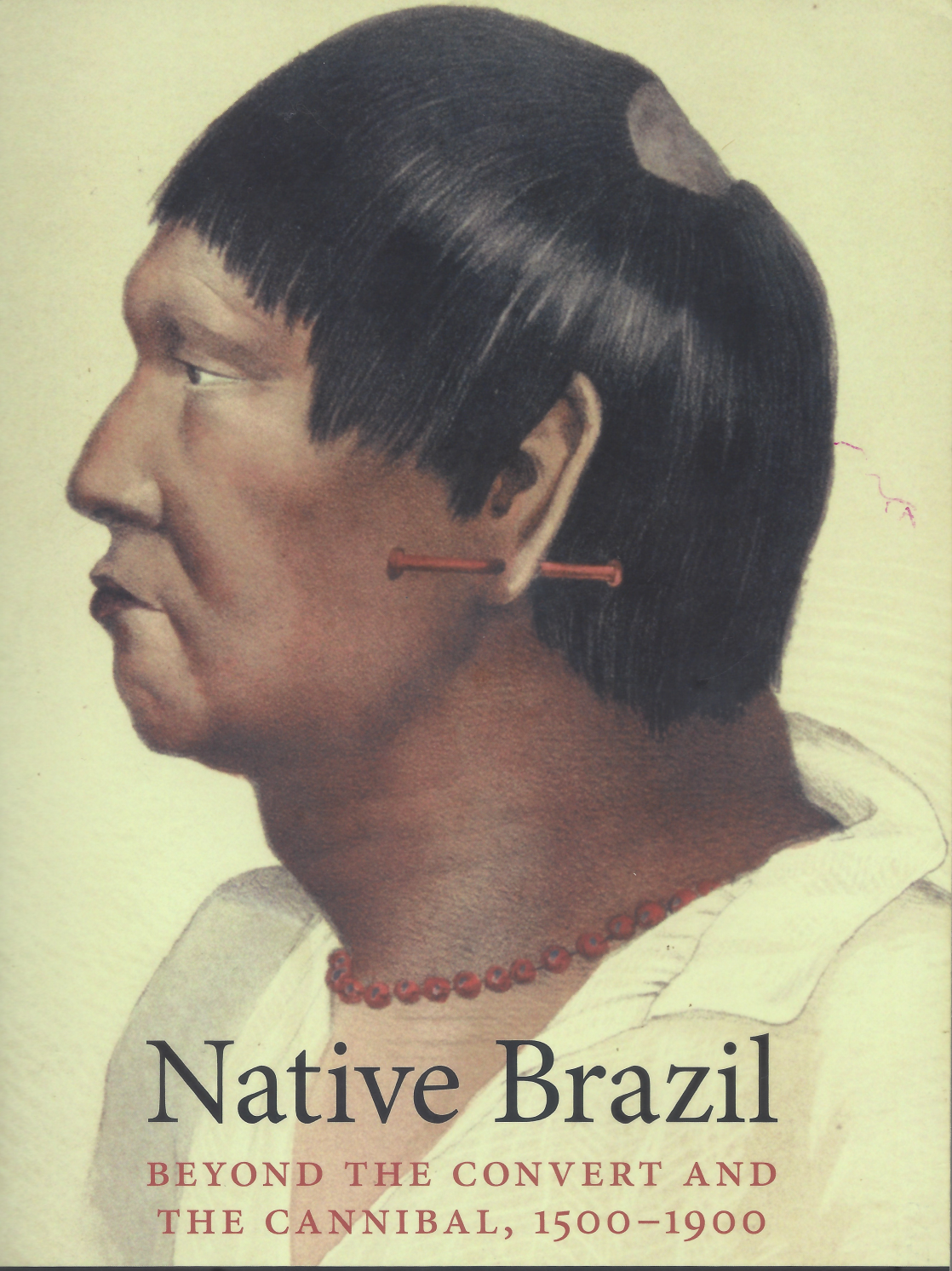

Native Brazil

BEYOND THE CONVERT AND THE CANNIBAL, 1500–1900

EDITED BY *Hal Langfur*

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Printed in the United States of America
19 18 17 16 15 14 1 2 3 4 5 6

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Native Brazil : beyond the convert and the cannibal, 1500–1900 / edited by Hal Langfur.
pages cm. — (Diálogos)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-8263-3841-9 (pbk. : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-8263-3842-6 (electronic)
1. Indians of South America—Brazil—History. 2. Indians, Treatment of—Brazil—History. 3. Indians of South America—Brazil—First contact with Europeans. 4. Indians of South America—Missions—Brazil—History. 5. Indians of South America—Brazil—Government relations. 6. Brazil—Colonization. I. Langfur, Hal, author, editor of compilation.
F2519.N37 2014
981—dc23

2013034139

Cover and interior design by Catherine Leonardo
Composed in Minion Pro 10.25/13.5
Display type is Minion Pro

For Kerry, Bridger, and Devon

And to the memory of John Monteiro and Neil Whitehead

5

Indian Autonomy and Slavery in the Forests and Towns of Colonial Minas Gerais

Hal Langfur and Maria Leônia Chaves de Resende

First christened the Minas dos Cataguases (the Cataguá Indian mines), the mineral-rich inland territory that became known as Minas Gerais (the general mining district) did so only later, as the eighteenth century unfolded (see map 4). The original name assigned to the region by the Portuguese explorers who traversed its mountains and river valleys bespoke a colonial history set in motion by encounters with native peoples. For generations, scholarship devoted to its fabled history contributed little to our understanding of the process by which its indigenous inhabitants responded. Even though their presence was the topic of countless contemporaneous administrative and ecclesiastical discussions, the mining district's Indians remained virtually unstudied until quite recently.[1] Although a few historians noted native participation in the early history of Portuguese America's primary gold- and diamond-producing zone, they almost always did so in the most restricted fashion, reducing the role of Indians to preliminary interactions, without considering their subsequent importance as historical agents who contributed to the captaincy's social and cultural formation. Even when their persistent presence was noted, Indians were treated as a mere afterthought and assigned an inferior status.

A primary justification for this gap in the historiography was the alleged genocide perpetrated by paramilitary expeditions of conquest, known as *entradas* (entrances) and *bandeiras* (flag-bearing troops), toward the end of

the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries. According to this narrative, the first colonists penetrated the region's *sertões* (backlands), advanced indiscriminately through indigenous territory, and decimated the native population.[2] Indians were presumed to have been all but exterminated, leaving them no active role in the construction of regional society.

Our objective in this essay is to refute this interpretation. We are not the first to recognize the survival of native peoples in the mining district long after the onset of Portuguese exploration, conquest, and settlement.[3] However, our analysis of an extensive corpus of neglected archival sources has allowed us to offer a significantly more complete rendering of this chapter of Brazil's indigenous history.[4] In this text we emphasize a particular aspect of our collaborative research: the prominent, simultaneous, and connected presence of Indians not only in the region's remote, unsettled sertões, but also in its towns and villages. We propose, first, to gauge the degree to which seminomadic native peoples confronted the aggression of soldiers and settlers in the surrounding forests and, second, to elucidate the struggle against enslavement of those who came to live within the colony's rural and urban communities.

By examining the characteristics and conduct of these indigenous peoples and their mixed-race descendants, our aim is to contribute to a revised understanding of Minas Gerais during and immediately after its gold cycle (ca. 1700–1770), and of the wider colony during its final century of Portuguese rule. Like the other chapters in this volume, our findings help dispel a tenacious myth of the vanishing Indian.[5] Indians surviving to the end of the colonial period thereby become more visible, no longer presumed to have died off, to have lost their cultural identity, or to have fled deep into the continental interior.

The ongoing colonization of Minas Gerais linked forest Indians to those living in settled areas. By necessity, we have employed distinct sets of sources to reveal this connection. Military dispatches, expedition accounts, and frontier settler petitions detail the consequences of Portuguese incursions into native territory, discussed in the first part of the essay. Baptismal registries, marriage records, and judicial documents trace the trajectories of Indians absorbed into colonial domain, examined in the second part. The very different nature of these sources and experiences makes for a less-than-seamless story. In compensation, a more comprehensive portrait can be drawn of an indigenous population living simultaneously in more than one world. At the outermost reaches of settler society, bloody clashes with farmers, ranchers, and

miners presented a constant challenge for still-independent natives, provoked outrage among frontier colonists, and preoccupied state authorities, who mobilized troops to secure distant homesteads, trails, and river routes. Some Indians resisted with surprising success over many decades. Others entered colonial society, sometimes willingly, often coerced, abandoning their wandering existence to reside in *aldeias*, towns, and villages under the supervision of the church and crown. While violent conflicts continued at the edge of the settled zone, new kinds of tensions developed within it, as Indians and their descendants struggled against those who sought to make them slaves. Rejecting invisibility, they asserted their indigenous identity in the face of attempts to define them as deracinated, generic members of a growing population of peoples of color. Throughout the eighteenth century, both in the mining district's surrounding forests and in its thoroughly colonized areas, the region's Indians remained historically significant.

"THEY AMUSE THEMSELVES BY SETTING OUT TO HUNT INDIANS"

The hunting of Indians was on the mind of poet Tomás Antônio Gonzaga and his readers, when in the captaincy capital of Vila Rica he pseudonymously circulated stanzas that included the line quoted above. The disturbing image comes from Gonzaga's *Cartas Chilenas*, which satirized royal administration on the eve of the anti-colonial intrigue known as the Inconfidência Mineira (Minas Conspiracy).[6] The plot was discovered in 1789, before its participants, including Gonzaga, could put their planned rebellion into action. At that moment, Governor Luís Antonio Furtado de Mendonça, the viscount of Barbacena (1788–1797), also thought of Indians. Having discovered that local poets, priests, military personnel, and indebted plutocrats planned his assassination and the declaration of an independent republic, the governor set in motion a plot of his own. The alleged sighting of hostile Indians along the captaincy's main road and primary escape route, the Caminho Novo, provided Mendonça the excuse he needed to reinforce troops on patrol. Scheming to avoid the "suspicion that any extraordinary movement of troops would cause," the governor calculated that residents of the mining district, accustomed as they were to seeing soldiers deployed to control unsettled Indians, would remain ignorant of his true motives. What he really sought—and successfully secured—was the swift arrest of the rebellious cabal.[7]

The Inconfidência Mineira has preoccupied generations of historians seeking to understand the demise of colonial rule in Portuguese America, but the governor's deception involving Indians has rarely prompted a second scholarly thought. Although a minor incident in the foiled conspiracy, the actions of Indians, real or imagined, at this decisive historical moment raise an important question about the broader contours of life in the mining district during the eighteenth century. Why was it, counter to almost everything that existing scholarship tells us about the region, that the policing of Indians supplied the governor with his most plausible excuse for the movement of Portuguese troops?

The answer is clear. Residents of Minas Gerais would have readily believed that Indians could be spotted along the Caminho Novo. They knew that many Indians and their descendants lived in the captaincy's towns and villages. They knew that countless others remained hidden in its unincorporated forests. Most, they believed, were savage cannibals. By the second half of the eighteenth century, moreover, an increasing number of Mineiros (inhabitants of Minas Gerais) had become convinced that the presence of Indians on the periphery of settled mining, farming, and ranching zones was thwarting the discovery of new deposits of gold, emeralds, and diamonds. They believed that the conquest of these outlying lands through the use of armed expeditions would restore Minas Gerais to a grandeur fast fading with the progressive exhaustion of its great alluvial mineral strikes.

The height of the violence that pit soldiers and settlers against Indians in the Mineiro sertão occurred not at the onset of the gold rush in the 1690s, as might be assumed, but during the second half of the eighteenth century in the eastern third of the captaincy. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, numerous indigenous groups had retreated inland away from coastal colonization. During the early eighteenth century, the mining boom established a consolidated line of settlement to the west of these groups. The result was the creation of a refuge zone in the captaincy's eastern forests. A royal prohibition on settlement in the area, prompted by concerns about smuggling from the mines to the coast, helped sustain the relative freedom of movement independent Indians experienced in these forests. The systematic conquest of this zone, known as the Eastern Sertão, began only after the mining boom subsided around midcentury. As the original gold discoveries began to run out, colonists pushed eastward into the forests. Some searched for new sources of mineral wealth, while others sought agricultural, pastoral, and commercial alternatives to the waning mining economy.[8]

On the surface, the cause of the resulting conflict appears obvious, representing simply another episode in what John Monteiro has described as the "chronicle of extinction" that characterizes the greater part of the historiography pertaining to Brazilian Indians.[9] Beneath that surface, however, many complexities emerge when evaluating the origin and extent of this interethnic violence. Hence the need for a more detailed, historically specific account of the deteriorating relations between the Portuguese and the eastern seminomads as an antidote to sweeping generalizations about the fate of the captaincy's Indians.

Some tightly focused questions provide a starting point. When tensions in this frontier zone degenerated into violent confrontation, who initiated the ensuing attacks—Indians, settlers, or the colonial state? What was the link between the numerous violent encounters found in the documentation and the increased activity of state-sponsored wilderness expeditions during this period? Did Indian attacks prompt the deployment of these armed expeditions, as officials claimed, or did the persistent, antagonizing presence of the troops themselves provoke confrontation? Were reports of Indian aggression fabricated by captaincy authorities to justify invasion of this zone, or were the reports accurate and thus evidence of determined Indian resistance? On an even more basic level, is it possible to appraise the degree to which the surviving sources, all of them drafted by colonial intruders, exaggerate or, conversely, underreport the number of violent clashes in the Eastern Sertão? Such questions will better prepare us to consider why some Indians opted to cross the frontier and enter into colonial society.

The aggressive seizure of land from the aboriginal inhabitants of the Eastern Sertão undermines the claim, advanced by colonial officials and settlers, that the Portuguese entered the wilderness as heralds of civilization, forced into violence only in self-defense when attacked by incorrigible, ungrateful natives. As Governor Luís Diogo Lobo da Silva (1763–1768) explained the issue, Portuguese soldiers simply sought to "reduce" the Indians "to peace and civil conformity" in accordance with royal orders. Only when the state's benevolent methods failed to sway these Indians were soldiers permitted to "submit them to the stated obedience by means of force."[10] This assertion proves to be as false in the case of Minas Gerais as it does in the innumerable other instances in which colonists made similar claims elsewhere in the Americas. In our haste to dispel this myth, however, we must guard against the opposite view, no less distorted and reductive, that the natives were invariably blameless victims. To reject the view that Indians always initiated violent confrontations only to conclude that they never did so brings us no closer to a balanced understanding of the motives and behavior of either native or colonist. The image of a reactive, defenseless indigenous population misconstrues the chain of events that led to the eventual subjugation of the Indians of eastern Minas Gerais, underestimates the role of frontier violence, and strips the natives of the initiative they took, including their prolonged resistance to conquest.

It is true that the various peoples of the region—including the Coroado, Puri, Botocudo, Kamakã, Pataxó, Panhame, Maxakali, among others—found themselves in the end outnumbered and outgunned, stricken by disease, and displaced in the face of dwindling land and resources. Throughout their long struggle for survival, however, they, like the colonists they fought against, acted not only in self-defense. Particularly in the case of the Puri and Botocudo, they also staged numerous aggressive forays into territory recently settled, and, in some cases, territory long-since considered securely under colonial control. The Indians, in short, were both victims and perpetrators of violence. Of course even the closest scrutiny of sources written by colonists can only begin to explain how this struggle was perceived by the Indians. Nevertheless, such analysis suggests that they conducted themselves in a fashion at odds with what the colonists portrayed as the random and irrational nature of indigenous resistance.

Between 1760 and 1808, the year in which Prince Regent João declared open war against the Botocudo, culminating a half-century of increasing conflict, eighty-six violent engagements involving Indians in the Eastern Sertão were reported in the records of the captaincy government (see table 2).[11] During this time, only one five-year period (1785–1789) passed without at least one denunciation of violence, although the frequency of such reports proved to be highly erratic. Almost one-half of the incidents occurred between 1765 and 1769, the period during which military operations against the Indians in the sertão reached their peak under governors Lobo da Silva and his successor José Luís de Meneses Abranches Castello Branco, the count of Valadares (1768–1773).

The sources that reported these many clashes, however, did so in terms that make even this kind of rudimentary quantitative analysis a challenge. In some cases, only the vaguest mention of violence appeared. We learn from Captain Paulo Mendes Ferreira Campelo, then the region's top military commander, for instance, of an attempt by settlers to farm fields that former colonists had abandoned for fear of Indian attacks at the remote settlement

Figure 21. The Puri and Coroado were among the many groups occupying the forested mountains separating the inland mining district of Minas Gerais from coastal settlements in Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo. Many Puri mounted fierce resistance to colonial incorporation, while most Coroado chose the path of greater accommodation. In some instances, the two groups themselves clashed; in others, they cooperated. Source: Hermann Burmeister, *Landschaftliche Bilder Brasiliens und Portraits einiger Urvölker als Atlas seiner Reise durch die Provinzen von Rio de Janeiro und Minas Geraës* (Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1853). Public domain access: http://www.brasiliana.usp.br/bbd/handle/1918/003612-011

of Cuieté, halfway down the Doce River valley.[12] The implication was that such fear derived from experience, and many sources reported other attacks at the settlement. The document cited, however, remains opaque. The formal letter to the count of Valadares in which the commander describes his frustrations at the slow pace of settling the sertão can be dated to the period soon after the governor took office in 1768. The flight of settlers it mentions,

Table 2. Violent Engagements with Indians in Eastern Sertão, 1760–1808*

YEARS	NUMBER OF ENGAGEMENTS
1760–1764	3
1765–1769	42
1770–1774	1
1775–1779	12
1780–1784	5
1785–1789	0
1790–1794	7
1795–1799	1
1800–1804	11
1805–1808*	4
TOTAL	86

SOURCES: APM, CC, cód. 1156; APM, SC, códs. 118, 224, 260, and 277; BNRJ, SM, II-36, 5, 32 and cód. 2, 2, 24, cód. 19, 3, 39, and cód. 3, 1, 35; BNRJ, SM, CV, cód. 18, 2, 6; *RAPM* 1, no. 4 (1896): 781; Diogo P. R. de Vasconcelos, *Breve descrição geográfica, física e política da Capitania de Minas Gerais* (1807; reprint, Belo Horizonte: Fundação João Pinheiro, 1994), 147–48; Diogo [Luís de Almeida Pereira] de Vasconcelos, *História média de Minas Gerais*, 4th ed. (Belo Horizonte: Ed. Itatiaia, 1974), 203; Cambraia and Mendes, "Colonização," 142.

*Not including incidents after the crown's declaration of war against the Botocudo on May 13, 1808, when violent incidents again increased significantly for several years. Counts as two all engagements described in sources as multiple but whose total number is not specified. When multiple locations are mentioned, counts each as a single engagement.

however, occurred at some unspecified point in the past, perhaps even before Campelo was named to his command by Governor Lobo da Silva in 1765. The letter did not indicate what sort of violence occurred, whether, for example, the alleged attacks were directed against soldiers or settlers, against persons or property, or whether they took place in the surrounding forest or within the confines of the town of Cuieté itself. Nor did Campelo state how many Indian raids occurred before settlers chose to flee. Probably it took more than just one. In such cases—and there are many—in which the ambiguity of the source rules out an accurate identification and quantification, we have not included the incident or implied incident in our count of violent engagements.

Many reports cite multiple attacks but do not tally how many occurred. In such instances, we have adopted the most conservative approach,

assuming one violent incident per location cited, two if described in the plural, that is, as "attacks" in a single place. Thus a series of military expeditions deployed by Governor Lobo da Silva in the 1760s responded not simply to a single Indian attack, or a series of single attacks in several places, but against attacks that he said were occurring "year after year" at sites throughout the Eastern Sertão.[13] The frequency of such reports of numerous but unspecified incidents provides the first piece of evidence for surmising that substantially more interethnic violence occurred in the Eastern Sertão than suggested by the eighty-six cases that can be dated and linked to a particular location with enough precision to include them in our count.

Further evidence concerning the origin and extent of the violence surfaces when comparing the data on reported attacks with those on the armed expeditions dispatched to the Eastern Sertão. We have identified nearly one hundred military and paramilitary expeditions that marched into the wilderness of colonial Minas Gerais to pursue a variety of objectives related to territorial conquest and incorporation. Frequently referred to as entradas and bandeiras, but known also by other terms such as *expedições*, *escoltas*, and *tropas* (expeditions, patrols, and troops), these military and paramilitary ventures set out to neutralize native resistance, to secure land, to search for new sources of mineral wealth, to clear new trails and roads, to reconnoiter rivers, to pursue runaway slaves, to extend state authority over areas sparsely populated by subsistence farmers and unsupervised prospectors, and to track down smugglers. Most combined more than one of these objectives, although their primary aim was the pacification of Indian territory. This bandeira activity became especially intense during the second half of the eighteenth century in the eastern forests. Of these many documented bandeiras, seventy-nine traversed the forests and river valleys of the Eastern Sertão between 1755 and 1804, after which early mobilization for the 1808 war transformed these expeditions into more conventional crown-ordered military operations.[14] Although further research will likely uncover still others, the peak years of this activity will surely remain the two decades between 1765 and 1785, precisely that period during which the economic dislocations of the post-boom era became most severe.[15]

A comparison of the archival data reveals an exceedingly close correspondence between reported Indian attacks and the deployment of bandeiras (see chart 1). The spate of attacks documented between 1765 and 1769 occurred amid two separate assaults, the first coinciding with expeditions

deployed during the final two years of Governor Lobo da Silva's rule, the second with similar activity during the second year of the count of Valadares's tenure. Both governors were particularly avid in their attempt to rejuvenate the captaincy by way of expansion into the sertão. Together, the peak in violence during this five-year period and the absence of aggressive acts during the nine-year span between 1782 and 1791 corresponded with the periods of greatest and least bandeira activity, respectively. The same correspondence held true, on a relative scale, for virtually every other period of intensification or diminution of bandeira activity.

A number of explanations suggest themselves for the direct relationship between violent incidents and bandeiras. First, the most skeptical hypothesis: that in most or at least many cases violence did not really occur at all but was invented by authorities as a pretext for dispatching troops to explore and occupy the sertão. Because the crown had restricted access to the Eastern Sertão early in the century in an attempt to block the passage of smugglers in and out of the mining district by promoting the survival of Indians considered to be hostile, captaincy governors needed some sort of justification for venturing into this territory imagined to be rich in mineral wealth.[16] The call to retaliate against Indian atrocities provided precisely the required excuse. Even so, especially in the case of the specific accounts that have been included in our tally, there were simply too many cases providing too many details over too long a period to support the conclusion that authorities invented these incidents.

A pair of alternate possibilities explaining the correlation of bandeiras and violence is less easily assessed. The first assumes that violent incidents in almost every case provoked the government or local settlers to form retaliatory bandeiras. The converse possibility is that whenever and wherever bandeiras roved the wilderness they provoked native resistance. Anecdotal evidence can be assembled to support both hypotheses.[17] Thus a third possibility suggests itself, a middle position, which assumes that both types of events occurred: violence prompted expeditions, and expeditions stirred up violence. All three possibilities share the supposition that in almost every case and every place a direct relationship existed between frontier violence and the presence of bandeiras.

On closer examination, however, the data suggest still another interpretation (see tables 3 and 4). In an overwhelming majority of cases (92 percent), Indians were reported to be the aggressors. In only a handful of cases (8 percent) were soldiers said to have initiated hostilities. Of the entire eighty-six

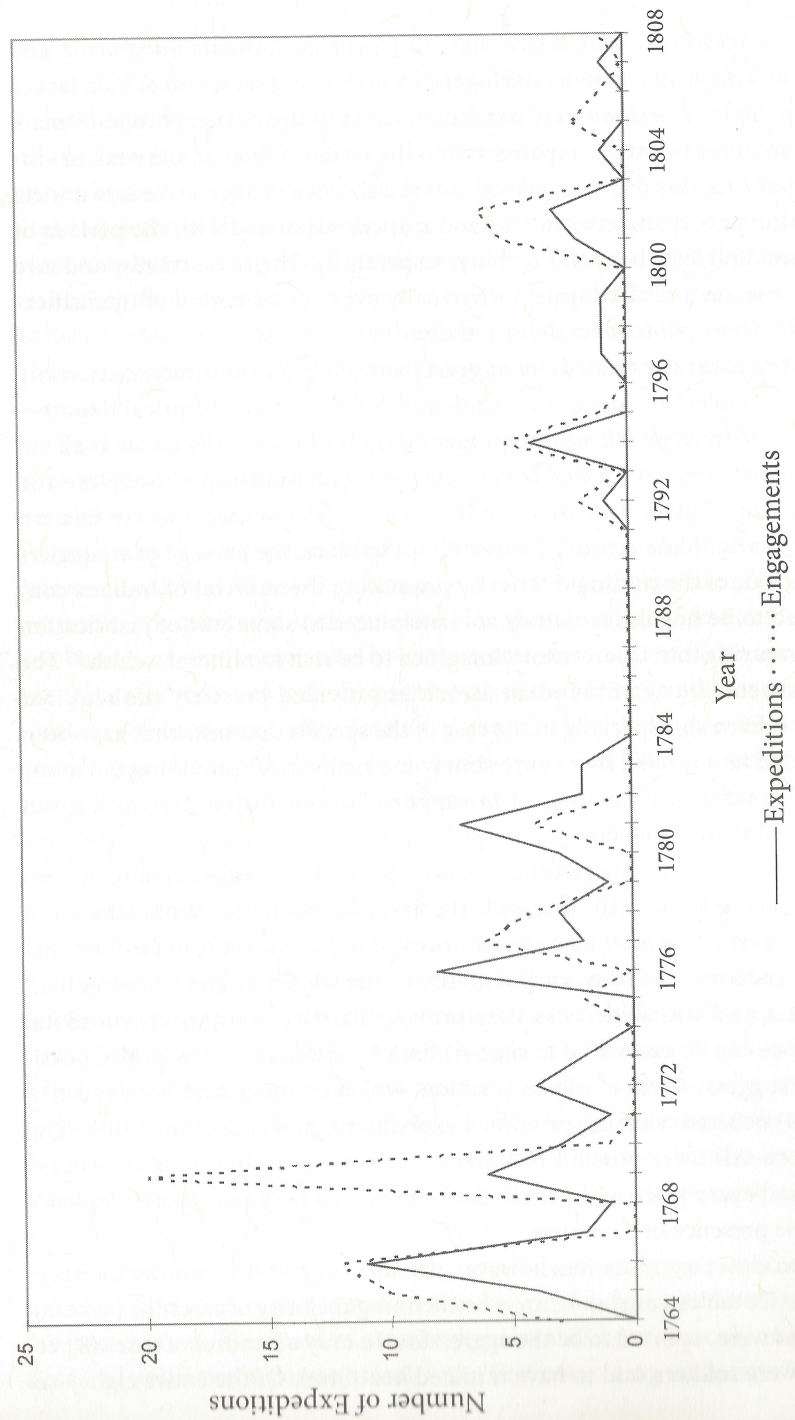

Chart 1. Expeditions and Violence Compared, 1764–1808

Source: Langfur, *Forbidden Lands*, chap. 6.

instances of violent conflict, not a single incident was attributed to the actions of settlers, a point to which we will return.

As for the victims of Indian attacks, settlers were named in almost three of every four cases (72 percent), soldiers in about one of five (20 percent), and settled Indians living in aldeias (state- or church-supervised villages) in just a few (5 percent). Adding the sixteen attacks against soldiers to the seven attacks they initiated, the total number of clashes between Indians and soldiers amounts to twenty-three, or slightly more than one-fourth of the total eighty-six. The violence in the Eastern Sertão, it thus becomes clear, stemmed from a conflict that seethed primarily between Indians and settlers, not Indians and soldiers, even though the sources highlight the connection between native violence and military deployment, even though officials touted soldiers as the vanguard of the drive to subdue the natives of the Eastern Sertão, and even though settlement of the region was supposed to be forbidden by the crown.

The direct correlation between the data on violence and bandeiras conceals the bloodiest aspect of the conflict, which took place at far-flung farms and mining operations in the eastern forests, out of the immediate reach of the roving wilderness expeditions. Bandeiras may have stirred up Indian

Table 3. Identity of Aggressor

AGGRESSOR	NUMBER	%
Indians	79	92
Soldiers	7	8
Settlers	0	0
Total	86	100

Table 4. Identity of Victims of Indian Attacks

VICTIM	NUMBER	%
Settlers	57	72
Soldiers	16	20
Settled Indians	4	5
Unknown	2	3
Total	79	100

Sources: See table 2

resistance, but they did so in an indirect way. They were deployed when hostilities between Indians and settlers, in the opinion of the ruling governor and his commanders, merited resorting to the use of military force. The link between violence and bandeira activity, in short, can be attributed to the nature of the sources themselves. These sources necessarily documented the attacks that prompted the government to act and warranted the accompanying expense and recruitment efforts. Such documents also provided a written rationale for the decision to flout, in an official and conspicuous fashion, the royal prohibition on the settlement and exploration of the Eastern Sertão. For the same reason, furthermore, it seems likely that many violent episodes went unreported. When government officials were too preoccupied by other matters, when financial resources were too limited to contemplate a response, or when an incident because of its isolated nature went otherwise unattended, no documents were generated by the bureaucratic machinery set in motion by the mounting of a retaliatory bandeira.

The elimination of military expeditions as the primary source of violence makes sense from the perspective of the Indian side of the conflict, as well. After long experience dealing with colonists encroaching on their territory, Indians recognized the folly of engaging a well-armed military expedition in the field, even through the use of hit-and-run tactics. Rather, they chose their targets cautiously from among the isolated homesteads, farms, ranches, and even villages and towns along the shifting frontier between Portuguese and native territory. The use of bandeiras was an essential tactic of the state, as it moved to incorporate the Eastern Sertão into the colonial domain. For the Botocudo, Puri, and other indigenous groups, however, soldiers on the march posed less of a threat than frontier settlers. Settlers were far more numerous, their presence was far more disruptive to nomadic ways, and they were far more vulnerable to attack than the armed soldiers who passed through native territory on intermittent expeditions and then disappeared. As Mineiro settlers repeatedly and increasingly crossed the boundaries established by the crown between settled zones and Indian territory, they became victims, as well as perpetrators, of interethnic violence. Only an elite minority of these settlers possessed the power and influence to gain the attention of public authorities when Indians attacked. These incidents, and these alone, were the ones that surfaced in the documentation pertaining to military expeditions sent out in response. Many other incidents, it seems prudent to conclude, went unrecorded, whether because they involved impoverished, illiterate settlers

Figure 22. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Botocudo were cast as archetypical savages. The German naturalist Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, traveled through their territory not long after the Portuguese crown declared war on them, justifying the action with accusations of cannibalism. Source: Wied-Neuwied, *Travels in Brazil in the Years 1815, 1816, 1817* (London: Henry Colburn, 1820). Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

with little recourse to official aid, or because the captaincy government itself was unable to attend to every appeal.

Of all the quantitative characteristics of the documents describing interethnic violence in the sertão, the one that most clearly highlights how the very production of sources both molded and reflected the way officials understood the conflict is the utter absence of reported attacks initiated by settlers against Indians. The imbalance is simply impossible to credit. Having surmised that many individual attacks between settlers and Indians never appeared in government records, we can better determine why those that did were consistently blamed on Indians. In issuing orders to bandeiras entering

the sertão, Governor Lobo da Silva warned that those engaging in acts of unjustified aggression against the Indians would be punished. Violence was to be used only in self-defense to repel Indians who proved uncooperative.[18] One suspects, however, that it required little effort either to conceal the use of such violence or to provoke Indians to actions that justified retaliation. For example, the settler Manoel Pires Farinho, who was both a bandeira organizer and a settler, led an unauthorized expedition into the southeastern reaches of the captaincy, attacking a group of Puri and killing ten. When the news reached Governor Rodrigo José de Meneses, he drafted a forceful rebuke, describing himself as "very displeased." He condemned the "impetuosity" with which the bandeira had attacked the Indians, even though the Puri had given no "immediate motive for being treated as enemies." He warned against waging similar attacks "in any case other than natural defense."[19] Under such conditions, it seems fair to conclude that settlers learned to conceal their own aggression against Indians by attributing it to self-defense or failing to report it.

The denial of colonial responsibility for clashes with indigenous peoples became a trope of conquest throughout the Americas. The Portuguese version of the conflict in the Mineiro sertão comes as no surprise. But the sources teach us something more. Subjected to careful analysis, their lacunae and biases made evident, they reveal that strife between settlers and Indians proliferated to an extent even greater than that suggested by the dozens of violent engagement documented in the Eastern Sertão during the second half of the eighteenth century. Inadvertently the sources and their silences illustrate how much remained hidden from official view. For the Portuguese, the violence endemic in the eastern forests assumed the form of an ageless contest between civilization and barbarism, which required an organized, government-led military advance on unincorporated territory to combat the random acts of irrational cannibals. Nonetheless, the reported incidents, while blamed virtually without exception on Indian savagery, contained evidence of settler culpability, although to exactly what degree is, in the end, difficult to assess. Despite crown restrictions, settlers of all classes were pushing slowly but relentlessly into Indian territory. Some sought gold, others simply subsistence. The prominent presence of the state in the form of military expeditions and troops garrisoned at frontier presidios should not distract us from the basic fact that violent clashes occurred overwhelmingly between Indians and settlers, not between Indians and soldiers. It is also clear that native opposition to Portuguese territorial expansion persisted in

a sustained, meaningful, and exceedingly disruptive fashion throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. If Luso-Brazilian behavior did not conform to the peaceful, civilized intentions colonists claimed for themselves, neither was the native response characterized by the passive acceptance of defeat.

FROM *MESTIÇOS* TO COLONIAL INDIANS

Confronting settlers and clashing with bandeiras in the Eastern Sertão, Indians also waged their struggle in the towns and villages of Minas Gerais. In these colonized zones, they turned their determined resistance against the practice of slavery. While violent conflict predominated in the forests, official channels and the legal system provided openings for challenging oppression from within colonial society.

The presence of Indians and their descendants in settled areas can be attributed to several factors. Some of these Indians were *carijós* (detribalized natives) who arrived from other regions in the company of Paulistas (inhabitants of São Paulo). Paulistas accounted for most of the famed *bandeirantes*, expeditionaries who began to settle the area after striking gold toward the end of the seventeenth century. Among the carijós were many taken prisoner in bandeirante slave-hunting raids.[20] Another segment of the native population was taken captive by subsequent expeditions, those manned by Mineiro settlers and often financed by the captaincy government. As we have seen, the Mineiro expeditions continued throughout the eighteenth century. In contrast to standard depictions, the conquest of Brazil's Indians—the colony's "red gold"—did not cease with the early discoveries of mineral wealth, only later to erupt again in the declared war against Botocudo in 1808.[21] The primary motivation to participate in wilderness expeditions during the second half of the century was the discovery of new sources of precious minerals and, by extension, the acquisition of land grants, official appointments, and other rewards and honors. But one should not underestimate the ongoing lure of capturing natives. Indians seized in confrontations with colonists were used as mining, agricultural, and domestic laborers.

As the historian A. J. R. Russell-Wood notes, there has been a scholarly tendency to exaggerate the degree to which Paulistas ceased to "molest indigenous communities after the discovery of gold." For him, the distinction between those known as the Emboabas (Portuguese settlers newly

arrived in the mining region) and the Paulistas, who fought unsuccessfully to retain control of the mineral-rich lands they discovered, was not limited to their different places of origin. The Paulistas were also distinguished by a standard of comportment and way of life that emphasized "a high prevalence of relationships with Indian women." They constructed "a culture that was neither entirely European nor entirely indigenous, but an amalgam." Although their "ambivalent" relationship with Indians was essentially predatory, it also implied the incorporation of the Indian "into the context of the domestic economy," leading to a preference for Indians who were young, "easy to domesticate," and, in the case of women, "desirable as sexual partners."[22]

This legacy carried over into Minas Gerais and appears to have impelled the participants of the wilderness expeditions discussed in the first part of this essay. A good example was the situation that developed in the parish of Guarapiranga in the southeastern portion of the captaincy. As early as 1720, Domingos Dias Ribeiro appealed to the governor for permission to arm an expedition that would head out from Vila Rica to a new mineral strike at the headwaters of the Piranga River. There, the expedition would "conquer any wild heathens." The governor's response was supportive on the condition that Ribeiro keep careful records of any conquered Indians "in accordance with the law and royal dispositions."[23] In 1729, Francisco Melo Coutinho de Souto Maior announced the results of a subsequent expedition, proposing to "sell in the public square" the Indians he captured. After paying the requisite royal taxes, he intended to divide what remained among the men that accompanied him. "Their self-interest," he wrote, would encourage them to apply "greater effort in the conquest of the heathen."[24]

By midcentury, this region was still a final outpost of mining exploration bordering the barrier established by the presence of "wild Indians," such as the Botocudo, Puri, and Coroado, who impeded the advance of colonists in what to this day is still referred to as the Zona da Mata (Forest Zone).[25] In 1746, reacting against the Indian obstacle, local inhabitants filed a petition lamenting the "oppression" resulting from "infidel" attacks. They called on the Portuguese king to provide a "swift remedy" and requested "permission to be able to enter into those sertões with bandeiras, and to conquer those wild heathens, and to discover gold, because they were in possession of the best lands." To repay expenses, the expeditionaries proposed retaining any Indians who "made war and were apprehended as captives." Such Indians would be made to serve them and "instructed in church doctrine."[26] To

provide legitimacy to the proposal, they alleged that it derived from the principles of "just war."

Little changed over the ensuing years. Settlers continued to complain. Indians continued to be transferred forcibly from forests to homesteads and fields. In 1750, settlers petitioned for help in purchasing "gunpowder and shot to force the heathens to retreat" from their farms, where they were committing "murders and thefts." Again, settlers asked the king to allow them to make any captured Indians "serve as slaves" while they received "the benefit of our sacred faith."[27] From Lisbon, came the royal response: "to use kindness if [the Indians] became tame"; otherwise, not to hesitate to wage "war, continuing until they become tame or flee or are extinguished."[28]

Many other requests of this sort were registered in the colonial archives. A great number of Indians were unquestionably taken prisoner beginning in

Figure 23. This image of a Puri family portrayed the isolation of life in the eastern forests. Although dozens of military and paramilitary expeditions crisscrossed the forests even before the 1808 declaration of war, the increasing presence of encroaching settlers caused even greater disruption, interfering with seminomadic hunting and gathering practices in a shrinking territory. Source: Wied-Neuwied, *Travels in Brazil.* Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

the 1760s, when captaincy governors implemented the policy of invading indigenous lands that produced the peaks in violence and bandeira activity registered in table 2 and chart 1. As noted, one wilderness expedition after another set out during the second half of the century. The captivity of Indians increased accordingly, based on the principles of what was known in Brazil as the Indian administration system or *administração*. The system is conventionally associated with an earlier period.[29] However, many Indians were taken captive in the growing number of wilderness confrontations and transferred to towns and villages as "administered Indians" or *administrados*.

In a letter sent to the governor in 1772, Captain Paulo Moreira da Silva reported on Indians captured in the "Conquest of Cuieté," the remote expanse of the eastern forests centered on the town by that name in the Doce River valley. They had been placed under the authority of local settlers "in order to give them the necessary guidance and doctrines and to teach them the skills to provide for their sustenance and civilization, and to instruct them in the dogmas of the sacred faith."[30] This incident suggests the means by which Indian "administration" became formalized. Once a petition to capture Indians received official approval, colonists were required to present the names of those taken prisoner to the local municipal council. The council was responsible for delegating to colonists the task of administering Indians. The first responsibility of an administrator was the consecration of baptism. From that point on, he was to accompany the "nurturing" process (*criação*). Officials were to verify whether these Indians had learned "a skill or occupation in some sort of lawful work," had been "instructed in [church] dogmas," and had been "freed of [their] nature."[31] Every three months, administrators were called before the municipal council to account for how much progress their Indians had made.[32] As one might expect, the system served as a pretense for removing Indians from the forest and inserting them into the civilized, Catholic world under the auspices of their masters, resulting in the indiscriminate appropriation of native labor.

Bewildered and threatened by the numerous expeditions crossing their lands, many Indians simply fled to the nearest towns. In these cases, too, they were systematically received by town councilors and, after certain preliminaries, were placed under the care of colonists.[33] Dispersed in the archives are numerous requests for assistance by Indians from a full range of ethnic groups who appeared "voluntarily."[34] To cite just one example, Governor Lobo da Silva stated that "more than twenty wild Indians called Coropós,

Gavelhos, and Croás" presented themselves to authorities soon after he took office in 1763. He arranged for them to be dressed and provided them with tools. A few days later, thirty more arrived "with the same commitment [to be baptized], possibly having been informed of the friendly reception that the first group received."[35]

One should also not overlook those Indians from officially established aldeias who were fugitives, deserters, or abducted.[36] Some escaped from aldeias in Rio de Janeiro; others came from Jesuit missions in Ceará and Pernambuco; others from the aldeias of São Miguel and São José in São Paulo; and still others from the Rio Pomba aldeia in southeastern Minas Gerais.[37] These do not include additional carijós who arrived from Taubaté, a town in the interior of São Paulo.[38] Such mobility was a common behavior during this period. As historian Sheila Faria has noted, itinerancy in frontier regions was a strategy to escape privation adopted by the poor, whom she calls "survival wanderers."[39] It is likely that the same logic prevailed among many of the captaincy's Indians.

All of these Indians—whether they arrived from São Paulo during the gold rush, were survivors or captives of raids in the sertão, or were in flight from supervised aldeias—came to live in Mineiro towns and other localities under the tutelage of colonists. They can be designated "colonial Indians," that is, Indians and their descendants, detribalized for diverse reasons, of various ethnic and/or geographic origins, brought to live in or born into colonial society and thereby incorporated in the social and cultural life of Minas Gerais during the eighteenth century.[40]

IN SEARCH OF LIBERTY

The restrictions on the enslavement of Indians articulated in a series of royal laws[41] encouraged colonists in Minas Gerais to reproduce the secular practice of Indian administration. Settlers assumed private responsibility for the conversion and religious indoctrination of Indians, treating them as neophytes in all aspects of the Christian faith. Under the pretext of administering catechesis, the religious instruction that was to lead to baptism or confirmation, colonists obtained the prerogative to control Indians in ways that otherwise would have been characterized as slavery and a violation of legal principles. By way of this expedient, they bypassed problems of a juridical and moral nature. However, this practice was not employed without

resistance. In legislation issued between 1755 and 1758, as other contributors have explained, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the future marquis of Pombal, affirmed the freedom of Brazil's Indians. The move only deepened the impasse over the emancipation of Indians in Minas Gerais.

Luís Diogo Lobo da Silva, then still governor of the northeastern captaincy of Pernambuco, ordered the new laws made known to the public so that the "scandalous abuses" suffered by Indians would be "extirpated and abolished." He sought to "uproot such practices once and for all," practices by which "Indians were enslaved under impious pretexts." The crown had insisted upon the "incontestable liberty" of Brazil's Indians, ordering that this principle be obeyed "without apology, interpretation, or modification of any kind." When Lobo da Silva assumed the governorship of Minas Gerais in 1763, he again invoked this legislation, ordering freedom to be restored to Indians and mixed-race mestiços of European and indigenous descent, so that they could live according to the same civil code that governed the colony's nonnative population.[42]

This measure set a significant precedent for Indians and their descendants. Having until then suffered an uncertain juridical status, caught between slavery and freedom, they could now appeal to the colonial legal system in defense of their right to liberty. Many colonial Indians initiated legal proceedings against their administrators in various regions of the captaincy.[43] Considering the ongoing violence in the eastern forests, these developments may seem contradictory. The new laws, in fact, helped justify the conquest of the sertão, whereby Indians could allegedly receive the liberty that was due them once the state "convey[ed] the law of God to the barbarous nations, reducing them to the Catholic faith and to the true knowledge of His Holy Name."[44] Yet the same laws provided a mechanism by which Indians who migrated to towns and villages could defy colonists' attempts to keep them in bondage.

In 1764 a family claiming to be of "carijó conception" petitioned the governor in Vila Rica, basing their petition on this new legislation. Leonor, her three children (José, Manoel, and Severina), and her grandchildren (Felix, Mariana, Narcisa, and Amaro) asked to be "free and exempt from the slavery in which they were held" by Domingos de Oliveira, whom they accused of maltreating them and inflicting "harsh work and beatings." According to Leonor's deposition, their administrator maintained the entire family under strict surveillance. One of Oliveira's sons spied on them "so that they would not complain." Upon official investigation, several

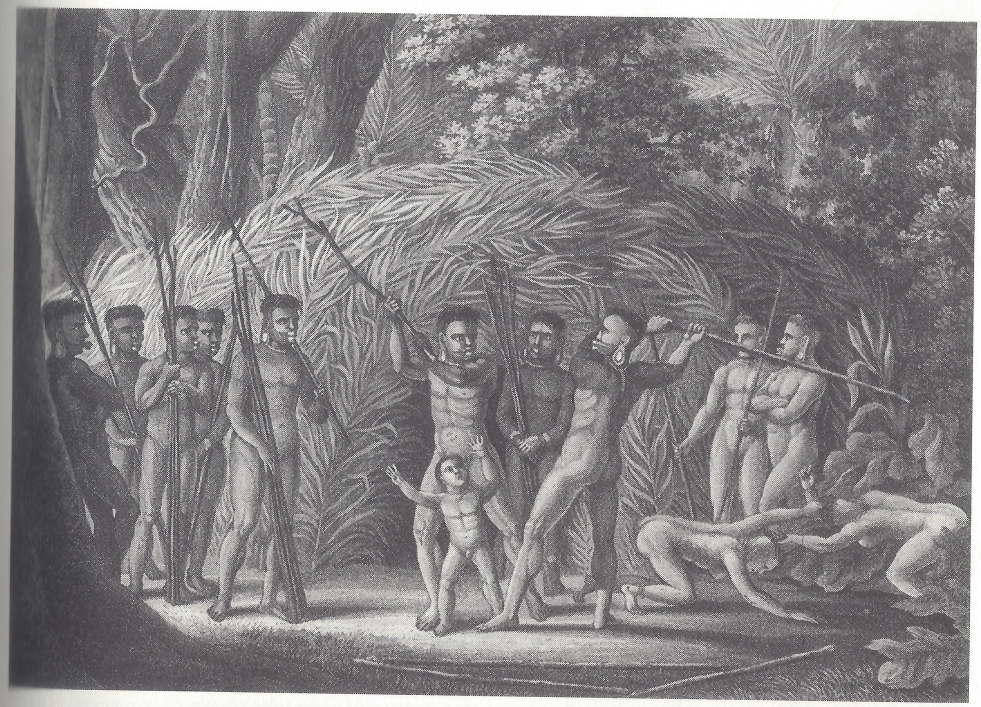

Figure 24. The German naturalist Maximilian witnessed rival Botocudo clans practicing a highly ritualized form of combat. A very different kind of military practice, relying on ambush and hit-and-run tactics, was required for successful warfare against advancing colonial adversaries. Source: Wied-Neuwied, *Travels in Brazil.* Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

individuals confirmed these claims, and the governor ordered a patrol sent out to free the carijós.[45]

Another petition along these lines came from Maria Moreira, the descendant "of *gentio da terra* [heathens of this land; i.e., Indians], having been born of free parents who were straight-haired carijós." Such individuals, she affirmed, had been "declared free by repeated orders of His Majesty." Appealing to the governor, she requested permission to leave the home of Lieutenant Francisco Xavier, where she had been "deposited by the orders of her master." Prevented from passing through the streets, she maintained that she could not "tend to her interests" in securing her liberty. After it was determined "by way of visual inspection" that "her status as an Indian was evident," a favorable official ruling resulted.[46]

Not all such individuals had the same luck. Many encountered difficulties in proving their indigenous ancestry. Administrators sought to conceal the ethnic origin of these Indians, labeling them with names that corresponded with generic mixed-race categories. They employed terms such as *caboclo* (detribalized Indian rustic), *curiboca* (Afro-native mestizo), and *cabra da terra* ("goat"; i.e., mestizo of this land), among many others, all of them pejorative labels roughly equivalent to "half-breed." By thus engendering the "invisibility" of these peoples, they created a loophole in royal legislation, since the crown did not prohibit the captivity of mestiços whose racial mixture derived in part from enslaved mothers of African descent. With this tactic, they legitimized indigenous slavery. Had it not been for the insistence of colonial Indians, resolute in setting the justice system in motion in order to guarantee the recognition of their indigenous origins, these individuals surely would have remained enslaved.

Apparently this was the unfortunate fate of Violante, labeled a "cabra," and her mother Josefa dos Prazeres, who sued for freedom sometime around 1769.[47] They reasoned that they were "free" because they had "descended from Indian origins." Their owner appealed, calling on ecclesiastical authorities to verify descent through baptismal records, and alleging that the petition was false and "malicious" because "only on the paternal side was there this ancestry." In fact, by way of testimony given in the case, we know that Violante was the daughter of an African slave named Josefa, who had married a carijó who was called both "freed" and "administered." Violante was the child, grandchild, and great-grandchild of carijós, but only on her paternal side. We do not have the final ruling in the case, but in view of the testimony provided by several witnesses the petition likely did not succeed. This conclusion is based on the sole exception to the laws granting freedom to Indians, established since 1755, which excluded those who were also the children of *negras escravas*, female slaves of African origins. Given that slave status was transmitted through the mother's womb, *partus sequitur ventrem*, many mestiços who were descendants of an indigenous father and an enslaved mother ended up being considered slaves. Thus, for Violante, slavery seems to have been inescapable.[48] However, the case was controversial because, as one judge wrote, some "laws declared the freedom of Indians and heathens, and others demanded the preservation of the possessions and rights of owners."[49]

Precisely for this reason, those masters who were most resistant to granting freedom to the colonial Indians under their administration claimed that they were children of enslaved mothers. Caterina Florência, her son, and her

two grandchildren suffered this misfortune.[50] In 1766 Dr. Francisco Pais de Oliveira Leite filed a petition, refusing to recognize her claim to be descended from the "Indian nation." To her advantage, her master did not present her baptismal record but merely insisted that she was the "daughter of a legitimately captive womb." In conformance with the law, faced with a lack of documentation, it fell to the judge to conduct a "visual inspection" to determine ethnic ancestry. In this case, the judge was convinced that Caterina's "quality" was that of an Indian, destroying "any presumption that she was the daughter of an enslaved black" mother.[51] The judge ruled that she could no longer "be aggrieved by captivity."[52] One can deduce from this finding that mestiços could turn indigenous physical traits to their own advantage. If characteristics of phenotype were among the many variables that classified certain individuals as mestiços of ambiguous origins, in other situations these same characteristics made possible the passage from mestiço to colonial Indian.

That said, attempts to turn Indians back into slaves were not uncommon, and many Indians failed to evade the schemes of the most stubborn colonists. One of the tools employed was the system of *coartação*, which made manumission possible under certain conditions through self-purchase contracts between slaves and their owners.[53] Widely used among slaves of African descent, this mechanism was a means to forestall the right to liberty of many colonial Indians. Such was the case of Isabel de Souza [Guimarães?], who in 1769 presented manumission papers received from Lieutenant Manoel Funchal on the occasion of his death. To her dismay, her manumission "could not take effect" until its "conditions were fulfilled," indicating that the sum for her self-purchase had not been paid.[54] Accordingly, we can glean that the enslaved status of many colonial Indians was tacitly recognized. So common was this assumption that even when one such individual, Valentim, presented his baptismal records, he was ordered by a parish priest to show his manumission papers as well, given that "in the baptismal records it was evident he was a captive." In fact, those records stated that his mother, "Micaela, a carijó, was the slave of Captain João de Monteiro Santiago." As such, the priest had to be reminded that Valentim "was demonstrably free, for being the son of a carijó mother."[55]

In another incident in 1769, Bárbara Moreira de Castilho, the wife of a renowned *sertanista* (backwoodsman), Bento Furtado, appealed to the governor, the count of Valadares. Castilho claimed that she had "possessed this half-breed" for more than thirty years "in full view of everyone, without any trouble, and always as a legitimate slave who had been part of a dowry given

by her parents." She had "never heard anything" about her slave Caterina being of Indian descent. Furthermore, she complained that because of Caterina's initiative yet another one of her children, Felizardo, had left to join his mother. For this reason, she feared that Caterina's remaining three children, who were still living in her home, would take the same action. Caterina was asked to provide clarification. She claimed to be a "cabocoula" (perhaps a misspelling of cabocla, the female counterpart of a caboclo) and was prepared to prove this by presenting her baptismal records once she obtained them from the town of Taubaté in São Paulo. In the face of this impediment, Castilho offered a new explanation. Her husband had followed His Majesty's orders "not to hold *Tapuias* [wild Indians] in captivity, since they were born free, sending away those he had in his company." As for Caterina, she had only called attention to "the status of being a carijó," "freed and free," as a result of "the insinuations of ill-intentioned persons and the scheming of one of her daughters, a half-breed." These individuals were seeking to take advantage of Castilho, "seeing the extreme poverty and defenselessness in which she lived." In addition, she insisted, if Caterina had "vestiges of a Tapuia," they appeared to be strictly from her father's side. But to demonstrate her benevolence, Castilho made an opportune suggestion: "In the event that this captivity was found to be unjust, she would not cast doubt on the need to give [Caterina and her daughter] days off as required by law or any days they wanted, provided that this concession not apply to more children and descendants, since they must remain in the power of the claimant."[56] We do not know the outcome of this case, but many other suits of this sort indicate the difficulties encountered by Indians while attempting to secure their freedom.

Near the end of the century, in 1797, the fate of the Cardoso family exemplified this struggle. The justice system in this case moved slowly and methodically. Members of the family had to deal with threats, followed by arbitrary imprisonment. Such incidents served to intimidate colonial Indians who claimed their right to be free. Perpétua and Ângela Cardoso were the daughters of Quitéria Cardoso. Francisca was the daughter of Lucrécia Cardoso. All three were the "natural children" of Lieutenant Miguel Raposo de Camargos. That is, they were born out of wedlock, their mothers described as "Indian women of this America" from São Paulo. Camargos later moved to Rio das Mortes, the southernmost *comarca* (county) of Minas Gerais, bringing with him his "administered Indian women." There, he became indebted to the Captain André Alvares da Silva, who quickly sued for payment. Camargos's possessions, including the "mothers of the supplicants, a brother, and other

Indian women of that family," were seized and put up for public auction. The Indians did not even have "a chance to cry out," due to their "poverty and distress." When they pleaded for their rights before a judge, they were held captive by court officials. According to the claimants, they had been "stifled by the utter rigidity" and "unchecked ambition" of the attorney Antônio Gonçalves Figueiredo," who condemned them with the "help of justice officials" to imprisonment in the town jail "for his own advantage." Objecting to these actions, convinced of the women's just cause, the head of the local municipal council ordered the Indians freed. Nevertheless, acting according to the "cunning and violent methods that were his custom," Figueiredo insisted on auctioning off the Indian women. At this point, they appealed to the governor. They pleaded for royal protection against their "intended oppression and obliteration." The governor finally demanded that the earlier order mandating their freedom be fulfilled to the letter of the law "with due punishment for anyone who challenged his ruling."[57]

In the same year, another petition by a "mestiço [and] American Indian" named Antônio similarly revealed the reluctance of administrators to respect royal orders and government dispatches.[58] After requesting his "simple freedom from [his] master, the Sergeant-Major Antônio de Castro e Souza," Antônio was imprisoned for ten months, despite receiving a favorable ruling from the district court before which he was unable to appear "because he was in prison and without money." After receiving a provisional release, he was again thrown in jail, where he remained "in chains, receiving whippings," due to the "vengeance" of his master, who accused him of "desertion." All of this had been concealed, Antônio charged, by reports issued by the local notary. "Help!" he pleaded in his petition, crying out to the crown. As a vassal, he sought "the favor of the sovereign law," asserting his "right . . . to be free from imprisonment and the torments of cruel vengeance." An official ruling placed him in the power of a competent person for the time necessary to clarify "the motives for what had occurred while the claimant was imprisoned." Antônio's misfortune apparently had not yet reached its conclusion.

As administrators, their accomplices, government authorities, and court officials attempted to interfere with the Indians' right to liberty, so too did representatives of the Catholic Church. The story of the Indian João Colomis reveals this aspect of their struggle. Colomis accompanied a committee that brought Bishop Frei Manoel da Cruz from the northeastern captaincy of Maranhão to the town of Mariana, where he served as the first bishop of Minas Gerais between 1748 and 1764. Still a minor, Colomis was turned over

to the Reverend Canon Francisco Ribeiro da Silva to "instruct him in the Christian doctrine and the sacred dogmas of the faith."[59] After years of captivity, Colomis finally achieved his freedom, but not without fighting a long judicial battle.

We do not know his ethnic origin, but it is likely that he had come from one of the Jesuit aldeias along the bishop's route.[60] Another possibility is that he was taken prisoner during encounters with the Gueguê and Acroá Indians. These encounters forced the committee to field "many troops of men" in order to pass safely through the "dangerous sertão."[61] Against the bishop's recommendation, the reverend sent the "heathen" Colomis to a fazenda (farm or estate), "where he was reputed to be a slave, subject to the rigors of captivity." According to the deposition of the Sargeant-Major João Teixeira da Costa, to whom Colomis complained, he was "mistreated and despised, whipped and put in irons, the food he lived on as wretched as the clothes he wore." Colomis recounted the harsh punishments administered on the orders of Dona Quitéria, the reverend's strict niece. She kept him bound with "handcuffs and cunning" after he had been caught attempting to escape with a Brazilian-born slave named Isabel. Making use of his labor, "just like the rest of the slaves," the reverend forced Colomis to work for two years in a mining operation in which he had an interest, and another four or five years in the fields. At this point, the fazenda and its slaves were sold to Cipriano Pereira de Azevedo, who did not pay what he owed for the purchase. When the property was seized by the government, an official questioned the reverend about listing the Indian João Colomis as one of the property's slaves, which was prohibited by law. A month later, with the approval of the count of Valadares, an official ruling declared that the Indian was "free" and that the reverend was obligated to compensate him for the daily pay he had done without "for the entire time in which he was enslaved."[62] Furthermore, in accordance with the penalty stipulated in legislation that had forbidden the sale of Indians since 1680, the priest was to be sent to Lisbon's Limoeiro Prison. It was there that he eventually ended up, not for this violation, but because he was "considered rebellious and one who disturbed the public peace" and "truly evil."[63]

Many other Indians accompanied the same expedition that brought Bishop Frei Manoel da Cruz to Minas Gerais. In addition to Colomis, we have information about the Indian Inácio Xavier, who also submitted an appeal to end his enslavement.[64] Aiming to deflect responsibility for the matter from the Bishop of Mariana, a number of priests conspired to claim that

it was customary to enslave Indians. Yet it was the bishop himself who, in compliance with royal orders, acknowledged forwarding to the governor in 1760 an "authentic collection of pontifical briefs, royal laws, instructions, and other papers" pertaining to the execution of the legislation that "restored to the Indians of Brazil their primitive and natural liberty." All of this documentation had been zealously safeguarded "in a chest with three keys in the diocesan archive."[65] As one can see, the bishop cast a blind eye to these laws, about which he had clear knowledge. In one form or another, these and many other appeals testify to the colonists' reluctance to concede freedom to Indians and their descendants.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Colonial Indians, as these cases indicate, did not stop challenging their uncertain juridical and social status that placed them between freedom and slavery. Using the laws imposed by their colonizers, they forced even the most obdurate to give ground. By reaffirming their indigenous origins, they rejected the ambiguous mestiço status and, as such, captivity. Despite their "invisibility," colonial Indians reconstituted their alterity by asserting their "Indianness." In Minas Gerais's slave-based society, in which freedom was an essential mark of social differentiation, to evoke indigenous origins as gentios da terra, irrespective of ethnic differences, was to assume the shared status of the free. In this way, the actions of colonial Indians helped to deepen all of slavery's complexities and contradictions and to shift its boundaries. These changes resulted not from the concessions of colonial society, but from the conquests of Indians struggling to contend with their restrictive daily lives. In the region once known as Minas dos Cataguases, the mines of the Cataguá Indians, colonial Indians recreated themselves as beneficiaries of an indigenous past, making the slave system more flexible.

In light of native conduct in both the unsettled and settled regions of colonial Minas Gerais, the history of the captaincy, one of the most thoroughly studied in Brazilian historiography, takes on a different aspect with its indigenous peoples restored. Minas Gerais was deeply marked by native resistance to the seizure of ancestral lands, to detribalization, and to the dissolution of cultural ties resulting from colonization. Indians stood firm in the forests, mounting long-term challenges to colonists who maneuvered to seize their land. Although official sources portrayed them as aggressors,

much evidence points to settler culpability. When imprisoned by wilderness expeditions and taken to the region's towns and other settlements, or when they chose to enter colonial society on their own, Indians did not become passive. They used the colonial justice system to affirm their indigenous origins in order to secure their freedom under the prerogatives of the law.

Our objective in this text was to consider the place that indigenous peoples occupied in the history of Minas Gerais. Their history is rarely mentioned. When it is, they are usually cast as subordinate social actors. Our research demonstrates their determined participation in colonial Mineiro society, both at its territorial fringes and at its core. In this sense, it was no coincidence that the region entered colonial consciousness at the end of the seventeenth century under the name Minas dos Cataguases, and that its colonial period ended more than a century later following a declaration of war against the still-unincorporated Botocudo.

NOTES

1. On this "void" in the historiography, see Crisoston Terto Vilas-Bôas, "A questão indígena em Minas Gerais: Um balanço das fontes e bibliografia," *Revista de História* (Ouro Preto) 5 (1995): 42–55. All translations from the Portuguese are by Hal Langfur, including the portion of this chapter written by Maria Leônia Chaves de Resende. Abbreviations used in the notes are as follows: Arquivo da Cúria de Mariana (ACM), Processo Matrimonial (PM); Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon (AHU), Projeto Resgate (PR); Arquivo Público Mineiro (APM), which houses a portion of the dispersed Arquivo Casa dos Contos (CC), the Seção Colonial (SC), and the Secretaria do Governo (SG); Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro (BNRJ), Seção de Manuscritos (SM), Arquivo Conde de Valadares (CV); Banco de dados Campanha da Princesa: Guia de fontes para a história do Sul de Minas (BD), which uses data from the Livro de Batismo de Campanha (1748–1762), a project coordinated by Marcos Ferreira de Andrade and Maria Tereza Pereira Cardoso; *Revista do Arquivo Público Mineiro* (*RAPM*).
2. For an analysis of this approach to the region's indigenous history, see Hal Langfur, *The Forbidden Lands: Colonial Identity, Frontier Violence, and the Persistence of Brazil's Eastern Indians, 1750–1830* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 21–23.
3. See, for example, Renato Venâncio Pinto, "Os últimos carijós: Escravidão indígena em Minas Gerais: 1711–1725," *Revista Brasileira de História* 17, no. 34 (1997): 165–81; Paulo Mercadante, *Os sertões do leste; estudo de uma região: A mata mineira* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores, 1973); Celso Falabella de Figueiredo Castro, *Os Sertões de Leste: Achegas para a história da Zona da Mata* (Belo Horizonte: Imp. Oficial, 1987); 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* (July 1988): 137–50; Maria Hilda Baqueiro Paraíso, "O tempo da dor e do trabalho: A conquista dos territórios indígenas nos Sertões do Leste" (PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 1998); Oiliam José, *Marlière, O Civilizador: Esboço biográfico* (Belo Horizonte: Ed. Itatiaia, 1958); and José, *Indígenas de Minas Gerais: Aspectos sociais, políticos e etnológicos* (Belo Horizonte: Imp. Oficial, 1965).
4. Texts resulting from our research include Maria Leônia Chaves de Resende, "Gentios brasílicos: Índios coloniais em Minas Gerais setecentista" (PhD diss., UNICAMP, 2003); Resende, "Devassa da vida privada dos índios coloniais nas vilas de El-Rei," *Estudos Ibero-Americanos* 30, no. 2 (Dec. 2004): 49–69; Resende, "Minas dos Cataguases: Entradas e bandeiras nos sertões do Eldorado," *Vária História* 33 (Jan. 2005): 186–202; Resende, "Brasis coloniales: Índios e mestiços nas Minas Gerais Setecentistas," in *História de Minas Gerais: As Minas Setecentistas*, ed. Maria Efigênia Lage de Resende and Luiz Carlos Villalta (Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2007), vol. 1, 221–51; Hal Langfur, *Forbidden Lands*; Langfur, "Uncertain Refuge: Frontier Formation and the Origins of the Botocudo War in Late Colonial Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no. 2 (May 2002): 215–56; Langfur, "Moved by Terror: Frontier Violence as Cultural Exchange in Late-Colonial Brazil," *Ethnohistory* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 255–89; Langfur, "The Return of the Bandeira: Economic Calamity, Historical Memory, and Armed Expeditions to the Sertão in Minas Gerais, Brazil, 1750–1808," *The Americas* 61, no. 3 (Jan. 2005): 429–62. Earlier versions of this essay have appeared in Brazil and Portugal. See Resende and Langfur, "Minas Gerais Indígena: A resistência dos índios nos sertões e nas vilas de El-Rei," *Tempo* (Universidade Federal Fluminense) 12, no. 23 (July–Dec. 2007): 15–32; Resende and Langfur, "Minas Expansionista, Minas Mestiça: A resistência dos índios em Minas Gerais do século do ouro," *Anais de História de Além-Mar* (Lisbon) 9 (2008): 79–103.
5. For the counterpart of this myth in North American historiography, see Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1991); Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
6. Tomás Antônio Gonzaga, *Cartas Chilenas*, ed. Tarquínio J. B. De Oliveira (São Paulo: Ed. Referência, 1972), carta 10ª, linhas 307–8.
7. Governor to viceroy, Cachoeira do Campo, 6 May 1789, *Anuário do Museu da Inconfidência* 2 (1953): 49; Governor to colonial secretary, Vila Rica, 11 July 1789, ibid., 72. Kenneth R. Maxwell mentions this incident in his history of the Minas conspiracy, *Conflicts and Conspiracies: Brazil and Portugal, 1750–1808* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 154.

8. Langfur, "Uncertain Refuge"; Langfur, *Forbidden Lands*.
9. John M. Monteiro, "The Heathen Castes of Sixteenth-Century Portuguese America: Unity, Diversity, and the Invention of the Brazilian Indians," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 80, no. 4 (Nov. 2000): 718.
10. 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.
11. For a more detailed discussion, see Langfur, *Forbidden Lands*, 216–26.
12. Campelo, "Representação," s.d., BNRJ, SM, CV, cód. 18, 2, 6, doc. 198.
13. Governor, "Lista das pessoas que devem e tem obrigação de concorrerem para embaracar o corso com que o gentio Sylvestre esta todos os annos entrando pelas fazendas e sesmarias da Beira do Rio Doce . . . ," Vila Rica, 9 May 1765, APM, CC, cód. 1156, fl. 4.
14. See Hal Langfur, *Forbidden Lands*, 165; Resende, "Gentios Brasílicos," anexo; Resende, "Minas dos Cataguases," 186–202.
15. On the gradual economic recovery beginning in the early 1780s, see Laird W. Bergad, *Slavery and the Demographic and Economic History of Minas Gerais, Brazil, 1720–1888* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 163–66.
16. Langfur, "Uncertain Refuge."
17. See, for example, governor, "Portaria para Joaquim Correya Mosso commandar hum Esquadra para afugentar os Indios Bravos," Vila Rica, 9 July 1792, APM, SC, cód. 259; Antônio Veloso de Miranda to governor, [Presídio dos] Arrepiados, 23 Nov. 1781, APM, SC, cód. 224, fls. 79v–80v.
18. "Requerimento de Antonio Cardozo de Souza, morador no Rio Pardo da Comarca de Serro Frio, respectivo sobre a rodução de Indioz que circulão a Otinga," [1766], APM, SC, cód. 60, fl. 86; Governor to Souza, Vila Rica, 29 Aug. 1766, ibid., fls. 86–86v.
19. Governor to Francisco Pires Farinho, Cachoeira, 13 Nov. 1781, APM, SC, cód. 227, fls. 13–13v.
20. See various account of this practice in Luciano Raposo de Almeida Figueiredo and Maria Verônica Campos, eds., *Códice Costa Matoso: Coleção das notícias dos primeiros descobrimentos das minas na América que fez o doutor Caetano da Costa Matoso sendo ouvidor-geral das do Ouro Preto, de que tomou posse em fevereiro de 1749, & vários papéis* (Belo Horizonte: Fundação João Pinheiro, 1999), 2 vols. See also Muriel Nazzari, "Da escravidão à liberdade: A transição de índio administrado para vassalo independence em São Paulo colonial," in *Brasil: Colonização e escravização*, ed. Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2000), 30.
21. John Monteiro, for example, maintains that the exodus of residents from São Paulo to the mining district led to the suspension of bandeirante slaving. John M. Monteiro, *Negros da terra: Índios e bandeirantes nas origens de São Paulo* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1994), 210.

22. A. J. R. Russell-Wood, "Identidade, etnia e autoridade nas Minas Gerais do século XVIII: Leituras do Códice Matoso," *Vária História* 21 (July 1999): 101–2.
23. APM, SC, cód. 11, p. 262.
24. AHU, PR, 13563, cx. 15, doc. 30.
25. Pinto, "Os últimos carijós," 173.
26. APM, SC, cód. 10, fot. 808–11.
27. AHU, PR, 4515, cx. 55, doc. 25.
28. BNRJ, SM, Papéis Vários Manuscritos, 1, 4, 1, doc. 20.
29. See, esp., Monteiro, *Negros da terra*, 129–53.
30. APM, SC, cód. 179, fot. 1768–1769.
31. APM, SC, cód. 179, fot. 1774, 1775.
32. APM, SC, cód. 182, rolo 25, fot. 2303; APM, SC, cód. 167, fot. 862–63.
33. According to the historian Diogo de Vasconcelos, a policy adopted in 1758 and confirmed in 1768 sanctioned the distribution of clothes, tools, and other goods to Indians who arrived in the captaincy's settlements and presented themselves to authorities. Diogo [Luís de Almeida Pereira] de Vasconcelos, *História média de Minas Gerais*, 4th ed. (Belo Horizonte: Ed. Itatiaia, 1974), 205.
34. See, for example, in 1766, eleven Coroado Indians, APM, SC, cód. 152, fot. 287, 288; in 1767, another eight Coroado, APM, SC, cód. 152, fot. 448, 449; and in 1776, seven Coroado, APM, SC, cód. 152, fot. 357.
35. AHU, PR, 6728, cx. 83, doc. 16.
36. During the early stage of the gold rush, Indian labor was used in the mines, which led many to "abduct" Indians settled in aldeias, according to a complaint made in the mining town of Mariana. See APM, SC, cód. 9, fot. 53. M.T. Ferreira discusses three types of dislocation experienced by aldeia Indians: "absence" by permission of the village director or his agent in order to work or learn a trade for a period of one month or one year; "flight," which consisted of unauthorized absence; and "desertion." M. T. C. da R. Ferreira, "Os aldeamentos indígenas no fim do período colonial" (MA thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 1990), 52.
37. On the flight of Indians from the aldeias of Rio de Janeiro, see Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida, "Os índios aldeados no Rio de Janeiro colonial: Novos súditos cristãos do Império Português" (PhD diss., UNICAMP, 2001), 140. On Indians from Ceará and Pernambuco, see ACM, PM, no. 1989 (1735) and ACM, PM, no. 2904 (1743); on those from the aldeia of São Miguel, see ACM, PM, no. 4042 (1750). Various baptism records from the city of Campanha da Princesa in southern Minas Gerais reveal the presence of Indians from the aldeia of São José, such as José Antunes (1749), Geraldo Dias (1754), and Lucas Dias (1758), as well as José Domingues (1775) from São João de Atibaia in São Paulo. See BD, Livro de Batismo de Campanha (1748–1762). On Indians from the aldeia of Rio Pomba, see ACM, PM, no. 2808 (1791).
38. Ana Cardoso and Pedro Dias, also identified as Clara Aguiar and José de Oliveira, were recorded as "carijós from the town of Taubaté" when they baptized their son

in the parish of São Gonçalo in Campanha in 1761. See BD, Livro de Batismo de Campanha (1748–1762).

39. Sheila de Castro Faria, *A colônia em movimento: Fortuna e família no cotidiano colonial* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Nova Fronteira, 1998), 102.
40. On native participation in colonial society elsewhere in Portuguese America, see, in addition to the other chapters in this collection, John Monteiro, "Rethinking Amerindian Resistance and Persistence in Colonial Portuguese America," in *New Approaches to Resistance in Brazil and Mexico*, ed. John Gledhill and Patience A. Schell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 37–40.
41. See Beatriz Perrone-Moisés, "Inventário da legislação indigenista, 1500–1800," in *História dos Índios no Brasil*, ed. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, FAPESP/SMC, 1992), 529–66.
42. BNRJ, SM, cód. 5, 2, 2, p. 1–3. On the application of this law in Minas Gerais, see Langfur, *Forbidden Lands*, chap. 2. Concerning the laws known as the Indian Directorate, the basis for indigenous policy between the 1750s and 1790s, see Rita Heloísa de Almeida, *O Diretório dos índios: Projeto de "civilização" no Brasil do século XVIII* (Brasília: Universidade de Brasília, 1997).
43. Elsewhere in the colony, commissions set up to hear these cases were composed of authorities occupying the following positions: *ouvidor geral, juiz de fora, procurador dos índios, prelado diocesano,* the captaincy governor, and high-ranking representatives of the Jesuit, Carmelite, and Capuchin missionary orders. Final verdicts were issued by the Mesa de Consciência e Ordens. See Carlos de A. Moreira Neto, *Índios da Amazônia: De maioria à minoria (1750–1850)* (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1988), 162. In Minas Gerais, it fell to a *juiz ordinário* to issue the final verdict.
44. "Providencias tomadas para a catechese dos Indios no Rio Doce e Piracicaba, Vila Rica, 1764–1767," APM, CC, cód. 1156, fols. 1–2, 4.
45. APM , SC, cód. 59, fol. 103–104v.
46. APM, SC, cód. 59, p. 101v–102.
47. APM, SG3, cx. 6, doc. 39 (6/12/1769).
48. Almeida, *O diretório dos índios*, 199.
49. BN, SM, cód. 18, 3, 3, p. 188.
50. APM, SC, cód. 60, fot. 2123–2124.
51. APM, SC, cód. 60, fot. 2086.
52. APM, SG3, cx. 6, doc. 39.
53. On freed slaves in eighteenth-century Minas Gerais, see Núbia Braga Ribeiro, "Cotidiano e liberdade: Um estudo sobre os alforriados em Minas no século XVIII" (MA thesis, Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1996), 79; Laura de Mello e Souza, *Norma e conflito: Aspectos da história de Minas no século XVIII* (Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 1999), 166.
54. BN, SM, cód. 18, 3, 3, p. 82.
55. ACM, PM, no. 7862 (1769).

56. BN, SM, cód. 18, 3, 3, p. 75–79.
57. APM, SC, cód. 260, fot. 772–74. A similar case occurred in the town of Pitangui in 1760. In this instance, several Indian women were not released from prison when local officials failed to act on an order to grant them their freedom. See APM, SC, cód. 130, fot. 1837–1838.
58. APM, SC, cód. 260, fot. 783–86.
59. PR, AHU, 8078, cx. 103, doc. 6. This was the same canon who ordered published the panegyric *Áureo Trono Episcopal* in Lisboa in 1749, which recounts the committee's voyage from Maranhão to Mariana. See Iris Kantor, "Um visitador na periferia da América Portuguesa: Visitas pastorais, memórias históricas e penegíricos episcopais," *Vária História* 21 (July 1999): 441.
60. See Figueiredo and Campos, eds., *Códice Costa Matoso*, 917–42.
61. Iris Kantor, "Um visitador," 443.
62. AHU, PR, 8078, cx. 103, doc. 6.
63. AHU, PR, 8086, cx. 103, doc. 87.
64. APM, SC, cód. 184, fot. 2134.
65. AHU, PR, 6163, cx. 75, doc. 54. Knowledge of such legislation had been widespread in Minas Gerais since the beginning of the eighteenth century. See, APM, SC, cód. 9, fot. 64.