

The "Prohibited Lands": Conquest, Contraband, and Indian Resistance in Minas Gerais,

Brazil, 1760-1808

Hal Langfur

University of Texas

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As in other regions south of the Amazon Basin, Brazilian Indians all but vanish from accounts of the history of Minas Gerais the moment they no longer serve as a narrative foil for the exploits of the bandeirantes, slave-raiders who hunted them mercilessly before the gold discoveries of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.¹ The ensuing gold rush in Minas Gerais, which depended on the labor of Indians before African slaves replaced them, and which sealed the final destruction of many groups, unfolds in historical accounts virtually devoid of indigenous peoples.² By the third decade of the eighteenth century, as one historian recently put it, articulating a central assumption responsible for this scholarly lacuna, gold seekers had “already penetrated practically all of the forests and sertões, expelling and/or decimating the great majority of the indigenous population” of Minas Gerais.³ Combine that assessment with a scholarly bias for focusing on the opulent apex of the gold economy, the export rather than the internal economy, the region’s urban rather than rural society, add the overshadowing presence of the Inconfidência Mineira, and the absence of Indians from what we know about Minas Gerais in the eighteenth century and beyond becomes comprehensible if no less misleading.

The inhabitants of colonial Minas Gerais who migrated west, south, and east from the urban gold-mining nucleus as the decline following the gold boom became pronounced after the middle of the eighteenth century knew otherwise. To their great consternation, they knew that Indians had in fact survived in the sertão, even if they were not fated to do so in later historical monographs. West of the São Francisco River, throughout the fertile region that would become the Triângulo Mineiro, the southern Caiapó roamed freely, forming a barrier to lusophone settlement well into the nineteenth century. One official in 1807 described this border area between Minas Gerais and Goiás as comprising “unsettled sertões inhabited solely by the Caiapó, wild heathens who cause great damage to travelers

¹ The primary exceptions are the works of the regional historian Oiliam José, Marlière, o Civilizador (Belo Horizonte: Ed. Itatiaia, 1958) and Índigenas de Minas Gerais (Belo Horizonte: Imprensa Oficial, 1965). For a brief discussion of ethnographic and historical scholarship on the Indians of Minas Gerais, see José, Historiografia mineira, 2d ed. (Belo Horizonte: Imprensa Oficial, 1987), 336-8. Forthcoming studies by Judy Bieber and Maria Hilda B. Paraíso on the Botocudo Indians promise to help fill this gap, as does the work in progress of Laura de Mello e Souza, pertaining to the frontier in eighteenth-century Minas Gerais. On the absence of Indians in the historiography of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Brazil, see B. J. Barickman, “‘Tame Indians,’ ‘Wild Heathens,’ and Settlers in Southern Bahia in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries,” The Americas 51:3 (Jan. 1995): 326-7.

Sources on the raiding by bandeirantes of indigenous peoples in Minas Gerais, as well as on the early exploration and occupation of the region in general, include Augusto de Lima Júnior, A capitania das Minas Gerais, rev. ed. (Belo Horizonte: Ed. Itatiaia, 1978); Afonso de Escagnolle Taunay, História geral das bandeiras paulistas, vols. 9-10 (São Paulo: Typ. Ideal and Imprensa Oficial, 1924-50), and Relatos sertanistas (Belo Horizonte: Ed. Itatiaia, 1981); Diogo [Luís de Almeida Pereira] de Vasconcelos, História antiga de Minas Gerais, 4th ed. (Belo Horizonte: Ed. Itatiaia, 1974).

² John Monteiro notes the lack of a single useful study of the role of native populations during the early years of the gold rush. John M. Monteiro, Negros da terra: Índios e bandeirantes nas origens de São Paulo (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1994), 210 n. 3.

³ Carla Maria Junho Anastasia, introduction to Breve descrição geográfica, física e política da capitania de Minas Gerais, by Diogo Pereira Ribeiro de Vasconcelos, edited by Anastasia from 1807 ms. (Belo Horizonte: Fundação João Pinheiro, 1994), 15.

who pass through those lands.”⁴ South and southeast of the mining district, lived the Coropó and Coroado. Raided by bandeirantes during the seventeenth century, they struggled to retain their native lands in opposition to settlers throughout much of the second half of the eighteenth century.⁵

But it was especially in the eastern sertão that Indians continued to reign supreme. The Puri resolutely held the southern reaches of this tropical and subtropical forest separating Minas Gerais from the Atlantic coast. Their domain extended from the Paraíba River to the Mantiqueira Mountains and the upper reaches of the Doce River. The Maxacalí (including the subgroups Macuní, Cumanaxó, Capoxó, Panhame, and Monoxó) and the Camacã inhabited the forested hills dividing Minas Gerais from coastal Bahia, including portions of the Pardo, Jequitinhonha, and Mucuri river valleys. Between and overlapping these zones, the Pataxó and Malalí occupied lands ranging from the Pardo to the Doce river valleys.⁶ And above all, vying for the territory of these and other groups, dominating a vast expanse of mountainous terrain covering some 7,200 square kilometers from the Pomba River north to the Pardo River and beyond, the Aimoré or Botocudo, as they were increasingly referred to after the mid eighteenth century, blocked settlement and exploration for new gold and diamond deposits.

The Portuguese applied the name Botocudo generically to a variety of groups believed, no doubt erroneously in certain cases, to be common descendants of the Aimoré, inland natives who for two centuries raided coastal settlements in Ilhéus, Porto Seguro, and Espírito Santo before seeking refuge from the Portuguese deeper in the interior. These groups generally (but not always, since the Portuguese sometimes classified them inaccurately) spoke the same Macro-Gê language or one of its dialects (of which scholars now recognize more than thirty). At times, entirely distinct groups like the Pataxó, the Maxacalí, and the Macuní were lumped together as Botocudo, even though subsequent scholarship has shown them to be distinct. That the name Botocudo, although still employed by anthropologists—as it is here, since colonial sources leave the historian little choice—had a limited ethnological basis should be clear from its origin: it derived from botoque or batoque, the Portuguese word for barrel lids that resembled the ornamental wooden disks that many, but not all, of these Indians inserted in their ear lobes and lower lips.⁷ In general, when colonists used the term Botocudo, they referred to nothing more

⁴ Diogo P. R. de Vasconcelos, Breve descrição, 51; Robert H. Lowie, “The Southern Cayapó,” in Handbook of South American Indians, ed. Julian H. Steward (New York: Cooper Square, 1963), 1:519-20.

⁵ Alfred Métraux, “The Purí-Coroado Linguistic Family,” in Handbook 1: 523-30.

⁶ Métraux and Curt Nimuendajú, “The Mashacalí, Patashó, and Malalí Linguistic Families,” and Métraux, “The Purí-Coroado Linguistic Family,” in Handbook 1: 541-5 and 523-30, respectively.

⁷ See José, Indígenas, 13-37; Nelson de Senna, “Principaes povos selvagens que tiveram o seo ‘habitat’ em territorio das Minas Geraes,” Revista do Arquivo Público Mineiro (hereafter RAPM) 25:1 (1937): 337-55; Maximilian Wied, Prinz von, Viagem ao Brasil, trans. Edgar Sússekind de Mendonça and Flávio Poppe de Figueiredo (Belo Horizonte: Ed. Itatiaia, 1989), 283-4; originally published as Reise nach Brasilien (Frankfurt: H. L. Brönnner, 1820). Also see Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, Viagem pelas províncias do Rio de Janeiro e Minas Gerais, trans. Vivaldi Moreira (Belo Horizonte: Ed. Itatiaia, 1975), 251-3; originally published as Voyage dans les provinces de Rio de Janeiro et de Minas Geraes (Paris: Grimbert et Dorez, 1830). For a more current discussion, see Métraux, “The Botocudo,” in Handbook 1: 531-40;

specific than any one of the numerous nomadic groups of the eastern *sertão* that refused to submit to Portuguese subjugation. Botocudo, in other words, was synonymous with enemy.⁸

The Botocudo became the great nemesis of Minas settlers bent on discovering the new lands and sources of wealth that they hoped would restore their languishing personal fortunes or simply provide for their subsistence. As settlers both rich and poor pushed into zones bypassed by the gold rush, they invaded lands controlled by the Botocudo and other groups, provoking violent clashes and even full-scale warfare. Convinced that these lands would return the captaincy to its former prosperity and prominence, government officials, were equally determined to neutralize Botocudo resistance. In the most dramatic instance of Portuguese aggression, following the arrival in Rio de Janeiro of the royal court in flight from the invasion of Portugal by Napoleon's armies, Prince Regent João declared open war on the Botocudo on May 13, 1808. In so doing, he proclaimed the crown's policy to be one of "offensive war" and gave official sanction to the Botocudo's slaughter and enslavement.⁹

In stark contrast to conventional accounts, however, the war against the Botocudo in Minas Gerais began a full half century earlier. Virtually every governor of the captaincy beginning with Luís Diogo Lobo da Silva (1763-8) pursued a policy of violent Indian conquest, although none commanded the military resources nor possessed the unabashed candor of the prince. In other research I trace the history of this prolonged violent conquest and the indigenous response. Here, my concern is to re-conceptualize frontier

José Ribamar Bessa Freire and Márcia Fernanda Malheiros, Aldeamentos indígenas do Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro: Programa de Estudos dos Povos Indígenas, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 1997), 6-8.

Recently, B. J. Barickman has revived a long-standing debate as to whether the Botocudo in fact descended from the Aimoré. The link, he notes, is based on slim linguistic evidence. Barickman, "Tame Indians," 335 n. 29. A more fundamental issue is that both names, Botocudo and Aimoré, were used interchangeably in Portuguese documents from the mid eighteenth century onward, neither of them with any real precision. The latter designation, which also appears in sources as Aimboré, Amburé, and Imburé, was applied no less generically than Botocudo. Neither term was used, as scholars have long recognized, by the Indians to identify themselves. Instead, they used Kren, Cracmun, Nacnenuc, Pejaurum, and other names, referring to particular subgroups. I have employed these more specific terms whenever they appear in the sources but am forced to settle in most cases for Botocudo, since the Portuguese rarely concerned themselves with native preference or, for that matter, with the differences, sometimes minor, sometimes considerable, between one subgroup and another. Vexed, despite his direct contact with them, by the difficulty of systematically distinguishing the various Botocudo "tribes" with their "diverse customs," Saint-Hilaire (p. 251 n. 360) wrote, "in truth, there exists no bond among all those [groups] that constitute, as a whole, the [Botocudo] nation."

⁸ The primary exception occurred when colonists sought to focus attention on a particular group of Botocudo, singling them out as enemies, for instance, not only of the Portuguese but of other indigenous groups. Thus in 1800, the priest Francisco da Silva Campos petitioned the crown for greater aid in the struggle to Christianize Indians, expressing horror that the Botocudo had "destroyed through warfare" the following "nations" in order to "eat them": "Mandali, Maxaculi, Pendi, Capoxi, Panhami, ... Manaxó, Pataxó." Petition of Padre Francisco da Silva Campos to king, [1800], in RAPM 2:4 (1897): 692.

⁹ For the prince regents' declaration of war against the Botocudo, see carta régia, 13 May 1808, in Legislação indigenista no século XIX: Uma compilação (1808-1889), ed. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1992), 57-60.

conflict in Minas Gerais given the recognition that the war on the Indians began in the mid eighteenth and not the early nineteenth century. I seek to set the geographic stage, moreover, upon which the subjugation of the Indians of the eastern sertão was enacted and to examine the way Governor Silva invoked a crown policy intended for Brazil's settled village Indians as the legislative basis for the conquest of this sprawling frontier.

More specifically, I wish to propose the presence of a shifting mentalité, a fluid conceptual context, an ideological and cultural contest in which irreconcilable positions concerning the significance of the eastern sertão vied for predominance, and to whose opposing ends crown policy proved to be equally adaptable. Before conquest became legitimate, a policy that forbade activity by colonists in the eastern sertão had to be challenged. So did the prevailing indigenous policy of the Portuguese monarchy—its official position of benevolent paternalism applied especially to Indians settled in aldeias. Geographic space itself had to be culturally reconstituted, the sertão transformed from a savage wilderness into a beckoning frontier, from a geographic barrier providentially barring the passage of gold and diamond smugglers into a fertile, gold-laden cornucopia, an Eden or Eldorado, promising sustenance and riches to the those who dared to seize them. This transformation, like the conquest it engendered, occurred in fits and starts, with the notion of the fecund frontier present as early as the 1760s and that of the frontier as deterrent persisting into the 1810s.

Throughout, of course, these changes looked very different from the Indian perspective. There is every indication that natives took advantage of crown prohibitions on uncontrolled settlement and, more generally, of the contradictions in crown and captaincy policy. They resisted invasion on the periphery of their domain; simultaneously, they created a refuge for themselves in increasingly remote territory, insecure though this refuge may have been. In both instances they struggled to prolong their own survival and did so with marked success—but also at great cost in land and lives.

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In the rugged, forested sertão separating the urban nucleus of Minas Gerais from the Atlantic coast, settlement stalled and Indians, especially the nomadic Puri, Botocudo, and Pataxó, remained dominant throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. In part, their persistent presence was a result of crown policy. Soon after the first discoveries of mineral wealth were made in the 1690s, the crown sealed off the eastern sertão in order to prevent the smuggling of gold and diamonds to seafarers, evading heavy crown taxation. At least in theory, trade and other overland traffic between the captaincy and the coast were restricted to just three roads patrolled by soldiers: one leading south to São Paulo; one, the so-called Caminho Novo, southeast to Rio de Janeiro; and one leading north to Bahia and Pernambuco. Topography largely dictated the location of these routes. Attempts to penetrate the sertão at other points, particularly by way of the most direct route traversing Espírito Santo from the Atlantic coast, proved impracticable because of the intractability of the mountains, the vastness of the forests, the lack of easily navigable rivers, and the absence—out of fear of hostile Indians—of settlers to provision

expeditions. That, in any case, is how one contemporary described the problem of access to the mines at the turn of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ But the determination of the crown to control smuggling, monitor the flow of gold out of the mines, reap its royal fifth on gold production, and tax imports (including slaves) and exports meant that natural barriers evolved quickly into legal prohibitions.¹¹

Just as the discovery of gold determined which regions of the captaincy would become densely populated, the absence of discoveries left other areas all but untouched by colonists once initial exploration failed to uncover accessible mineral wealth. As the pattern of settlement took shape in the wake of the gold rush, the crown turned to a policy of forbidding access to these unsettled zones in order to halt unsupervised and thus untaxed prospecting and stem the flow of contraband. The unsettled zones that ringed the urban mining nucleus came to be known as the “Prohibited Lands” (*áreas proibidas*), a designation used most frequently in reference to the southern and southeastern reaches of the captaincy, where the heavily traveled routes to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and constant pressure from settlers to open new lands made restrictions on movement imperative in the view of a crown bent on surveillance. But it was to the east and northeast, rugged territory covered by dense forests, where the connection between the prohibition on the presence of colonists, on the one hand, and the presence and resistance of Indians, on the other, was most tightly drawn. This “*sertão* of the eastern parts,” explained Governor Luís da Cunha Menezes, future count of Lumiares (1783-88), had been cordoned off as so-called “Prohibited Lands in the theory that the said *sertões* serve as a natural barrier that protects this captaincy against smuggling.”¹²

The susceptibility of this verdant *sertão* to any number of unsupervised activities incompatible with the dictates of strict colonial supervision meant that the region was among the first to be cordoned off after the gold strikes. In 1700, as news of the discovery of gold rapidly spread, construction of a road linking the mines with the Espírito Santo coast was begun and then, two years later, abruptly halted on crown orders. From one point of view, construction of the road made sense. Promising to be the most direct route to the mines, traversing a distance of a mere 240 kilometers, the road could have served as the sole access to and egress from the mines, all traffic being monitored as it passed through the fortified gateway port of Vila Nova do Espírito Santo (Vitória). But the opposing view, which ultimately prevailed, was that opening yet one more access to

¹⁰ “Informação sobre as Minas do Brasil,” ca. 1700, in *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional*, Rio de Janeiro, (hereafter, *ABNRJ*) 57 (1935): 167-8.

¹¹ For statistics on gold production, crown revenues, the royal fifth, and other taxes and levies in Minas Gerais, see C. R. Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil, 1695-1750: Growing Pains of a Colonial Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 333-50; Laura de Mello e Souza, *Desclassificados do Ouro: A pobreza mineira no século XVIII*, 3d ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1990), 43-9; Kenneth R. Maxwell, *Conflicts and Conspiracies: Brazil and Portugal, 1750-1808* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 245-54.

¹² Quoted in Diogo [Luís de A. P.] de Vasconcelos, *História média*, 275.

the mines would make the supervision of all routes more difficult.¹³ That the crown had some difficulty stopping what it had begun is clear: concerned by the flow of gold from Minas Gerais to the coast, the governor of Espírito Santo was forced in 1710 to reaffirm the suspension of all exploration or road building in the region.¹⁴ It was not until a full century later that the crown changed positions and finally permitted the construction of a number of roads cutting through the eastern sertão to the coast, including a route descending the Doce River basin, passing from Vila Rica to Vitória through the heart of Indian territory.¹⁵ During that period, similar prohibitions were extended to the rest of the captaincy. A royal charter of 1733, reconfirmed in 1750, prohibited the opening of new roads to the mines from any direction, not just the east, punishing as smugglers those who ignored the order or traveled along unauthorized roads. Violators had their possessions seized as presumed contraband and divided equally among the royal treasury and any informants whose collaboration led to such an arrest.¹⁶

The perimeter of a territory as vast as the eastern sertão was impossible to patrol, but colonial authorities did what they could to enforce the prohibition. In 1761, for example, Gomes Freire de Andrada, the count of Bobadela (1735-63), learned of the discovery of gold at Cuieté, a remote settlement located at the heart of this territory. The gold had been unearthed by an explorer named Domingos Jozé Soares and a dozen of his companions who had formed a bandeira and descended the Doce River. Proceeding eastward to the coast, where they presented a quantity of gold dust to authorities in Vitória, Soares and part of his band were promptly imprisoned for venturing off established roads to mine in prohibited zones. Five more associates arriving later learned of the arrest and fled north to the coastal settlement of São Mateus, described by their accuser as a bastion of fugitives, smugglers, and murderers among whom these men were to be included for daring to cross the eastern sertão.¹⁷ Similar cases presumably occurred

¹³ João de Lencastre to crown, Salvador da Bahia, 12 Jan. 1701, in Os manuscritos do Arquivo da Casa de Cadaval respeitantes ao Brasil, eds. Virginia Rau and Maria Fernandes Gomes da Silva (Coimbra: Atlântida, 1955-8) 2:14-7; C. R. Boxer, Golden Age, 43.

¹⁴ Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva, ed., Dicionário da história da colonização portuguesa no Brasil (Lisboa: Verbo, 1994), 309.

¹⁵ Wilhelm Ludwig von Eschwege, Pluto brasiliensis, trans. Domicio de Figueiredo Murta (Belo Horizonte: Ed. Itatiaia, 1979), 1:117; originally published in German under the same title Pluto brasiliensis (Berlin, 1833). The road down the Doce appears first on “Mapa da capitania de Minas Geraes,” 1810, Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Seção de Iconografia (hereafter BNRJ and SI), arc. 32,4,20. The year 1810 marked the beginning of a burst of road-building activity farther to the north, as well, including the construction of a route from the town of Ilhéus inland along the Pardo River, a route between the towns of Belmonte in Porto Seguro and Minas Novas in Minas Gerais, and a route between the towns of Portalegre in Porto Seguro and Minas Novas. To the south, the situation was no different, as the crown approved additional road construction related to the provisioning of the court in Rio de Janeiro. See Barickman, “Tame Indians,” 355, Table 2, “Attempts to Improve Communications Between the Coast and the Interior in Southern Bahia, 1777-1818”; Caio Prado Júnior, Formação do Brasil contemporâneo, 20th ed. (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1987), 243-7; Alcir Lenharo, As tropas da moderação: (O abastimento da Corte na formação política do Brasil, 1808-1842) (São Paulo: Símbolo, 1979), chapt. 2.

¹⁶ Raimundo José da Cunha Matos, Corografia histórica da província de Minas Gerais (1837) (reprint, São Paulo: Ed. Itatiaia, 1981) 2:42; Maxwell, Conflicts and Conspiracies, 13.

¹⁷ Francisco [de Sales] Ribeiro to Governor, n.p., 24 July 1761, AN, cód. 807, vol. 5, fls. 81, 85.

with some regularity. Another that left documentary traces did so in 1778, when Governor Antônio de Noronha (1775-80) learned that one of his regional military commanders had authorized a number of men to form and arm a bandeira to enter the forests occupied by Indians in a mountainous region between the Doce and Paraíba rivers. Implicated in the illegal action were the officer Captain Francisco Pires Farinho and his son Manoel Pires Farinho, and perhaps the district commander himself, Jozé Leme da Silva. In charge of a group of settled Coropó and Coroado Indians at the newly established parish of São Manuel da Pomba (Rio Pomba), the Farinhos found their strength bolstered by an influx of settlers to an area until recently dominated by these Indians as well as the Puri. Emboldened, they sought to explore outlying zones, including those set off-limits by official prohibitions. Noronha reacted after the younger Farinho led a bandeira, probably manned by settled Indians, in search of “a great stretch of open country thought to be rich” in mineral wealth. The governor chastised his local commander and the elder Farinho alike for sanctioning the expedition and thereby risking opening a route for contraband. Only with Noronha’s express permission were bandeiras to be allowed to “penetrate the forest of that sertão,” which the governor reminded his commander, “serve as a wall” separating Minas Gerais from Rio de Janeiro and the coast. Anyone else who persisted in such activity should be considered a criminal, imprisoned, and severely punished.¹⁸

In this way, over time, the geographic basis of the mining district’s access routes and settlement pattern merged with the exercise of colonial power to determine the boundaries of those lands occupied by colonists and, conversely, those where indigenous peoples found refuge and remained dominant. To the east, in Ilhéus, Porto Seguro, and Espírito Santo—nearly the entire distance, in other words, between the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Salvador—settlement was restricted to a narrow strip along the seaboard largely as a consequence of the Indian presence. The crown consciously sought to turn the zone between the coast and the inland mining district into a kind of forested no-man’s-land, peopled by native antagonists, whose enmity, forged over the course of two centuries of conflict with Portuguese colonists, would prevent unauthorized access to and smuggling from the mines to the coast.¹⁹

Crown legislation and the zeal of local governors, therefore, had to go only so far in constructing such a barrier. The best defense against smuggling was the untracked wilderness itself and its reputedly savage denizens. Although official concerns about illicit activity in the region would never disappear entirely, colonial authorities remained convinced that their prohibitions were by and large successful, certainly far more so than measures taken to stop smuggling along authorized routes. On the subject of smuggling to Espírito Santo, Governor Noronha, for instance, could declare that “through the [eastern] forests the smuggling of gold is impracticable given that their nature, the

¹⁸ Governor to Jozé Leme da Silva, Vila Rica, 27 July 1778, and to Francisco Pires Farinho, Vila Rica, 27 July 1778, BNRJ, Seção de Manuscritos (hereafter SM), cód. 2,2,24, fls. 164-5v. Also see Waldemar de Almeida Barbosa, Dicionário histórico-geográfico de Minas Gerais (Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia Limitada, 1995), 286-7; Celso Falabella de Figueiredo Castro, Os sertões de leste: achegas para a história da Zona da Mata (Belo Horizonte: Imprensa Oficial, 1987), 11-5.

¹⁹ Maria Hilda B. Paraíso, “Os Botocudos e sua trajetória histórica,” in História dos índios do Brasil, ed. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, FAPESP/SMC, 1992) 415.

distance, and the wild Indians that inhabit the said forests make impossible the criminal pretension of smugglers in those parts.”²⁰

Maps of the region provide another gauge of the effectiveness of this barrier and the status the eastern sertão acquired as Indian territory. Drawn in the mid sixteenth century, prior to the incorporation of geographic knowledge resulting from the gold boom, a map by the Dutch cartographer Joan Blaeu illustrated the Brazilian interior as virtually blank but divided into numerous regions identified by the indigenous groups dwelling in them. The zone separating the coastal captaincies of Ilhéus, Porto Seguro, Espírito Santo, and Rio de Janeiro from the region that would later evolve into the mining district—the zone that came to be known in Minas Gerais as the eastern sertão—bore the names of the following Indians from north to south: the Guaymure (west of Ilhéus); the Aymure (west of Porto Seguro); the Apiapetang, Tapuia, and Margaia (west of Espírito Santo); and the Molopaque and Tououpinabauti (west of Rio de Janeiro). A subsequent map by Blaeu represents interior river basins with slightly more detail and alters the names of some indigenous groups. From north to south they include the Tupinachin (west of Ilhéus); the Aymure, Gaymure, and Apiapetanga (west of Porto Seguro); the Tomonymeno, Margaya, and Tapuya (west of Espírito Santo); and the Tououpinabauti (west of Rio de Janeiro). The territory controlled by the Aymoré, whom the Portuguese would later call the Botocudo, extends far to the west of the São Francisco River, although there is no reason to believe that Blaeu based the size of this territory on anything but speculation. The Puri (on the map spelled Pories), who also occupied the eastern sertão, similarly appear far to the west, beyond the Paraná River.²¹

That exploration, despite prohibitions, persisted in the Doce river basin (and by inference in other watersheds of the eastern sertão) between Blaeu’s time and the mid eighteenth century is confirmed by a map dating from the 1750s, when the major discoveries of the gold cycle were a thing of the past, their alluvial gold virtually exhausted. Even at this early stage of the economic crisis that would follow, attention was focused on the eastern sertão. This map, whose author remains unknown, shows many of the Doce’s numerous tributaries. Down river from Mariana a few towns and parishes now mark the landscape, including those of Forquim, Piranga, and Antônio Dias Abaixo. And to the north, that of Peçanha (on the map labeled Santo Antônio do Bom Sucesso) appears along the Suaçui Grande, one of numerous tributaries of the Doce River. The map-maker drew attention to one particular portion of the sertão, noting the existence of “emerald fields with many accumulations still to be discovered.” Curiously, however, he left out all mention of Indians, as though the barrier they presented to these anticipated discoveries had not yet become the well defined problem it would present after the mid 1760s. This is the case, too, on a map illustrating Governor Silva’s 1764 expedition through the sertão to the south and west of Vila Rica, a map which also includes the

²⁰ Governor, “Plano Secreto para a nova Conquista do Cuieté,” [ca. Aug. 1779, Vila Rica], BNRJ, SM, cód. 2,2,24, fl. 230v.

²¹ Johannes [Joan] Blaeu, “Brasilia,” 1657, Rare Books Room, Benson Latin American Collection (hereafter BLAC), University of Texas, Austin; Ioanne Blaeu [Joan Blaeu], “Nova et Accurata Brasiliae,” 1670?, *ibid.*

eastern sertão to which Silva would directly turn his attention in constructing his aggressive Indian policy.²²

Despite these signs of increasing cartographic knowledge, large portions of the eastern sertão remain unmarked, literally and figuratively, labeled simply “terra incognita” on an undated map apparently drawn no later than the 1760s. At least in the mind of this anonymous map-maker, much of the region had been sealed off well enough that it could be represented only as the unknown, revealing its secrets no more than it had on the earliest maps of Brazil. Another anonymous map of the captaincy completed in 1767 shows scattered settlement along the Caminho Novo to Rio de Janeiro. Now, however, the otherwise vacant territory between the mining nucleus and the coast bears marks denoting Indian villages that dotted the sertão. As interest turned to this prohibited zone, the presence and specific location of Indians there became an increasingly pertinent and irksome subject. Penned in the middle of a nearly featureless sertão, a note by the map-maker describes the Botocudo there as “wild heathen” who were impeding attempts to secure the settlement of Cuieté. Eleven years later the military engineer and cartographer José Joaquim da Rocha completed the most detailed map of Minas Gerais to that date, depicting again a near absence of settlement in the southeastern and eastern reaches of the captaincy, except for the towns lining the road to Rio de Janeiro like beads. Indian villages remain the primary features drawn in this unsettled territory, apart from schematically rendered forests, mountain ranges, and rivers. Similar villages appear on the more detailed maps Rocha drafted of individual comarcas (judicial districts), maps whose legends themselves bear illustrations of Indians in various states of undress. In the sertão to the east of the comarca of Sêrro do Frio, Rocha drew groups of red dots to indicate the existence of these villages, describing one such village as the dwelling place of the “heathen Panhame who eat other nations.”²³

After the turn of the nineteenth century, the Indian presence increasingly preoccupied map-makers. A comparatively detailed map that includes the sertão separating Minas Gerais from Ilhéus and Porto Seguro bears witness not only to the tenacious survival of Indians in the region sealed off against smugglers, and not only to the mounting pressure from settlers, but also to the way in which the Indians were more unambiguously than ever portrayed as a barrier to such settlement. This map mentions the plight of fazendas near Peçanha subject to the “invasion of numerous heathen of the

²² “Mapa da região banhada pelo Rio Doce e seus afluentes, na Capitania de Minas Gerais,” ca. 1758, in Mapa: Imagens da formação territorial brasileira ed. Isa Adonias (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Emílio Odebrecht, 1993), 223, pl. 152; “Carta geographica que comprehende toda a Comarca do Rio das Mortes, Villa Rica, e parte da Cidade de Mariana do Governo de Minas Geraes,” ca. 1764, in *ibid.*, 224, pl. 153.

²³ The first of these maps, untitled, BNRJ, SI, arc. 9,2,7A, is erroneously catalogued as a copy of Rocha, “Mappa da Capitania de Minas Geraes . . .,” 1777, BNRJ, SI, arc. 1,2,28, from which it in fact differs. The second map is “Carta geographica da capitania de Minas Gerais e partes confinantes,” 1767, BNRJ, SI, arc. 17,5,12. Rocha’s 1778 maps include “Mapa da Capitania de Minas Geraes com a deviza de suas comarcas,” “Mappa da Comarca do Serro Frio,” “Mappa da Comarca da Villa Rica,” “Mappa da Comarca do Rio das Mortes,” and “Mappa da Comarca do Sabara.” The Arquivo Histórico do Exército in Rio de Janeiro holds the originals, facsimiles of which have recently been published as flyleaf inserts in José Joaquim da Rocha, Geografia histórica da Capitania de Minas Gerais, edited by Maria Efigênia Lage de Resende from 1780 ms. (Belo Horizonte: Fundação João Pinheiro, 1995).

Tocoió nation” (another Botocudo subgroup), which inhabited the banks of the Araçuaí River. Elsewhere were zones in which “a multitude of heathen Botocudo and others roam,” as well as those occupied by the “wild and heathen Pataxó” and those in which the “heathen Amburé customarily rob fazendas.” Also depicted are villages of Tupinambá and Camacã, both labeled as “fugitives,” suggesting they had once occupied lands neighboring Portuguese settlements but had now retreated to the heart of the sertão, seeking refuge in more remote areas as relation with settlers hardened. As late as 1810, another anonymous map-maker described the eastern sertão as a territory “in which the heathen Botocudo roam.” South of this territory was a sertão “peopled by the wild Puri heathens” and “dominated by heathen Guarulho,” who had similarly sought sanctuary in remote forests, ascending the Pomba and Muraié Rivers from Rio de Janeiro into Minas Gerais, where they had become, according to the map-maker, the “sole adversary of the Botocudo.”²⁴

All of these maps further reveal that no political boundary between Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo had been established, so unexplored and unknown was the intervening territory. In 1780, having completed his ambitious mapping, Rocha wrote that “between the captaincy of Minas Gerais and that of Espírito Santo there is no known division other than the Ilha da Esperança,” a small island along the Doce River. No other border had been established since these were “scarcely penetrated sertões peopled by heathens of various nations.”²⁵ Legislation meant to define the border between Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo, authored in 1800 and confirmed by royal edict in 1816, failed to settle what would evolve into a full-fledged border dispute that remained in litigation until the twentieth century. The disputed region retained its designation “Aimoré Territory” into the twentieth century.²⁶

The connection between Indians and borders was no accident. The missing division between captaincies, the absence of an imaginary line distinguishing one colonial jurisdiction from another, testified both to a vacuum of colonial power and to the dominance of the Indian. The captaincy’s western border, too, was no well-defined dividing line but “unsettled sertões” kept vacant of settlers by the Caiapó. The same was true of portions of the southern border with São Paulo, where the Caiapó impeded exploration and colonization at least until the late 1760s.²⁷ Even the internal divisions between individual comarcas, especially where they coincided with the eastern wilderness, were “uncertain,” lamented Governor Noronha in 1779, because they had been established at a time when these lands were “unsettled, unknown, and inhabited by savage Indians,

²⁴ “Comarcas de Porto Seguro e de Ilhéus,” ca. 1807, in Mapa, ed. Isa Adonias, 207, pl. 145; “Mapa da capitania de Minas Geraes,” 1810, BNRJ, SI, arc. 32,4,20. On Guarulho origins in Rio de Janeiro, see José, Indígenas, 28-9. The cartographer’s assessment notwithstanding, we know that the Puri, Coroado, and Coropó also clashed with the Botocudo in the same zone.

²⁵ Rocha, Geografia histórica, 77-8.

²⁶ Dicionário geográfico brasileiro (Pôrto Alegre: Ed. Globo, 1972), 192.

²⁷ On Caiapó resistance along the São Paulo border, see Jerônimo Dias Ribeiro to Morgado de Mateus, Registo de Itupeva, 11 Jan. 1766, 29 Nov. 1768, BNRJ, SM, Arquivo Morgado de Mateus (hereafter MM), I-30,16,9 docs. 1, 9.

just as part of them still remain.”²⁸ But it was above all the lands between Minas Gerais and the captaincies to the east that constituted “a desert,” as one contemporary put it.²⁹ There, in place of a formal border, the crown and, when it suited them, captaincy officials created another sort of jurisdictional authority—that of enforced absence. As such, they fashioned imaginary lines no less significant than political borders, lines which separated the established mining territory from Indian domain, and Indian domain from the settled coast. These lines divided and defined colonial identities in accordance with patterns as old as the Portuguese colonization of Brazil itself. The boundary between settled and nomadic societies, between mercantile and kinship-based economies, between, in terms used by colonists, the Christian and the heathen, the civilized and the savage, such lines emerged from and then reinforced the oppositions central to the fluid dynamics of frontier containment and conquest on the periphery of the urban mining nucleus.³⁰ The territory long deemed terra incognita thus assumed a significance far beyond the geographic boundaries that gave rise to its sparse settlement pattern and to the concerns over smuggling and surveillance that prolonged its status as a frontier.

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No matter how determined the policy of cordoning off the region, no matter how unequivocal the assertions by officials in sources documenting it, there is good reason to be skeptical about the supposed impenetrability of this imposing expanse of wilderness and Indians. Historians have rendered more rigidly in their narratives of the past the divide colonial officials managed with only partial success to impose in practice.³¹ This is not to

²⁸ Governor, “Bando para a devizão das Comarcas,” Vila Rica, 5 Oct. 1779, BNRJ, cód. 2,2,24, fls. 223v-4v. In this decree, Noronha established new borders between what were then the captaincy’s four comarcas: Vila Rica, Sabará, Rio das Mortes, and Serro Frio. The decree is published in Theophilo Feu de Carvalho, Comarcas e termos: Creações, supressões, restaurações, incorporações e desmembramentos de comarcas e termos, em Minas Geraes (1709-1915) (Belo Horizonte: Imprensa Oficial, 1922), 64-6.

²⁹ The quotation is taken from the title of the ms. Manoel José Pires da Silva Pontes, “Extractos das viagens feitas no deserto, que separa as povoações da provincia de Minas Geraes, e as povoações do littoral nas provincias do Rio de Janeiro, Espirito Santo, e Bahia,” n.d., BNRJ, SM, cód. 5,3,40.

³⁰ On the setting of boundaries as an essential part of the social, political, and cultural history of frontier settlement, cf. William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, “Becoming West: Toward a New Meaning for Western History” in Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past, eds. William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1992), 15; Jill Lepore, The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), xiii, 74.

³¹ Maxwell, for instance, writes, “The River Doce valley was the undisputed territory of the ferocious Aimores Indians....” In the same vein, Prado Júnior writes that apart from the northerly diamond district of the Jequitinhona-Araçuaí river basins centered on Minas Novas and, further south, some minor gold mining activity in Doce basin in the vicinity of Peçanha, the eastern sertão remained “a desert.” The crown “had completely closed off the region” to prevent smuggling. North of the Paraíba river valley and the Caminho Novo, “the forests remained intact, occupied solely by tribes of savage Indians.” Only at the end of the eighteenth century, according to Prado Júnior, did any significant advance into the sertão

suggest the divide was entirely or even primarily imagined, a fictional creation of map-makers or captaincy governors eager to reassure a crown obsessed with preventing contraband. But as in all frontier settings, these geographic and especially cultural boundaries turned out to be extraordinarily difficult to consolidate and maintain. The lines separating colonist from Indian in the eastern sertão proved highly unstable, and the official ban on crossing into Indian territory had no small role in creating the conditions for its own violation. This was because both the ban and the cultural cleavages that were its counterpart accentuated, on the one hand, the most threatening depiction of the Indian and, on the other, the most enticing image of the wilderness.

The more the Portuguese succeeded in creating a zone—even the perception of such a zone—off-limits to settled, “civilized” society, the more the Indians who lived there could be categorized as “uncivilized.” To the degree the Indians were identified with the impenetrable “interior of the sertões,” they were seen as a part of savage nature, as “wild” and “inhuman,” as “irrational beasts” or even “more fearful than the beasts themselves.”³² It became increasingly difficult to differentiate the useful threat they posed to renegade smugglers from the intolerable impediment they represented to settlers. As one priest put it, the Indians who occupied the eastern sertão were “perverse bandits,” “enemies,” and otherwise “malefactors” who “scandalously persist in being our executioners and the capital enemies of the civil and human contract.”³³ He overlooked the fact, of course, that it was precisely these characteristics that were supposed to serve official purposes. But such purposes did not preclude a concomitant outrage at the Indian presence. On the contrary, officials themselves came to view the Indians as indomitable not because they were but precisely because of the prohibitions designed to cordon off their territory. And the more the Indians seemed to exercise unchallenged control over their territory, the more they inspired terror in the minds of colonists, officials included. A policy designed to create a barrier to smuggling, created fear, racial hatred, and an irrepressible impetus for conquest.

Another consequence of the ban on entering the eastern sertão, and another way it undermined itself, was the status the region acquired, nothing short of mythical, of a place of unparalleled fecundity. As long as substantial portions of the region remained terra incognita, unexplored and unknown, and aggressively portrayed as such, colonists could sustain the same longings and fantasies that had driven the conquest of the Americas from the beginning, inscribing them on the still unconquered mountains, forests, and river valleys separating the mining district from the sea. Colonists came to prize the region in direct proportion to the impenetrability of the barrier, both real and perceived, created by

east of Minas Novas occur, while similar expansion into the Doce region began only after the turn of the century. Maxwell, Conflicts and Conspiracies, 85; Prado Júnior, Formação do Brasil contemporâneo, 76-8.

³² Governor to Jozé do Valle Vieira, Vila Rica, 4 Mar. 1777, BNRJ, SM, cód. 2,2,24, fl. 88; Governor to Commander, 3d Division, Vila Rica, 7 Mar. 1812, BNRJ, SM, cód. 1,4,5, doc. 271; Paulo Mendes Ferreira Campelo to Governor, Cuieté, 4 Apr. 1770, BNRJ, SM, Arquivo Conde de Valadares (hereafter CV), cód. 18,2,6, doc. 237; Pedro Afonso Galvão de São Martinho to count of Linhares, Vila Rica, 29 Jan. 1811, BNRJ, SM, I-33,30,22, doc. 1.

³³ [Manoel Vieyra Nunes,] “Termo de reunião de conselho,” Barra das Laranjeiras, 5 July 1769, BNRJ, SM, CV, cód. 18,2,6, doc. 192.

its indigenous occupants. Thus this sertão could be described as “salubrious” and laden with “hidden wealth,” holding the promise of future settlement and abundance, and simultaneously as a place “infested by the Puri,” as though they were so many ants or mosquitoes, or corrupted by a pervasive “fear of the wild Indians of the Botocudo nation,” and thus uninhabitable.³⁴

Extolling the potential of the region in 1798, Jozé Eloi Ottoni prophesied the discovery of riches surpassing all of the gold and diamonds previously extracted from Minas Gerais. “The greatest treasures are yet to be discovered,” he wrote. The Indians themselves had transmitted news of this untapped wealth, not only mineral but agricultural, whose existence had been confirmed by sertanistas (backwoodsmen) who had visited the Indians in their villages. “The fertility of the soil is such that the greater part of our crops grow spontaneously without cultivation, requiring only the provident effects of wise nature, which, perhaps anticipating the inertia of the Indians, conserves for the benefit of humanity the root and the seed. Deposited in the earth, they come at their proper time to produce in their own season. What incomparable wealth Agriculture promises us in that land!” If the mere presence of Indians was enough to elicit outrage, the possibility that they were preventing the Portuguese from obtaining concealed riches went beyond all toleration. To rectify the untenable, Ottoni called on the crown to promote a new era of the bandeira, encouraging a new generation of explorers to enter the forests in search of gold: “I would be in favor of animating the bandeiristas [sic.], stimulating the project of making new discoveries by means of favors, privileges, and grants conceded to those who, inflamed by Patriotic zeal, enter into the forests.” The result would be the definitive Portuguese possession of the eastern sertão and the ushering in of an era of unprecedented prosperity in Minas Gerais.³⁵

Economic hardship in the post-boom mining district contributed considerably to proposals like Ottoni’s which advocated the abandonment of what by his time was a century-old policy of sealing off the eastern sertão. That he identified the Indians who controlled the territory not as unwitting accomplices in the crown’s efforts to control contraband but as backward peoples blocking the discovery of new sources of wealth can be attributed directly to the pressing problem of restoring the captaincy to its former prosperity. The decadence of the mines made it increasingly difficult for colonists, whether they were individual settlers or captaincy authorities, to abide by the territorial

³⁴ Pontes, “Extractos,” BNRJ, SM, cód. 5,3,40, fls. 19v; “Ordens sobre arrecadação e despesas, 1768[-1771],” 30 May 1770, BNRJ, SM, Arquivo Casa dos Contos (hereafter CC), gaveta I-10-7, doc. 55; “Petição que fizerão e assignarão os moradores das freguesias ostilizadas,” ca. May 1765, Arquivo Público Mineiro (hereafter APM), CC, cód. 1156, fl. 9. See also Ricardo de Bastos Cambraia and Fábio Faria Mendes, “A colonização dos sertões do leste mineiro: Políticas de ocupação territorial num regime escravista (1780-1836),” Revista do Departamento de História—FAFICH/UFMG 6 (July 1988): 137-50.

³⁵ Jozé Eloi Ottoni, “Memoria sobre o estado actual da Capitania de Minas Gerais,” Lisbon, 1789, in ABNRJ 30 (1908): 313. Ottoni’s image of the eastern sertão echoes a central myth that from the beginning galvanized the European conquest of the New World: that of the existence of and consequent search for an earthly paradise, a lost Eden, especially one whose fecundity rendered human labor unnecessary. See Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Visão do paraíso: Os motivos edênicos no descobrimento e colonização do Brasil 4th ed. (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1985). For the myth’s North American counterpart in which the western frontier was portrayed as the “garden of the world,” see Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West in Symbol and Myth (New York: Vintage Books, 1957).

restrictions established by the crown.³⁶ Drawn to the sertão by images of undiscovered wealth, they were also impelled there by precarious economic conditions.

But there is also a striking incongruity between Ottoni's call for conquest and the events that preceded it. The military conquest of the eastern sertão began in the mid 1760s; Ottoni offered his expansionist proposals a quarter century later. He made reference to the fact that the inhabitants of Minas Gerais were already dispatching bandeiras to search for gold and precious stones.³⁷ But he missed the significance of that fact, and the same can be said of historians. Focused on crown policy rather than the actual incorporation of the frontier as it was conceived and pursued both formally by captaincy officials and informally by settlers, they have all but ignored the importance of the military and settlers' advance on the eastern sertão as a primary response to the decline of the mining economy. Correspondingly, they have disregarded the fate of the region's Indians. The advance on the eastern sertão—indeed, the new era of the bandeira invoked by Ottoni—began in earnest after the installation of Governor Silva. It continued through virtually every succeeding governor's tenure until the end of the century and then proceeded unchecked into the nineteenth century. In some cases soldiers led the march; in others, settlers did so and then called on the military to defend newly colonized territory subject to Indian attack. By Ottoni's time, dozens of expeditions had already plunged into the eastern forests in search of new wealth, or to do battle with the Indians who stood in the way, or both, in contravention of all measures to keep the region off-limits (see table 4.1). The crown policy of maintaining the sertão as a barrier to contraband continued in force until the early nineteenth century, but local authorities, responding to the pressures of increasing numbers of impoverished miners, farmers, and ranchers, simultaneously forged an incompatible policy of opening the territory to exploration and settlement. All activity in the region, every facet of relations among the state, settlers, and

³⁶ For an analysis of the decline or decadência following the gold cycle during the second half of the eighteenth century, see Souza, Desclassificados, chapt. 1. On the broader colonial economic crisis of which the decline in mining was but one part, see Fernando A. Novais, "Brazil in the Old Colonial System," trans. Richard Graham and Hank Phillips, in Brazil and the World System, ed. Richard Graham (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 11-55; Novais, Portugal e Brasil na crise do antigo sistema colonial (1777-1808), 2d ed. (São Paulo: Ed. HUCITEC, 1981); José Jobson de A. Arruda, O Brasil no comércio colonial (1777-1808), 2d ed. (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1980), esp. 115-20, 317-8, 655-62. Also see Kenneth Maxwell, Pombal: Paradox of the Enlightenment (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 131-6, and Conflicts and Conspiracies, esp. chapt. 2.

³⁷ Jozé Eloi Ottoni, "Memoria," 317.

Table 4.1

Expeditions to the Eastern Sertão, 1765-1804

Years	<u>N</u>
1765-69	19
1770-74	6
1775-79	14 ^a
1780-84	12
1785-89	0
1790-94	5
1795-99	2
1800-04	6
Total	64

Sources: APM, CC, cód. 1156; APM, SC, códs. 60, 118, 183, 200, 214, 224, 227, 259, 260, 276, 277; “Ordens ..., 1768[-1771],” BNRJ, SM, CC, gaveta I-10-7; BNRJ, SM, CV, códs. 2,2,24 and 18,2,6; RAPM 2:2 (1897): 315; Diogo P. R. de Vasconcelos, Breve descrição, 150-1; Diogo [Luís de A. P.] de Vasconcelos, História média, 206-8, 252; Barbosa, Dicionário histórico, 83; Castro, Os sertões de leste, 11-5.

^a Counts as three the “several expeditions” dispatched by Gov. Noronha in 1776 to the upper Doce River to “defend” against Indian attacks and track down runaway slaves.

Indians, would be informed by the inevitable contradictions inherent in these opposing objectives.

The same inconsistency writ large concerns the role of the prince regent's 1808 declaration of war. The German naturalist Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, who between 1815 and 1817 traveled along the perimeter of Botocudo territory observed that the decree meant that "no truce was granted the Botocudo, who proceeded to be exterminated wherever they were encountered, without regard to age or sex." This "war of extermination," he wrote, "was maintained with the greatest perseverance and cruelty, since it was firmly believed that [the Botocudo] killed and devoured any enemy that fell into their hands."³⁸ For the few historians who have considered the matter, this military assault bears the mark of a watershed event, the moment at which relations irrevocably hardened between the state and the remnant of the once numerous Indians of non-Amazonian Brazil, when tensions presumably long since forgotten suddenly, almost unaccountably, re-ignited and provoked the ire of the colony's highest authority, who reacted by invoking the principle of "just war," which had not been applied in Brazil since the 1730s.³⁹

But the war against the Botocudo—extended officially in November 1808 to the Kaingáng of São Paulo (which then included Paraná) and unofficially to the neighboring Puri in Minas Gerais and to other groups in Goiás, Piauí, and Maranhão—was no anomaly.⁴⁰ Instead it marked the royal legitimization of a policy with a long history in Minas Gerais. In 1764 Governor Silva first provisioned and the following year deployed a series of armed expeditions to secure the state's hold on the eastern sertão. The stated motive for this action was to "hinder the pillage" of the "wild heathen," who "year after year" and at numerous locations had attacked fazendas and other lands conceded to settlers by the crown. The Indians had committed "such hostilities as murder and the destruction of cattle, crops, and fazendas themselves." They had engaged in looting and arson, burning settlers' fields and houses. Not only had they harmed property owners and others in the region but, as long as their attacks were left unchecked, they also threatened "the ruin" of neighboring areas dangerously proximate to the central settled zones. In particular jeopardy, however, was the remote settlement of Cuieté, where Indian raids had

³⁸ Wied, Viagem ao Brasil, 153.

³⁹ On the historical origins and frequent application by the Portuguese of the principle of "just war" to the Indians of Portuguese America, see Beatriz Perrone-Moisés, "Índios livres e índios escravos: Os princípios da legislação indigenista do período colonial (séculos XVI a XVIII)," and "Inventário da legislação indigenista, 1500-1800," both in História dos índios, 115-32 and 529-66, respectively. For a recent analysis of English and Spanish notions of the same principle in the conquest of Amerindians, see Lepore, Name of War, 106-13. An equally long history set a pattern for Portuguese military actions in which crown distinctions between attacking the enemy while sparing friendly Indians were disregarded in practice. See, for example, Mathias C. Kiemen, The Indian Policy of Portugal in the Amazon Region, 1614-1693 (New York: Octagon Books, 1973), 22.

⁴⁰ On the war's extension to these other groups, see Oliveira Lima, Dom João VI no Brasil, 3d ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks, 1996), 487; John Hemming, Amazon Frontier: The Defeat of the Brazilian Indians (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 93, 112-3. For the royal declaration of war against the Kaingáng, see carta régia, 5 Nov. 1808, in Legislação indigenista, 62-4.

forced settlers to flee on several occasions from promising gold-mining operations.⁴¹ Responding violently to settler incursions, the Botocudo had, as farmers and prospectors put it, “infested” substantial stretches of the eastern sertão, fought fiercely, and won, at least temporarily, first attacking Cuieté and then advancing in the direction of Mariana itself, one of the mining district’s chief urban centers.

Prodded by outraged landholders subject to what they termed “notorious” and “constant” losses of property, including entire estates (fábricas), Silva ordered some 150 armed men to march to Cuieté and its environs, where they would repel the Indians, put an end to their hostilities, and reverse their gains. Thereby the governor hoped to make the frontier—or at least prized portions of it—safe for settlement, not only for the benefit of the settlers themselves but also for that of the royal treasury, since the mineral wealth and “commerce” that resulted from a secure frontier would generate revenues in the form of the royal fifth assessed on gold production and steep taxes levied on other profitable enterprises.⁴² Whereas his predecessor, the count of Bobadela, had limited his actions in Cuieté to a defensive posture of protecting settlers from raids by Indians inhabiting the surrounding woods, Silva adopted an explicitly aggressive stance intended not only to quash Indian resistance but also, as one of his successors described it, to “reduce those Indians by means of military expeditions to the Roman Catholic religion and to make them fit for society and useful to the state.”⁴³

Silva named Captain Antônio Cardozo de Souza commander of a series of military expeditions whose stated goal was to repel the “advances and abuses”⁴⁴ of the “heathen Botocudo and other barbarous and wild nations” and to “reduce them to peace and civil conformity” in accordance, asserted Silva, with royal orders. Souza and his fellow officer Captain Antônio Pereira da Silva were to lead separate bandeiras, which would advance on Indian territory. They were to confront the Botocudo and any other Indians judged responsible for attacks on settlers. Where peaceful means proved unconvincing to any of these Indians, Governor Silva authorized Souza to “submit them to the stated obedience by means of force.” Such words suggest the euphemistic, if not oxymoronic, quality of what the governor described as a policy of “defensive war” by which he meant a war justified by Indian atrocities, specifically those of arson, theft, and murder.⁴⁵ Invoking the

⁴¹ “Lista das pessoas que devem e tem obrigação de concorrerem para embarçar o curso com que o gentio Sylvestre está todos os annos entrando pelas fazendas e sesmarias da Beira do Rio Doce . . .,” Vila Rica, 9 May 1765, APM, CC, cód. 1156, fl. 4.

⁴² “Petição que fizerão e assignarão os moradores das freguesias ostilizadas,” ca. May 1765, APM, CC, cód. 1156, fls. 9-10.

⁴³ Governor [Antônio de Noronha], “Conta que foi inclusa nas ditas cartas do sr. Marquês de Pombal e Martinho de Mello sobre a extinção das duas companhias de pedestres do Cuieté,” Vila Rica, 25 July 1775, APM, Seção Colonial (hereafter SC), cód. 212, fls. 72-3.

⁴⁴ The Portuguese here is “entradas e insultos.” Entrada or entrance, along with bandeira and expedição, was commonly used to describe the expeditions mounted by the Portuguese to enter and conquer the sertão. Applied to Indian attacks on settlements, the term is curious and suggests an entrance or, as I have translated it, an advance into territory the Portuguese considered their own.

⁴⁵ Governor, “Instrução que hade seguir o Cap.^{am} Antônio Cardozo de Souza,” [Vila Rica, ca. 1767,] BNRJ, SM, CV, cód. 18,2,6, doc. 293.

notion of defensive action in this way, Silva established a continuum with the policies of his predecessor but, just as importantly, made what was in fact an aggressive departure from that policy more palatable both to the crown and to settlers who would be heavily taxed to pay for the mobilization of captaincy troops.⁴⁶ Whatever verbal somersaults were practiced in the capital of Vila Rica, soldiers in the field acknowledged the blatantly bellicose nature of their mission. During the years that Captain Souza remained in the eastern sertão pursuing the Indians, not only under the orders of Silva but also of his successor, José Luís de Menezes Abranches, the count of Valadares (1768-73), he understood his military objective to be nothing less than “to extirpate the fierce Botocudo.”⁴⁷ Since these nomads chose not to submit willingly to the obedience authorities demanded, Souza and his co-commanders endeavored to “engage them in a violent war and subdue them by way of fire and sword.”⁴⁸ The action amounted to nothing less than open warfare, declared by the governor, ratified by his officers, and repeatedly reaffirmed in the conduct of his successors and, later, by the prince regent himself.

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To legitimize the occupation of the eastern sertão, captaincy officials found in crown indigenous policy a decidedly pliant corpus of legislation to support their moves. Governor Silva interpreted these laws and edicts as comprising part of what he had called his “royal orders” to march into the untracked forests. The indigenous policy in vigor at the time had been formulated during the previous decade, beginning in April 1755, with a royal edict designed, in the contradictory spirit of Portuguese enlightened despotism, to end racial persecution of the native peoples of the Amazon Basin while speeding their assimilation. The edict forbade the use of the derogatory term caboclo (half-breed), encouraged miscegenation between Indians and whites, and sought to eliminate the stigma attached to children of such mixed-race marriages, promising them preferential treatment in the allocation of royal favors and social equality in their eligibility for “any employment, honor or dignity.”⁴⁹ On June 6, 1755, King José I promulgated a second law, the so-called Law of Liberty, which “restored to the Indians [of the Amazon basin] the liberty of their persons, possessions, and commerce.”⁵⁰ The law swept aside, at least on paper, the

⁴⁶ The tax records are contained in the ms. codex “Providencias tomadas para a catechese dos Indios no Rio Doce e Piracicaba, Vila Rica, 1764-1767,” APM, CC, cód. 1156, fls. 2-3v.

⁴⁷ Antônio Cardozo de Souza to Governor, Vitória, 15 Sept. 1769, BNRJ, SM, CV, cód. 18,2,6, doc. 301.

⁴⁸ [Manoel Vieyra Nunes], “Termo de reunião de conselho,” Barra das Larangeiras, 5 July 1769, BNRJ, SM, CV, cód. 18,2,6, doc. 192.

⁴⁹ Alvará (royal charter), 4 Apr. 1755, quoted in John Hemming, Amazon Frontier, 1-2.

⁵⁰ “Ley porque V. Magestade ha por bem restituir aos Indios do Grão Pará, e Maranhão a liberdade das suas pessoas, bens, e commercio na forma que nella se declara,” Lisbon, 6 June 1755, facsimile

abusive practices, including forced labor and enslavement, to which these Indians, specifically those living in Jesuit-controlled aldeias, had for two centuries been subjected. Granted political autonomy and ownership of their village land, they could now, theoretically, choose to work for whomever they wished and at fair wages. Then on June 7 the reform's hidden agenda became clear, as the king stripped the Jesuits of all temporal powers they exercised over Indian villages, restricting them to ecclesiastical activities alone, and throwing open the villages to trade with the outside world.⁵¹ For the Indians, as one historian of the Amazon has observed, this "emancipation" represented little more than a legal device to speed their "forced integration" into colonial society."⁵²

The work of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo (future marquis of Pombal), Indian liberation was designed to check the power and wealth of the Jesuits, to bolster the ailing economy of northern Brazil, and to secure geopolitical advantage against the Spanish in the strategic Amazon Basin in the wake of the Treaty of Madrid (1750). But Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, governor of Grão Pará and Maranhão and Carvalho e Melo's brother, also wished to guarantee colonists access to Indian labor. In May 1757 he thus issued his own lengthy set of policies known as the Diretório dos índios or Indian Directory, effectively nullifying Indian autonomy by placing outside lay "directors" in charge of village life in place of the Jesuits, whom he had accused of making themselves "masters of the sertão." Deemed to lack the "necessary aptitude required to govern themselves," the Indians would now be subject to the rule of directors named by the governor himself. The directors would "Christianize and civilize these hitherto unhappy and wretched peoples," teaching them the essential skills of trade and agriculture that would hasten the transition to secular government and allow them to shed the "ignorance and rusticity to which they find themselves reduced." In the end, the Indians would become "useful to themselves, to the colonists, and to the state." Under the guise of humanitarian action, Furtado sought in the Directory to eradicate the isolation of the Amazon's village Indians and to exploit them as a workforce as rapidly as possible. The system ushered in an even more repressive system than these Indians had confronted under the rule of the Jesuits, who were finally expelled from Brazil on September 3, 1759.⁵³

reprint in Carlos de Araújo Moreira Neto, Índios da Amazônia: De maioria a minoria (1750-1850) (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1988), 152-63.

⁵¹ John Hemming, Amazon Frontier, 1-2.

⁵² Moreira Neto, Índios da Amazônia, 164.

⁵³ For the full text of the Diretório, see "Directorio que se deve observar nas Povoacoes dos Indios do Pará, e Maranhão em quanto Sua Magestade não mandar o contrario," (Pará, 1757), facsimile reprint in Moreira Neto, Índios da Amazônia, 165-203, quotations 166-8. Furtado's accusation is quoted in Colin MacLachlan, "The Indian Labor Structure in the Portuguese Amazon, 1700-1800," in Colonial Roots of Modern Brazil, ed. Dauril Alden (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 209. Additional scholarship on the Diretório includes Hemming, Amazon Frontier, 4-7, 11-6, chap. 3; Barickman, "'Tame Indians,'" 337-51; Maxwell, Pombal, 58-9; Beatriz Perrone-Moisés, "Índios livres e índios escravos: Os princípios da legislação indigenista do período colonial (séculos XVI a XVIII)," in História dos índios, 115-32; Colin MacLachlan, "The Indian Directorate: Forced Acculturation in Portuguese America (1757-1799)," The Americas 28:4 (April 1972): 357-87 and "The Indian Labor Structure in the Portuguese Amazon, 1700-1800," in Colonial Roots of Modern Brazil, ed. Dauril Alden (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 209-22; and João Capistrano de Abreu, Chapters of Brazil's Colonial History, 1500-1800, trans. Arthur Brakel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 155-65;

Little has been written about the implications of this legislation for non-Amazonian Brazil.⁵⁴ Formally enacted by the crown and extended to the remainder of Portuguese America by charter in August 1758 and in the so-called Direção legislation of May 1759, the Directory remained the backbone of indigenous policy until it was abolished in 1798, and in many regions of Brazil its precepts continued in force until well into the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ Yet historians have not pursued its effects, subject perhaps to the misconception, as articulated by such influential scholars as Capistrano de Abreu, that “in the rest of Brazil, Indian affairs were no longer a matter of concern, and the violence against them was not as great as farther north.”⁵⁶

In Minas Gerais the Law of Liberty, the Directory, and the Direção had profound consequences and themselves proved to be the cause of unremitting violence. Nowhere are the implications of such legislation, drafted with settled village Indians in mind, for the subjugation of still nomadic Indians more evident than in Minas. At the time of the legislation’s extension to the rest of Brazil, Silva, who would assume his post as governor of Minas Gerais five years later in 1763, was still serving as governor of Pernambuco, where he received the Direção and supervised the conversion to the Directory system of fifty-four Indian villages.⁵⁷ In Minas Gerais, however, where the primary problem he would face involved not village Indians but nomads occupying the unsettled sertão, he resolutely adapted crown policy to local conditions.

In the official register of his government outlining the basis for his actions, Silva established legitimacy for a policy of military conquest by citing three documents. The first was the order he received as governor of Pernambuco in 1758 in which the crown instructed him to take steps, in accordance with its earlier decrees, to restore liberty to the Indians in Pernambuco’s aldeias while placing them under the civil authority of white directors. Officials were to give settled Indians “all of the support and protection they needed until they were entirely established in the tame and peaceful possession of these liberties.” Village land was to be protected in the form of a royal grant (sesmaria) to which the Indians would be given tenure for the benefit of farming and trade. Aldeias were to be converted into official townships with Portuguese names instead of the “barbarous names” assigned by natives. Secular rather than religious authority would govern these

translation based on Capítulos de história colonial, 1500-1800, 3d. ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Brigueit, 1954). On Indian emancipation and the expulsion of the Jesuits, also see Maxwell, Conflicts and Conspiracies, 17, 30. For a useful index by year, subject, and ethnic group of legislation pertaining to Brazilian Indians, see Beatriz Perrone-Moisés, “Inventário da legislação indigenista, 1500-1800,” in História dos índios, 529-66. On the nineteenth century, see M. Cunha, Legislação indigenista.

⁵⁴ Recent exceptions include Barickman, “Tame Indians,” 337-51; and Mary Karasch, “Catequese e cativo: Política indigenista em Goiás, 1780-1889,” in História dos índios, 397-412.

⁵⁵ The first of these documents is alvará, 17 Aug. 1758, facsimile reprint in Moreira Neto, Índios da Amazônia, 165-203, quotations 166-8. For the full text of the Direção, see “Direção com que interinamente se devem regular os índios das novas villas e lugares erectos nas aldeias da Capitania de Pernambuco e suas annexas,” Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (hereafter RIHGB) 46:1 (1883): 121-69.

⁵⁶ Abreu, Chapters, 156.

⁵⁷ The villages are listed in Abreu, Chapters, 164-5.

settlements. The second document reaffirmed the end of missionary rule in all Indian villages on the eve of the Jesuits' expulsion from Brazil in 1759. The third document, a letter from Furtado, now in Portugal, dated February 12, 1765, two years after Silva had assumed leadership of Minas Gerais, communicated the monarch's permission to proceed with an attempt begun the previous year to distribute goods among certain Indians of the eastern sertão in order to "establish some trade" along its rivers, specifically the Doce and Piracicaba. Furtado told Silva that the king would pay for expenses incurred in the effort. He also urged the governor to "work to whatever extent possible to establish among the same Indians civil townships, applying all means judged necessary." The king, Furtado averred, was convinced that in addition to possible profits accruing from trade in the region there were other benefits "still more important, both temporal as well as spiritual, that will follow from our becoming familiar with and associating with these heretofore unfortunate peoples who, because of the tyranny with which they have always been treated, find themselves in the ignorance in which they were born." Condemned to this fate, these Indians had degenerated into the Portuguese's "capital enemies, lost souls, depriving the state of the great advantages it could derive from them."⁵⁸ Even the crown itself, it seems, was prone to contradictions on the subject of whether Indians in the eastern sertão should be left alone and whether activity there was entirely forbidden.

Furtado did not elaborate on what he meant by "all means judged necessary." Based on his accompanying phrases, however, he meant something other than military confrontation. His injunction to concentrate on "becoming familiar with and associating with these heretofore unfortunate peoples" suggests he had more moderate methods in mind. This is supported, too, by the tenor of indigenous policy in other regions of the colony. A recent compilation of pertinent legislation lists orders relating only to settled Indians during the 1760s: the payment of Indian salaries by those contracting their labor services in Pernambuco and Paraíba do Norte, restrictions on their movement along trade routes in São Paulo; the allotment of land in their aldeias and the transformation of these aldeias into civil townships, also in São Paulo. According to the list, only after 1770 were orders again issued to sanction violent conquest, but these were issued by captaincy officials, not the crown.⁵⁹ The most immediate royal legislative precedent was the 1755

⁵⁸ In order these three documents are two royal decrees [cartas régias], both dated 14 Sept. 1758, and Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado to Governor, Salvaterra de Magos, 12 Feb. 1765. They occupy the first pages of the ms. codex the remainder of which contains documents related to Governor Silva's attempted conquest of the Indians of the eastern sertão. See "Providencias tomadas para a catechese dos Indios no Rio Doce e Piracicaba, Vila Rica, 1764-1767," APM, CC, cód. 1156, fls. 2-3v.

⁵⁹ Perrone-Moisés, "Inventário," História dos índios, 558. For the specific legislation pertaining to Pernambuco and Paraíba do Norte, Consultation of Overseas Council, Lisbon, 11 Oct. 1764, Documentos Históricos, 92 (1951): 75-6. For São Paulo, see "Portaria para que nenhú Soldado q' estiver de Guarda nos Reg.^{os} desta Cap.^{nia} deixe passar Indio algum com cargas," São Paulo, 15 Jan. 1767; "Ordem p.^a o Director da Aldea dos Pinhr.^{os} mandar medir as terras pertencentes á d.^a Aldea," São Paulo, 17 July 1767; "Ordem p.^a se medirem as terras pertencentes á Aldea de S. Miguel," São Paulo, 29 July 1767; "Ordem para se formar Villa da Aldea de Nossa Snr.^a da Escada," São Paulo, 14 Aug. 1767, Documentos interessantes para a história e costumes de São Paulo (hereafter DI) 65 (1940): 148, 172, 172, 175-6. The orders sanctioning new conquests also originated in São Paulo, where in 1771 Governor Luís Antônio de Sousa Botelho, the morgado de Mateus, armed sixty soldiers mobilized to subdue Indians along the border between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and in a separate action granted special exemptions to members of

Law of Liberty, which, while focused on settled Indians, contained provisions for incorporating natives “living in the darkness of ignorance” in the “interior of the Sertões” far removed from the Jesuit missions and civil townships of the Amazon. The law called for these Indians to be settled in aldeias, Christianized by missionaries, and encouraged to engage in agriculture and trade. But it also stipulated that authorities guarantee that these natives, like those already settled, “preserve the liberty of their persons, possessions, and commerce,” and it forbade that such rights be “interrupted or usurped under any title or pretext.” Any individual perpetrating an act of violence against newly settled Indians was to receive prompt punishment.⁶⁰

Silva did not hesitate to ignore such subtleties. Basing his actions on the three documents cited, taking full advantage of Furtado’s vague instructions, imagining that the task at hand differed little from the orders he had previously imposed on village Indians, the governor set out to “proceed with the execution of [royal] orders,” repeating what he “had done in Pernambuco” in order to secure in turn the “reduction of the wild Indians that infest” Minas Gerais. As such, he was pursuing what he construed to be the wishes of a Portuguese monarchy that sought to “convey the Law of God to the barbarous nations, reducing them to the Catholic faith and to the true knowledge of His Holy Name.”⁶¹ Since the prevailing policy of the Indian Directory had been crafted for settled Indians, the nomads of Minas Gerais, Silva reasoned, would first have to be settled in order to implement that policy. They would have to be gathered in villages, forcibly if necessary, submitting to what the governor and his contemporaries freely called “conquest,” so that their liberty might then, in accordance with the 1755 law, be restored. But in explicit defiance of that law, he ordered captaincy troops to “block the liberty” exercised by the forest Indians, countering their resistance with military force.⁶² Although invoking royal orders, Silva revealed his willingness to act in circumvention of the stated intent of crown indigenous policy and to exceed the apparent reach of Furtado’s direct instructions. The Indians of the eastern sertão, the governor believed, had demonstrated themselves to be utterly intractable. Their liberty, he made clear, was not to be construed as the freedom to maintain a traditional, nomadic existence but simply the right—or, more accurately, the obligation—to contribute to colonial society as loyal, sedentary, Christian workers. Such was the basis of the policy of violent conquest that, in one form or another, remained in effect throughout the second half of eighteenth century, up to and including the declaration of war in 1808.

an expedition ordered to combat Indians along the border between São Paulo and Minas Gerais. “Ordem mandando municiar aos Soldados que vão conquistar os Indios da Piedade,” São Paulo, 6 June 1771, and “[Ordem] dando izenções aos que forem combater contra os Indios, nas divisas com Minas Geraes,” São Paulo, 6 June 1771, DI 33 (1901): 10-1.

⁶⁰ “Ley porque V. Magestade ha por bem restituir aos Indios do Grão Pará, e Maranhão a liberdade das suas pessoas, bens, e commercio na forma que nella se declara,” Lisbon, 6 June 1755, Índios da Amazônia, 161-2.

⁶¹ “Providencias tomadas para a catechese dos Indios no Rio Doce e Piracicaba, Vila Rica, 1764-1767,” APM, CC, cód. 1156, fls. 1-2, 4.

⁶² Governor, “Orden para a entrada dos corpos de gente para a civilização dos gentios silvestres Purûs e Buticudos,” Vila Rica, 21 Apr. 1766, APM, SC, cód. 118, fls. 148-50v; Governor to Antônio Pereira da Silva, Vila Rica, 28 June 1766, APM, SC, cód. 118, fls. 171v-2.

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This kind of local nuance, the malleable nature of crown policy with respect to the eastern sertão and its native occupants, and, more fundamentally, the startlingly pervasive presence of the Indian in archival sources during a period in which they were supposed to have been a long-forgotten concern—these phenomena demand a far more thoroughgoing analysis than they have received in the meager historiography on relations between the colonial state and the Indians of interior zones bypassed by the gold rush. A number of common assertions in particular require revision. First, given the official preoccupation with native resistance, one must reject the notion that Indians disappeared as an active element in the region's history. The act of “expelling and/or decimating the great majority of the indigenous population” before and during the gold rush should direct us not to ignore Indians but to turn our attention to the isolated forests and river valleys where they took refuge.

Furthermore, given the intensification of overt violent conflict between the captaincy government and Indians beginning in the 1760s, we must discard the undue emphasis placed on 1808 as the watershed year in relations between the state and the remnant of the once populous Indians of southeastern Brazil.⁶³ A policy of open warfare took effect long before the prince regent made it official crown policy. The declaration of war is significant for a number of reasons—one of the most important being its role in the final demise of the colonial impulse to contain frontier settlement—but among them is not its supposed status as the origin of a new kind of official violence against Indians. Conflict between the Portuguese and the Botocudo, a perennial feature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, did not vanish until 1808 and then reemerge *ex nihilo*; rather, it began to gather force a half century earlier as a consequence of resurgent internal colonization tied to the decline of the central mining district.

In declaring war, finally, the prince regent assumed royal responsibility for a policy of violent conquest already in effect on the regional level. But there was something more fundamental at stake. The declaration of war points to the struggle to establish centralized power over regional authority characteristic of the formation of the Brazilian state in the early nineteenth century.⁶⁴ As with other administrative tasks in the distant colony, the

⁶³ A representative instance is the formulation of the anthropologist Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, who, it should be noted, deserves as much credit as any single scholar for a growing interest in the history of Brazilian Indians. Cunha writes that the declaration of war inaugurated an era of “unprecedented frankness about fighting Indians.” Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, “Política indigenista no século XIX,” in História dos índios, 136-7. Moreira Neto, for his part, attributes to the 1808 arrival of the Portuguese Court in Brazil the consolidation of a “new policy of oppression” that reverted to the sixteenth and seventeenth century treatment of Indians. Moreira Neto, Índios da Amazônia, 32. Other examples of scholars' treatment of the decree and the war that followed include Maria Hilda B. Paraíso, “Os Botocudos e sua trajetória histórica,” in História dos índios, 416-8; Barickman, “‘Tame Indians,’ ‘Wild Heathens,’ and Settlers in Southern Bahia in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries,” The Americas 51:3 (Jan. 1995): 359-62; Lima, Dom João VI, 487-93; Hemming, Amazon Frontier, 91-3, 99-100.

⁶⁴ On the belated rise of centralized authority in Rio de Janeiro during the transition from colony to nation, see esp. Roderick J. Barman, Brazil: The Forging of a Nation, 1798-1852 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988).

responsibility of interpreting, implementing, and even forging state policy on both indigenous relations and internal territorial matters had devolved largely to the governors of individual captaincies rather than to the viceroy in Rio de Janeiro or the crown before it transferred residence to Brazil. Only well into the nineteenth century would these largely autonomous regions submit in a unified manner to central authority, and even then local governments continued to set the course for indigenous policy. Fixed on the legislative machinations of the court, first in Lisbon and then in Rio de Janeiro, failing to look beyond the laws, decrees, and official ideology articulated and promulgated by the crown and its highest ministers, historians commonly miss this local origin of Indian and frontier policy.⁶⁵ They miss the forging of cultural and regional identities which such policy embodies. They miss the central importance of frontier conquest and native resistance to the history of a region that heretofore has been treated almost exclusively as an urban milieu. In Minas Gerais, where Indians all but disappear from the historiography after the seventeenth century, it is only at the regional level and, where sources permit, at the level of remote settlements and military garrisons in the sertão that we come face to face with the quotidian persistence of interethnic frontier violence.

⁶⁵ Again, Karasch, “Catequese e cativo,” and Barickman, ““Tame Indians,”” provide exemplary exceptions for the cases of Goiás and southern Bahia, respectively.