

## *Preparations*

AS THE CHRISTMAS SEASON APPROACHES, *folias de reis*, or *companhias de reis* (companies of kings) begin to make the necessary preparations for their ritual journeys (*jornadas*). Before setting off they plan their itinerary, they check to make sure that there are people to occupy all the ritual and administrative roles required by the tradition, and they meet for rehearsals to guarantee the quality of their performances. While *foliões* (folia members) know what happens on these ritual journeys, no one knows what will happen during the one for which they are preparing themselves. Expectations heighten as foliões reminisce about previous journeys, remembering bygone days when the drama could be conducted “properly”; they remind one another of the various “Herods”—or dangers—they might encounter along the way; they speculate about how they will be received by a particular household, and about the number of manger scenes to be adored along the way. As they prepare for their journey, foliões create an atmosphere of excitement around the days to come, keeping expectations high through to the final festival.

This book is about these journeys, and it follows their sequence from the planning stages to their festive culmination.<sup>1</sup> Folia journeys are both part of and set apart from everyday life. They are embedded in the patterns of everyday social life, but they are also special spaces which enhance social experience through music making and intense sociability. Journeys articulate with the foliões’ values and commonsense notions about the world around them

while speaking also of their visions and aspirations. These ritual spaces constitute "total social facts," drawing on the dominant themes that mark the daily lives of the *foliões*: they comment on family and community relations as well as on class and race relations, they refer to the economic conditions of the participants and provide a forum for the elaboration of political views, they create a stage for asserting and proclaiming the values of the devotees, and through their ritual activities they define themselves as a moral community. The investigation of these ritual contexts, then, provides a means of gaining access to the social lives, worldviews, and aspirations of vast sectors of the Brazilian subaltern classes engaged in popular Catholic activities.

My focus is upon the *folia* tradition in the urban context, where the ritual journeys are set against the backdrop of the journeys made by rural migrants in search of a better life in the city. In the urban setting, many migrants have confronted conditions of extreme poverty and marginality in a highly stratified society, and their adaptation to city life has been hindered by low levels of education and inappropriate skills as well as by value systems radically opposed to the rationality of capitalist enterprise. Within this hostile environment, *folia* activities have provided a means of creating and sustaining networks of mutual support. Though there is nothing new in this proposition,<sup>2</sup> I shall argue that the efficacy of these networks within the *folia* universe is predicated on the ethical base that sustains them: the moral principles of popular Catholicism emphasize solidarity and mutual obligations, and a claim to these principles has become a primary means of forging cultural integrity within migrant communities. It is in moral terms that they mark their identity in opposition to the privileged sectors of Brazilian society.

This argument could be made equally with respect to popular Catholicism in rural contexts. Indeed, it is not my intention to suggest that there is anything unique about the urban setting which alters the fundamental dynamics of the *folia* tradition. On the contrary, the very embeddedness of *folia* ritual activity in everyday life has hindered its sedimentation, allowing the tradition to be continuously resignified over the centuries in consonance with changing historical circumstances. In moving to the city there certainly has been a shift in the themes highlighted during *folia* performances, but since colonial times *folias de reis* have operated in and articulated with a diversity of social formations, the contemporary urban context being only the most recent structural setting into which the tradition has been adapted. One of my objectives is to portray the fluidity with which *folia* communities have continuously negotiated their ritual life in face-to-face interactions, drawing on their daily experiences on the margins of mainstream Brazilian society.

The resilience of popular Catholicism in Brazil is undoubtedly linked to its continuous ability to engage with the themes of immediate concern to the devotees. But these themes are brought to the fore within an aesthetic environment of intense experiential value, in which music plays a central role. *Folia* journeys are conducted through participatory musical performances, as are countless other vernacular religious traditions around the world. Music, of course, is used in a number of distinct ways within different ritual contexts, just as musical styles and the conditions of their performance display considerable diversity from one ritual tradition to another. Yet ethnomusicologists have documented numerous cases in which music is the primary medium for organizing ritual activity. The *folia de reis* is just such a musically directed religious tradition: musical sounds dominate the ritual time-frame; musical performance is conducted by an ensemble with a more or less inclusive participatory orientation; and music is the primary means of integrating the attendants into the ritual drama. Through an in-depth ethnography of this context I hope to show that anthropological perspectives on ritual and ritualization can be significantly enhanced by close attendance to ritual music and music making.

The book is premised on the argument that participatory musical performance within a religious context provides a means of orchestrating ritual enactment in such a way as to allow participants to proclaim their religious truths at the same time as their coordinated interactions during music making re-create the social ideals embodied in their religious tenets. I refer to the musical mode of ritual orchestration as "enchantment."<sup>3</sup> Enchantment creates a highly charged experiential realm in which devotees gain a momentary glimpse of the harmonious order that could reign in society, provided everyone agreed to adhere to the moral precepts outlined in religious discourse. By promoting such intense experiences, musical performance is, I contend, a powerful medium for forging religious conviction and commitment.

In vernacular usage, "enchantment" refers to a seductive world of poetry and fantasy. One of its connotations pertains to the use of magical powers to effect transformations. The concept of enchantment was introduced into social theory through the work of Max Weber, for whom it was the condition of premodernity. Weber contended that enchantment would ultimately be displaced by the rationality of modernity, leaving in its wake a disenchanted world of "icy darkness and hardness" (Weber 1958, 128), a world devoid of meaning. But what I wish to highlight here is the link Weber ([1922] 1963) saw between enchantment and morality. According to Weber, the enchanted sphere of religion articulates a moral order, and when ethically constituted,

the world remains warm, fluid, and meaningful. My conceptualization of enchantment draws on these associations, providing a concise way of encapsulating what I consider to be the main thrust of the musical mode of ritual orchestration: the creation of a morally grounded visionary social world through communal music making, the experience of which can have profound transformative implications for the participants.

■ As an experiential realm, enchantment takes place in the here and now; its efficacy is predicated upon its emergent quality. Such experiences can be promoted through music precisely because music making organizes collective action, while song texts can be endlessly rewritten and brought to bear upon the specificities of the immediate performance situation. By directly linking content to the performance context, I will demonstrate how foliões are able to generate profound personal experiences within an interpretive frame which relates shared discursive representations to the sensory experiences promoted during ritual enactment. Furthermore, within the fluid and decentralized context of the folia universe—and of other vernacular religious settings—musical performance serves to mediate the negotiations involved in staging ritual activity.

My journey into the folia universe began with the enchanted experience I had when I first heard the Folia do Baeta Neves back in 1986. But like the Kings, I did not return by the same route. Once the singing had come to an end, I began the struggle of making sense of their journeys and musical performances, reflecting upon where I had been and what I had heard, seen, done, and read over the years, merging the intensely moving experiences I had among folia communities with the requirements of academic practice. Without doubt it was the memories which my data evoked in me of my time spent with them that sustained my interest as I confronted endless stacks of field notes, transcriptions, photographs, and audio- and videotapes.

Journeys always produce stories—as do reporters. It is, therefore, through stories that I present this account. Some of the stories I will be telling were narrated by foliões; others are my own anecdotal representations of observations and experiences I had during my time in the field. Stories have the potential of bringing an event to life; they demand the readers' identification with the characters, allowing them to sympathetically reexperience an episode with the narrator. Moreover, stories provide eloquent illustrations of the uniqueness and contextuality of an event; they show how shared representations are negotiated in terms of the specificities of the here and now. Stories are perhaps the human way of reconciling the fluidity of experience with the representational mode through which people communi-

cate with one another. But before I can begin my story, I will set out my agenda through a dialogue with relevant literature.

### *Folias de Reis and Popular Catholicism in Brazil*

Numerous popular narratives tell how the Three Kings became musicians, forming the first folia on earth. In one of the most common versions of the narrative it is said that, in exchange for their gifts, Our Lady presented them with musical instruments when they arrived at the crèche. She gave them a *viola* (a stringed instrument slightly smaller than a guitar, with five double courses), a *pandeiro* (tambourine), and a *caixa* (a large double-headed cylindrical drum) and told them to return to the Orient singing along the way to announce the birth of Christ. In accordance with the myth, folias de reis conduct a symbolic dramatization of the journey of the Three Kings, in which a group of musicians and a few clowns—frequently known as *bastião*—roam from house to house with the banner of the Holy Kings. During their journeys—or *giros* (rounds)—the groups bless the families they visit in exchange for donations that will then be used to promote the “festival of the arrival” (*feira da chegada*) that occurs on Kings' Day, 6 January. Companhias normally begin their journeys at midnight between 24 and 25 December in a ritual known as the “departure of the banner” (*saída da bandeira*). This event occurs at the home of the *festeiro* (patron of the festival), who administers the funds the folia collects during the journey and organizes the festival on behalf of the community. The journey ends when the group closes the circuit and “arrives” back at the festeiro's house, where the festival of the arrival is held. All those who contributed with donations during the journey are invited to participate in the event. A good festival is one in which there is an abundance of food and much music and dancing throughout the night.

There can be little doubt that the folia tradition in Brazil came to the country with the Portuguese colonists, but it then began to take on a localized profile. As the tradition diffused throughout the land, it was continuously reinvented and reinterpreted to suit the specific needs and aesthetic preferences of those involved in its performance. As one would expect of any “folk” tradition, there is a considerable degree of variation in the performance practices of different groups from one region to the next, and even from one town to the next within a single geographic area, just as each group is itself in a constant process of transformation. Today folias are also com-

mon in the country's large urban centers, brought by the millions of rural laborers who have come to the cities over the past decades in search of work and a better standard of living. This process has brought further transformations to the tradition to adapt it to the migrants' experiences in the new context.

The folia de reis is but one of countless localized lay devotional traditions to have developed in Brazil during the colonial era. *Congados* and *moçambiques*, for example, are drum- and percussion-based dance troupes, made up predominantly of blacks, that perform during festivals in honor of Saint Benedict the Moor and Our Lady of the Rosary, among other saints; Saint Gonçalo dances (*danças de São Gonçalo*) are devotional double-line dances which help guarantee the strength of one's legs; baptisms of Saint John the Baptist involve requests for rain by rural communities to guarantee an appropriate supply of water for crops; festivities in honor of Saint Anthony, the patron saint of "old maids" (*tias*), commonly include social dances and mock weddings. Like the Three Kings, many of the saints who have become the objects of popular devotion in Brazil are depicted with all-too-human characteristics, and quite frequently they are fun-loving musicians and dancers. Devotion to these saints typically involves merrymaking, an abundance of food, and much music and dancing.

The relative homogeneity in the devotional practices associated with a specific saint has led some researchers to suggest that these spheres be viewed in terms of distinct "cycles" (see Brandão 1981), each comprising a cluster of interrelated symbolic units of wider or more restricted diffusion. While it could be argued that a broadly defined popular Catholic ethos underlies them all, the sphere of popular Catholicism is highly fragmented and localized; whatever links there may be across devotional cycles—or even within each cycle—popular Catholic practices constitute local instantiations of an available repertoire, in which, over the centuries, participants have selected, highlighted, and downplayed distinct elements at their disposal, in accordance with their daily lives and aspirations.

What favored the proliferation of these forms of lay religious expression was the limited presence of the institutionalized church in the colony, which left settlers to develop their own forms of devotion to meet their religious needs, particularly in isolated rural communities. These circumstances emerged out of a special relationship between Rome and the Portuguese crown established during the crusade against the Moors, in which a series of papal bulls granted the king patronage concessions over the religious institution, rendering the church subservient to the Portuguese state. In the first

years of ecclesiastical patronage, the goals of the state were congruent with those of the church. In time, however, the crown's greater interest in gold than in souls had grave consequences for the expansion of the church. Approximately 250 years after the "discovery," the state had scarcely fulfilled its part of the mission: there were but eight dioceses in the colony and the vast majority of secular clergymen were employed independently by large landowners or urban confraternities, serving a limited part of the population. Throughout much of the colony, religious life was left predominantly in the hands of laymen, who expressed their religious sentiments by drawing upon Portuguese forms of folk devotion, many rooted in late medieval musical practices.<sup>4</sup>

With the separation of church and state in the late nineteenth century, the relationship between local religious communities and the Catholic church entered a new phase, as a progressive sector of the clergy spearheaded a project of ecclesiastic Romanization. Their efforts, however, were unable to eradicate popular Catholic beliefs and practices, particularly among members of the lower classes. Though they invested heavily against vernacular forms of devotion in urban centers, the most they were able to achieve was to push such practices out of the church itself, while in isolated rural areas they remained virtually unaffected by this civilizing onslaught. In any case, the primary targets of Romanization were the members of polite society, so that the rural peasantry remained forgotten and continued to conduct their religious lives much as before. In urban centers the marginalized lower classes either transferred their religious practices out into the churchyard and the street or removed them altogether from the direct gaze of the priests (Brandão 1985, 138–39). It is worth noting, however, that among significant sectors of the clergy, the former state patronage system remained entrenched, such that conservative stances with tolerant and laissez-faire attitudes toward popular Catholicism have continued to be prevalent right up to the present day.

Even since Vatican II, when the church declared a preferential option for the poor, the official church in Brazil has made little headway in displacing popular Catholic worldviews and ritual activities. It has been primarily the groups associated with liberation theology who have made the greatest efforts to absorb the practices of their low-income parishioners into the sphere of the church, but they have often found it difficult to reconcile their projects with the "unorthodoxies" of popular Catholic religiosity. One of the major forces compelling church authorities today to rethink their attitudes toward popular forms of religious expression has been the astounding

growth of Pentecostalism among the lower classes, which has resulted in an increased—if guarded—acceptance of the charismatic movement within the church (Julianelli 1999; Oliveira et al. 1978). Yet while the church has struggled to develop strategies to deal with vernacular modes of religiosity, many devout Catholics actively involved in popular forms of devotion call upon the services of the church only for major sacraments, such as baptisms, first communions, marriages, and funerals.

As this overview indicates, there is no straightforward way of defining the relationship between official Catholicism and popular Catholicism. While popular Catholic practices are highly localized affairs with immediate links to the lives of devotees, the “official” church is hardly a unified institution, sheltering—as it does—a diversity of conflicting and contradictory orientations to theological doctrine, liturgical practice, and vernacular religiosity. Any assessment of the interaction between these two domains must take account of their complexities and of the specificities of the contexts in which they intersect.

Although Brazil is the largest Catholic country in the world, with around 75 percent of the population declaring themselves formally Catholic, the interest in the study of Catholicism among anthropologists has been fairly muted. This contrasts dramatically with research into African-Brazilian possession cults, in which a much smaller proportion of the population is involved but in which the “exotic other” is in clear evidence. It was only after the emergence of liberation theology that Catholicism attracted the attention of social scientists in a significant way (see, for example, Bruneau 1974; Hewitt 1991; Kadt 1970; Macedo 1986; C. Mariz 1994; and Petrini 1984). These studies tend to focus on the effects of the changing attitudes of church officials in the post-Vatican II era, and on the movements these changes have engendered, particularly the emergence of CEBs (Christian base communities), in an attempt to assess their potential as effective instruments of political change.<sup>5</sup>

The same enthusiasm, however, has not been shown toward the investigation of popular Catholicism, which has remained of secondary interest. Along with the material contained in the community studies of the 1950s (see E. Galvão 1955; Mello e Souza 1982; Pierson 1966; Wagley 1964; and Willems 1961, among others),<sup>6</sup> the most extensive documentation of the aesthetic forms of popular Catholic traditions has been conducted by Brazilian folklorists, who have tended to locate their object of research among the rural peasantry. Although folklorists have published extensively, their research

methods are those of interested amateurs, and their material is essentially descriptive (Béhague 1982, 1991). Following in a tradition established in the early part of the century, these researchers have conceived of folklore as a repository of national and regional heritage (Rowe and Schelling 1991, 4–6), and the collecting of it was meant to rescue the country’s cultural legacy from extinction. Over the past decades, however, anthropological studies have become more prevalent, as researchers have begun looking at the expressive dimension of popular Catholicism as a way of understanding the ethos and aspirations of the subaltern classes of the country.

This interest emerged when Brazilian anthropologists began turning to the ideas of Antonio Gramsci, whose concept of folklore as the expression of popular commonsense notions brought a refreshing alternative to the structural Marxist perspectives prevailing in Brazilian popular Catholic studies. It is worth noting, though, that the term “folklore” was strategically avoided in favor of “popular culture” by “serious” Brazilian scholars. They wished to distance themselves from the country’s folklorists not only because they saw them as dilettantes, but also because of their political positions: many folklorists had become directly associated with the projects of the military dictatorship.

Up until the early 1980s, anthropological studies of popular Catholicism had emphasized the fatalistic ethos of popular Catholic forms of devotion, which was seen as an ideological support upholding the exploitative patterns of interclass relations in rural Brazil (see Bruneau 1974, 68). Gramsci, however, had a far more dynamic vision of the popular domain, seeing human beings as historical agents actively involved in the construction of their own destinies. He defined folklore as the conceptions of the world and life of the subaltern classes, and he saw popular Catholicism as a sphere for the articulation of the morality of the people (1985, 190), rooted in their notions of “natural law.” While the church authorities were also said to have a concept of natural law, Gramsci saw it as distinct from that held in the popular domain. He argued that the popular masses continuously renew the commonsense categories expressed in their popular traditions in accordance with the “pressures of real living conditions and the spontaneous comparisons between the ways in which the various social strata live” (1985, 193). This renewal is possible, he argued, insofar as folklore is “a confused agglomerate of fragments of all the conceptions of the world and life that have succeeded one another in history,” which people continue to appropriate into “the mosaic of tradition” (1985, 189). Ultimately, he posited, this process would al-

low for the formation of "organic ideologies" that would permit the masses to organize and fight for the transformation of the means of production which limit their access to the goods of society.

Whatever the revolutionary potential of popular religious movements may be, Gramsci's ideas altered the way some Brazilian anthropologists looked at the country's lower classes and their lifestyles, and excellent documents began to emerge showing how popular Catholicism articulates with the moral codes and patterns of sociability prevailing in popular Catholic communities. This perspective is most evident in the work of Carlos Rodrigues Brandão (1981, 1983a, 1985, and 1989, among others), who has dedicated a lifetime of research to the central and southeastern rural peasantry, but it is also found in the work of Francisco Rolim (1980), Alba Zaluar (1983), Rubem César Fernandes (1982), Raymundo Heraldo Maués (1995), and others. These studies, however, focus primarily on the analysis of the symbolic repertoire and normative ritual processes of popular Catholic traditions, paying less attention to the fluidity of social interactions in expressions of religiosity. Thus, they reflect a rather static and essentialist representation of the popular Catholic ethos and subaltern morality, obscuring the intense processes of negotiation and resignification of commonsense categories so integral to Gramsci's ideas. Indeed, in accordance with the perspective so prevalent in community studies and Weberian approaches to popular religion, outside forces, such as the church, agricultural capitalism, and urban migration, are typically portrayed as agents in the erosion of the idyllic pastoral lifestyle of the peasantry, ultimately leading to the impoverishment and disappearance of popular Catholicism.

Without doubt, global forces have had an impact on the lives of rural communities, and popular Catholic forms of expression have clearly been affected by them. But vernacular traditions have also become significant sites for the expression of subaltern responses to these forces (see Bohlman 1997). It is precisely because of the localized nature of popular Catholic practice that religious life can keep pace with all aspects of daily experience; each time devotees stage a ritual, they engage in intense processes of negotiation, bringing the shared symbolic repertoire of the tradition to bear upon their contemporary lives.

Within the folia tradition, ritual journeys are constructed from people's memories of their participation in previous journeys, but this shared template is adapted annually to the specific circumstances, motivations, and interests of the participants at the time, so that folia performances are continuously in an ungraspable state of flux. Each folia journey is a reinvention of

past journeys, some involving contemporary musicians, others of generations long gone, their individual biographies woven into the "confused agglomerate of fragments" out of which history is constituted. Thus, each journey is distinct, as pragmatic considerations and new ideals fuse with the archaeological mosaic of past journeys to generate new expressive forms and experiences among participants. The familiarity of the symbolism provides devotees with a sense of the continuity and stability of their rituals, which allows them to perceive them as "their tradition," "their cultural heritage," and to constitute themselves through them as a moral community (Stokes 1994, 3). Each folia journey is the result of intense negotiation among participants, in which together they strive to reenact collectively their interpretations of the journey of the Wise Men. All this investment proves worthwhile when the outcome is the construction of an aesthetic world which greatly enhances the quality of social experience.

### *Ritual, Music, and Experience*

In his discussion of rituals within religious revitalization movements, James Fernandez (1986, 162) has argued that such movements—and possibly even all religions—are in the business of reconstituting the fragments of everyday life by creating an illusion of the relatedness of things associated with disparate domains of experience; their mission is to provide people with a sense of the wholeness of the cosmos in which they live. While it is not entirely clear what Fernandez means by wholeness, it is certainly the case that religious systems typically postulate a vision of cosmic order which links the social world of humanity to the sacred universe of the gods. This sacred domain is commonly portrayed in religious discourse as an idealized utopia of social harmony, and it is detached from the ever-changing terrestrial sphere to protect it from the effects of temporality and human limitations. Morality is defined in terms of this mythic realm, and ritual activity is the primary means available to humans in their struggle to preserve their links with the morally constituted cosmic order.

Religious discourse, however, is typically allusive and figurative in nature, constituting what Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs (1990, 72–76) might call entextualized reality, an independent reality contained within a text. While fictional entextualization calls for only a temporary suspension of disbelief, religious entextualizations are meant to be taken as truth. If they are to be convincing, they must be capable of encompassing their followers

within the moral order they construct, and they must also provide the means for people to visualize their relationship to that order. Whatever Fernandez may have meant by wholeness, his work has highlighted the critical significance and persuasive power of what one might call "religious experience," fleeting moments in which the world seems perfect and everything is as it should be. Religious experience circumscribes phenomenological encounters which are interpreted by those who experience them as momentary revelations of the sacred sphere. Such intensely charged affective experiences are highly memorable and deeply cherished, providing inchoate insight into the metaphorical language of religious discourse. As Harvey Whitehouse (1995, 175) has argued, it is out of experiences such as these that a sense of commitment to religious organizations and their doctrines can be forged.

Anthropologists have frequently pointed to ritual as the locus of religious life, and thus it constitutes a privileged context for the orchestration of religious experience. According to Catherine Bell (1992, 74), ritualization is predicated upon establishing a "qualitative distinction between the 'sacred' and the 'profane.'" To achieve this separation, the ritual space is set apart from the pragmatic world of everyday life, so that it can be perceived and experienced as extraordinary, and special framing devices are employed to demarcate its sacredness (Bauman 1975, 1992). For Joel Kuipers (1990, 4) rituals construct the sacred frame through entextualized enactments, and he defined ritual entextualization as "a process in which a speech event (or series of speech events) is marked by increasing thoroughness of poetic and rhetorical patterning and growing levels of (apparent) detachment from the immediate pragmatic context." Ritual entextualization, then, is created through the use of performative devices in which articulations become progressively more formulaic and musical, while the content of the messages draws increasingly upon mythic imagery. In this way ritual constructs a representation of the cosmic sphere.

Kuipers (1990) claims that, among the Weyewa of Indonesia, the ultimate mode of ritual entextualization results in a coherent monologic performance of the ancestors' words, and its persuasive power derives from the ritual specialist's ability to convince the audience that he is but a mediator through which the ancestors speak. In emphasizing the poetic display of the ritual speaker, Kuipers loses sight of the participatory role of the attendants in the enactment, yet as the "ancestor" speaks—though actually he sings—his words are endorsed through choral responses. By focusing exclusively upon the ritual texts, Kuipers disregards the potential of participation as a

means of bridging the gap between the entextualized monologue and the attendants' experience of the (enchanted) reality it depicts.

Among the Weyewa, ritual efficacy is predicated upon the proper performance of a strictly prescribed ritual script, but such formal rigidity is far from universal. In fact, it is quite uncharacteristic of revitalization movements and autonomous community-based associations, such as Brazilian popular Catholic ensembles, which are not committed to "well-worn routines and the inertia of institutions" (Fernandez 1986, 183). Indeed, many vernacular ritual traditions are remarkably flexible, and the means of linking performances to the immediate circumstances is often built into the ritual structure itself. Nonetheless, it would appear that some level of prescriptive "ruling" (G. Lewis 1980, 11) or "directionality" (Parkin 1992) is common to all rituals, particularly those with some degree of historical depth. This skeletal framework, however, can be—and often is—padded out and made ever thicker by a complex interplay of various communicative media, which heighten the contrast between the ritual space and everyday life. Along with music, ritual may be accompanied by mythic narrations, prayers, and various other types of text, ritual objects, spatial organization and positionality, phasing, significant colors, foods, smells, and much, much more. At first glance, this symbolic density appears to immerse participants in an ocean of fragmentary sensory stimuli, or motifs, which are combined in a number of ways as the ritual progresses, creating continuous tension between the prescribed ritual script and its elaboration. While the whole may be too complex to be apprehended in its totality, it is designed to affect the senses, enhancing the experiential value of the event.

Fernandez's argument emphasized this interplay of ritual motifs,<sup>7</sup> giving center stage to the way in which it affects the orchestration of ritual experience. He claimed that when people are enveloped by a multiplicity of sensations, their primary perceptions are evoked, and the disparate fragments begin to resonate inchoately with one another, forming ever larger webs of association. Thus, however contradictory and incoherent rituals may be shown to be (Gerholm 1988), an experience of coherence nonetheless can be forged through the emergent associations made by the participants during the ritual event. To illustrate the process of associative resonance, Fernandez resorted to metaphors derived from the musical universe; more specifically, he invoked the relationships between the different parts in orchestral music.<sup>8</sup> Yet he made no mention of how musical performance within the ritual context itself might play a special role in promoting associative experience. If re-



ligious systems are indeed in the business of forging a sense of wholeness and group music making is frequently a fundamental part of ritual proceedings, it follows that structural properties specific to music and music making play a central role in orchestrating the ritual experience of relatedness.

Musical sound is, in the first instance, a contentless vessel, since it lacks an immediate semantic base (Blacking 1977, 2; 1980a, 35; 1985a, 65–66). It is articulated through such abstract elements as melody, rhythm, form, timbre, tempo, dynamics, and instrumentation. Because it is nonreferential, any objectified meanings a piece of music may come to acquire at the discursive level can be represented only through metaphoric associations. Within the ritual context, numerous encoded forms of representation are in evidence, such as myths, oratory, song texts, iconography, gestures, and spatial and temporal organization, as well as the formal properties of the style of music employed. These media provide a pool of resources for the construction of associative webs that link the ritual motifs to one another. The very ambiguity and multivocality of symbols (Turner 1967) allow for multiple resonances and for the continuous emergence of new associations, cross-referencing the ritual sphere, the wider social context, and personal life stories, spinning them into complex, interconnected and meaningful webs.

While the ritual motifs embody the potential for endless resonances, musical performance binds the participants to the associative webs they construct, encompassing them within a meaningful—yet ineffable—world. This, I contend, is the critical factor accounting for the prevalence of music—and more specifically of participatory music making—in many communal religious rituals. As “text,” it could be said that there is little to distinguish the way music operates within ritual from the associative processes invoked by other ritual motifs, but in performance, music organizes the actions and interactions of the participants, giving a temporal dimension to their ephemeral experience of connectedness. But it does more than this. To perform in an ensemble, participants must act in consort, agreeing to adhere to the performance requirements of the genre which unites them, and this provides a communal focus for forging a sense of shared experience. Through group music making the entextualized reality of the cosmic order is enchanted collectively into existence, and through the participants’ engagement in the construction of that order, they create a context for envisaging themselves within it. In the act of making music participants become a part of the very webs they are constructing, and they are able to experience the harmonious social world envisaged within their religious discourse.

As John Blacking (especially 1973a, 1973b, 1980a, and 1985b) insisted

throughout his work, the emphasis in participatory music making is on the sociability of the activity, heightening people’s awareness of their relationships to other people. To perform as a group musicians must coordinate their behavior with one another, becoming engaged in intense processes of negotiation through nonverbal interaction. During performance, people can become so closely “tuned in” to one another (Schutz [1951] 1977) that they perceive minute inflections in the behavior of those around them, which in other circumstances could go unnoticed. In highlighting the face-to-face relationships that are established among musicians in an ensemble context, Alfred Schutz ([1951] 1977, 117) observed: “The Other’s facial expressions, [her] gestures in handling [her] instrument, in short all the activities of performing, gear into the outer world and can be grasped by the partner in immediacy. Even if performed without communicative intent, these activities are interpreted by [her] as indications of what the Other is going to do and therefore as suggestions or even commands for [her] own behavior.”

The performance requirements of the style may promote particular modes of social interaction in the very process of music making (Blacking 1980a, 35). The style may involve turn taking during particular sections, which places people in musical dialogues with one another; it may engage them in attempts to mirror each others’ behavior simultaneously, as occurs in unison singing; it may call for the coordination of disparate parts; or it may combine these various modes of interaction simultaneously. Many African styles, for example, are structured in a repetitive, cyclical manner, involving turn taking in the form of improvised solo calls and unison choral responses, while polyrhythmic percussion parts coordinate among themselves and with the vocal parts, often adding dialogic variations which draw out their musical relationships to one another. The interactive experience can be further enhanced by the presence of dancers, who also enter into nonverbal dialogues both among themselves and with the musicians (Chernoff 1979). In relation to the Venda, Blacking demonstrated that the modes of interaction promoted during the performance of traditional styles articulated with the patterns of social interaction that were valued by the Venda in extramusical spheres. In the *tshekona*, the most highly cherished of their musical traditions, the Venda enchanted a space for experiencing their social ideal: “individuality in the largest possible community of individuals” (Blacking 1973a, 51).

While certain musical forms are likely to be more conducive than others to generating particular patterns of social interaction during performance, the same musical form can be used in different ways, articulating quite dis-



musical orientations to the social relations of musical production (see Turino 1991). Thus, the ways in which musical activities are orchestrated and experienced are implicated in the conceptions held by the participants about music and music making (Merriam 1964; Nettl 1989). In participatory genres the formal properties of the musical style used in a given context articulate dialectically with the conceptual orientations and motivations of the performers, and together they negotiate their performance practices in the very act of music making. Where sociability is the prime objective underlying the musical event, one would expect participants to strive to construct their musical performances in a manner which makes extensive use of the interactive potential of their repertoire, heightening their awareness of their contribution to the collective undertaking.

One could say that participatory music making provides a context for the experience of what Victor Turner (1974) has called *communitas*. Turner made a major contribution to the social sciences by placing the analytical gaze squarely upon those experiences which make life worth living, but he insisted upon a highly problematic methodological dichotomy between social structure and antistructure (Morris 1987, 254–62), which is untenable when applied to any context of group music making, where coordinated interaction is possible only because participants agree to adhere to the structural norms of the genre which unites them. The experience of *communitas* is dependent upon structure, since it is through structure that the collective gaze can be most efficiently funneled to generate a sense of shared experience. To experience *communitas* is to experience a sense of intersubjectivity, which neutralizes structure and creates the illusion of antistructure. As Niall MacKinnon (1994) has shown, the informality and “cosiness” experienced by participants of “singarounds” in the British folk scene is the result of considerable management on the part of the organizers of the events.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly not all music making is integrated into religious ritual, but—following Leach ([1954] 1970, 10–14)—one could argue that all musical activity entails ritualized behavior. Drawing on Wittgenstein, Leach ([1954] 1970, 12) argued that aesthetic behavior articulates ethical principles, obscuring the divide between the sacred and the profane. Enchantment, therefore, is not restricted to religious contexts; any setting which promotes experiences of *communitas* through music making enchants an alternative social reality into existence. The paradigmatic sphere of enchantment, however, is religious ritual. Within the religious context, the musical experience is juxtaposed to religious discourse, thus enhancing the potential that the

sensory experiences promoted through ritual enactment be interpreted in moral terms. Through musical performance, religious discourse and aesthetic experience become inextricably intertwined, inclining participants to experience the ritual space as an encounter with the moral order of the sacred. In such an enchanted world, participants construct and simultaneously experience the harmonious order that could reign in their society, if only their natural laws were not being systematically violated.

### *The Urban Experience*

Analysts commonly cite the 1930s as the decade in which the urbanization of Brazil got under way in earnest (Bresser Pereira 1985; French 1992). This was the period in which the economic base of the country started to shift from agricultural to industrial production, and this development was mostly concentrated in the urban complexes of the southeast. But it was not until the 1960s, when a dramatic restructuring of the rural economy led to a mass exodus of the rural labor force, that Brazil was to emerge as an urban nation, as several million destitute and unskilled migrants flooded into the country's major centers in the hope of securing their livelihood. In 1940, 73.65 percent of the population lived in rural areas; by 1991, 77.13 percent resided in urban centers (Santos 1993, 29), the greater part of them in or near absolute poverty.<sup>10</sup> Already in 1960 São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro had absorbed 10 percent of the population of the country; by 1991 greater São Paulo and greater Rio housed nearly 25 million people, approximately 17 percent of the total national population. According to data obtained by the Plano Urbano Básico (PUB) for 1968, 88.6 percent of the inhabitants of greater São Paulo at the time had not been born in the municipality. The national census figures for 1980 indicate that the migrant population for São Bernardo do Campo stood at 73 percent (Cardoso 1981, 39). Between 1960 and 1970 São Bernardo accounted for 36 percent of the total population increase in the “Great ABC,”<sup>11</sup> which indicates that it attracted only a minor majority of the incoming migrants to the region; during the following decade, however, when the car industry had focused its activities in the municipality, São Bernardo was responsible for 60 percent of the regional population increase (Krumholz 1982). Although internal migration declined considerably during the 1980s, São Bernardo remained a major pole of attraction; while the national population increase during the decade was 1.8 percent, São

Bernardo underwent a 13 percent increment (Toledo 1992, 60–61), reaching 561,000 people in 1991, although in 1950 there were but 29,000 people in the municipality.

Although industry was growing at an astounding rate, it was unable to keep up with the vast labor supply, most of which was composed of unskilled and illiterate or semilliterate rural agriculturalists, arriving daily in search of jobs. The constant influx of migrants was also putting tremendous pressure on the urban infrastructure, which was unable to provide the necessary housing, public services, transport facilities, and so on to meet the new demands. Over the past decades the standard of living of the Brazilian lower classes has been rapidly deteriorating as salaries have been corroded by unimaginable rates of inflation.<sup>12</sup> As Lucio Kowarik (1987, 221) has observed, Brazilian development has not been linked with prosperity for large sectors of the working classes. In 1975, 85 percent of the population of greater São Paulo—the best-paid workforce in the country—received no more than three times the minimum wage. Even though this figure had declined to 79 percent in the early 1990s, the buying power of the minimum wage had fallen by 80 percent since 1960, while since 1985 alone it had lost 40 percent of its buying power (“*Pingente da economia*” 1993, 22–23).

Today São Bernardo do Campo is the locus of the Brazilian automobile industry. Within sociological literature, it is best known for the militancy of its metalworkers’ labor unions, particularly their historic strikes in the early 1980s, which have received considerable academic attention (see Brato 1983; French 1992; Humphrey 1982; Keck 1992; and Rainho and Braga 1983, among countless others). These movements ultimately led to the organization of the Workers’ Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*), or the PT, which has come to be the largest left-wing political party of the country, with a somewhat stable electoral base of around 33 percent of the national votes. Thus, São Bernardo do Campo stands as more than a paradigm of Brazilian industrialization: with its migrant population, it helped to articulate transformations that marked the political history of the country in the late twentieth century, and local *foliões* were squarely immersed in this political atmosphere.

Despite my first impressions, however, political militancy among *foliões* was quite rare. Indeed, the only “real” political activist participating in a *companhia* in São Bernardo during the period of my research was Zezo.<sup>13</sup> He was directly involved in the metalworkers’ union, he had been a member of the factory commission at Mercedes-Benz since 1984, and he stood as a candidate for the PT for a seat as town representative in the municipal elec-

tions of Santo André in 1988, though he received only half the number of votes required for the seat. Zezo’s militant career was instigated by a family tragedy in 1978. He was on the night shift at Volkswagen while his daughter was in the hospital undergoing a routine operation in São Paulo. The child died on the operating table and the hospital claimed it informed the factory, but Zezo never received the message. The next morning he set off for the hospital to collect the child, but discovered she was dead. He became convinced that the factory managers had deliberately withheld the information because they were short of staff that evening. His attitude toward the company changed dramatically, and—drawing on the discourses of the union activists with whom he worked—he came to see the multinational as being solely preoccupied with extracting labor from the workforce while showing no interest in their families’ well-being.

Owaldir had participated in the 1980 strike and lost his job at Volkswagen as a consequence, even though he had not held a leadership role within the movement. He blamed his misfortune and the hardship his unemployment had brought upon his family squarely on the union leaders, and when these same people founded the PT a few years later, he transferred his disdain to the party. His grievance resided in his feeling that the union leaders had placed their personal political aims before the well-being of the workforce they claimed to be defending, while leaving them out in the cold once they had fulfilled their role. Since then he has steered clear of all forms of voluntary political activity, an attitude he continued to hold when I last met him in 1994. With the leadership of the Folia do Baeta Neves thus divided in their political allegiances, party political discussions within the group were systematically avoided.

Their father’s disdain for the PT notwithstanding, Owaldir’s two sons of voting age declared their support for the workers’ party to me in 1992, as did several other members of the group, most notably those employed in the automotive industry. Other *foliões*, however, sympathized with Owaldir and other acquaintances whose personal lives had been disrupted by militant activism. These *foliões* tended to cast their votes all across the vast spectrum of political parties registered at the time, so even though only a third of the group’s membership supported the PT, it was still the party with the largest representation within the group throughout my years among them. While PT support tended to be somewhat higher in most of the other *companhias* in São Bernardo, on the whole, *foliões*’ voting patterns closely mirrored the general electoral trends of the municipality at large. Given these figures, it seems inappropriate to pursue a line of inquiry that would attempt to relate

folia participation to preferences for particular political parties. Moreover, foliões themselves saw no direct relationships between these domains, and they actively pursued strategies to keep them separate. While this may tell us more about the foliões' conceptions of the public political sphere in Brazil than it does about their ideological stances, it seems clear enough that—at least up to the mid-1990s—none of the country's political parties voiced their aspirations with any clarity.

It seems, then, that folia communities are far more representative of the wider working-class population of greater São Paulo than they are of the more visible militant associations that have so fascinated the academic community. This study, therefore, is of the more commonplace strategies adopted by migrant communities in Brazil's big cities in dealing with a life of urban poverty and marginality. Indeed, James Scott (1985, 1990) has argued that such overt and explosive forms of political opposition as occurred in the 1980 strikes are quite rare, but political activity is not confined to such open manifestations of discontent. Between an apparent quiescence of the status quo and outright revolt lies an immense political terrain marked by countless forms of covert resistance, which Scott refers to as "infrapolitics": like infrared rays, infrapolitics lies "beyond the visible end of the spectrum" (1990, 183), and like the support system implied by the concept of infrastructure, it provides a cultural and structural foundation out of which public forms of political action can emerge when conditions are right. In the interim, infrapolitical activity nibbles away at the edges of the power structures, often to great effect.

It is in the realm of the infrapolitical that Scott (1990) claims that subaltern groups construct their "hidden transcripts," that is, critiques of power containing expressions of their experiences of social injustice. These transcripts are hidden precisely because they are formulated among one's family and peers in spaces that are far removed from the public gaze of the power holders, and like Gramsci, Scott finds them in aesthetic representations that are often called folklore. Scott, however, emphasizes the experience of assaults upon one's dignity and self-esteem that typically accompany material exploitation, pointing out that these themes are prominent in hidden transcripts. Thus, considerable energy is expended within the infrapolitical sphere in creating autonomous social spaces for the reassertion of dignity and the restoration of self-esteem.

Though—at least at present—the folia tradition cannot be connected to public political action, it can be seen as part of the infrapolitical grid, providing a safe cover for the construction of hidden transcripts and the nur-

turing of cultural integrity. Its discourses may challenge official church doctrine, but they are presented as a form of Catholicism, which reduces surveillance over folia activities; folia journeys take place completely outside the control of the church, circulating within the limits of low-income neighborhoods, where the state apparatus also keeps a low profile; furthermore, they are the basis for the construction of networks of mutual support common to many migrant groups all over the world, encompassing many households within the grid. By structuring the network around religious activity, mutual support can be articulated in ethical terms. By enchanting their social vision into the world during their annual journeys, folia communities periodically reconfirm the truths of their religious tenets, reconstituting themselves as moral communities, where they can reclaim a sense of dignity.

### *Itineraries*

When I began my fieldwork for this project, I had already been investigating Brazilian popular Catholic traditions since 1982, though I had focused on patron saint festivals in the rural southeast. Having been brought up in São Bernardo in an American Methodist missionary family, I was fascinated by what I perceived as the garish baroque aesthetics of Brazilian popular Catholicism. This mystical world of magical realism contrasted so starkly with the austerity and frugality of mainstream urban middle-class Protestant aesthetics that, at least initially, I had little difficulty finding the "exotic other" among its practitioners. Indeed, I was convinced I had just entered the pages of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* on my first-ever field excursion to document a popular Catholic festival, the Pentecost festival in São Luiz do Paraitinga. There I was, a total stranger to the place, and yet immediately upon my arrival, I was informed of the dreadful tragedy that had just struck the town: only minutes before my bus rolled into the station, someone had stolen the crown of the Divine Holy Spirit from the festival altar. It had happened, I was told, because the priest had refused to choose a patron for the festival; it was an electoral year and he had not wanted local politicians to use the event to forward their political aims. Without a patron, however, there could be no *afogado*, the local meat stew served as a collective repast to everyone at the festival. Thus, the Holy Spirit had punished the community because there would be no food for the masses on his feast day.

The poetics of popular Catholicism was also not lost on Dona Maria

"Santeira" (Saint-Maker), who painted the banners for the various Catholic festivals in São Luiz. She lived in a tiny, narrow cottage whose walls were lined from top to bottom with clippings and posters of saints, angels, churches, and other religious symbols, and her cabinets overflowed with Catholic paraphernalia. She told me that several years earlier she had converted to Pentecostalism, and the pastor had said she needed to take down all her decorations. And she did. One day, a few months later, she walked into her house and saw the blank white walls and realized that her house was ugly. Then and there she decided to become a Catholic again, and put everything back up.

For all its poetic charm, popular Catholicism is constructed out of representations of wide diffusion throughout the Christian world, and this posed a methodological problem intrinsic to any ethnography of the familiar—or "endo-ethnography" (daMatta 1994): the challenge of "defamiliarization." Having had a strong Christian upbringing, I often found it difficult to distinguish between the readings of Christian symbolism that I held and those of the devotees with whom I worked. Though I strove to estrange myself, I was never entirely sure of the extent to which I was imposing my own commonsense notions upon the material. Moreover, the cultural baggage I shared with Brazilian popular Catholic communities was not limited to a common repertoire of Christian symbolism: we all saw ourselves as Brazilians, and therefore we had been socialized into many of the same dominant narratives and ideologies—or "public transcripts" (Scott 1990)—operating in the wider society; we spoke the same language, despite the differences in our accents; we lived within the same national borders, which made us subject—at least in principle—to the same laws and public policies; we were exposed to many of the same television soap operas and commodities propagated by the mass media; and this is but a small sampling of the vast overlapping spheres in our experiences. This commonality of experience provided us with a mutually recognized repertoire of cultural representations, and one could be easily deceived that we also shared the same understandings of this common ground.

Yet the lifestyles and social experiences of the devotees contrasted dramatically with my own. In Brazil, where the social classes are highly segregated, there is a wide cultural gap separating the rich from the poor, which only appears to be bridged by the national and supranational representations and discourses that make up the public transcripts. The class divisions in Brazilian society are, of course, far more complex and contradictory than this simple dichotomy between rich and poor would indicate, cut across, as

it is, by distinctions that emerge from regional specificities, the rural-urban divide, race and ethnic relations, gender and generational differences, and the finer markers of distinction operating within each of these categories. Among the lower classes, however, a gross opposition between rich and poor is basic to their understanding of the social order (Sarti 1995, 117; Scheper-Hughes 1992, 98). In a society thus divided, much of the cultural material available for elaboration by the subaltern classes derives from the public transcripts, since they must negotiate their livelihood and cultural integrity within a wider frame defined by hegemonic discourses. This does not mean, however, that their understandings of the dominant cultural themes necessarily cohere with the dominant views; along with continuity, there is also considerable interpretive discrepancy. While contrasting interpretations can be identified fairly easily, at the interface, where public and hidden transcripts meet, there is a wide, ever-shifting gray area of continuous negotiation and argument that refuses to be disentangled. Indeed, it is the very ambiguity and multivocality of the shared repertoire that enable the continuous dialogue—or argument—across the divide, preserving a façade of national unity.<sup>14</sup>

Given the global nature of Christian symbolism, there are also methodological issues pertaining to the ethnographic representation of the material, since Western readers' understandings of the familiar motifs will also be informed by their cultural backgrounds and their commonsense interpretations of the symbols. Just as the ethnographer must strive toward distancing to grasp local interpretations when dealing with global phenomena, she must also find the means of constructing the ethnographic narrative in such a way as to elicit defamiliarization from the readership. The danger here is that one can easily overemphasize and fix the interpretive distinctions, losing sight of the ambiguity, multivocality, and contextuality of cultural representations. In response to this problem I have juxtaposed accounts of actual performance events to the normative cultural models that informed them, as a means of illustrating the fluidity with which shared representations are negotiated within immediate situations.

While these matters pertain to the study of popular Catholicism generally, when I transferred the research from the rural to the urban context, I confronted other challenges as well, not the least of which involved overcoming my fear of entering the "dangerous space" of low-income urban neighborhoods, a fear which—as a child of the middle classes—had been repeatedly drummed into me. I had heard countless stories about the violence that was thought to prevail in such places, and it was said that only luck

and God's protective hand—allowed one to reemerge unscathed. To be sure, the daily lives of the urban poor were marked by violence, but not of the sort portrayed in middle-class myths. Furthermore, their ethos seemed remarkably continuous with that of the rural communities with which I was familiar,<sup>1</sup> for urban life seemed to have made little headway in breaking the enchantment of the popular Catholic aesthetic world which linked the migrants to their rural backgrounds, even though—to me—many aspects of their lives seemed to be far from enchanted.

When I began my project on folias de reis, I held a short-term research fellowship at the Centro de Estudos da Memória Popular do ABC of the Instituto Metodista de Ensino Superior in São Bernardo do Campo, where I was conducting a survey of migrant traditions in the industrial centers surrounding the institute. I was still completing the survey when I entered the doctoral program in social anthropology at the University of São Paulo, which was located at the opposite end of the city. Moreover, I had teaching obligations at three other institutions scattered across São Paulo. This was not an uncommon scenario for Brazilian doctoral candidates, since the buying power of salaries and student grants fluctuated continuously, along with the escalating rates of inflation. Developing strategies for balancing the household budget while trying to prepare a doctoral thesis was a challenge I shared with most of my colleagues in the postgraduate program. These circumstances were far from ideal for conducting field research according to “conventional” anthropological methods, and I never lived continuously for a prolonged period in any of the neighborhoods in which a folia was based. Instead, I remained in my flat in São Paulo, and the bulk of my data were collected during evening visits and weekends, when foliões were off work and free to speak with me. During my vacations I spent time in their hometowns to experience the contexts they spoke about so frequently and with such nostalgia. By working as a part-time field researcher, I collected data in a steady stream of homocopathic doses extending over a period of three years. Since I moved to Northern Ireland in 1990 I have returned to Brazil on a regular basis, updating my material with each trip.

Anthropologists and ethnomusicologists have become acutely aware that the most any ethnography can achieve is a partial representation of what is there (Clifford 1986). Despite this inescapable truth, exacerbated perhaps by “homocopathic” research methods, I was guided throughout my work by what I would now call the “holistic ideal of radical empiricism” (Spencer 1997). Clearly, there will always be a gap between what is possible in a pragmatic world and what one would hope for in an ideal setting, but it is only

by safeguarding the ideal that we will be able to construct revelatory visions of humanity's humanity. By preserving a holistic orientation, I hope that my partial representation is able to give some insight into the ways folia communities construct experiences of fragmentary wholeness through the contradictory coherence of their enchanted realities.

In the next chapter, “Folias,” I discuss the historical background of the tradition. This is followed by descriptions of the various musical styles used by folias in the southeast, which are then related to the mobility, settlement patterns, and economic activities of the population in the region from the colonial era to the present day. I conclude the chapter by introducing the reader to the companhias of São Bernardo.

Chapter 3, “Banners,” outlines the hierarchical structure of folias and provides descriptions of each of the roles available to the participants within these associations.

In chapter 4 “Rehearsals,” I look at the foliões' conceptions of music, music making, and the social relations of musical production, demonstrating how these conceptions articulate with folia musical performance practices. Through a detailed ethnography of the sociability of music making, I show how an atmosphere of camaraderie is created among the musicians during performance, which neutralizes their internal hierarchies. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the recent introduction of product-oriented conceptualizations of music is being negotiated within urban companhias.

In “Departures” I discuss the ritual that launches each journey, looking at how its orchestration redefines the social sphere, to construct a sacred sphere distinct from the everyday world. The chapter addresses the ways in which the various motifs in the ritual context articulate with the ritual script to form webs of associations which embody the major themes in the folia worldview. Moreover, I show how the shared representations of the folia repertoire are made meaningful on a personal level by integrating individual biographies into the collective memory of the community.

The sixth chapter, “Adorations,” focuses upon the mythic repertoire of the tradition. Folia narratives are viewed in relation to “orthodox” accounts of the Nativity to highlight the ways in which the foliões' (unorthodox) representations of the Three Kings embody the moral values of the Brazilian subaltern classes. In proclaiming their subservience to the saints, folia communities construct their identity in moral terms, marking their distinction from the “rich.”

In chapter 7, “Visitations,” I describe the ritual exchanges that occur during visitations, in which the blessings of the Kings are reciprocated with do-

nations to the festival. Reciprocal relations within the context of visitations are further viewed in terms of the logic of the promise, in which the miracles of the Kings are implicated in communal obligations, articulating inter-household solidarity as a divine mandate.

The eighth chapter, "Arrivals," looks at the final festival that ends the annual journey, bringing together a community of fellow townsmen and their friends and neighbors. Together they celebrate their religious tenets, constituting themselves as a moral community. I claim that the apparent naïveté and innocuousness of the folia de reis tradition provides a cover through which foliões have been able to safeguard their cultural capital, while the folklorization of the tradition has allowed for the creation of spaces for its performance in a wider public arena.

In the final chapter, "Visions," I argue that, in contrast to official Catholicism, in the popular Catholic realm the continuous communal resignification of religious representations maintains a degree of coherence between religious life and daily experiences and aspirations. In such a decentralized context, enchantment provides a means of organizing communal action in a manner which re-creates the religious ideals, allowing devotees to visualize themselves within a divine moral order. Within folia communities it is the contrast between experiences within the ritual domain and experiences outside it that reinforces their conviction of the truths articulated in their enchanted worlds. From the margins of society, the infrapolitical realm of popular Catholicism allows the Brazilian underprivileged classes to periodically reinvent the universe in terms of their understanding of God's natural laws and thereby to create and sustain a vision of an equitable social world.

## *Folias*

You want to know where the folia de reis comes from? Well, madam, it's from the beginning of the world.

Before Jesus was born . . . there already was Gaspar, because there were three: a Portuguese, a German, and an African. . . . So they had been raised out there. Well, one day before Jesus came, King Herod ruled the earth. So all the people were slaves. . . . Those three boys took care of the sheep out there. . . .

Before Jesus was born, he already performed miracles. The Three Kings were working there, innocently. They were there without a father, without a mother. Not even their father and mother knew each other, because slaves were all bought. They would buy a lot and take it over there; another lot and bring it here. Well, there they were working, working.

So one day Jesus's mother passed by. She and Saint Joseph passed by where they were. . . . Gaspar, who was the oldest, said to his companions: "Look" —he had never met his mother— "look, there's our mother, our mother is coming!"

They looked and looked and looked. And she was coming and coming and coming.

He said to her, "There's no path here" —the fence was high so the sheep couldn't escape— "there's no path here."

She said, "But I can pass."

He said, "There's no path"