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Calundu's "Winds of Divination"

Music and Black Religiosity in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Minas Gerais, Brazil

Jonathon Grasse

The drum-laden music of *calundu* religious practice punctuated life in cities, mining towns, and farms (*fazendas*) in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Minas Gerais, Brazil. This article seeks to more clearly understand *calundu* historically, its religiosity's links to music, and its meaningfulness as a vital yet seemingly lost sacred music tradition from an understudied region of the African diaspora. Discussion of its oppression, subsequent fragmentation, and transformation leads to a brief examination of notional scenarios of cultural redirection and absorption of *calundu*'s music among other black religious music genres in Minas Gerais. These include the syncretic Afro-Brazilian religions of *macumba* and *Umbanda*, the black Catholic *congado*, and the quasisacred remnants of the otherwise secular *batuque* circle dance. Examining eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music and black religiosity, and *calundu*'s fate, offers insight both into links between music and religious belief, and into these identities in Minas Gerais as a unique cultural territory.

Another role *calundu* music plays arguably rests in its appeal to the "parallelism" approach found in scholarship on Atlantic creole religious belief. For instance, James Sweet maintains that early eighteenth-century African religions in Brazil were often less syncretic or creolized than "independent systems of thought" paralleling Catholicism.¹

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¹ James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 7 and 115.

In addition to its very religiosity running counter to Christian beliefs, *calundu*'s African-derived liturgical music and language help distinguish it from creolization, syncretism, or hybridization.² Drumming—both figuratively doctrinal as sacred communication *and* imagistic in its sensual timbre and attractive musical patterns that induce dance and trance possession—is a primary conduit for ancestor worship and spirit communication. A key to religious parallelism, drumming here remains "uncompromisingly African."³ Likewise speaking to parallelism was *calundu*'s equally uncompromising chant, calling forth spirits and ancestors in African languages including a "dialect of the mines" (*falar Africano* or *calunga*) specific to Minas Gerais and southeastern Brazil, which decreased in prevalence, like *calundu* itself, in isolated parts of Minas.⁴

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² See Kalle Kananoja, *Central African Identities and Religiosity in Colonial Minas Gerais* (Åbo, Finland: Åbo Akademi University, 2012), 17–22. Using Afro-*mineiro* religiosity as a focal point, this author effectively summarizes divergent views on distinguishing creolization from among other theories.

³ José Jorge de Carvalho, "Black Music of All Colors: The Construction of Black Ethnicity in Ritual and Popular Genres of Afro-Brazilian Music," in *Music and Black Ethnicity: The Caribbean and South America*, ed. Gerard Behague (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1992), 188.

⁴ Steven Eric Byrd, "Calunga, an Afro-Brazilian Speech of the *Triângulo Mineiro*: Its Grammar and History" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, Austin, 2005). Regarding the cultural and religious power of secretive, African-derived language in Brazil, see also

From Africa to Brazil

Calundu's dynamic social spaces define a chapter of Minas Gerais's history, helping illustrate the unique cultural territory of this interior highland state also referred to as Minas, whose inhabitants are known as *mineiros* (miners). A cross-section of colonial mineiro society dominated by a Catholic Portuguese minority sought out secretive calundu healers who maintained trance-possession customs within a hidden world that contrasted with the public soundscapes of other Afro-mineiro religious music. Some calundu sessions attracted paying clients seeking remedies, spiritual protection, and good fortune in matters of love and finance. Directors of calundu ritual (*calundeiros/as*) relied upon music, chant, and dance for trance possession, inviting ancestral spirits (sometimes known as *zumbi*) to prescribe treatments and advice. Enslaved *nganga* priests and priestesses from Angola likely contributed to calundu's presence in Minas, as did perhaps the slavery-shattered remnants of secretive Congolese *kimpasi* religious societies. The Baongo people, for instance, placed *nganga* practice alongside the work of *itomi*, advisors in supernatural communication who encouraged fertility and resolved family disputes, and of *ndoki* fortunetellers practiced in divination. Two centuries before the decades-long mineiro gold rush began in the mid-1690s, the Portuguese and missionaries spread Catholicism in Africa while interpreting these rituals as creolized concepts of fetish (*feitiço*) and sorcery (*feitiçaria*), with practitioners known as fetishists (*feitiçeiros*). Early eighteenth-century Portuguese Inquisition testimony given by Matheos, a Jesuit College estate slave in

Bengo, Angola, describes *quilundu* (calundu) and *maconzá*, a scraper idiophone known in Brazil as *reco-reco* and *canzála*:

They also had a pot placed over a fire. In the pot [were] blood, wild honey, red feathers, and bones of animals. Three men danced around the fire, accompanied by musicians playing *maconzas*. The purpose of the ceremony was to cure a sick black woman. Paulo, the master of the ceremony, invoked a spirit named Angola, clearly a reference to the title *ngola*.⁵

Slaves and their descendants formed ethnically diverse generations of Afro-mineiros who acknowledged the liturgical music upon which calundu's efficacy rested, contributing to the transformed traditions of an increasingly pan-Bantu culture, dominated as it was by Congolese and Angolan influences. Liturgical chant and dance were likely accompanied by combinations of membranophones of various shapes and sizes played by hands or sticks: frame drum (*adufe*, later *pandeiro*), friction drum (*cuíca* or *puíta*), wooden or bamboo notched scrapers (*reco-reco*, or *canzála*), shakers metallic or otherwise (generic term: *chocalho*), bead or shell net-covered gourds (*chekere*), basket rattles (*caxixi*), struck metallophonic bells (*agogo*), and shaken bells with clappers (*adjá*). While no transcriptions of calundu music exist, we can surmise that these sacred timbral textures were combined with syncopated, polyrhythmic patterns similar to those heard in known African and Afro-Brazilian percussion music. Arguing for timbres and generic style as primary contexts for religiosity allows us through conjecture to establish historical continuity of some musical traits with other Afro-Brazilian religious practices. We ascribe to

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Carlos Vogt and Peter Fry, *Cafundó: A África no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996).

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⁵ Cited in Kananoja, *Central African Identities and Religiosity*, 202.

calundu's musical import not just this commonality, but also a heightened sense of what Suzel Reily posits in her ethnography of southeastern Brazil as the "sensual stimulation and loosely qualified affective experiences . . . in the construction of religious consciousness," as she navigates between dichotomous notions of "doctrinal" and "imagistic" modes of religiosity.⁶

Diverse Central African ethnicities in Minas likely shared to varying degrees music's role in articulating religious beliefs concerning everyday social roles, relationships, fluidity between the worlds of the living and the dead, and beliefs in the eternal force of human souls. The relatability with spirit pantheons and ancestral heritage through music remained a cornerstone. Other shared features likely included communal vocabularies of performative gestures engaging the explanation, prediction, and control of life experience through spirit forces. Fortune and misfortune arose from a universe of conditions, ranging from a healthy and harmonic balance to illness and bad luck brought about by spiritual imbalances. Mediating these forces were calundeiros possessed by the "winds of divination," with drumming, chant, and dance enabling embodiment of spirits grounded anew in transformed social spaces of Minas Gerais, where the practice flourished more than in other Brazilian regions.

Although common in Bahia [in northeastern Brazil], it was in the region of Minas where references [to calundu] more consistently appeared in documentation, generalized during the eighteenth century as a social function of the region's large contingent of slaves, the

process of urbanization, and the local production of gold.⁷

Though of great historical value, sources such as observations published by nineteenth-century European travelers—who were sometimes unaware of the sacred-music functions they witnessed in Afro-mineiro communities—were prone to racist characterizations.⁸ Some misidentification likely went both ways: secular entertainment may have been conveyed as sorcery, with sacred rituals described as simple dance music. "Feast" and "dance" labeled what could have been calundu. Some whites and mulattos participated in calundu healing rituals, while some blacks did not, adding to potentially confusing socially heterogeneous musical meanings. *Ladinos*, acculturated Africans who turned away from their ancestral traditions such as calundu, more readily looked toward beliefs that Luso-Brazilian colonial society accepted.⁹ Catholicism had made inroads into sixteenth-century Africa long before slave shipments to Minas began: some slaves had already been converted to, or deeply influenced by, Catholicism. In subscribing to divination and healing rituals, certain whites in authority tacitly allowed blacks and slaves to continue calundu as a vehicle of broader

⁷ Daniela Buono Calainho, *Metrópole das Mandingas* (Toronto: Garamond, 2008), 90. Unless otherwise noted, translations are by the author.

⁸ See Ilka Boaventura Leite, *Antropologia da viagem: Escravos e libertos em Minas Gerais no século XIX* (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 1996). The author catalogues and details observations on mineiro slaves and freed persons published by European visitors during the nineteenth century.

⁹ Blacks and mulattos formed an integral community of professionally trained Western-instrument musicians during the *barroco mineiro*, the Baroque-era flourishing of sacred Catholic church music. The Minas School of mulatto composers refers to a nativist group of locally trained composers who created a good portion of Brazil's *música colonial* repertoire of liturgical music, for which Minas is highly regarded.

⁶ Suzel Ana Reily, *Voices of the Magi: Enchanted Journeys in Southeast Brazil* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 212–14.

religious and cultural presence. It was calundu's healing and divination practices, propelled by economic gain, that attracted whites and thus generated a preponderance of documented Inquisition and other ecclesiastical testimony. These witnesses, as cultural outsiders, were far less compelled to parse the negative satanic witchcraft context from calundu cosmology's otherwise more thoroughly marginalized religiosity. Of course, music and language served all of calundu's purposes, as primary examples of "parallel" religious practice.

Yet calundu struggled to find safe haven, being driven into secrecy and fragmentation by secular and church law, the latter enforced via the repressive apparatus of the Portuguese Inquisition.¹⁰ Portugal's Tribunal of the Holy Office of Inquisition operated between 1536 and 1821. As Goa, India, was its only outpost in the colonies, Brazil answered directly to Lisbon. Proceedings in Salvador, Bahia, began in 1646, seeking primarily to punish Jews and Muslims. Calundu constituted aids to sorcery, enchantment, and magic rather than manifestations of holy worship to a singular deity standing contrary to Christian belief.¹¹ Testimony was further shaped to portray African religious practice, including music and dance, as demonic. Popular literature of the time also

made erroneous connections between calundu and the Christian concept of the devil. In denouncing calundu's religious and performative components while criminalizing its medical practices, the Inquisition promoted its associations with satanic worship. During the generation preceding the Minas Gerais gold discovery, Brazil's celebrated Baroque-era poet Gregório de Matos Guerra (1636–96) depicted calundu as satanic witchcraft in descriptive verse completed during his stay in Bahia (1679–94):

I know of *quilombos* / with superlative masters
In which they teach at night / calundus and
witchcraft . . . .
What I know is that in such dances / Satan is
engaged . . . .
There is no scorned lady / or disfavored gallant
Who misses going to the *quilombo* / to dance his
little bit.¹²

Inquisition activities in Brazil were most frequent and broadest in scope in Minas Gerais, occurring there between the 1720s and the early nineteenth century. The Holy Office's familiars closely observed colonial populations, documenting offenses that could be prosecuted by the Lisbon Tribunal.¹³ Separate from the Inquisition, ecclesiastic inquiries (*devassas eclesiásticas*) were investigative church hearings examining the lives of select mineiro citizenry, at which individuals testified as to religious behavior, suspect activities, and sexual conduct. Devassas were first carried out in Minas by an ecclesiastical unit in 1721. (In 1745 it would become the office of the archbishop of Mariana.) As with the Holy See's Inquisition records, devassas offer

¹⁰ Papal agreements granted the royal court of Portugal patronage over the church (*padroado real*), effectively making the Inquisition an agency of the Portuguese state.

¹¹ Anita Novinsky, *Inquisição: Prisioneiros do Brasil, séculos XVI–XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: Expressão e Cultura, 2002), 23–24. Practitioners of what was seen by Western authority as "magical" African-derived religious rites were persecuted, but less rigorously than heretics and the followers of organized religions constituting idolatry. Despite calundu's religious import, the Inquisition declared that it amounted to deception and trickery, a repertoire of lesser evils and nonheretical strategies for solving everyday problems and for healing.

¹² Cited in Rogério Budasz, *A música no tempo de Gregório de Mattos* (Curitiba: DeArtes/UFPR, 2004), 12. Here, *quilombo* refers not to a runaway-slave settlement but rather to a forest clearing.

¹³ Laura de Mello e Souza, *The Devil and the Land of the Holy Cross*, trans. Diane Groszklaus Whitty (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 184–86.

valuable descriptions of calundu manifest through music, dance, chant, and language. However, these views were filtered through complex authoritarian means tainted by racist bigotry and by potentially spurious witnesses reporting malicious hearsay. Some witnesses may have libeled their fellow citizens or misled investigators in an attempt to conceal their own involvement in calundus. For instance, slave owners were known to have received percentages of receipts from their slaves' professional rituals. They and other whites risked exposure in having profited from, participated in, or formed a willing audience to calundu.

In Minas, *calundeiros* and *curandeiros* (the latter term, “healers,” can also be used in contexts unrelated to calundu) entered even the lives of Catholic clerics. During his 1819 expedition from Rio de Janeiro to southwest Minas, the French naturalist Auguste de Saint-Hilaire noted in the city of São João del Rei that the local parish priest recommended a black slave *curandeiro* who had treated his father.¹⁴ In a not atypical case from the early eighteenth century, military officer Silvestre Marques da Cunha paid higher than market value for four African slaves sold by mineiro merchant Pedro Nunes de Miranda: each was a highly skilled *curandeiro* specializing in remedies and treatments for illnesses. Sixteen kilometers east of Queluz (today Conselheiro Lafaiete), farmer (*fazendeiro*) Antonio Gomes da Cruz rented out his healer and diviner slave Matheus Monjolo throughout the region.¹⁵ Criminalized yet commodified, calundu settled into this mountainous Brazilian interior

among diverse agents, forming an uneasy regional identity that

can be seen as a way in which the slave protected and redefined his culture in the face of hierarchical cultural values imposed by Luso-Brazilian authorities, while at the same time creating links of friendship and fraternity with elements of the dominant society. This popular culture, uniting currents arising from Africa and from popular Portuguese culture, impeded the full imposition of Portuguese hierarchical culture.¹⁶

A Group of *Calundeiras* in Colonial Minas

Black freedwoman (*liberta*) Rosa Gomes was a store owner and highly regarded official in her Catholic brotherhood (*irmandade*) in Conceição do Mato Dentro, a town in the Serra do Cipó region 40 kilometers from the Afro-mineiro communities of Açude and Mata Tição. (Both towns are renowned in the twenty-first century for maintaining Afro-mineiro musical traditions.) Rosa represented a significant mineiro demographic: the free person of color who either owned or operated a bar or general store. Her weekly practices constituted creolized Catholic worship masking African-derived religious practices. In 1764, Rosa was denounced by the Portuguese Inquisition for hosting “celebrations that were clearly African in origin,” including batuque dances on feast days and Sundays.¹⁷ The case language conflates an otherwise secular batuque drum circle with unspecified religious practice described as “African in origin,” likely calundu. Though the simultaneity of Catholicism and “parallel” ritual is apparent, the details of Rosa’s celebrations

¹⁴ Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, *Viagem às nascentes do Rio São Francisco* (Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia, 2004), 64.

¹⁵ Júnia Ferreira Furtado, “Ensaio barbeiros, cirurgiões e médicos na Minas colonial,” *Revista do Arquivo Público Mineiro* 41 (2005): 99.

¹⁶ D. Ramos, “A influência africana e a cultura popular em Minas Gerais: Um comentário sobre a interpretação da escravidão,” in *Brasil: Colonização e escravidão*, ed. Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 2000), 142.

¹⁷ Kananoja, *Central African Identities and Religiosity*, 189 and 197–98.

remain a mystery. Four generations of Africans and their descendants had been making Minas their home by the time of her trial. Rosa was either a *calundeira* or one whose community leadership position empowered her to simply host ceremonies.

A Central African slave named Gracia hosted racially mixed Saturday evening gatherings in the small mineiro town of Rodeiro, near Ubá, in the Zona da Mata region. Lisbon Tribunal testimony from 1721 details three African dancers performing a ritual aimed at, among other spiritual and divinational goals, locating runaway slaves and curing blindness. The witnessing Catholic priest testified that during spirit possession, Gracia channeled a venerated ancestor identified as Dom Felipe, likely referencing the king of Ndongo (1626–64) known as Dom Felipe.¹⁸ Gracia's clients knelt before her, offering great reverence and addressing her as Dom Felipe.

Also telling is the case of Rita, a slave from Africa's Mina coast living near Mariana, home to 11,000 slaves by 1718, and an important Roman Catholic diocese by 1745.

Her cures were made "in the presence of various blacks who had found the sound of drumming from their land. . . . [A]s she danced, the more they wanted the sound of the drum to be played according to the custom of their land." During her ceremonies, she spoke "at the same time using her Mina language," . . . accompanied by African instruments, and she "prayed and made those watching pray on their knees in front of a small altar with lovely images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and other saints." The cures made by Rita used divination, natural products such as herbs and powdered roots, African music and elements of the Catholic religion, [and] are a window into a popular culture in formation. . . . [T]he participants

played music "of their land." The preferred instruments were drums also "of their land," [and] speaking in languages "of their land."¹⁹

In the 1740s, a fifty-year-old Angolan healer in Sabará who had purchased her own freedom, directed drumming, dance, and chant to bring about *calundu's* "winds of divination." As described by Luzia Pinta's accusers, drums called forth the transformative, cosmological healing power of the spirit world of apparitions. According to the official letter sent with her to the Lisbon Tribunal, this "*feitiçeira*" was known for invoking the devil by means of dances called *calundus*. One of her accusers was a Portuguese-born white landowner and head of the local militia who had testified in 1739 concerning Pinta's *calundus*, in which he had participated. Diogo Sousa de Carvalho stated to the tribunal that

singing were two negresses, also Angolans, and an African male playing a *tabaque*, which is a small tambourine; and they say that the negresses and the black male are her slaves; and playing and singing for a space of one to two hours she became as if out of her mind, speaking things that no one understood; and the people who were to be cured lay down on the floor [and] she passed over them various times; on these occasions, it was said that she had the winds of divination.²⁰

Such testimonies describe the practice of *calundu* as one sought out by elites as well as commoners. The most prestigious of Luzia's clients was Dr. Bathesar de Morais Sarmiento, graduate of Portugal's esteemed University of

¹⁹ D. Ramos, "A influência africana e a cultura popular em Minas Gerais." 144–45.

²⁰ Inquisition of Lisbon, Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, trans. D.R. *Tabaque* is a corruption of *atabaque*, a tall cylindrical drum, and is erroneously identified as a "small tambourine." Cited from http://academic.csuohio.edu/as227/Lectures/Brazil/pinta_translation.htm (accessed April 2013).

¹⁸ Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 151.

Coimbra and a prominent judge (*ouvidor*) of the colonial unit of Minas Gerais (*capitania*), who visited her for pain relief.²¹ Luzia was shipped to Lisbon and coerced into confessing that her spiritual practice was an illness. Tortured for alleged satanic pacts, she was exiled and ordered never to return to Sabará.

The Vila Sabará of Luzia Pinta's day was one of the most important mineiro cities. Luzia's calundus flourished in a bustling, wealthy urban center that was demographically dominated by Africans and their descendants. Less than 15 percent of Sabará's population was white, a number almost doubled by free women of color such as Luzia.²² Children of mixed racial parentage, many the result of sexual abuse, would sometimes be granted manumission if the mother was a slave. The population of free mulattos swelled throughout Minas by the middle of the eighteenth century. Those of mixed parentage likely strayed more readily from strongly parallel religious practice like calundu toward syncretic belief and Catholicism. Religious hybridism occurred, with some calundu practitioners baptized as Christians and molding Catholic beliefs into their daily lives.

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²¹ Laird W. Bergad, *Slavery and the Demographic and Economic History of Minas Gerais, Brazil, 1720–1888* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 151.

²² *Ibid.*, 230–31. Sabará's gold mines attracted outsiders well into the late eighteenth century, and by 1776 over 5,000 free blacks called the city home. Because of the low ratio of white women available for white men, colonial Minas witnessed widespread concubinage among rich, poor, slave, and free. While fining citizens for violations of religious doctrine, the church could not stop widespread interracial sexual encounters; nor could it prevent white men from living unmarried, public lives with black and mulatto women. Years later, the 1808 Sabará county (*comarca*) census would count 64,927 people of color in the total population of 76,215: 21,980 black slaves, 8,884 free blacks, 32,465 free mulattos, and 786 mulatto slaves.

A dearth of effective Western medicine encouraged social elites to seek black healers, who were seen by authorities as criminals engaging in Cabalistic pacts. In Mariana in 1790, Joaquina Maria de Conceição attended “calundu dances” directed by the “Benguelas” (after the Angolan slave port of Benguela) Maria and Thereza. These dances were attended by slaves, the fazendeiro's daughter, and three other white women. Joaquina later testified, in what was likely malicious hearsay, that “the blacks pretended that they died and started to speak in delicate voices, saying that it was the Devil speaking.”²³ Rural mineiros, including fazenda owners, also relied on African-derived medicinal practice. In his study of coffee fazenda culture in the county of Vassouras, in Rio de Janeiro's Paraíba Valley, Stanley Stein comments on what could most likely have been said about nineteenth-century coffee fazendas in southern Minas:

Where fazendeiros knew little home medicine, their wives and their slaves exchanged views or finally called in the curandeiro, a figure of long standing in African cultures. Known among Vassouras slaves as curandeiros, quimbandeiros, and cangiristas, and to Portuguese as feiticeiros, curandeiros employed a variety of remedies including herbs and other substances prescribed in accordance with set rituals.²⁴

The case of Rosa Courana (ca. 1719–ca. 1761), later known as Rosa Maria Egípcíaca da Vera Cruz, offers insight into the calundu-influenced society of eighteenth-century Minas Gerais. Of the Coura people, Rosa was sold into slavery at age six in Whydah (today in Nigeria), and thus was too young to have

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²³ Kannanoja, *Central African Identities and Religiosity*, 237. The author cites the Tribunal do Santo Oficial/Inquisição de Lisboa in the Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais, Lisbon.

²⁴ Stanley J. Stein, *Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 189, 205.

received religious training while still living in Africa. Sold again in 1725 at Rio de Janeiro's infamous Valongo slave market, she was raped at fourteen by her owner. Rosa was sold a third time, to Ana Garces de Moraes of Inficcionado, Minas Gerais, a small town of 500 residents a few kilometers from Mariana, where she lived as a prostitute until the age of thirty-one. A "public woman," one of many "women of the fandango in Minas Gerais" during the height of the gold rush, she befriended Leandra, a *crioula* (creole) from Pernambuco believed to have been an initiate (*ekédi*) of the Xangô religion centered in the city of Recife. Another acquaintance was Padre Francisco Gonçalves Lopes, a traveling exorcist who diagnosed Rosa's epilepsy as satanic possession, and whose friendship led to her gradual conversion to Catholicism and acquisition of literacy.

Rosa's painful journey, including her eventual transformation into a popular saint, is characterized by forms of cultural and religious syncretism manifested in Minas Gerais, and arguably reflected the viciousness with which authorities punished an innocent victim whose behavior was linked to calundu's possession-based trance. She crossed paths with church authorities in 1749 when she suffered a severe epileptic seizure in Nossa Senhora do Pilar Church in São João del Rey. Following her immediate arrest and subsequent jailing, she was mercilessly whipped for the heretical crime of satanic possession at the pillory in Mariana's main square on orders issued by the recently installed bishop of Mariana, Dom Frei Manuel da Cruz. Carrying scars for the remainder of her life, and partially paralyzed by her public torture, Rosa was adopted and freed from slavery by her exorcist priest. She left Minas Gerais in 1751. In Rio de Janeiro, her written accounts of visions, of having a direct relationship with

Jesus Christ, and of hearing divine orders directly from God won admirers and sparked a movement to have her canonized. Rosa Maria produced the earliest known autobiographical work of any black woman in history, *Sagrada teologia do amor divino das almas peregrinas* (Sacred Theology of Divine Love of the Pilgrims' Souls).

A saint who prayed in Latin, who knew how to touchingly sing liturgical hymns, but who, as a good African from the Mina coast, never dispensed with the *cachimbo* drum from which she was inseparable; who in her mystical rapture could be convincingly compared to the prophets canonized by Rome, but who could not occasionally resist the temptation to worship Jesus Christ by dancing frenetically to the rhythm of batuque.²⁵

Calundu Drumming: Brazilian Transformation of the Powerful *Ngoma*

While the celebratory rhythms of Afro-mineiro drumming brought certain freedoms from, and created resistance to, slavery's brutality and injustice, the functional sonic worlds and rhythmic patterns of calundu coaxed the presence of ancestors and healing spirits, forming sacred alliances with incantations, dance, ritualized objects, and medicinal treatments. Trance possession signaled the stage in which the healer appeased the spiritual entity, channeling its diagnosis and treatment of illness, revealing remedies and instructions for their application. In Central Africa, drumming engendered successful ancestral healing overseen by specialized communities:

In some circles these communities are called "drums of affliction," reflecting the significance of their use of drumming and rhythmic song-dancing, and the colloquial

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²⁵ Luiz Mott, *Rosa Egípcia: Uma santa africana no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Bertrand Brasil, 1993), 10. Facts about this case are cited from Mott, *passim*.

designation in many societies of the region of the whole gamut of expressive dimensions by the term *ngoma* (drum). The drumming is considered to be the voice or influence of the ancestral shades or other spirits that visit the sufferer and offer the treatment.²⁶

In Brazil the word *ngoma*, transformed into *ingoma*, *angona*, and similar corruptions, is still used in reference to drums and musical functions, as well as in extramusical contexts. In Minas, its meanings have broadened to indicate the people, event, and social space associated with festive drumming. Brazilian ethnomusicologist Glaucia Lucas locates contemporary uses of the term *ingoma*, noting designations for a group of congado dancers (a genre discussed below) and an adjectival expression for a “very good” performance.²⁷ Her ethnography of the Os Arturos community documents African-derived music culture in Contagem, a city in the Belo Horizonte metropolitan region. In another study of the Os Arturos community, Pereira de Magalhães Gomes and Almeida Pereira write of their spiritual connection with ancestors of the Afro-mineiro past, specifically the community’s nineteenth-century founder and “father of the drum” (*dono de ingoma*), Arthur Camilo Silverio. They state that “the *ingoma* is the group of people, the instruments, the ceremony, the party, and the sacred cultural space.”²⁸

Some accounts of calundu refer to *tabaques* (*atabaque* drums), its root term dating to the ancient Akkadian *tabalu* and shared by the Indian *tabla*, later entering Iberia through the

Arabic *tabl*. *Tambor* (*tambu* is a common Afro-Brazilian corruption) and *caixa* (box) are common Portuguese terms for drums throughout Minas, the latter resonating with *cachá* (drum), the Congolese root for the drum known in Brazil as *caxambú*. On the Brazilian coast, African-derived ritual found its fullest voice in the trio of cylindrical, single-head drums common to Candomblé, Xangô (primarily in Recife), and Tambor de Mina (São Luís) religious practices, whereby drum patterns call forth the pantheon of spirits known as *orixás*, or *voduns* in the case of Tambor de Mina. Here, trance-possession rituals rely on the drum’s call for the desired spirit to descend into the initiated.

Lodging overnight in a mineira fazenda during the 1720s, the Portuguese priest and writer Nuno Marquez Pereira was kept awake by drumming and slave festivities. The fazendeiro later explained that the calundu Pereira had heard was either entertainment or divination brought from Africa. The fazendeiro described the varied divinational functions of calundu dance and music: “They were used for discovering various things, such as the cause of illnesses and the location of lost things, and also for having good luck in hunting and agriculture.”²⁹ In Inquisition testimony, calundu practitioners wearing ritualistic costumes danced “to the sound of drums or cymbals” performed by an encircling group. Shakers, rattles, bells, or scraper instruments added meaningful color to calundu’s sacred sound world. These idiophonic timbres, from bright metallophonic tones to various wooden-instrument punctuations, find significant roles in other Afro-Brazilian religious and secular traditions, past and present, offering discrete roles in

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²⁶ John M. Janzen, *Ngoma: Discourses of Healing in Central and Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

²⁷ Glaucia Lucas, *Os sons do Rosário: O congado mineiro dos Arturos e Jatobá* (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2002), 87.

²⁸ Pereira de Magalhães Gomes and Almeida Pereira, *Os Arturos: Negras raízes mineiras*, 2nd ed. (Belo Horizonte: Maza Edições, 2000), 287.

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²⁹ Kananoja, *Central African Identities and Religiosity*, 219.

repetitive, interlocking patterns in ritual music otherwise dominated by drumming and chant.

The calundeiros also opened up culturally resonant moments of “freedom” for their enslaved brethren. Every calundu ceremony included a small entourage of helpers who aided the calundeiro in his or her invocations—dancers, musicians, and so on. By including other slaves in the proceedings, the calundeiro ingratiated himself or herself to others in the community, reinforcing not only the religious importance of calundu, but also the social “freedoms”—music, dance, and food—that came along with it.³⁰

The Sound of Medicine

Music brought about the efficacy of sacred objects associated with calundu. Use by some calundeiros of figurines and drawings of St. Anthony, the symbolic healer and finder of lost things, offers transformative links between Christian and African cosmologies. Embodiment of the ritual object by the divine is a shared tenet across beliefs of Atlantic creole Christianity. Wooden sculptures of men, women, and anthropomorphized figures imbued with spiritual power were known in Bantu-speaking Africa as *nkisi*. Joining nkisi, the Christian crucifix, ritual puppets and dolls, and other empowered, syncretic materials was the Mandinga pouch (*bolsa de Mandinga*), a protective amulet designed to “close the body” (*fechar o corpo*) against misfortune. Often occurring in conjunction with calundu, the possession, manufacture, and distribution of Mandinga pouches were crimes prosecuted by the Inquisition in Minas Gerais, and Mandinga cases offer rare descriptions of calundu music. In Vila Rica (later Ouro Preto) during 1791, the Angola-born *liberto* Pai Caetano da Costa’s lizard-skin *bolsas de Mandinga* con-

taining brass relics were used while “doing his dances called calundus,” and in creating magic spells against informers.³¹ A widely respected leader in the mineiro War of Emboabas (1707–09), Manoel Nunes traveled throughout Minas offering for sale the magical healing and fortunetelling calundu powers wrought by his slave, a “black mandingeiro” of the African tradition.³² That a prominent citizen of the colony overtly supported, and profited from, the distribution of African “fetish” practice speaks to the needs of the population as much as to the popular defiance of social norms and authority: the sick and dying had few other hopes for cures. The St. John’s Day practices of Pedro Teixeira, a colonial-era resident of São Sebastião, near Mariana, relied on a ritually imbued three-legged doll. His annual ceremony included this spirit-channeling doll and “divination, healing, and fortunetelling,” followed by “a specially prepared dish . . . sordid evening dances and abominations called calundus,” realized by “black men and women of his spiritual community.” According to Pedro Teixeira’s wife, who had been forced to give Inquisition testimony against her husband, the sacred dish included cut-up images of Jesus Christ and saints mixed with herbs in a mortar.³³

Devassa eclisiástica witnesses testified to music rounding out ritualized applications of herbs and foliage, ceremonial uses of chicken feathers and eggs, dolls, and applications of colorful skin paint derived from clay and soil pigments. In Vila Rica, property owner Miguel

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³⁰ Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 154.

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³¹ Kananoja, *Central African Identities and Religiosity*, 232–37. The author cites the *Tribunal do Santo Oficial/Inquisição de Lisboa* in the Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais, Lisbon.

³² Ferreira Furtado, “Ensaio barbeiros, cirurgiões e médicos na Minas colonial,” 99.

³³ D. Ramos, “A influência africana e a cultura popular em Minas Gerais,” 147.

Rosario claims to have been visiting a household to collect a debt payment when he witnessed a calundu ritual. In 1791, as one of ten eyewitnesses testifying against an Angolan-born calundeiro named Caetano da Costa, Rosario helped convict the man to a sentence of public flogging and three years of forced labor:

We know that we saw a puppet they called Dona Crentina . . . . When doing their calundu dances, there entered a *biola* [*viola*, a ten-string Brazilian guitar]. And the sound of such playing made the puppet dance, and also in such calundus there were images of St. Anthony, crucifixes, and candles.³⁴

Luiz Mott interprets further Inquisition testimony regarding a calundeiro's uses of sacred objects and substances in Minas:

Also, the black Antonio Barbosa, resident of Queluz [now Conselheiro Lafayette], was reported in 1799 for "doing their dances they called calundu" in his home full of blacks, creoles, and mulattos, and using smoke and rubbing unguents on their hands and feet, calling on them to kiss a crucifix to remove spells, and passing a crucifix and the image of St. Anthony through the legs of those who were to see their fortune.³⁵

Bolstering the demand for calundu, colonial authorities barred from Minas Gerais the Sacred House of Mercy brotherhood (Santa Casa de Misericórdia), a social institution responsible for public hospitals and burial services. Not until 1734 did the first professional, European-trained doctor offi-

cially register in Vila Rica, then a city of 20,000. Exotic medicinal treatments drawing from the spice trade formed a basis for innovative European practices, reflecting Portuguese maritime access to Indian pepper, myrrh, dates, cinnamon, musk, sandalwood, ginger, and nutmeg. Pharmacy inventories in mineiro cities featured medical panaceas of Islamic origin, as well as African products and ancient Eastern remedies, like red coral dissolved into a warm liquid and ingested to decrease the blood's acidity. Eighteenth-century barber-surgeons, many of whom were Afro-mineiros joining untrained Portuguese immigrants, were neither doctors nor apothecaries; nonetheless, they inherited Europe's premodern medicine, prescribing and manufacturing drugs.³⁶ Later in the eighteenth century, mineiros Luís Gomes Ferreira, José Antonio Mendes, and João Cardoso de Miranda self-published local handbooks on medicine, incorporating new herbs, medicines, and bloodletting and purging strategies for illnesses encountered mostly among the slave population.

Communities in Early Minas Gerais

Before the mid-1690s gold discoveries, the Portuguese had been enslaving Africans for 250 years. Commercial relations among Brazilian ports, European markets, and Atlantic slave traders defined the shifting African ethnicities that were brought to Minas by force. During the early gold rush, Portugal's West African slave trade east of São Jorge da Mina (St. George of the Mine fort, Ghana) centered on Bight of Benin ports along what became known as the Mina coast. "Mina" slaves in Minas Gerais became legendary in

³⁴ Roger Sansi-Roca, "The Fetish in the Lusophone Atlantic," in *Cultures of the Lusophone Black Atlantic*, ed. Nancy Priscilla Naro, Roger Sansi-Roca, and David H. Treece (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 8.

³⁵ Luiz Mott, "Santo Antonio, o Divino Capitão-do-Mato," in *Liberdade por um fio: História dos quilombos no Brasil*, ed. João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996), 131. Mott cites the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Inquisição de Lisboa, processo no. 134.

³⁶ Ferreira Furtado, "Ensaio barbeiros, cirurgiões e médicos na Minas colonial."

Luso-Brazilian history. Entering the mineiro interior through Salvador, Bahia, they were marched straight to the gold and diamond mines of the Serra Espinhaço mountain range and its subregions, Serro Frio and Serro do Cipó, and the wealthy cities of Vila Rica, Diamantina, Mariana, and São João del Rey. Others went to their forced labor in cotton fields and cattle fazendas. The numbers of these West Africans waned in the mid-eighteenth century, and they remained a majority in the region only until roughly 1750. Bahia's powerful merchants faced Salvador's loss of status when the colonial capital was moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1763, partly owing to the latter's proximity to the gold mines. Central Africans bound for Minas from ports in Loango, Cabinda, Benguela, and Quilimane and entering Rio de Janeiro quickly began to outnumber West Africans in the mineiro interior during the second half of the eighteenth century. The southeast's coffee boom beginning in the 1830s would see a truly massive increase in slave importation into Minas. The Minas Gerais of the colonial and imperial eras, a socially and racially complex mosaic of urban and rural elements, became the most prominent region for Afro-Brazilian religious practices.

Placing Minas ahead of Bahia in this context, where the slave population was even greater, is attributable to the fact that [Minas] constituted a more complex slave system and was more intensely urbanized. In Minas, conflicts erupted at any moment, disrupting the mining towns. Probably occurring there also was the greatest concentration of quilombos [runaway-slave settlements] during the colonial period. It was also in Minas that the African cultural complex was better preserved.³⁷

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³⁷ Laura de Mello e Souza, *O diabo e a Terra de Santa Cruz* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1986), 37.

At the hinterland edge of the Black Atlantic in Portuguese America, Minas Gerais became a cultural outpost of African cosmology, and though calundu had by the start of the eighteenth century become familiar throughout the colony, it flourished in the mineiro interior. African-derived cosmological concerns with social spaces, and the actions required to maintain the goodwill of territorial spirits, spoke to a regionally specific power of place for Afro-mineiro culture and its localities. The formation and bordering of Afro-mineiro communities helped define their spiritual links to a past articulated by ritualized behavior aimed toward ancestors, memory, and ancient, lost territory. Calundu space became sacred space: slave quarters (*senzalas*), forest clearings, private homes, and runaway-slave quilombos. In his study of Central African religion in eighteenth-century Minas, Kalle Kananoja invokes notions of borders and territory when he states that “many slaves from varied origins in Central Africa would have held shared beliefs in the strong association of territorial spirits and water, and the need to propitiate those spirits for the well-being of the community.”³⁸ It was, however, in the burgeoning colonial-era urban areas enriched with mining wealth that accomplished calundeiros/as were able to find paying clients for healing and divination rituals:

They flourished in Minas more than anywhere else in the colony during the eighteenth century; at least available references to Minas calundus are more numerous – even more so than references to calundus in Bahia, now the land of Candomblé. Here again it must be remembered that Afro-Brazilian religious

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³⁸ Kananoja, *Central African Identities and Religiosity*, 234. See also Marina de Mello e Souza, *Reis negros no Brasil escravista* (Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 2002), 65; and Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 144.

syncretism, religious persecution, and slavery were traveling companions in colonial territories, so Minas stands out; after all, in 1733 Simão Ferreira Machado called Vila Rica, “for the circumstances of its nature, the head of all America; for the abundance of its wealth, the precious pearl of Brazil.”³⁹

Vestiges of calundu also remained in the isolated quilombos, which contrasted sharply with the wealth, stability, and political power of colonial-era cities before their post-gold-rush decay. Free to a great extent from the terrors of the Inquisition and crown authorities, runaway slaves likely practiced increasingly fragmented forms of calundu in the many quilombos found throughout Minas, though few details are known. Noted in these rural mineiro locations are pan-Bantu qualities of religious ceremonies known as *canjeré*, a dance and sacred gathering (from the Kimbundu *kanzare*, to spin, shake, or whirl):

Although the term *calundu* is as common in Minas as elsewhere in Brazil, African religious ceremonies were commonly known in that province as *canjeré*. Little remains of them today. Aires da Mata Machado Filho discovered what may be the last moribund survivals of these old Bantu religions in the area of Minas, where the *quilombos* were most numerous, and the vocabulary he recorded does indeed show that there were priests known as *ngangas* or *ugangas* as well as witch doctors called *caquis*.⁴⁰

By the 1780s, one in three mineiros was a free person of color. Though slaves practiced calundu, blacks and mulattos born free (*forros*) and those who had purchased their freedom through manumission (*libertos*) were, in comparison to the slave’s severe social

limitations, better situated to lead and participate in calundu. African-born practitioners may have been perceived as more authentic and spiritually powerful, and newly arrived slaves integrated into an oppressive system. Meanwhile, mulatto cultural directions, and syncretism with Catholic and indigenous beliefs, offered increasing challenges to notions of “authentic” African religiosity. For instance, healers from the rural San Francisco River district of Manga (today the river-port city of São Romão) earned renown throughout northern Minas for an indigenous-derived divination and healing tradition that lasted into the twentieth century. These “mixed-race sorcerers” (*caboclo feitiçeiros*) of São Romão were common references in regional popular culture.

Authorities doubled down on the destruction of calundu social networks in a sort of religious and cultural genocide. The secrecy surrounding this destruction speaks to the terror that enveloped calundu, to the danger calundeiros/as faced in maintaining traditions, and to the risks that white participants took in seeking healing cures. Accounts of those condemned in Minas Gerais are found in the Inquisition records in Lisbon’s Torre do Tombo National Archives, where a long list of crimes offers proof that calundu flourished within a brutal slave system.⁴¹ Identified in 1742 as a black calundeira living on the Antonio Pugas fazenda near San Ant3nio da Rio Acima, Isabel’s singing and dancing of calundu with feitiçeiro Manoel Lobo Franco formed a ritual aimed at

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³⁹ De Mello e Souza, *The Devil and the Land of the Holy Cross*, 171–72.

⁴⁰ Roger Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 202.

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⁴¹ Maria Le3nia Chaves de Resende, “Minas Gerais sub examine: Invent3rio das den3ncias nos Cadernos do Promotor da Inquisiç3o de Lisboa (s3culo XVIII),” in *Travessia inquisitorias das Minas Gerais aos c3rceres do Santo Of3cio*, ed. J3nia Ferreira Furtado and Maria Le3nia Chaves de Resende (Belo Horizonte: Fino Traço, 2013), 415–75.

“closing the body” from harm. That same year in Sabará, the creole slave Violante was accused of ritualistic dancing. In 1744, the black slave Francisco Axé faced the Inquisition for rituals including the use of a *chocalho* idiophone shaker. In Congonhas do Campo during 1745, Joana Jaguatinga, Manoel da Silva (both black), and mulatta Antónia da Silva were all denounced to the Inquisition for performing *calundu*, drinking chicken’s blood, and acting out other *feitiço*. Others included Felix, a black *calundeiro* who danced for divination (*Catas Altas*, 1755);⁴² an unnamed freed black woman, denounced for dancing in ceremonies (*Nossa Senhora da Conceição dos Prados*, 1759); and freed black woman Angela Maria Gomes, accused of dancing *calundus* and *batuques* with the devil (*Itabara*, 1760).

Punishments for simply using *curandeiro* medications could be brutal, with additional exorcism or chronic mistreatment awaiting. The slave Bernardo Pereira Brasil, found guilty of medicating himself with healing compounds taken from bones, received 60 lashes delivered by his owner.⁴³ The list of *calundu* infractions in Minas Gerais goes on. The *calundeira* Luzia Lopes, a free, Brazilian-born black woman (*liberta crioula*), was severely whipped in the public square of the Serro Frio town of Conceição do Mato Dentro sometime after 1767.⁴⁴ In 1774, Ana Maria Mercês of Piedade de Paraopeba was denounced to the Inquisition for operating a *calundu* house (*casa de calundu*) where various acts of superstition and demonic pacts were practiced. Ana Maria Mercês and Grácia, both blacks, were denounced for dancing with the devil (*Piedade de Paraopeba*, 1774); João Coelho, Antónia Angola, and Mónica Maria

de Jesus, for forming a procession that included *calundu* (near Sabará, 1775); slaves Roque Angola, Brizida Maria de Araujo, and other accomplices, for *calundu* dance and rituals against Catholicism (*Pitangui*, 1777); Domingos, a freed black man, for *calundu* and dancing (*São Bras do Suaçui*, 1779); the white slave owner Antonio Pereira and the slave Manuel, for healing Pereira’s slaves with *calundu* (*Mariana*, 1782); Francisco, for his circle dance designed to heal another black man (*Mariana*, 1782); and the black man António Barbosa and the freed *crioula* Maria Lopes, for *calundus* (*Queluz*, 1792).

This institutionalized religious violence arguably appears as a historical arc beginning with the 1446 Ordinances of King Afonso (*Ordenações Afonsinas*), crown legislation governing black cultural expression in Portugal five years after the first African slaves arrived in Lisbon. The very need for these promulgations suggests that musical expression of black religiosity was common, and threatening, enough to warrant a legal framework of punitive social control.⁴⁵ The legal language of human trafficking, and of religious and cultural restrictions, is far removed from the poetry of Gregório de Matos quoted above. Spared the fatal sentencing meted out to countless Jews and Muslims, *calundeiros* nonetheless risked fines, physical torture, and banishment, with the terror driving rituals further underground, into a secrecy leading to generational loss and religious displacement. The fate of *calundu*, it has been stated, resulted from a combination

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Calainho, *Metrópole das Mandingas*, 82.

⁴⁴ Mott, *Rosa Egípcíaca*, 112.

⁴⁵ The Ordinances of King Manuel I (*Ordenações Manuelinas*, 1514) revised the 1446 laws. The 1603 *Ordenações Filipinas* of King Philip II of Spain (known as King Philip I when referring to his simultaneous reign over Portugal) outlawed gatherings involving black music and dance.

of brutal oppression and more popular, syncretic forms of religious observance:

In the realm of magic and religion, syncretism would ultimately prove itself uncontainable and ineradicable; it would forever bear the ambiguous mark of popular culture, which mixed the sacred and profane. Leaving behind it a trail of death, and horrific suffering, the long process of acculturation eventually merged sabbats, masses, and calundus.⁴⁶

The Demise of Calundu in Relation to Umbanda, Candombe, Batuque, and Lundu

Calundu's disappearance from the historical record as a specific, named practice in Minas Gerais corresponded with deep social and political shifts in nineteenth-century Brazil. African religiosity continued in Minas but was no longer documented by the Inquisition, which was challenged and reformed by Pombal,⁴⁷ ultimately closing its Brazilian shop in the 1820s. In addition to the Inquisition's violent repression and the hardships visited on black populations, both free and slave, the forces of change that scattered the calundu legacy include Brazil's emergence as an independent empire in 1822, urbanization, and the social convulsions associated with the collapse of the monarchy, the formation of the Brazilian Republic in 1888, and the abolition of slavery that same year. The decline of calundu occurred alongside the rise of hybrid, syncretic religious practices that also featured African-derived music and drumming. Given calundu's historical importance to a large inland population of African

descendants, new musical and religious practices may have absorbed or masked calundu as it succumbed to persecution. What became of this legacy of music? Did calundu music carry a cultural inertia that influenced or joined with subsequent practices? Three genres of Afro-mineiro sacred drumming in Minas Gerais rise as likely candidates in this transformation: the syncretic religions of macumba and Umbanda, the *candombe* of the black Catholic congado tradition (not to be confused with the religious practice known as Candomblé), and the vestiges of spirituality in the otherwise secular galaxy of the batuque circle dance. Additionally, the popular colonial-era couples dance known as *lundu* and its latter transformation as a sophisticated salon dance, *lundu song*, were likely secular offshoots of calundu dance practice.

The elements of "parallelism" that once characterized a strongly African religion defined by its independence from Christian practices, and was once suppressed by authorities, survived as components of outwardly Catholic syncretic practices. These notional transformations went undocumented. Primary examples of creolized, syncretized, or hybridized practices that continue to flourish today include "*macumba* in Rio, *jurema* in Recife, *pajelança* in São Luís do Maranhão, *candomblé de caboclo* in Salvador, or, in more general terms, *umbanda*."⁴⁸ However, criticism of the very nature of syncretism runs deep, as argued by Brazilian anthropologists examining black music and religion in Minas and the social conditions faced by cultural practitioners. Gomez and Pereira observe that "discourse on Brazilian religious syncretism must address

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⁴⁶ De Mello e Souza, *The Devil and the Land of the Holy Cross*, 255.

⁴⁷ Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, first marquês of Pombal, the de facto head of the Portuguese state during the latter half of the eighteenth century. "Pombaline reforms" refer to his Enlightenment era influences on the empire.

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⁴⁸ Carvalho, "Black Music of All Colors," 192. Since the 1990s, Evangelical Church membership has made significant inroads on both Catholicism and syncretic cults.

the socio-historic conditions that enveloped this alleged symbiosis. In the specific case of blacks in Minas, this notion of syncretism did not, and still does not, correspond to an ontologically complete symbiosis.”⁴⁹

It is probable that in mineiro cities and countryside the earliest vestiges of syncretic Afro-Brazilian religion such as macumba gradually merged with and supplanted calundu’s fragmented remnants, in a society slowly changing from Portuguese colony to imperial Brazil. Other syncretic cults from Afro-mineiro history include canjeré and *pemba*, the latter described as a religious practice in Minas Gerais “which is exactly midway between a *congada* and a modern *umbanda* possession cult.”⁵⁰

The predominance of drum and percussion accompaniment to call-and-response chant structures in religions such as macumba and other syncretic cults likely represents a stylistic connection to previous Afro-Brazilian religious practice. These cults also somehow absorbed musical and cosmological Africanisms of newly arriving slaves once calundu was driven underground and out of existence. The sometimes derisive term *macumba* is found in references to Afro-mineiro religions variously syncretized with Catholicism and practiced in early twentieth-century Belo Horizonte, the state’s capital, which was planned and constructed in the 1890s. This was a period of unusually intense regional urbanization involving the first post-emancipation generation of Afro-mineiros.

In mineiro author João Alphonsus’s 1938 modernist novel *Rola-Moça*, macumba, poverty, and blackness are defining themes of social difference in depicting Belo Horizonte’s turn-of-the-century slums (*favelas*). These new,

marginalized city dwellers modified and maintained traditions caught up in urbanization on a massive scale, a world ready for Afro-Brazilian cults such as Umbanda. Nationwide, the twentieth century witnessed the rapid growth of Umbanda, which soon became Brazil’s most popular syncretic religion, with millions of followers, black, white, and brown. In 2010, more than 350 Umbanda centers existed throughout Belo Horizonte’s metropolitan area.⁵¹ In examining the Os Arturos community’s congado traditions of black Catholicism in the Belo Horizonte metropolitan-area city of Contagem, Gomes and Pereira characterize the area’s tradition of Afro-mineiro religiosity, focusing on Umbanda as an indicator of the survival of an African community of belief: “In the past, Contagem’s many slaves engendered the survival of diverse black African communities of belief. Efforts by the church and slave owners failed to hinder their development, a fact currently reflected in the area’s significant number of Umbanda and Quimbanda houses of worship.”⁵²

A connection with calundu’s legacy of sacred drums also likely exists, with candombe ritual drums still found in the region’s black Catholic congado tradition. This popular Catholicism, or what has been termed a “mythical Afro-descendent religion in Brazil,”⁵³ is musically defined by drumming, chant, and processional group dance. Candombe’s highly regarded sacred drums, often stationary and hidden from the general public, are firmly

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⁵¹ Associação Filmes de Quintal website: <http://www.mapeandoaxe.org.br/terreiros/belohorizonte> (accessed Aug. 15, 2013).

⁵² Gomes and Pereira, *Os Arturos*, 245.

⁵³ Vânia Noronha, “Reinado de Nossa Senhora do Rosário: A constituição de uma religiosidade mítica afrodescendente no Brasil,” *Horizonte* 9/21 (April–June 2011): 268.

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⁴⁹ Gomes and Pereira, *Os Arturos*, 139.

⁵⁰ Carvalho, “Black Music of All Colors,” 191.

associated with congado's otherwise very public processional music and open worship, which defines much of Brazilian popular Catholicism. The transformation of a violently oppressed calundu into an underground, increasingly secretive sacred ritual occurred within an ever-broadening cultural milieu of pan-Bantu ethnic roots, mulatto offspring, and the general social and cultural mixing that characterized nineteenth-century Brazil. Candombe is clothed in both the myths of oral tradition, rich in symbolic legacies, and the social fabric of the highly documented presence of Catholic lay brotherhoods.

Congado stems from what might be termed an Africanization of Catholic practice, some of which had begun three centuries earlier in the Portuguese missions in the kingdom of the Congo and elsewhere.⁵⁴ To a further degree tolerated and fostered by a broad base of regional elites, congado and other festivities of the Catholic religious calendar flourished in many respects, even as religious vehicles strongly associated with African-derived music, chant, language, and dance. Eclectic pan-Bantu cultural practices in Minas were further absorbed by an Atlantic creole Christianity and transformed into cosmologies, rituals, and worship of the popularized saints of black Catholicism.

Caio César Boschi emphasizes that in the eyes of crown and church, the racially segregated Catholic lay brotherhoods that served the marginalized and slave population of Minas Gerais were intended to foster Christian religiosity and preserve social domination and submission. This analysis is supported by the fact that these associations

never promoted class consciousness or change in social structure: "The permission and encouragement to initiate the creation of confraternities was not a measure of liberality or contradiction on the part of the Portuguese rulers."⁵⁵ Forms of class consciousness grew nonetheless from the social strains created by slavery and the social injustices faced by forros and libertos. What resulted was a significant sociocultural milieu fostered by brotherhoods for blacks that developed within the brutality of the slave system yet in some ways remained beyond the control of slaveholders, crown, and church. Congado—its performative Africanisms, its brotherhood-based arena for absorbing pan-African cosmologies, and its communal nature—symbolizes the resistance and survival of Afro-mineiros within this historical framework. Maintaining African-derived performance practices in congado ritual, Afro-mineiro brotherhoods, over many generations, created and defended their Atlantic creole Christian manner of celebrating the Virgin Mary, and in doing so could easily have absorbed the remnants of calundu.

Drumming and Regional Religious Identity

Oral traditions in contemporary congado mineiro communities locate the origins of the practice in three competing sources. All three conflict with documented historical records, and two claim that the genre emerged in Minas Gerais. The Chico Rei myth posits that an enslaved African king of that name in Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais, purchased his own and many others' freedom, thus becoming founder and "king" of the congado. Suzel Reily documents the widespread belief among

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⁵⁴ Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 210. Sixteenth-century Congolese Catholicism is vastly predated by north and east African Christianity. See also De Mello e Souza, *Reis negros no Brasil escravista*.

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⁵⁵ Caio César Boschi, *Os Leigos e o poder* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1986), 156.

congadeiros in Campanha, Minas Gerais, that congado was born from the successful struggle against slavery and symbolizes the end of slavery in Brazil.⁵⁶ Congado musical groups (*guardas*) can be seen as representing colonial-era social groups integral to a third, almost universal mythopoesis subscribed to by *congadeiros*. This tradition binds Our Lady of the Rosary (Nossa Senhora do Rosário) to blacks, linking this venerated manifestation of the Virgin Mary to the suffering of slaves and their descendants while simultaneously establishing African-derived performance practice and affective participatory worship as essential to these rituals. The *marujos* guarda in their naval regalia represent Portuguese sailors and white elites who, like the “Indian” *caboclos* dressed in feathery, native-inspired costumes with bows and arrows, were unable to call the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus to safety from the ocean waters. As the legend continues, the saint emerged safely to shore only upon hearing the candombe drumming and praise songs calling her.

The myth emblemizes congado’s de facto cultural elevation of percussion music and call-and-response chants: Our Lady of the Rosary’s celestial presence as patron of blacks emerges only through the now liturgical drum-based music and performance aesthetics. By way of this foundational legend, not only is the veneration of this saint ensconced in Africanisms, but the *guardas*

form a hierarchy of spiritual efficacy that ultimately valorizes candombe, the most secretive guarda, and the most closely associated with African musical heritage. The notion of drum patterns calling to the Virgin Mary echoes the pan-African belief in drum and percussion timbres calling to the spirit world. Likewise, the West African spirit (*orixá*) Yemanjá, widely worshipped in Brazil, is associated with the sea, rising from the waters (as the Virgin Mary does in the congado origin myth) to join in the possession trances of Afro-Brazilian Xangô and Candomblé sects. In *congado mineiro*, the candombe drum’s legendary communicative powers with the Virgin Mary act similarly to Xangô and Candomblé drumming’s position in calling forth the orixás with sacred rhythms—or at least as similarly as popular Catholicism and mineiro society historically allowed. Drums as visual and sound icons emerge for practitioners as symbols of religiosity bridging diverse African origins and valorizing performance aesthetics.

Gomes and Pereira’s ethnographic study of the Os Arturos community in the 1980s considers the historical roots of candombe in Brazil, locating a microregion of candombe culture roughly 100 kilometers north of Belo Horizonte.⁵⁷ Subsequent scholars have reinforced their work in these regards.

The candombe, perhaps the most Bantu of the congado, is a type of closed society for blacks of the Our Lady of the Rosary brotherhood who desire to be Christians without having to stop being Bantus. Ancestors are remembered to the rhythms of old, sacred drums . . . . Zambi (the God Creator) is with them. In many cases, candombe appears as jongo or caxambú (nonliturgical circle dances associated with blacks in the southeast). Unfortunately,

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⁵⁶ Suzel Ana Reily, “To Remember Captivity: The *Congados* of Southern Minas Gerais,” *Latin American Music Review* 22/1 (Spring/Summer 2001): 4–30. In publications by Brazilian scholars concerning the origins of congado mineiro, both the Chico Rei myth and the Virgin-in-the-waves mythopoesis are cited as widely subscribed-to, complementary beliefs among *congadeiros*. See Lucas, *Os sons do Rosário*; Leda Maria Martins, *Afrografias da Memória* (Belo Horizonte: Maza Edições, 1997); Gomes and Pereira, *Os Arturos*; and De Mello e Souza, *Reis negros no Brasil escravista*.

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⁵⁷ Gomes and Pereira, *Os Arturos*, 283.

various candombes have stopped playing. In Minas Gerais, candombe is observed in the region north of Belo Horizonte up to Serra do Cipó.⁵⁸

Brazilian anthropologist José Jorge de Carvalho points to the same Serra do Cipó “candombe musical area” in his discussion of Mata Tição (also Matição) as an isolated microcosm of Afro-mineiro sacred tradition, tellingly associated here with the longstanding musical heritage of what was in all likelihood calundu:

As a cultural form, the candombe is a spectacular case of socially constructed remoteness within a framework of deep musical interrelationship. Matição is a village quite protected from the outside world, especially from the central institutions of the state: very poor formal education, no television, a minimum access to radios, inaccessible dirt roads, very few economic activities apart from subsistence agriculture and some handicrafts. Yet . . . Matição shows a high degree of integration and contact, probably over hundreds of years, with other Afro-Brazilian traditions of the area.⁵⁹

It is highly probable that sacred drumming fronted calundu’s fragmented cultural inertia, surviving in, or resonating with, macumba, Umbanda, and candombe. Yet another black settlement in the Serra do Cipó’s candombe musical area, Açude famously hosts candombe sessions on tambu drums dating to the nineteenth century. Contemporary community residents are descendants of slaves belonging to the Cipó Velho fazenda, the featured

protagonists in this local legend that also references batuque:

The main story related to the candombe in the Serra do Cipó says that the slave batuques always took place in the early evening. The blacks of the Cipó Velho fazenda gathered to dance to the tambus, even though it was not to the liking of the white owner. One day, irritated by the noise coming from the slave quarters, the master ordered the foreman to end the party, burning the tambus. But the smoke released by the drums penetrated inside the big house, bothering the owner for hours. Almost suffocated, he imagined that it was a curse commissioned by blacks. Startled, he ordered the slaves to build new drums, believing that only in this way would the spell be annulled. This was done and the mandinga faded.⁶⁰

Here, batuque, tambu drums, and candombe are placed within a sacred arena protected from the overlord by Mandinga. Batuque blurred Western polarities of sacred and secular. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century observers dismissing the potential of sacredness in black expression could relegate all of it to a willfully undiscerned, subaltern music that they freely termed batuque.

Today, the communities of Mato-Tição, Açude, and Os Arturos are known for batuque drumming traditions. In Os Arturos, batuque is performed during wed-dings and birthday celebrations, typically late in the festivities following samba, *forró*, and other popular, entertaining dances. In these instances, the batuque’s African heritage marks a more serious celebratory atmosphere, requiring what community members call “bringing the feeling” (*por sentido*).⁶¹ In the southern Brazilian

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⁵⁸ Maria Gontijo dos Santos and Pablo Matos Camargo, *Comunidades quilombolas de Minas Gerais no século XXI* (Belo Horizonte: Autêntica/Centro de Documentação Eloy Ferreira da Silva, 2008), 69.

⁵⁹ José Jorge de Carvalho, “Afro-Brazilian Music and Rituals. Part 1: From Traditional Genres to the Beginnings of Samba” (Duke University of North Carolina Program in Latin American Studies, Working Paper Series), 14–15.

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⁶⁰ Afonso Capelas, Jr., “As Donas da História,” in *Raiz*, 2nd ed., 2005. http://revistaraiz.uol.com.br/portal/index.php?Itemid=96&id=82&option=com_content&task=view (accessed Jan. 4, 2013).

⁶¹ Author interview with Glaucia Lucas in Belo Horizonte, Aug. 16, 2013.

state of Rio Grande do Sul, however, batuque is a ritualized Afro-Brazilian religion with noticeable West African in-fluences. Far to the north, in Belém, Pará, the term refers to houses of worship associated with syncretic religious sects derived from West African beliefs and Amerindian *caboclo* practices.⁶² In Minas Gerais, the hardships of slavery and the ethnic complexity of pan-Bantu mineiro society led batuque dance toward secularization and cultural fragmentation, and in the process could have played a role in absorbing calundu cultural inertia. As Gomes and Pereira suggest, the dance in Minas historically retained a simultaneous aura of serious, sacred, or quasisacred presence while influencing secular offshoots: “There is a distinction between sacred batuque and profane batuque . . . the batuque transformed itself from the sacred dance that it was, to a profane dance. The alteration of the function suggests that the batuque, formerly a fertility rite, has been transformed into a recreational dance.”⁶³

Lundu developed as a truncated term for calundu used by Brazilians in the late seventeenth century, though its earliest written mention in 1780 refers to a secular dance by whites and mulattos (also known as *pardos*), distinguishing it from the fully African calundu. Through a process never to be fully understood, and perhaps similar to the batuque’s transformation from its spiritual focus, lundu came to define a secular couple’s dance with origins in hinterland Afro-Brazilian culture. Secular and gentrified offshoots included a lessening of drumming’s primary role, and inclusion of Western harmonic and

melodic instrumentation, namely, the viola and guitar. Formalized as an urban genre, lundu developed into a gentrified salon dance and poetic song form entertaining Brazil’s nineteenth-century coastal aristocracy.⁶⁴

Music engendered calundu’s efficacy in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Minas Gerais. Drumming, invoking spiritual possession and accompanying chants in various African languages and dialects, was a performative element that bound together religious beliefs shared by slaves, freed persons, and their descendants. The distinct cultural traits of music and language may be said to have exhibited an intellectual practice running parallel to the dominant religion of Catholicism. Music was highly incriminating evidence in testimony against calundeiros elicited in church hearings, testimony that was responsible for brutal punishments and for calundu’s inevitable demise. Much testimony came from whites, some of high standing, proving that healing practices infused with trance possession included broad sectors of Minas society.

Some of calundu’s cosmological tenets and performative characteristics may have been transformed or absorbed by syncretic cults, the *candombe* or *congado*, and the increasingly secular batuque dance tradition. These notional transformations went undocumented. A plausible historical interpretation suggests that brutal oppression created an impetus for hybridization of calundu practices deemed “too African.” A complementary analysis adds that communities of African descendants, with traditions further challenged by poverty and isolation, more easily engaged in syncretic religions and popular

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⁶²See Reginaldo Gil Braga, *Batuque jeje-ijexa em Porto Alegre* (Porto Alegre: FRUMPROARTE, 1998); and Morton Marks, CD liner notes for *Amazônia: Festival Cult Music of Northern Brazil* (Lyricord LYRCD 7300, n.d.; recordings made in 1975).

⁶³Gomes and Pereira, *Os Arturos*, 449.

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⁶⁴Carlos Sandroni, *Feitiço decente* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 2001), 39–61.

Catholicism accommodated by Brazilian society. From the fall of calundu, celebratory music and dance arose in the form of secular lundu.