



# Popular Organization and Democracy in Rio De Janeiro: A Tale of Two Favelas

*Robert Gay*

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"Robert Gay's study is well done. It provides a detailed look at two different forms of popular political organization in Brazil and how they relate to the state, local people, parties, and politicians.... Gay allows the reader to catch a glimpse of the enormous varieties of ways in which popular organizations relate politics to contemporary Brazil. There is no comparable book on Latin American politics."

--Scott Mainwaring, Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame

This urban tale of survival illustrates two versions of active, organized, aggressive participation in the political process.

Vila Brasil survives by exchanging votes for favors. The president of its neighborhood association promises political candidates that the favela will vote in masse for the highest bidder. Vila Brasil has maneuvered this power to become one of the best served favelas in the region--for the moment, at least.

Vidigal, on the other hand, steadfastly refuses to support candidates who campaign on boasts or promises alone. Vote-selling, or buying, is not permitted. To do well in Vidigal, a politician must talk not only about providing electricity and water in the favela, but also about wages, education, and health care over the longer term.

In analyzing the favela's different responses to the popular movement that confronted the military in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the author makes a significant contribution to literature about relationships among urban poor, political elites, and the state.

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