

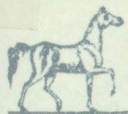


AMY CHAZKEL



Brazil's Clandestine Lottery and
the Making of Urban Public Life

LAWS OF CHANCE

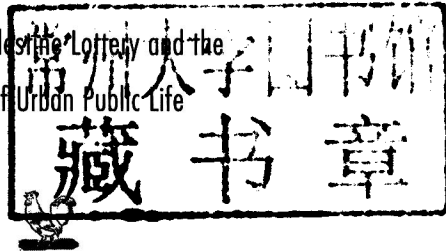




LAWS OF CHANCE



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Making of Urban Public Life



AMY CHAZKEL

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LAWS OF CHANCE

A BOOK IN THE SERIES

Radical Perspectives: A *Radical History Review* book series

**SERIES EDITORS: Daniel J. Walkowitz, New York University
Barbara Weinstein, New York University**

For my parents,

JANE DEBORAH HOCHMAN and
MICHAEL FREDRIC CHAZKEL

ABOUT THE SERIES



History, as radical historians have long observed, cannot be severed from authorial subjectivity, indeed, from politics. Political concerns animate the questions we ask, the subjects on which we write. For over thirty years the *Radical History Review* has led in nurturing and advancing such engaged historical research. Radical Perspectives seeks to further the journal's mission: any author wishing to be in this series makes a self-conscious decision to associate her or his work with a radical perspective. To be sure, many of us are currently struggling with what it means to be a radical historian in the early twenty-first century, and this series is intended to provide some signposts for what we would judge to be radical history. It will offer innovative ways of telling stories from multiple perspectives; comparative, transnational, and global histories that transcend conventional boundaries of region and nation; works that elaborate on the implications of the postcolonial move to "provincialize Europe"; studies of the public in and of the past, including those that consider the commodification of the past; histories that explore the intersection of identities such as gender, race, class, and sexuality with an eye to their political implications and complications. Above all, this book series seeks to create an important intellectual space and discursive community to explore the very issue of what constitutes radical history. Within this context, some of the books published in the series may privilege alter-

native and oppositional political cultures, but all will be concerned with the way power is constituted, contested, used, and abused.

In *Laws of Chance*, Amy Chazkel follows the fascinating trajectory of a notorious Brazilian institution, the illicit lottery known as the *jogo do bicho*, or animal game, from its creation in the 1890s through much of the twentieth century. She acquaints the reader with a shifting (and sometimes shifty) cast of characters ranging from well-heeled financiers and skeptical jurists to small-time ticket sellers, street peddlers, lottery players, policemen on the take, and old men playing dominoes in a public square. Dating from the first decade following the end of slavery and the founding of the republic, this lottery, Chazkel shows, became an integral feature of life in Rio de Janeiro during a period of massive urban renewal programs and the expansion of petty trade, as well as a constitutive element of urban policing. The key question, according to Chazkel, is not so much whether illegal activities were taking place, but why and how this popular gambling pastime became criminalized. The result was not the massive arrest or imprisonment of ticket sellers and purchasers, but rather a “gray area” that allowed the police considerable latitude in restricting the use of public space. Central to Chazkel’s argument is her rethinking of what many historians see as the central flaw in Latin American legal culture: the “gap” between formal legal codes and policing practices, a concept which rests on the expectation of a direct correspondence between the letter of the law and its enforcement. Instead Chazkel argues that this “gap” is precisely the space in which a range of authority figures could enjoy a certain degree of flexibility or wield arbitrary power. In this vein, it is significant that the crackdown on the *jogo do bicho* in 1917 had the effect, not of erasing this “gap,” but of inciting even deeper cynicism about Rio’s police force. It is the final irony of this intriguing historical study that the illicit *jogo do bicho* ends up being regarded, in the popular milieu, as the most reliable and credible institution in everyday life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



This book has trotted along at my heels for more years than I care to admit. Anyone who has accompanied me in my life over this time has had to deal with its presence and the yapping pack of deadlines, worries, and tasks that always accompanied it. I wish to thank my friends and family for their forbearance and support through this whole process.

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Participants in the Boston Area Latin American History Workshop at the Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, the Law and Society Graduate Student Workshop, and the Laboratório de História e Antropologia at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro/Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Sociais, the Yale Graduate School Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Urban History, the CUNY Center for the

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En route to becoming a book, a version of chapter 1 appeared in the *Journal of Latin American Studies* (volume 39, August 2007).

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A NOTE ON BRAZILIAN CURRENCY AND ORTHOGRAPHY



The basic currency unit in use in Brazil throughout the period on which this book focuses was the *milreis*, which Brazil adopted in 1846. One milreis, written as 1\$000, was the equivalent of one thousand *reis* (the plural of *real*), an older monetary unit that had diminished radically in value by the mid-nineteenth century. One thousand milreis equals one *conto*. In 1942, the *cruzeiro* replaced the milreis and the conto. Dollar equivalents cited in this book are based on an annual average of the month-end closing quotations. Sources of historical exchange rate and cost of living data are cited in the endnotes.

The Brazilian Portuguese language had not yet been orthographically standardized in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth. For all proper names of persons I used the spelling that most frequently appeared in the contemporaneous documentation. I spelled all proper names of places according to present-day conventions. All other words are spelled according to today's standard. Documents from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth variously call the animal lottery that is the subject of this book the *jogo dos bichos*, the *jogo do bicho*, and the *jogo de bicho*. I use today's standard name, *jogo do bicho*, except in some direct quotations.



MAP 1 Brazil: Major Cities and Political Boundaries, ca. 1900.

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