred members to nearly sixty after just one week,

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<sup>136</sup> For demanding drivers to stop vehicles, Cueca and Videira, November 26, 2022. For attacks from cars, Ricardo, July 19, 2024. For regular attacks between galeras, Rivaldo, July 23, 2024; Davi, July 10, 2024; Ricardo, July 19, 2024; Josiane, July 17, 2024; Thiago Bermuda, July 8, 2024; Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023; Wladimir, May 12, 2023; Claudinho, July 27, 2024.

a number which would not fill a chartered bus. Under the circumstances, the remaining members began accompanying funkeiros from Irajá to venues, and together not only did they fill a bus but also formed a corridor allegiance which inspired new montagens highlighting their newly-formed bond.<sup>137</sup>

Galeras could also target rival buses as the corridor events themselves took place. While rivals were in the venues, some groups took to sabotaging buses parked just outside the clubs. Jaspion, for instance, claims that a rival group, on one occasion, even set a few homemade bombs in a bus designated to his galera—bombs which, however, went off while the bus was empty. At other times, galeras without buses would leave events just minutes prior to its conclusion in order to coerce bus drivers to take them home, stranding the designated galera at the venue. Some of the galera men, with leadership roles in their groups, also utilized their influence to punish women who may have been romantically involved with a member of a rival galera, keeping them from taking the chartered buses on their way back home (Ribeiro 1996: 288).<sup>138</sup> Valued resources, buses were leveraged by some and targeted by others.

Seeing the escalating problems, ZZ Disco began to host weekly meetings with galera leaders to discuss bus itineraries. In an attempt to control the matter, ZZ Disco representatives punished galeras which did not take proper care of the chartered buses. According to Sargento, present at some of these meetings, organizers also scolded galera leaders in front of others and, at times, even stripped them of their leadership positions in efforts to stimulate proper supervision over the vehicles. Also, if galeras were caught vandalizing rival buses, organizers would deduct

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<sup>137</sup> For galeras motivated to attack buses due to losing in the corridors, Mariana, April 29, 2023. For vigilance while on the bus, Claudinho, July 27, 2024. For the Cruz Vermelha incident, Wladimir, May 12, 2023; This particular attack also in Gularte 2014, 852.

<sup>138</sup> For sabotaging buses, Visconde, November 16, 2022. Jaspion, November 16, 2022. For male leaders punishing women, Urso, September 9, 2023.

points in the galera competitions—yet another measure of control. Finally, organizers and galera leaders also discussed the bus itineraries themselves, tweaking routes and schedules according to both the galera leaders' views and the sound system teams' concerns.<sup>139</sup> Hosted regularly, these meetings were important moments to address issues; for galera leaders to represent their areas outside the corridor venues; and for all of those involved to organize itineraries despite the lingering tensions between the attending galeras.

Not all galeras were given chartered vehicles, and some funkeiros had no choice but to take municipal buses to attend corridor events. According to Tatá, funkeiros took city buses as a last resort since they would be left vulnerable while passing through rival areas, especially if the funkeiro went alone and was a well-known fighter. To mitigate risk, funkeiros sometimes sat at the back of buses as to hide while moving through rival neighborhoods (Rosa 2024: 10), concealing their identities as they made their way to venues. At other times, funkeiros did just the opposite, sitting on the highest seats to have a better view of their surroundings. Some funkeiros sat close to drivers, rushing them through some areas and intimidating them with harsh words or, even, threats of violence. On some occasions, funkeiros demanded drivers skip designated stops, browbeating them if they picked up people in areas associated with rival groups.<sup>140</sup> Taking city buses despite the risks, funkeiros looked to reduce the chances of encounters with the opposing side as they moved through the city on public transport.

But sometimes being seen was unavoidable, and on such occasions fighting would ensue. While returning from an event one evening, Jorge noticed a few galera members entering the bus he took, who soon began to ask him about his side affiliation. Once they found out he was from

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<sup>139</sup> For stripping leadership, Sargento, December 12, 2022. For point deduction, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023. For tweaking routes and schedules, Ferrete, October 16, 2022.

<sup>140</sup> Jorge and Tatá, August 29, 2023.

the Cajú neighborhood, they collectively beat him down and threw him off the bus. Enraged, Jorge swore revenge, and a few weeks later, while accompanied by his own galera, he spotted a rival on a bus and did the same. On another occasion, while moving through a rival neighborhood, funkeiros tried to pull Jorge off a bus, to which he held onto the bus's metal rails until the driver left the stop. At other times, funkeiros could also bluff their way out of trouble (Gularte 2014: 357). Spotted by rivals at a bus stop while accompanied by a friend and girlfriend, Cueca kept as many as seven rivals at bay by keeping his hand in his girlfriend's purse and claiming he would pull a gun if the group approached. As he saw his rivals dither, Cueca soon took to chasing them onto a passing bus to which, once they had escaped, he pulled out a comb and facetiously brushed his hair. Risking conflict and confrontation, galera members were hesitant to take city buses, fearing unfair confrontations which sometimes got them thinking on their feet.

Within such a contentious setting, it is perhaps unsurprising that galeras made a concerted effort to attend events as units. When a chartered bus was unavailable, galeras usually met in central areas of their neighborhoods to take city buses collectively. Some bus drivers, however, would not stop for galeras—often large and loud—so some members of the group would find a hiding spot while a few of the galera's women signaled for the buses. Once a bus finally stopped, both the men and women would climb on board in what was an important takeover. On the buses, galeras could commandeer the vehicles, telling drivers when and where to stop; harassing other passengers who usually got off quickly; or even making drivers park if and when they spotted a rival group they wished to fight. For some galeras, municipal buses were also important identifying markers for the groups themselves. The 472 galera, for instance, was named after the bus line which joined funkeiros from several neighborhoods and favelas on their way to work—Benfica, São Cristóvão, Barreira do Vasco, Tuiuti—since the line went through these areas while on its way

downtown. Some galeras also added bus line numbers to their own galera names and, even, their own montagens de galera, such as the galeras 701 Boiúna, 726 Venda Velha and 417 Sumaré, the latter with the words “*alma penada, que vaga por aí / 4-17 Sumaré vamo invadir* [lost soul, which drifts all around / four-seventeen Sumaré we will invade].” For some funkeiros, the names and numbers other galeras attributed to areas they knew little about even helped them learn about the city’s bus lines, helping coming-of-age funkeiros to better come to terms with the city’s public transportation and geography.<sup>141</sup> A crucial component of galera culture, city bus lines were utilized by galeras to attend events; were contentious spaces in and of themselves; and were stages for some galeras to further coalesce and form, even serving as identifying markers for a few such groups.

Territory and mobility were crucial for galeras, even outside the corridor venues. Representing their own blocks, neighborhoods, and favelas, galeras not only segmented clubs but also the city itself. Cementing notions of belonging, territorial divisions strengthened galera identities but also stimulated further conflict between groups. In this regard, buses represented much more than simply a mode of transportation—they confirmed galera identities and buttressed group movement in a secerated city. For Tatá, although the criminalization of corridor events in 2000 and Zezinho’s death in 2002 certainly reduced the number of events and their attendances, it was, however, with the end of chartered buses—also around this time—that corridor events began to lose their flair. Also, as Pamela put it, while travelling on chartered buses galera members not only got to know each other but also shaped their own identities—groups which, for the funkeira, further showcased their own cohesion in the collective brawls, absurd competitions, and

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<sup>141</sup> For meeting in central areas and naming galeras after bus numbers, Ferrete, October 16, 2022. For harassing passengers and drivers, Ralf Victor, September 16, 2023. For the specific names of the mentioned galeras, Pamela and Tatá, May 16, 2023; Ricardo, July 19, 2024; Josiane, July 17, 2024. For learning about the city, Pamela, May 16, 2023.

montagens de galeras which they associated with funk. But moving on buses also generated tension as funkeiros made their way to venues—movement which could lead to fighting. Travelling through a sectioned city they themselves further segmented, galeras represented their areas in venues throughout the suburbs or Rio; showcased their fighting prowess in competitive events; and formed bonds based on camaraderie, participatory music-making, and alliances—all of which were further bolstered by territorial distinctions and mobility on buses.

### *Beaches and Arrastões*

Galeras began to attend south side beaches in the early 1990s. According to a few funkeiros, once the corridor sides consolidated, A-side galeras solely attended Arpoador, Leme, and Copacabana, while B-side groups frequented Leblon and most of the extensive Recreio beach strip. Funkeiros usually visited the beaches on Sunday mornings after attending corridor events on Saturday nights, moving immediately to the beaches, or prior to late-afternoon events on Sundays, such as the corridor events at Chaparral of the mid- and late-1990s.<sup>142</sup> According to DJ Ouro, beach divisions among galeras began based on their previously-established corridor feuds, and as other groups began to attend the beaches, they joined these groups based on shared rivalries. Soon multiple galeras were visiting the south side in what established, week after week, a critical mass of funkeiros and clear-cut scissions between galeras.

Although these beach divisions, in many ways, reproduced the corridor and neighborhood rivalries, a crucial difference when it came to the south side is in the area's association with the upper-classes. Ever-so distant from the city's shores and famous tourist attractions—Sugar Loaf,

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<sup>142</sup> For beach divisions Visconde, November 16, 2022; Cueca and Videira, November 26, 2022; Carlota, June 8, 2023; Claudinho, July 27, 2024. For when galeras attended beaches, DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024. For attendance at Chaparral, Ferrete, October 16, 2022; DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024.

Botanical Gardens, Christ Redeemer, to name a few—the suburban north and west sides, and the Baixada Fluminense, have traditionally housed working-class groups, while the beach-side neighborhoods have concentrated a wealthier class. Galera movements towards the south side and their partitioning of the beaches, in this regard, highlighted suburban galera culture and their inter-group rivalries in a quintessentially upper-class space in what quickly galvanized responses from media outlets, policing institutions, and politicians at large.

But for as much as funkeiro beach-attendance placed the galeras center-stage, state and civic actors had already been noticing the burgeoning funk culture even prior to these movements (Cymrot 2022: 30). The violence associated with corridor events, both real and imagined, had already brought the police to shut down a few venues in April of 1992 and, as a reaction, the owner of Furacão 2000, Rômulo Costa, led a rally in the downtown neighborhood of Cinelândia. Alongside over fifty galeras, Costa publicly clamored for the reopening of clubs and, also, greater public security measures at venue exits. In August, then, Rômulo Costa and about fifteen-hundred funkeiros, frustrated that the police had shut down the north side venue Associação Atlética Vicente de Carvalho, decided to take the party to the streets. According to newspaper *O Globo*, that evening “Furacão 2000 played their sound speakers at full volume and the funkeiros danced [...] on the outskirts of the club, under the vigilance of ten policemen, [...] who preferred not to repress the open-air party finding that such repression could generate violence.” Also in August, sound system teams Águia Disco, Cash Box, A Cova, and a few others objected to police shut downs of their parties, pressuring officials to lift the interdictions in what were responses by both major sound system teams and galeras.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> *Jornal do Brasil*, April 4, 1992; *O Globo*, August 24, 1992; *Jornal do Brasil*, August 29, 1992.

But it would be the so-called *arrastão*<sup>144</sup> (mass robbery) on the south side beaches, on 18 October of 1992, which would mark a turning point in the relationship between the galeras and the press, police, and upper-class civic society. For DJ Ouro, present that day, the clash was sparked by a throng of about three-hundred funkeiros, led by the Vigário Geral galera, who decided to leave the Arpoador beach and go after their rivals from Parada de Lucas, who enjoyed the shores of Leblon, about a mile away (Ribeiro 1996: 288). The two galeras, who had fought at a corridor venue the night before, had arranged to meet at the beaches to continue their fighting (Cymrot 2022: 31). As the group from Vigário Geral dashed through the beaches, friendly galeras joined them, and upon reaching Leblon they were challenged by B-side groups, and readily advanced (Ribeiro 1996: 288). In the ensuing confusion, beach-goers ran left and right as the groups fought (Ventura 1994: 93), while a significant minority of funkeiros, taking advantage of the confusion, stole purses, sandals, and other valuables. The patrolling police, as a response, interrupted the fighting by beating down funkeiros with their batons and, soon enough, firing warning shots in order to disperse the crowds. The authorities then strip-searched some of the funkeiros and forced the galeras onto public buses, with their final destination the suburbs and the Baixada Fluminense (Gularte 2014: 437),<sup>145</sup> where most funkeiros had come from earlier that day. Reproducing their fights and rivalries on the south side beaches, funkeiros showcased galera conflict on a public stage associated with the upper-classes, a conspicuous display which catalyzed class tensions and racial biases, clearly seen in responses throughout the press.

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<sup>144</sup> *Arrastão* is a type of robbery in which groups dash through a multitude, tearing away goods while confusion ensues. Mainstream media referred to the incident with this term at the time, and funkeiros continue to refer to the incident with this term.

<sup>145</sup> For narratives of the day's events, Bruno Pretinho, August 18, 2024; DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024; César Touro, September 1, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ; Josiane, July 17, 2024.

It is crucial to note, once more, that this was not the first instance of galera fighting in public, a point which begs the question as to why the press scrutinized this incident in particular. Indeed, prior to the October incident the newspapers had already reported on galeras committing arrastões, either near clubs after funk parties, on municipal buses, in city squares, or even on the beaches themselves<sup>146</sup>—reports which had not generated a massive response. But in October of 1992, the circumstances were different. Fernando Collor, the first president elected by popular vote after the military dictatorship, had been recently impeached. Just two weeks prior to the beach incidents, moreover, riotous inmates in the now-extinct Carandiru prison, in the city of São Paulo, were met with a brutal response by the police, which killed 111 prisoners in what was later called the “Carandiru Massacre.” Although a few intellectuals and human-rights activists denounced the episode, major newspapers reported that at least one-third of São Paulo’s population endorsed the intervention in what, perhaps, was a reflection of their disillusionment with the justice system and their rising support over harsh policing (Yúdice 2003: 117). Allied to the prison incident, the October arrastões were also reported just weeks prior to a mayoral election in Rio, which put face to face Benedita da Silva and César Maia. Silva, a candidate born and raised in a favela, vouched for accessibility and inclusivity for all cariocas, while Maia, a conservative, endorsed the consolidation of law and order through the use of the armed forces (Cymrot 2022: 44; Cunha 2002: 98-9; Yúdice 2003: 137). In what was an increasingly polarized election, policing became more and more of a central issue in a city with rising crime rates, encouraging many ambivalent middle-class electors to eventually cast their votes on Maia (Yúdice 2003: 120), who eventually won the election. In the midst of rising tensions, the October incidents exacerbated sentiments and discussions over public security.

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<sup>146</sup> *Jornal do Brasil*, March 19, 1992, 1; *Globo*, February 24, 1992, 12; *Globo*, March 22, 1992, 18; April 4, 1992, 18. Bruno Pretinho, August 18, 2024.

The issue became even more fraught after journalists questioned Governor Brizola about the *arrastões*, just a few hours after they had occurred. The governor, who that morning was at the seventh day mass in memory of Ulysses Guimarães—politician who spearheaded Brazil’s new constitution—took the opportunity to publicly support Silva and defend his education plan, clamoring, also, for the installment of “Olympic pools inside the modern schools, to avoid overcrowding at the beaches.” Alongside Brizola, however, was Orlando Sobrinho, a savvy political rival who, upon listening to the short interview, immediately retorted: “but you are still going to reward the outlaws?” To this, the angry governor gave his back and, while leaving the church, yelled expletives against Orlando, a clever political figure who, during the mass, had worn clothes and wares indicating his support for Maia.<sup>147</sup> Linked to a growing political problem, the *arrastão* and its coverage accentuated tensions for the upcoming election, an increasingly-polarized election which saw the *arrastões* spark immediate responses.

And the press would continue to focus on the incident. The day after the *arrastões*, *O Globo* announced that “the *arrastões* [sic italics in quotes] terrorized sunbathers yesterday on the beaches of the South Side [sic], from Arpoador to Leblon, starting at 10 a.m., heralding what could happen during the upcoming summer.” In a similar vein, *Jornal do Brasil* stated that “the South Side of Rio was transformed into a battleground, with *arrastões* promoted by gangs of adolescents coming from suburban neighborhoods and the *Baixada Fluminense*.” On Tuesday, *Jornal do Brasil* printed that “two rival funk galeras from the carioca suburbs [...] were pointed by the police and by the *funkeiros* themselves as responsible for the *arrastão* which left thousands of sunbathers in panic on Sunday morning” claiming, further, that “when the *funk* groups want to promote an *arrastão*, they usually simulate a confrontation.” After some investigation, however, the police and press

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<sup>147</sup> *Jornal do Brasil*, October 20, 1992.

shifted their tone, attesting that the episode had not been a mass robbery after all. *O Globo*, for instance, claimed “the *arrastões* [...] on the South Side beaches did not have the object of robbing from sunbathers” but had rather been a “meetup between rival groups [...] which attend the funk parties of the suburbs and the West Side.” For police chief Adílson Fernandes, on patrol that day, “what usually happens when leaving funk parties happened in broad daylight”—that is, “rival groups met on the beaches, [and] the hustle and bustle frightened the sunbathers, who then also took to running.” The police chief then claimed that “there were no registers of stealing during the confusion,” even though “in the midst of all the chaos some could have stolen, but these would be isolated cases.” For Fernandes, the incident pointed to the fact that among the participating funkeiros “the objective was not to rob” as much as it was to engage in group fighting.<sup>148</sup> Shifting their views, both media outlets and the police recognized that the incident was much more about galera rivalries than it was about suburban cariocas planning and committing mass robberies.

But even though the newspapers recognized that the episode had not been an attempt at organizing a mass robbery, *Jornal do Brasil* linked the funk galeras to the city’s main criminal groups. In their Tuesday issue, the newspaper quoted a funkeiro who, on Sunday, had claimed that “one [of the galeras] assembles the Comando Vermelho [Red Command] *galera* while the other, the Terceiro Comando [Third Command]” in what, for the interviewee, demonstrated that “behind each funk group, there is support from a criminal organization.” The newspaper then went on to state that the clash between the “*galeras* from Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas” had staged a fight between the two opposing criminal organizations, sparked by a “provocation [which] came from the Vigário Geral *galera*, linked to Comando Vermelho.”<sup>149</sup> In its association between the

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<sup>148</sup> Respectively, *O Globo*, October 19, 1992. *Jornal do Brasil*, October 19, 1992. *Jornal do Brasil*, October 20, 1992. *O Globo*, October 20, 1992. For television broadcasts in a similar vein, Eissinger 2005, 97.

<sup>149</sup> *Jornal do Brasil*, October 20, 1992.

bands of territorial funkeiros and the city's criminal groups, the newspaper presumed that the galeras were associated to organized criminal group, a claim which further amplified public apprehension over the burgeoning funk culture and the galeras at large.

For all its faults, however, the article did hold some truth. Although the galeras were not comprised of members of criminal groups—and the corridor sides do not feature, to one side, members of the Terceiro Comando and, to the other, members of the Comando Vermelho—the Terceiro Comando did, in fact, control Parada de Lucas, while the Vigário Geral neighborhood was, during the period, under the tutelage of Comando Vermelho. The two neighborhoods, moreover, are also contiguous and, in galera culture, are part of opposite sides. Finally, and as both the newspapers and the funkeiros attest, it had also been these two galeras which had sparked the fighting on Sunday—fighting which they also regularly engaged in at the funk venues. The brutal warfare between criminal groups in those neighborhoods; the proximity between the areas; and their regular fighting in funk venues magnified the tensions between the galeras, and among those groups in particular this translated into a bitter rivalry. But did not mean that it had been members of criminal organizations who fought each other on the beaches—far from it. As César Touro and Urso—both born and raised in Vigário Geral—and Mariana—born and raised in Parada de Lucas—claimed, the associations between the neighborhoods and the criminal groups did not put face to face rival criminals as much as it magnified the rivalry between those two galeras in particular,<sup>150</sup> a rivalry which, perhaps, displays once more the importance of criminal-group tutelage and identity formation among youths living in areas under their control. In this regard, the regular warfare which plagued Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas—and the influence criminal

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<sup>150</sup> Daniel, July 21, 2024; Tatá, August 29, 2023; Urso, September 9, 2023; César Touro, September 1, 2024; Mariana, April 23, 2023. For violent conflict between the neighborhoods, see Ventura, 1994.

groups held and continue to hold in the daily routines of its residents—functioned to intensify their rivalries rather than to host criminal disputes as the *Jornal do Brasil* presumed.

And the arrastão displayed societal problems which went beyond criminality and violence—it also highlighted racial prejudices. In a frankly discriminatory article, the *Jornal do Brasil* claimed for a lack of political engagement among black suburbanites in comparison to their white middle-class counterparts who, just a few months earlier, had taken to the streets to demand the impeachment of President Collor. Comparing the two groups, the newspaper claimed that the north side youngsters

do not have their faces painted with the colors of the Brazilian Flag and, much less, are a reason to feel pride, as was the case with the youngsters who revived the student movement in the fight for the *impeachment* [sic italics] of president Collor. Without tinctures on their faces, the *painted-faces* [sic] of the suburbs brought to the South Side, last Sunday, the battle of one of the wars they fight since they were born—the dispute between communities [euphemism for favela]. Through this, they became a reason for shame, directly associated with beach terror: the arrastões which disseminated panic.<sup>151</sup>

For the newspaper, the funkeiros were an embarrassment for not contributing to political change during a difficult national moment and, also, for introducing violence to the south side beaches. The suburban beach-goers, moreover, also carried a mark much different than that of the politically-engaged students—they displayed “the *painted-faces* of the suburbs,” a claim which underscores racial heritage. Highlighting a putative link between suburban and racialized segregation, criminal violence, and political alienation, *Jornal do Brasil* illustrated a black suburban youth whose contribution to the current national scenario was to solely institute chaos throughout the south side beaches of Rio.

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<sup>151</sup> *Jornal do Brasil*, October 25, 1992.

But that was not all—residents from both the south side and the north side also responded to the *arrastão* through the press. According to *O Globo*, “groups of South Side youths who attend martial arts academies decided they will confront the **arrastões** [sic]” if they were to happen again, an initiative “to be put into action on Saturday and Sunday [of the following week], to defend the invaded ‘territories.’” During an interview, one of the youngsters even stated that “if they come over here, there’s going to be fighting. It has nothing to do with racism. We never kicked out *farofeiros* [poor beach-goers who bring their own food]. We kick out thieves.” In a follow-up issue, an older Leblon resident complained that “we pay the highest property tax of the city of Rio de Janeiro. And, when the weekend arrives, these people come and invade our beach?” For a disgruntled suburbanite from the north side Nova Holanda favela, however, the problem was much different. Responding to their statements, he claimed that “if someone white is with a surfboard he is considered a playboy [slang for an upper-class youth], but if it is someone black, he is considered a thief.” Another interviewee, a student from Ramos, also on the north side, questioned “why do I, who works and studies, have to stay at the Ramos beach [artificial body of water on the north side, near the Guanabara Bay]? Because I live in the favela, I don’t have the right to go to Arpoador?”<sup>152</sup> Interviewing both south side cariocas and north side youths, the follow-up *Globo* reporting highlighted spatial segregation along the lines of race.

And *O Globo* also published statements from one of the city’s social organizations. Outraged at what they considered racist attitudes from the police, the Centro de Articulação de Populações Marginalizadas,<sup>153</sup> a non-profit organization representing lower-class groups, stated the police searches during the incident had been both degrading and discriminatory since, in the

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<sup>152</sup> *O Globo*, October 21, 1992.

<sup>153</sup> Center for the Articulation of Marginalized Populations.

majority of cases, only blacks had been searched. According to Ivanir dos Santos, president of the association,

racism is also a crime and what we want is to know the criteria used by the police. Someone cannot be considered a suspect simply because they are black. If there are no strong indications to suspect a bus passenger or sunbather in particular, the police should search all or nobody at all. The way things are done, these operations are legalizing **apartheid** [sic] in Rio.

Santos then claimed that, as a result of police intervention, a few black families were giving up on attending the beaches altogether, fearing further humiliation at the hands of police or, even, retribution from south side groups. Meanwhile, the vice-president of the association, José Luis Barata, claimed that the organization had also received multiple complaints that the police were regularly embarrassing suburban beach-goers by stopping buses and ordering suspects, usually black, to get off the vehicles while on their way to the shores.<sup>154</sup> Reacting to police and south side interdictions, black suburbanites and interest groups pointed out the prejudices which had emerged, highlighting a long-standing territorial division allied to state prejudices which went beyond the October incident.

Despite these outcries, the state implemented policies which would further hinder movement—a crucial decision which highlighted the city’s spatial distribution. According to *O Globo*, the police planned to patrol “the final stops of the bus lines which leave from the suburbs towards the South Side beaches, to impede that the buses arrive at the beach strand with an excess of passengers.” According to the article, there would also be “police raids during the trips, as to avoid that someone arrive at the beaches armed.” For police chief Fernandes, this would “inhibit new **arrastões** [sic] on the South Side beaches during the summer” in a plan which, seemingly, was to last a few months. The police also decided to bar, during weekends and holidays, those who

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<sup>154</sup> *O Globo*, October 27, 1992.

took buses from the north side without an identity card; while not wearing a shirt; or with insufficient money to pay for the fare (Cymrot 2022: 54). Bus lines which connected the suburbs to the beaches, moreover, such as bus line 484 connecting Olaria to Copacabana, also saw their fares nearly triple in cost, a price spike which was to be implemented solely during weekends.<sup>155</sup> According to Bruno Pretinho, moreover, the police would also set blockades at crucial junctures, such as tunnels which connect the north side with the beaches, in order to frisk and search passengers and (Cunha 2002: 92; Ventura 1994: 92; Cymrot 2022: 45), also, “avoid that overcrowded buses arrive at the South Side.” Alongside these instituted policies, authorities had also planned on altering bus lines into circular trajectories as to keep groups from assembling at the beaches—where some bus lines ended—while some south side beach-goers also suggested the state reduce the number of north side-south side bus lines altogether<sup>156</sup>—policies which, however, were not implemented.

But for all of these imposed limitations, the galeras continued to access beaches. To circumvent the higher bus fares, some galeras simply did not pay, demanding, while part of large groups, a free ride from the oftentimes fearful bus cashiers. Some robbed other passengers to have money for the fare, especially when buses went through a tunnel, and a few took the opportunity to steal brand-name clothes and sneakers.<sup>157</sup> Others took the trips on top of buses, avoiding confrontations with employees while also seeking a dangerous thrill.<sup>158</sup> When stopped by the police and told to return, galeras usually walked a few hours through alternative routes until they reached the beaches or, more often, took a different bus line. To dodge the police altogether, galeras sometimes got off buses when they saw an upcoming blockade, walking out of range to then take

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<sup>155</sup> Respectively, *O Globo*, October 20, 1992; *O Globo*, October 22, 1992; *O Globo*, October 26, 1992.

<sup>156</sup> For overcrowded buses, *O Globo*, October 25, 1992. For suggestions, *O Globo*, October 21, 1992.

<sup>157</sup> Bruno Pretinho, August 18, 2024; Carlos Alberto, September 9, 2024.

<sup>158</sup> *O Globo*, October 21, 1992.

an alternative bus line which avoided that particular spot. As galeras learned the exact locations of blockades, they soon began to take bus routes which circumvented main accesses to the beaches, shifting their routes to move through areas which, while considerably adding to their travel time, would arrive at the beaches undeterred. Soon most galeras were not taking direct buses towards the south side but were rather taking a bus to Central do Brasil or Rodoviária Novo Rio—centralized bus terminals—to then take another bus to the beaches alongside friendly galeras. Knowledgeable that several galeras would be arriving at these crucial junctures, the state soon put police forces on duty at those very places—forces which, to control the groups, searched the men; shepherded the galeras; and, in extreme cases, fired warning shots to scatter crowds. Some galeras, finally, also commandeered the buses themselves, threatening drivers while demanding they move directly to the beaches without making stops; altering bus routes as to avoid blockades or, even; kicking off drivers and assigning a funkeiro to drive the group.<sup>159</sup> Unrelenting in their drives to reach the beaches, galeras took city buses to the south side despite the fact that the authorities had set up ways to limit circulation.

The police, however, were not the only group which hindered movement—the galeras themselves also restricted each other’s mobility. While on buses making their way to the south side, if a galera noticed another group of youths wearing clothes associated with funk, they invited them to tag along if part of the same side, but if the group was part of the opposing side, they would immediately start a brawl. Crossing paths while on different buses, galeras also got off the vehicles to fight each other, relieving drivers from taking galeras. On a few occasions, galeras promised drivers some of the goods they planned on robbing if the drivers waited, and if he or she did not agree, they would simply take another bus. Some galeras, as a preventative measure, began

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<sup>159</sup> For avoiding police, Bruno Pretinho, August 18, 2024. For police searches, DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024. For galeras taking over buses, Bruno Pretinho, August 18, 2024; DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024.

taking buses which moved through the least amount of territory linked to the opposing corridor side, especially if the bus line crossed an area associated with a major rival.<sup>160</sup> Soon the galeras were associating the bus lines themselves with each side and, even, particular galeras—bus lines which, once again, could be referenced in galera names. Sustaining their rivalries while moving towards the beaches, galeras restricted rival movements while amplifying their own mobility in a setting which featured both increased liberties and added restrictions.

And galeras would continue to attend the beaches and fight rival groups up to the late-1990s. Police blockades and galera tactics to circumvent the authorities would also persist, as would upper-class demands over greater state control. Indeed, although the 1992 *arrastão* remained as the most memorable galera beach incident, other such episodes occurred throughout the decade, as did further calls for greater security measures. However, for as much as the galeras continued to attend the beaches, their movements began to wane by the end of the 1990s. According to Urso and César Touro, *funkeiros* from Vigário Geral, Comando Vermelho representatives in their neighborhood had responded harshly to their galera's participation in the 1992 incident, heralding the ways in which criminal groups would treat galeras concerning their movements to the beaches for the remainder of the decade. According to both *funkeiros*, a few days after the incident, Comando Vermelho leaders called a meeting with the galera and warned them that, in their recent actions, they had brought unwanted attention to Vigário Geral, attracting both the police and media and, consequently, hurting their business. Comando Vermelho leaders then warned the galera that they were not to make themselves conspicuous while attending corridor events, nor were they allowed to loudly move through the city or rob other groups. To reinforce their demands, the

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<sup>160</sup> For galera interactions on buses, DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024. For galeras promising goods to drivers, Tatá, August 5, 2024; Bruno Pretinho, August 18, 2024. For taking buses which did not move through rival areas, Michael, August 17, 2024; Claudinho, July 27, 2024.

criminal groups then physically assaulted some galera leaders while telling the others that they were not to make the neighborhood name known in public.<sup>161</sup> Through violent intervention, Comando Vermelho restricted galera circulation and tempered behaviors.

Soon criminal groups at other locations were taking similar measures, and to further control galera behaviors they began to communicate with one another. According to DJ Ouro, as north side galeras continued to attend the beaches, criminal groups in south side favelas—Vidigal, Cantagalo, Rocinha, for instance—demanded that they cease fighting since they were scaring away their upper-class costumers. For this, criminal groups began to place calls to representatives of the same group in the galeras' own area in order to demand they reprimand those groups once they returned to the suburbs. If the group was of a different criminal organization, they themselves would approach the galera to demand they remain discreet, often through violent interventions. These initiatives grew increasingly common as the decade progressed and, crucially, as criminal groups grew to be more organized and communicated more often among themselves (Mattos 2012: 670).

Allied to these impositions were continued state efforts to control corridor events and Rio funk at large. In 1995, the Rio municipality organized a CEI,<sup>162</sup> or a special commission of inquiry, to investigate possible associations between funk and drug trafficking (Mattos 2012: 656)—investigations which failed at finding any links (Bragança 2020; Bezerra 2017). The inquiry was partly a state response to the rising popularity of bailes de comunidade, funk parties which do not involve corridor formation or galera participation; are hosted in favelas; and feature music

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<sup>161</sup> For galera persistence in attending beaches throughout the 1990s, Michael, August 17, 2024; DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024; Claudinho, July 27, 2024. For criminal groups interfering, Urso and César Touro, September 1, 2024. Criminal interference also in Cunha 2002, 134; Novaes 1997, 127; Ventura 1994, 200, and Cymrot 2022, 187.

<sup>162</sup> In Portuguese, this is a Comissão Especial de Inquérito. This is the municipal version of the state CPI, or Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito. These are investigations conducted by the legislative branch.

glorifying criminal organizations. Throughout the summer of 1994/95, the south side favela Chapéu-Mangueira regularly hosted community events attended both by people from the favela and upper-class youths from the south side, raising bourgeois anxieties concerning inter-class and inter-racial socialization and upper-class consumption of funk (Cymrot 2011: 17). The rising popularity of these events spurred police crackdowns at Chapéu-Mangueira and a few other favelas, reducing the number of community events during the mid-1990s and, indirectly, encouraging a considerable number of attendees to migrate to corridor events—events usually hosted on the north side and the Baixada Fluminense and which featured smaller numbers of middle-class youths among their ranks.

This growth of corridor events, however, stimulated, once more, increased media coverage over galera culture—a coverage which became more and more sensationalistic. In 1996, newspaper *O Dia* declared that “funk fever has already killed 80 people,” while *O Globo* featured an article claiming “three dead and six wounded by gunshots last night at the exit of a funk event.” The report then went on to state that the “police would be soliciting the interdiction of funk events from occurring at the Império Serrano samba school,” a club which, throughout the decade, had been known for hosting corridor events. Meanwhile, newspapers continued to report on galeras at the beaches. In 1995, *O Globo* stated that “the Arpoador beach was the stage last afternoon of a tumult provoked by rival ‘galeras,’ with the fight between the “gang from the Centenário neighborhood, in Duque de Caxias [municipality part of the Baixada], and attendees of the **funk** event of the Associação Atlética Caxiense ending in the detention of 16 people.”<sup>163</sup> Reaching their height in the second half of the 1990s, corridor events and galera culture continued to receive

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<sup>163</sup> Respectively, *O Dia*, September 12, 1996; *O Globo*, February 18, 1996; *O Globo*, January 16, 1995.

major attention from newspapers, the police, and state authorities, especially after the community events at Chapéu-Mangueira had been foreclosed.

A tipping point was finally reached in 1999, when thousands of attendees witnessed three deaths and several injuries at the Chaparral corridor event. After the incident, police authorities and state legislators pushed for the extinction of corridor events altogether. The police had already interrupted some corridor events earlier in 1999, such as in Country Club de Jacarepaguá, Gremio de Realengo, and CCIP de Pilares (Essinger 2005: 193), but the Chaparral incident encouraged a much more organized effort among authorities. A judge named Siro Darlan immediately set a harsh fine on sound system team ZZ Disco, which had organized that event, and declared that if they hosted another party at Chaparral authorities would confiscate their equipment. A few weeks later, Darlan accused ZZ Disco of maintaining connections with major drug dealers, who presumably had been regularly contracting Zezinho to organize parties. Further accusations were pressed by police deputy Arthur Cabral—soon nicknamed the “Funk Sheriff”—who alongside claiming the sound system teams incited violence, asserted that they had encouraged youths to engage in criminal activity and, also, to strip naked during parties. In December of 1999, then, both Rômulo Costa and Zezinho were sent to prison accused of connections with criminal groups and for “corrupting minors in Rio de Janeiro funk events.”<sup>164</sup> Then, early in 2000, the state legislative formed a CPI—or a parliamentary commission of inquiry—to investigate funk, passing, in May of 2000, a law which declared that “the police force may interdict the club and/or location in which acts of incentivized violence, eroticism, and pornography occur, as well as where the so-called

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<sup>164</sup> For Darlan’s fine and threat of confiscation, *Extra*, November 4, 1999. For presumed relation between Zezinho and crime, *O Globo*, November 18, 1999. For “funk sheriff,” *Extra*, January 9, 2000. For Cabral’s claims on violence, crime, and stripping, *Extra*, November 15, 1999. For corrupting minors, *Extra*, December 2, 1999.

**corridors of death** [sic] are observed.”<sup>165</sup> Soon after, authorities were interdicting venues and shutting down corridor events just hours prior to starting, and attendance quickly waned. Released from prison in 2000, Rômulo Costa readily disassociated himself from corridor events—even though he continued a career in funk—utilizing the media attention he had received to support his wife in a successful political campaign for city council. With the decline of corridor events, not only did community events see a sharp rise, but the city’s criminal groups also increased their associations with funk—groups which began to host more and more events in the favelas they controlled, while some ex-galera members abandoned the corridors altogether.<sup>166</sup> By the beginning of the 2000s, the zenith of corridor events had clearly passed, and Rio funk would increasingly be associated, more and more, with community events, a setting which persists up to this day.

Despite the circumstances, corridor events have persisted. Even though events were fewer and set in locations evermore distant from centralized and easy-to-access areas, Zezinho continued to organize events after his acquittal in April of 2000. But his efforts were made difficult by the state. According to some funkeiros, ZZ Disco would organize a few corridor events at select clubs and, after a few weeks, shut down operations and host alternate events to dodge state interventions. During a corridor event in 2001, then, Zezinho passed away from a heart attack,<sup>167</sup> leaving a vacuum in corridor event organization. Alongside state prohibitions over corridor events and criminal group interventions into funk culture, the passing of ZZ Disco’s owner spelled the end of the height of corridor events and galera culture. This decline, however, did not mean corridor events went extinct. With Zezinho’s death, ex-employees linked to ZZ Disco began to organize corridor events—events which have persisted up to this day.

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<sup>165</sup> State of Rio de Janeiro Law 3,410 of 2000.

<sup>166</sup> For political campaign, *Extra*, December 5, 2001 and *Extra* January 2, 2001. For sharp rise of community events, *Extra*, July 25, 2000.

<sup>167</sup> For hosting events after shutdowns, Carlota, June 8, 2023. For Zezinho’s death, Pamela, May 16, 2023.

The arrastão and its aftermath display important problems linked to urban space and race relations in Rio. An important question here is exactly how the police identified galera members when stopping buses in order to frisk and remand them to the suburban neighborhoods—a question which sheds some light on Brazilian race relations. DJ Ouro, for instance, stated the police did not target passengers based on skin color, but rather on the clothes they wore—caps, galera shirts, cyclone-brand shorts—and, also, on their behavior since the galeras did, according to the funkeiro, heckle passengers, find opportunities to fight, and find ways to take buses for free. Similarly, Carlos Alberto “Gato Preto” (Black Cat) claimed that when the police stopped buses, they would frisk youths which had their hair bleached, a mean-looking face, and who were cavorting on the buses in yet another claim which concealed race. It was only after being asked about skin color that Carlos Alberto claimed that, indeed, most of the funkeiros who were stopped by the police were young black men. In a conversation a few weeks later, Bruno Pretinho similarly did not mention skin color, adding that the police were particularly harsh with galera members since the south side of Rio is known to be expensive and those who live there want nothing to do with people coming from the Baixada. Chuckling as he reminisced about his beach-going days, Bruno then claimed that, from the sheer number of times he had been beaten up by cops, he was eventually able to differentiate wooden and rubber batons after they hit his body. Another funkeiro, Michael, another black man, also claimed that the police did not so much target black youths as much as they targeted youths who looked and acted like funkeiros. When probed about skin color, Michael then claimed that as a galera member, race was never an issue even though, throughout the period, he also claimed to have experienced racism in his day to day, especially when applying for jobs;

in his dealings with police officers; or, even, when walking by people who sometimes clutched their belongings when he passed.<sup>168</sup>

Far from indicating that race is not a problem, funkeiros elucidate on racial relations precisely in their concealment of talking about skin color. In what must have been a starkly similar research process, Olívia Cunha also shows that, among interviewed funkeiros, “color” almost never emerged as a primordial issue. Cunha’s interlocutors similarly claimed that they were stopped by police due to their clothing, hairstyles, and general appearance—or as one interlocutor claimed, their *jeitão assim de funkeiro* (general funkeiro way of being)—and not based on race (Cunha 2002: 115-6). Herschmann, similarly, interviewed galera members who, in their responses, usually spoke of social exclusion in general terms, and it was only after probing them about race that the funkeiros brought up ethnoracial categories as an important part of the problem (Herschmann 2005: 70). Cymrot makes a similar point, claiming that, during the 1992 *arrastão*, race was present but never explicit (Cymrot 2022: 38), while Lopes argues that the racial signifiers in funk were erased during the *arrastão*—focusing, on her research, on the media outlets—in what signaled a specific attitude of omitting race (Lopes 2011: 186). Penglase, finally, claims the *arrastão* was an instance of “racism without race,” with the funkeiros carrying signs which moved beyond race, specifically their clothing, in a setting in which the problem of race was clearly present but unspoken (Penglase 2010: 306 and 312). Similar to previous research, consulted funkeiros also omitted race in most of their remarks, supporting, importantly, the establishment of silence as an important condition linked to the problematic racism part of Rio de Janeiro.

Discourse lacking references to race stands as a sign of racial inequality in a city spuriously understood as a haven of “racial democracy,” a mythical characteristic which, in its claims for fluid

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<sup>168</sup> DJ Ouro, August 3, 2024; Carlos Alberto, September 9, 2024; Bruno Pretinho, August 18, 2024; Michael, August 17, 2024, restaurant in downtown Duque de Caxias, RJ.

relations and mitigated racial tensions, dampens action and discussion over what is a persistent and underlying problem. A demonstration of endemic muteness, this absence may, however, allow people to, at least partially, forget or contain the wounds of victimization and carve out a world in which to live with some dignity and laughter (Sheriff 2001: 60 and 75)—a traumatized delight which is, perhaps, best shown in Bruno Pretinho’s frivolous response to being regularly beaten. But for as much as galera movements towards the beaches may certainly highlight these local dynamics, their movements also produced change. A presumed symbol of Brazilian “racial democracy,” the beaches have carried the fabled notion of bringing together different classes and races in a public space open for all (Cymrot 2022: 45). In their movements from the suburbs to the south side, however, the galeras reconfigured social space by bringing the “other,” originating from a suburban “non-place,” to the quintessential carioca “place” in which this “other” was no longer distant but rather constitutive of the city (Herschmann 2005: 129 and 225-8). During the *arrastão*, this new suburban funk culture, however, came dangerously close to the children of the bossa nova generation in what was their most sacred space (Essinger 2005: 124), accusing the beach as a domesticized territory in a city with social hierarchies partly established through spatial scissions (Cunha 2002: 101). In this regard, it is no surprise that the *arrastão* may have shown Rio not as a racial democracy but rather as a *cidade partida*—that is, a divided city. In this framework, Rio has always featured clear-cut separations—if not all-out segregation—in which its second-class citizens have always been displaced to the hills and fringes of the city (Ventura 1994: 13). Funkeiro movements to the beaches and the response they received, then, accused this severance, and it is no surprise that major news outlets linked the galeras to criminal organizations—perhaps the strongest symbol of this divided city in the 1990s (Mattos 2017: 68)—adding this distinction to other such signifiers such as the favela/neighborhood and south side/suburban dichotomies (Cunha

2002: 104). A city hosting chronic problems linked to segregation, funkeiro movements to the beaches highlighted the inconsistencies linked to racial democracy, a setting which established a persistent silence linked to race which was provisionally broken by funkeiro claims over important city spaces.

A useful device for coming to terms with Rio, the image of a *cidade partida*, however, only goes so far. Indeed, galera fluidity encourages a broader understanding of Rio, in which notions of territory, borders, and identity are flexible as groups transgress and negotiate urban boundaries (Herschmann 2005: 232), even if at times violently. Here it is important to look back at the origins of Rio funk—a music which does not emerge out of local styles, but rather from foreign African-American musics which were never aligned with racial democracy (Penglase 2007: 320). In this regard, funk music moves beyond, simply, taking over the same physical place of samba as the popular music of its times, with galeras staking out their own territories and means of pleasure against the grain of national or regional identity, affirming, through their movements, an important local citizenship (Yúdice 2003: 113 and 128). In their exchanges, galeras displayed a city full of byways, crossovers, and mobile limits in what is, perhaps, a *cidade porosa*—a porous city—a space of exchange and movement which transformed the divided city, even if provisionally. Far from serving, however, as an opposition to the notion of a divided city, this distinction may only come about as part of a space previously split, as pathways and junctures can only be formed between locations which had been previously severed (Carvalho 2013: 39-44). This porosity does not occur without its frictions, and the tensions and violence which emerge from galera movements to the beaches—tensions and violence not restricted to the corridor groups themselves—is part of this fraught scenario.

The arrastão of 1992 was a watershed moment in the history of funk as it spelled both the beginning of media scrutiny over the burgeoning culture and (Herschmann 2005: 19), also, the beginning of the criminalization of galeras in their supposed links with criminal groups (Rosa 2024: 4). After the incident, funk, galeras, and corridor events quickly moved from the exotic to the familiar (Mattos 2017: 68), even if this meant funk would be increasingly linked to violence (Cunha 2002: 95). News reports generalized galera culture without truly contemplating the nuanced distinctions between the galeras themselves or the symbolic hierarchies constructed by these youths (Cecchetto 1997: 96; Novaes 1997: 120), and the participating youths, presented as somehow possessed, were also taken to eventually and unavoidably soon join one of the city's criminal groups (Essinger 2005: 125). But the incidents also accelerated the popularization of funk, not only highlighting galera culture at large (Herschmann 2005: 29), but also buttressing greater exchange between youths of all backgrounds at a moment in which funk began to cross symbolic borders of the city. In this regard, it is perhaps no surprise that, soon after, community events in the south side Chapéu-Mangueira favela grew in popularity among all social strata (Lopes 2011: 34). Although stimulating, at times, one-dimensional portrayals of the galeras, the arrastão also encouraged public discussions concerning the place of the disenfranchised in Rio, and this discussion also became part of political debates as the years passed (Mattos 2012: 654). An incident which displayed movement, exchange, and violence of different kinds, the arrastão of 1992 denounced the silent and lingering notion of a Brazilian “racial democracy” in its tests of the supposed fluidity and togetherness that this myth continues to carry, a myth challenged by a musical culture with roots outside Brazil.

## *Conclusion*

Throughout the 1990s, galeras moved throughout the city as units and, also, engaged in activities beyond the corridors—activities which usually held, as central concerns, territorial distinctions among different groups; mobility through the city; and movements towards the beaches. During the period, galera feuds and fights were not limited to the corridor venues, and funkeiros not only distinguished urban areas according to galera distinctions, but also found ways to move through the city in lieu of the fraught and often violent circumstances of Rio, and in this setting, chartered buses were crucial for amplifying galera mobility. But corridor practitioners also segmented the city while moving to the south side beaches, further reconfiguring the urban landscape and, also, setting forth the spatial scissions between galeras in an elite stage. Attending the beaches as increasingly larger groups, galeras staged their funk rivalries in broad daylight while in the midst of other beach-goers. The result was increased law-enforcement on the beaches; greater media attention over funk; and, in late-1992, new discussions among civil society and political leaders concerning what to do with regard to galera access to public space. Galera engagements with the south side beaches, along with the increasing violence in the corridor venues, eventually brought legislators and law enforcement agents to discuss the prohibition of the corridors, initiatives which produced, in 1999, a ban on events. Allied with the imprisonment of famous corridor organizers and, finally, Zezinho's death in 2001, corridor events clearly declined, heralding a new age of corridor formation at the dawn of the new century.

## Concluding Thoughts

This dissertation has focused on galera culture up to the year 2000, when the state of Rio de Janeiro criminalized corridor events in what began the decline of galera culture. This, however, did not result in the disappearance of galeras or, for that matter, corridor events—far from it. While this dissertation has shed light on a major cultural expression of the 1980s and, more explicitly, the 1990s, galeras continued to assemble among themselves while sound system teams, also, continued to organize corridor events—events which, year after year, rallied dozens of galeras to venues throughout the city, fighting for either the A-side or the B-side.

My main concern has been to examine important connections between the galeras and some crucial conditions of the city of Rio. It is my main argument that the rise and consolidation of galera culture, and their participation in corridor events, are both linked to two essential circumstances: the rooting of the favela as an ineradicable space of Rio—a condition, perhaps, which became explicit with Brazil's return to a democratic regime in the mid-1980s—and, simultaneously, an increase in violence and displays of a new hegemonic masculinity throughout the city, a violence and masculinity, importantly, stimulated by the growth and establishment of criminal groups in the city. This setting was crucial for both consolidating territory as an identifying marker for coming-of-age youths during the 1980s and 1990s—who became more rooted in their places of origin—and, also, for supporting a deeper embeddedness of criminal governance. These two issues contributed to shaping the galeras as groups which form communal bonds through their identification with their own places of origin and, also, their reiteration of violence as part of leisure and sociability—a violence which, although influenced by the city's transformations, was of an entirely different order than that of the city's growing criminal groups.

Although a manifestation linked to violent expressivity, galeras, however, are not merely a reflection of the city's changing setting. It is important to repeat, once more, that galera culture is far from static, and funkeiro activities are much more than simply a mirror image of the local context. Important here is the clear-cut distinction between galeras and criminal organizations, groups which have always been independent from one another even though, at certain moments, criminal groups have interfered in galera activities in attempts to gain advantages for themselves. In stark contrast to criminal organizations, moreover, galeras have also regularly displayed revelry, competition, tacitly-established rules, camaraderie, and the production of group identities linked to territorial origin as part of their socialization, a form of establishing relationships which stands in contrast to criminal groups which, although also territorial, are engaged in brutal warfare; the arrogation of space; and economic abuse over populations living in areas they increasingly control. In fact, criminal groups, in their contact with funkeiros, have usually dampened galera identities in what not only shows the distinction between these groups, but also the degree to which criminal governance influences culture, shifting important expressions such as galeras and, more broadly, Rio de Janeiro funk at large. This is, perhaps, most clearly displayed in the decline of corridor events during the late-1990s—a decline which was partly stimulated by the attempts among criminal groups in transforming galera identities to fit into their own territorial logics and, also, in the rise of *bailes de comunidade*, events which have grown considerably since the decline of corridor events and are increasingly more influenced by the city's criminal groups. While it then may be the case that galeras have reworked some of the signs and signifiers available to them in a city in which criminal groups and territoriality have an important influence, galeras and criminal groups have remained in a consistently oblique relationship and, importantly, distinguished from

one another—a distinction which has not only increased tensions between these groups but has also, ultimately, limited the cultural power of galeras.

Another important theme which I have developed throughout this work is masculinity—a masculinity which holds important characteristics linked to what is commonly understood as hypermasculinity. Although women were and continue to be part of galeras, these groups have been mostly comprised of men, a setting magnified for the contemporary galera in their attendances of corridor events—attendances which are, in most events since at least 2023, entirely composed of men. Importantly, galera participation in corridor events fosters a hegemonic expression of masculinity—hegemonic at least within the context of Rio de Janeiro—which values aggressivity, reputation, honor, and fighting prowess, while territory stands as a narcissistic extension which must be guarded as part of galera identity. Important values which were developed by some galera members and expressed during corridor events, these particular characteristics linked to masculinity are, moreover, important for some galera members to circulate with greater ease in environments in which criminal groups openly flaunt their weapons—criminal groups which, moreover, have also supported the establishment of hypermasculinity as part of the city’s cultural framework.

Another central theme throughout this work is race in Brazil and, specifically, in Rio de Janeiro. Far from standing as an example of a racial democracy, Rio de Janeiro displays clear racial prejudice and segregation. Linked to 1970s United States soul and funk, Rio de Janeiro funk and the galeras, retained influences linked to Black Rio in their tacit questioning of Brazilian racial democracy, integrating important debates concerning race—which, during the 1970s, globally circulated—into the more localized challenges of Rio. In this regard, the galeras’ insistence in not only moving through the city but, more specifically, routinely attending the city’s south side

beaches during the 1990s—when soul music from the United States was not as influential—was an important form of engagement with an important problem of the city, questioning Rio de Janeiro's segregation which, importantly, was and continues to be seldom discussed under the looming shadow of an invented racial democracy.

These themes appear throughout the work. Along with tracing a history of soul music in 1970s Rio de Janeiro and the emergence of funk in the 1980s, chapter one has shown a Brazilian engagement with important questions concerning race which were entering the country from the United States. These issues were important for supporting a local questioning of Brazilian race relations, stubbornly tied to an invented—and, perhaps, clearly damaging—notion of a racial democracy. The introduction of soul into Rio, and the consequent emergence of Black Rio, stimulated Rio de Janeiro youths to not only participate in a global blackness which was circulating at the time, but also established, as part of the history of what would soon be called Rio de Janeiro funk, a larger questioning of Brazilian race relations, even if this questioning remained, at times, much more tacit than explicit.

Chapter two examined galera participation in corridor events during the zenith of event popularity, throughout the 1990s. Attending by the thousands in the several venues spread throughout the city, galeras not only joined the front-lines of corridor fights, but also danced and socialized in events which rallied dozens or even the hundreds of galeras which were spread throughout the city. While attending events and, also, fighting in the corridors, galera members represented their own places of origin in venues which, as corridor events consolidated as weekly events, played a particular funk music dedicated to galera culture: galera rap and montagens de galeras. These pieces not only fueled the events themselves, but also served to further support each galera, as members of each group participated in the production process of the pieces themselves,

singing about their own places of origin in what, according to funkeiro Ralf Victor, inflated galera egos; further rooted galera names in collective memory; and granted groups greater visibility in the corridor fights themselves. Although certainly displaying violence—a violence which could be, simultaneously, brutal, ludic, and symbolic—galera fighting and competitiveness in these events strengthened group identities linked to territories throughout the city—identities which were linked, also, to communal bonds and places of origin.

In chapter three, I took a step away from corridor events to analyze galera engagements with cultural activities outside the corridor venues. Important here is the ways in which alternative activities available in the city—martial arts, Carnival, designer clothing, to name a few—fostered, and continue to foster, many of the values which galeras—especially its men—valued and continue to value. Some of these values, as discussed throughout the chapter, are fighting prowess, the accumulation of prestige, and the expression of a hegemonic masculinity associated with displays of aggressivity. Another important value, perhaps not as explicit, is the association with territory as an important identifying marker for funkeiros even as they circulate the city while not necessarily associated with their galeras, something which is particularly clear—although not exclusive—in their engagements with *torcidas organizadas*. By examining these cultural activities, I have shown that important cultural manifestations in Rio are recurrently attached to territory, an important aspect of local life which supports the notion that space has served as a foundational building block for identity formation, supporting the argument that the galeras' embrace of territory as an essential marker of communal identity is far from incidental.

In chapter four, finally, I examined galera circulation throughout the city and, importantly, their movements towards the city's south side beaches. Once more, the materials illustrate the importance of territory as an essential identifying trace for galeras, with groups fighting each other

if and when entering or spotting rivals. Expanding on these rivalries, galeras also frequented the city's beaches in what not only reproduced galera territorial partitions on the prosperous south side, but interrupted an informal segregation between rich and poor, and black and white. Moving to the beaches by the hundreds, galeras questioned the Brazilian notion of a racial democracy by claiming for a place in what has been claimed as the Brazilian democratic space par excellence. The result was not only a spike in societal tensions and a rush among state and media representatives to propose limits on movement, but also a larger debate concerning Brazilian race relations at large.

Further research on galera culture and corridor events would essentially include group expressivity since the year 2000, and this dissertation will be expanded to include at least two more chapters. Chapter five will examine corridor events and galera culture after the year 2000. Persisting even after the state criminalized events, corridor events have never ceased to be organized, and the chapter will outline the history of corridor events after their criminalization and, importantly, examine contemporary corridor events—events which are quite different from those hosted during the 1990s. For this, I will focus on the sounds of contemporary corridors—which feature conspicuous chanting among attendees; gunshot sounds executed by the increasingly-present criminal groups; and the notable absence of *montagens de galeras*. Along with showing that the criminalization of corridor events has pushed events more and more towards areas controlled by criminal organizations, the chapter will also demonstrate that current corridor events buttress further displays of hypermasculinity in a city facing increasing problems linked to criminal governance—problems which have amplified since the 1990s, the heyday of the corridor events.

In chapter six, I will once more take a step away from corridor events to analyze the galeras in their current state. Alongside examining contemporary cultural activity associated with galeras, such as *resenhas* (reminiscence events) and *baile das antigas* (“old school” events), the chapter will

also look at the ways in which relevant societal actors and galeras have interacted. Some of the examined actors are state agents, members of criminal organizations, and galera leaders. Although corridor events remain criminalized, state actors have found ways to benefit from galera culture, either through capitalizing on galera events which do not feature fighting or by exchanging influence, favors, or wealth with galera leaders and other important cultural actors. The setting is further complicated by the involvement of criminal organizations in galera culture, an influence which is unavoidably present and continues to shape galera culture.

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