Introduction

A Forgotten Frontier in Colonial Brazil

As revolutionary sentiments stirred on both sides of the Atlantic in 1789, the governor in charge of Brazil's great inland mining district, the captaincy of Minas Gerais, hurried to increase military forces at strategic points. Having discovered a conspiracy by local plutocrats who planned his assassination, an armed uprising against the Portuguese Crown, and the declaration of an independent republic, Governor Luís Antônio Furtado de Mendonça, the Viscount of Barbacena, set in motion a plot of his own. The supposed sighting of hostile Indians along the captaincy's primary road and escape route, which ran south out of the Minas highlands to the colonial capital of Rio de Janeiro, provided Barbacena the excuse he needed to reinforce captaincy troops on patrol. A second pretext came from unauthorized prospectors rushing to stake claims at two remote gold and diamond strikes, where hundreds had "gathered tumultuously." The conspicuous need to police these migrants, disperse them if necessary, apprehend smugglers, and prevent others from following their path would help conceal the governor's ruse as he requested two infantry companies dispatched from the capital by Viceroy Luís de Vasconcelos e Sousa. The governor was well aware of the "suspicion that any extraordinary movement of troops would cause." Scheming to make his false orders widely known, he revealed his true intentions only in secret communications with the viceroy, his uncle. Barbacena calculated that local inhabitants, accustomed as they were to the use of troops to control unconquered Indians and vagabond fortune seekers, would not divine his true purpose—the arrest of the conspirators and their removal from the mining district. The success of his ploy can be measured, at least in part, by the subsequent swift capture of the rebellious cabal.[1]

Unfolding amid momentous transformations in the Atlantic world, the nativist intrigue known as the Inconfidência Mineira has preoccupied generations

of historians seeking to understand the demise of colonial rule in Portuguese America. Long seen as a heroic first step toward Brazilian independence in 1822 and its participants elevated as national icons, the plot would later suffer the skeptical reevaluation of scholars less dazzled by the motives of its self-interested wealthy backers, who stood to profit from a tax rebellion. Despite such close inspection, the governor's deceptions involving Indians and uprooted miners never prompted a second scholarly thought. After all, they were minor machinations in the overall plot and its official suppression. Yet they raise an intriguing question about the broader contours of life in the mining district during the final decades of the eighteenth century.

Why was it that, counter to everything canonical scholarship would indicate, the movements of Indians and frontier migrants supplied the governor with his most plausible official cover for the deployment of Portuguese troops? Evidently, the inhabitants of Minas Gerais would have believed many other things about the region's autonomous Indians: that many were cannibals, that their presence on the periphery of the settled mining district prevented new discoveries of gold, emeralds, and diamonds, and that the conquest of these lands would restore Minas Gerais to a grandeur that had faded with the exhaustion of the great mineral deposits that first attracted a flood of settlers to the region early in the century. Residents of the captaincy's traditional mining towns would also have recognized in the constant and often unlawful movements of prospectors a persistent drive to occupy still-unsettled areas and establish in them the slave-based mining operations that had enriched their predecessors. These ongoing concerns about Indians and frontier conquests, matters conventionally considered affairs of the distant past, point to the central subject of this study.

Atlantic Connections, Academic Ruptures

The following chapters consider the curious history of a mining and farming frontier that expanded not westward into the heart of colonial Brazil but eastward from the mountainous interior back toward the Atlantic coast. They explore the accompanying surge in interethnic violence that engulfed the eastern forests of Minas Gerais, the colony's most populous captaincy, with just under 400,000 inhabitants in the 1780s, nearly half of them slaves and a third of them free persons of color—in both cases, more than in any other region.[2] They comprise one of the few sustained scholarly examinations of any portion of Portuguese America's sprawling frontier. Focusing on the racial, ethnic, and geographic relations of the whites, free blacks, slaves, and Indians who inhabited this slowly receding wilderness, they challenge prevailing depictions of Brazil's inland colonization. A traditional preoccupation with coastal events

and export-led development has deprived this centuries-long frontier history of anything approaching the intensive study it merits. To admit how little is still known about the settlement of this great inland swathe of the Americas is nothing short of astonishing.

The first step toward an adequate analysis requires connecting two realms often considered separately and even antithetically: the early modern Atlantic system and the frontier regions that formed along its perimeter. This bifurcation of academic inquiry has produced some surprising lapses. For example, my emphasis on independent Indians sets this work apart from a historiography routinely dismissive of their enduring significance throughout the colonial period, which ended with independence from Portugal in 1822. Equally, my scrutiny of the inland movements of peoples of African origin distinguishes this work from studies that bind slavery to the coastal plantation economy and reduce Brazil's frontier history to a dyadic contest between Europeans and Indians when the latter are not entirely ignored. To account for pervasive archival evidence linking these phenomena, which is fundamentally also the link between the frontier and the Atlantic world, I have sought to re-conceptualize the colony's internal consolidation, elaborating an approach for understanding the stark conflicts it engendered. Briefly stated, my overarching argument is that the key to the relentless violence that accompanied frontier incorporation can be found in the incompatible ways in which Luso-Brazilians, Afro-Brazilians, and seminomadic indigenous peoples sought to territorialize their distinctive societies—that is, to construct, sustain, reproduce, and protect those societies in an unsettled tropical and subtropical environment. Understood in this way, I propose that frontier conflict constituted a defining feature not only of Brazil's transition from colony to independent nation but also of its relationship to a wider world. In this respect, Brazil deserves a prominent place in any thorough understanding of the hemispheric sweep of internal colonization in the Americas.

In addition to these fundamental issues, the scholarly concerns that inform this book emerge from the efforts of a growing cohort of historians, ethnohistorians, and anthropologists newly attentive to Brazil's indigenous history. Renderings of Brazil's past have typically diminished the historical contribution of the first of three peoples—Indians, Europeans, and Africans—whose labors, conflicts, and creative energies created Portugal's New World colony. As new questions regarding the colony's internal dynamics have come to the forefront in recent years, researchers have begun to grapple more systematically with Indians and their role in Brazil's territorial and social formation.[3] Their combined efforts might now fairly be classified as Brazil's "new" Indian history, except that no "old" Indian history ever coalesced—making current

contributions, still few in number, all the more noteworthy. This book extends these efforts to the regional transformation in Minas Gerais that gathered force as the occupants of the mining district began to disperse after 1750. This migration, because of its historical idiosyncrasies, has eluded proper recognition as the primary instance of frontier expansion in late colonial Brazil. The resulting scholarly neglect, exacerbated by the dismissive slant on native peoples, has left the region's indigenous history utterly ignored.[4]

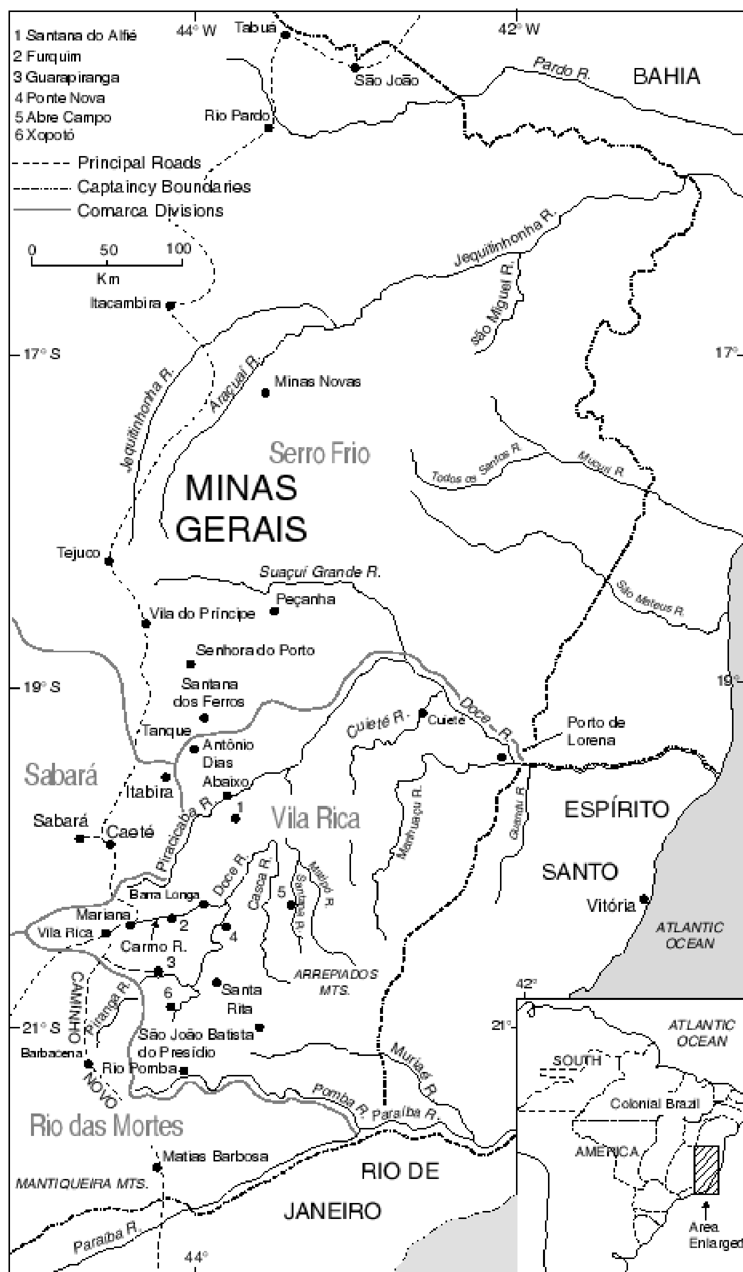
Another corpus of work this book engages is extensive research on the settled towns and mining camps of colonial Minas Gerais, if not its frontiers. In recent years, this endeavor has produced a veritable scholarly renaissance.[5] This activity stems in part from a renewed conviction, to use a metaphor applied by the Crown's colonial secretary, that the "soul" of Portuguese America lay not along the coast in the eighteenth century but inland.[6] Coastal events, particularly the fortunes of Brazil's export-oriented tropical plantation complex, while providing the customary focus of scholarly production about the colonial period, accounted for just one aspect of an economic and social matrix integrally linked to the interior. Benefiting from but identifying a fundamental flaw in the forceful new research on Minas Gerais, the present study insists that decisive events took place not only beyond the coast but also beyond the confines of the mining district's primary productive sites. The history of Minas Gerais and its ties to the rest of the colony can be fully understood only by reference to the wilderness that surrounded these mining centers and their agricultural hinterlands.

Beyond such connections, I hope to convince the reader that the historical issues at stake transcend the boundaries of this region, however important it might have been, and of Portugal's colony as a whole. In this larger realm, revisionist research focusing on frontiers elsewhere in the Americas, especially those that developed around the same time, represents a final body of scholarship incorporated in the pages that follow. In dialogue with this material, I seek to link regional, Brazilian, Latin American, and Atlantic histories.[7] Eighteenth-century Minas inhabitants referred to the mountains, forests, and river valleys to the east of the mining district as the Eastern *Sertão*. Over the course of this study, much will be said about the elusive meaning of the word *sertão* and its plural *sertões*. The term can be adequately translated into English as *wilderness*, *backlands*, or *frontier*. In the colonial period, usage was not confined geographically, as it now often is, to description of the semiarid, sparsely settled rural zones of northeastern Brazil. In the colony, the sertão described unsettled regions throughout Brazil's immense interior. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the portion of that interior called the Eastern Sertão became one of the many frontier zones that formed on the periphery of consolidating states

and market economies throughout Latin America and the Atlantic world. The history of this zone resists the kind of stage-by-stage analysis, whether as progressive triumph or catastrophe, until recently favored by frontier historians.[8] For decade after decade, colonization led neither to the successful establishment of a sedentary settler society nor to the final subjugation of the region's indigenous peoples. In other words, not merely historical idiosyncrasies but theoretical and methodological insufficiencies explain why historians have seldom recognized the Eastern Sertão as a frontier at all.[9]

The advances and reversals of settlement characteristic of this area and others like it have prompted some scholars to see the long-incomplete incorporation of the Brazilian interior as a negation of the usual frontier dynamic or, to use the terminology some have preferred, as a "hollow frontier." For instance, one historian has argued that a Brazilian "pioneer frontier" can hardly be said to have existed at all until the 1930s when industrialization prompted rapid expansion into the wilderness.[10] The trouble with such views stems from a failure to understand territorial incorporation as a multidimensional process that involved not only conquest but also, depending on the time and place, successful resistance, cooperation, mediation, and negotiation, and that produced prolonged periods of stalemate and equilibrium. To confine frontier history to only those periods when colonists succeeded is to write history from the limited perspective of the intruding society. A more comprehensive and historically precise approach conceptualizes frontiers not merely as the leading edge of European expansion but as zones of contact, conflict, and interaction, albeit often unequal interaction, between and among cultures. While the penetration of market capitalism into remote environments was central to the dynamic connecting the frontier to Atlantic commerce, this expansion occurred, more often than not, in fits and starts, advancing and receding, and requiring a long period of gestation. Despite the teleological conventions of much of the historiography, the frontier was not that distant place where European-based capitalism and imperial administration finally achieved dominance but, rather, exactly where they as yet failed to do so. This characteristic explains why those inhabiting the eastern reaches of Minas Gerais felt the pressures of frontier expansion well before the region experienced rapid economic growth and effective incorporation into either an export economy or a consolidated domestic market.[11] In short, fundamental to the perspective orienting this book is the assumption that the frontier constituted that geographic area remote to settled society but central to indigenous peoples, where such consolidation was not yet assured and where the outcome of multiethnic cultural encounters remained in doubt.

At the outer reaches of an expanding capitalist and imperial system, frontier migrants were thrust into precarious circumstances in peripheral zones



MAP 1. The Eastern Sertão, Minas Gerais, Brazil, ca. 1800 (all boundaries were disputed).

inhabited by natives throughout the Atlantic world. Another great rift in the historiography of the colonial Americas has consistently severed the study of frontiers from that of settled enclaves and thus the history of independent native societies from that of peoples occupying plantation and mining zones, where African slaves, their captive descendants, free persons of color, detribalized Indians, and poor whites comprised the primary work force.[12] The framework employed in this book explains why these peoples frequently occupied overlapping territories and why scholars have missed much of this complex process in the Brazilian interior. Failing to find a dramatic westward movement comparable to the far more thoroughly studied North American frontier experience, a process wrongly considered archetypal, historians have stumbled. They have overlooked the plodding, multidirectional, ethnically complex patterns of territorial incorporation central to the peopling of Portuguese America.

After the Fall

By the time the wilderness known as the Eastern Sertão became the object of intense official interest, the apex of the mining boom had come and gone. Beginning in the 1690s with the discovery of the most extensive gold strikes the Americas had ever known, the rush to exploit Brazil's southeastern interior resulted in an unprecedented economic expansion, producing a complex inland urban society and a rich Baroque culture. Two hundred years after the colony's discovery in 1500, the first great wave of Portuguese immigrants crossed the Atlantic in pursuit of opportunity and riches. During the first six decades of the eighteenth century, more than half a million colonists emigrated from Portugal and its Atlantic islands to Brazil. Tens of thousands of them and, in even greater numbers, the African slaves they purchased pressed inland from the seaboard. A small minority amassed fortunes from the alluvial deposits that sustained this bonanza. The population of European descent swelled from an initial handful of adventurers, cattle ranchers, and speculators. That of African descent grew even faster, eventually forming the largest regional captive population in Portuguese America, which, as a whole, received by far the greatest overall slave influx of any American colony. The number of free persons of African descent also ballooned as it did in most slaveholding societies, the result of migration from Brazil's plantation zones, of miscegenation, whether consensual or forcible, and of accumulated manumissions. Mining camps burgeoned at Sabará, Mariana, Caeté, and Vila Rica, to name only a few of the most prominent sites. Vila Rica blossomed into the gilded capital of the mining district. To the north at Tejuco, diamonds were discovered in 1729, adding still greater impetus to the windfall

that transformed the colony and the transatlantic commerce that linked it to Europe and Africa.

The name bestowed on the region, Minas Gerais, meaning the general mines, reflected with fitting transparency the zone's importance to the world beyond the colony. The district's cataract of precious metal and stones flooded the South Atlantic economy, restructured the Portuguese overseas empire, salvaged a declining Iberian kingdom, and nourished the burgeoning Industrial Revolution in England, Portugal's exigent ally to the north. In the colony itself, economic power shifted decidedly toward the mining region and Rio de Janeiro, the port city through which the bulk of the bullion, immigrants, slaves, trade goods, and contraband passed. However, before the Portuguese Crown fully acknowledged these changes and transferred the colony's capital from Salvador da Bahia to Rio de Janeiro in 1763, the inevitable depletion of the mineral washings was well underway. Considerable economic diversification cushioned the blow, particularly in the form of market-driven farming and ranching developed over time to meet the demands of a growing population. Nevertheless, the exhaustion of the mines produced economic havoc. First felt on a large scale around the middle of the century and intensifying over several decades, the slump brought with it marked social dislocation and political discontentment.

Another crucial consequence of the economic slide was that long after the search for gold purportedly ended and the concerns of colonists turned elsewhere, the inhabitants of Minas Gerais continued to scour outlying lands for new mineral deposits. Wherever these failed to materialize, they looked to the same surrounding lands for pastoral, agricultural, and commercial alternatives. This movement into the wilderness originated not from a scantily settled area in the remote interior but rather from what was by 1750 a relatively well-developed demographic crossroads, constituting during the second half of the century the colony's single largest captaincy with a fifth of Brazil's total population. Similarly, the interactions this movement produced among Portuguese settlers, slaves, free blacks, and Indians were not minor oddities arising in a far-off corner of the colony but phenomena occurring in its heart or, as the Crown minister preferred, its soul.

Like the gold nuggets and precious gems that occasionally still surfaced in newly discovered ravines and riverbeds, the questions that impel this study arise from the gaps that separated expectation from outcome in the pursuit of postboom frontier conquest and settlement. Why would colonial society prove so difficult to replicate in this wilderness? If established society represented the colonial order and the sertão its antithesis, how did the struggle to tame the wilderness shape the local, colonial, and transatlantic culture of territorial expansion? Such questions provoke others. How was frontier conquest imagined

and effected? How was it opposed? Who provided the labor? What sort of settlers participated? What became of the Indians? Why did some cooperate, how did others resist, and when did those who chose the course of violence finally submit? What did this violence say about frontier cultural exchange? What drove the whole process in the first place? And why have historians left it virtually unrecorded? I have sought the answers to these questions on both sides of the Atlantic in the dispersed, fragmented, sometimes intractable, but nonetheless copious archival materials documenting the eastward-moving frontier that formed after the middle of the eighteenth century in the forests separating the settled mining district from the Atlantic seaboard.

The gradual colonization of the Eastern Sertão was part of a much larger migratory process whose history, taken as a whole, remains poorly understood. Beginning no later than the 1750s, local elites, slaves, impoverished settlers, and seminomadic indigenous peoples engaged in a contest for land, labor, and resources, radiating outward from the mining district's major towns in several directions at once. Throughout the vast sertões of Minas Gerais, this conflict sometimes smoldered and sometimes flared. A slow-moving, often inconspicuous dispersion from urban into hinterland areas and from hinterlands into wilderness, this transformation depended on the actions of the powerful and the poor, the free and the enslaved. Each had their own reasons for journeying to the frontier, each made their own claims on unsettled land, and each confronted indigenous groups who saw them as invaders. By probing the relations of those who encountered and struggled with one another along the eastern extremes of this larger migratory flow, I attempt to rethink the process of Brazilian internal territorial consolidation.

Local inhabitants responded actively to the economic disarray and social disjuncture that followed the quickening disappearance of accessible gold. Among other responses, they joined the migration to the west, to the south, and—for the purposes of this study—to the east into lands officially sealed off a half-century earlier to thwart the flow of contraband gold and diamonds out of the mining district to seagoing smugglers. Along with most contemporary Minas historians, I reject the long-established view that the economic crisis left the region in a state of virtual collapse. The rich corpus of new and neglected sources assembled for this study demonstrates that frontier conquest played a critical role in responding to the crisis and shaping Brazil's late colonial history. Accordingly, this book moves beyond a historiography that has long subordinated the subject of internal colonization to that of Brazil's export complexes—sugar, gold, coffee, cotton, cacao, rubber, and cattle—under the erroneous assumption that the frontier advanced only when transatlantic trade and, later, domestic industrialization propelled inland movement. The evidence presented reveals

the historical salience of internal colonization precisely between two export booms—gold and coffee—a period traditionally treated as one of stasis and decadence.

Together, Luso-Brazilian settlers and Afro-Brazilian freemen and slaves, encroaching on highly mobile aboriginal peoples, forged a complex, conflict-ridden frontier social order in which all of these groups challenged each other and the colonial administration by turning motion and geography to their advantage. The violence accompanying this history stemmed from the mutually exclusive ways in which these groups struggled to secure their prerogatives. Severed from a mining economy in turmoil and often in search of basic subsistence, farmers and small-stakes miners, many of them persons of color, dispersed into zones bypassed more than half a century earlier by the gold rush and then placed off-limits by the Crown. Such migrants posed a direct threat to elites engaged in their own effort to seize territory. Lands deemed "vacant" and "virgin," like their geographic correlates in North America, became the object of a drive by the locally powerful to enlist the state in frontier conquests as an antidote to social and economic displacement.[13] When official conquest began, however, these lands proved to be already occupied—albeit sparsely—not only by the captaincy's own straying subjects but also by aboriginal groups determined to defend their domain from invasion. Over the course of the second half of the eighteenth century and the first two decades of the nineteenth, the rugged Eastern Sertão became the portion of the encircling Minas frontier where indigenous resistance peaked.

My delineation of varied native responses to this predicament depends, as it must, both on a specific methodology and on the possibilities and limitations of the extant archival material. It presupposes an understanding of Brazil's native peoples not as culturally pristine aboriginals but as full and deft participants in the contested process of territorial consolidation. This study is not a history of a particular indigenous group or native point of view per se but of the contact and connections among diverse groups of Indians, Portuguese colonists, and peoples of African descent. Part of the reason so little has been written about Brazil's colonial Indians, especially those independent peoples who inhabited the sertão, is that the sources are not only disjointed but also so difficult to decode. Written almost entirely by colonists, they simply do not allow for an unadulterated reconstruction of native perspectives. Only in rare instances do they even identify individual Indians by name. Nevertheless, with the focus fixed on contacts, connections, conflicts, and relationships, a rich story emerges situated at the nexus of the various peoples who encountered one another on the frontier. Worth remembering is that the sources are also far from transparent when conveying colonial perspectives. Not only did those who were literate portray Indians—and, for that matter, non-literate settlers and slaves—with a jaundiced

eye, they also depicted themselves with predictable indulgence. The application of an ethnographic sensibility to the world these sources echo uncovers multiple meanings attached to the shared experience of interethnic commerce deep in the forests. Such an approach, to use anthropologist Richard Price's formulation, "need know no geographical or typological boundaries: historical studies of 'primitives' or 'the civilized'... (and especially their respective interactions), come equally under its purview."[14] This insight encourages persistence in the face of the analytical difficulties surrounding non-literate historical subjects. Renderings of all parties must be treated with skepticism; restricting the field of analysis to those portrayed impartially would produce histories of none. Access to the Eastern Sertão would remain just as colonial authorities intended—strictly controlled.

In pursuing these lines of inquiry, I have divided my analysis into two parts. Part I, "Colonization," explores how local officials, influential elites, and frontier settlers of varying economic, social, and racial status reinterpreted or ignored Crown proscriptions that designated the eastern forests as the "Forbidden Lands." They tested, chipped away at, and ultimately helped reverse the Crown policy that placed the Eastern Sertão off-limits. As Chapter One demonstrates, the emergence of this frontier was far from a predetermined development in a progressive advance into the interior. The zone as a field of conquest and colonization had to be conceptualized and constructed both geographically and discursively. It had to be occupied, militarized, pacified, panned, sluiced, and planted. This could occur only in accordance with the fears, desires, imaginings, policies, and cumulative and contradictory actions of those who perceived something of value in a place previously considered beyond the limits of colonial activity. Mapmakers proved critical to the formation of the zone as a frontier, as did colonists' preconceptions about natives and nature, and the eastern Indians and wilderness in particular.

Rejecting a monolithic conception of the colonial state, Chapter Two highlights issues over which Crown and captaincy diverged with respect to lands beyond the edge of settled society. Tensions between governing the colony and the captaincy showed the extent to which local events rather than royal fiat determined the direction of frontier and indigenous policy. Soon after the middle of the eighteenth century, local authorities began to invoke a Crown policy formulated to "liberate" the colony's settled indigenous population but they transformed this policy into the legislative basis for the conquest of unsettled, seminomadic groups. Minas officials also began to establish and defend small outposts of controlled settlement in the sertão. They used a royal crackdown on the free poor to round up laborers, especially those of African descent, to advance the goal of frontier conquest. Reflecting a changing colonial identity vis-à-vis the

frontier, events in this distant wilderness began to impinge on metropolitan authority, erode established territorial boundaries, and undermine Crown dictates. As Lisbon clung to the Forbidden Lands policy banning access to the Eastern Sertão, captaincy elites adopted a competing conquest mentality with territorial divisions constructed along racial fault lines. What I have chosen to call an emergent "racial geography"—a conception of territorial incorporation infused with racialist assumptions—defined activities deemed disparately appropriate and inappropriate for those of European, African, and Indian origin who inhabited specific regions of the frontier. No matter how insistently colonial elites described the sertão as "virgin" or "wild," the region was anything but an undifferentiated, uninhabited expanse awaiting European settlement. It consisted of various interpenetrating zones, ranging from the outer edge of the settled mining district, where nascent villages represented the eastward extension of Brazil's slaveholding society into the wilderness, to the innermost reaches of coastal forests still dominated by natives. Between these extremes lay a zone where neither slaveholder nor Indian held sway. Still largely beyond the limits of established authority, this intermediary zone in particular revealed the strains between Crown and captaincy visions of the frontier, that is, the dissimilarities between their contradictory racial geographies.

Two chapters examine the formidable difficulties encountered transporting lusophone society into the wilderness and reconstructing it according to models employed in mining and plantation zones. Chapter Three considers episodes from individual settlers' lives and contextualizes them with census and land tenure data. Just as captaincy authorities pursued objectives that diverged from royal intentions, frontier landholders failed to conform to the dream officials nurtured of revitalizing Minas Gerais by conquering new lands rich in mineral wealth deep in Indian territory. Slaveholding colonists favored a more secure alternative: cautious expansion into fertile, less isolated stretches of the sertão that promised safe subsistence or agricultural profits. On lands located within reach of transportation routes and commercial networks, slaves could be redeployed from failing mining operations to extract gains by supplying foodstuffs to a growing colonial population. The expansion of these agricultural hinterlands occurred according to a common pattern by which squatters came to occupy territory still vulnerable to Indian attack. As the threat from such resistance diminished, as trails and roads improved, and as pastures and fields were cleared, planted, and valorized, early settlers found themselves displaced by subsequent waves of colonists. Directly or indirectly, even settlers who eschewed lands vulnerable to Indian raids ended up provoking them because the relentless search for secure colonial domain intensified pressure on the territory seminomadic natives required for survival.

Chapter Four focuses on the most marginalized group of frontier migrants: impoverished, rootless, free individuals, often the descendants of slaves or former slaves themselves. The opulence of the mining boom disguised the poverty and tenuous social status characteristic of all but the most fortunate. During the ensuing bust, those who were poor but free suffered greatly and were among the first to disperse. Denounced as "useless people" and "vagabonds" for abandoning established society to venture to the frontier, these settlers resisted the repressive tactics of a state that sought to control their movements and labor. Journeying outward from the mining district, their migration—like that of colonists of greater means—presaged a regional economic shift from mining to agriculture, along with attendant changes in social relations. Only when the risk of Indian attacks had been substantially reduced did settlers with sizeable slaveholdings successfully establish themselves in outlying lands. Where free poor Afro-Brazilian migrants arrived first, additional tasks confronted mining and farming elites, and the state authorities who arrived in their wake. Determined to transform land into profitable resources, they strove to mold transient subsistence farmers into compliant workers, disciplining them and fixing them to the land as dependents, compelling them to labor for the state, or chasing them away to replace them with slaves. Both the legal and informal imposition of racial categories on frontier activities, the further elaboration of a racially specific geography of conquest, proved central to this project.

Rather than discuss slaves in a separate chapter, I have treated them as the pervasive presence that they were, involved to varying degrees with all other sectors of society and in all aspects of the settlement process and thus a concern of each of these chapters. Some slaves, like those who helped found the wilderness outpost of Cuieté, journeyed with their masters to the frontier. Others were forced by the state to serve alongside the free poor on military expeditions sent out to conquer new lands or to retaliate against hostile natives. Some were killed by Indians while laboring in fields, forests, or mineral washings. Others were armed by their masters to protect those laboring. Runaway slaves also set out for the frontier, their treacherous journey culminating, when successful, in the founding of remote maroon settlements. In turn, these fugitives became targets of whites seeking to tame the frontier. The very fact that this was a slave-owning society proved decisive to the course of frontier settlement, as masters calculated how to use to the greatest advantage their investment in captive human capital and as Indians learned how to take advantage of those calculations.

Of course, the entire settlement process looked very different to the Indians, a reality that informs Part II, "Confrontation." As subjects of historical and anthropological research, the natives of this zone, like those throughout the colony during this period, have been virtually forgotten. And yet numerous

aboriginal groups, among them the Puri, Pataxó, Maxakali, and above all the seminomadic peoples the Portuguese first called the Tapuya, later the Aimoré, and later still the Botocudo, blocked settlement and exploration. Between the 1750s and 1808, colonists mounted dozens of military and paramilitary expeditions to neutralize Indian resistance east of the mining district. Aggression against the natives persisted as what remained of the royal ban on settlement gradually collapsed. Then, following the 1808 arrival in Rio de Janeiro of the Crown and royal court that fled Napoleon's invasion of Portugal, Prince Regent João declared open war on the Botocudo and others Indians condemned as cannibals or otherwise hostile, officially sanctioning their slaughter and enslavement.

Chapter Five demonstrates that the militarization of this conflict began a full half-century earlier, another testament to the gaps between Crown and captaincy policy. Despite royal prohibitions and at times despite their own profound misgivings, virtually every governor of Minas Gerais from the 1760s on pursued a policy of violent Indian conquest at one time or another. None commanded the military resources and only a few possessed the unabashed anti-Indian conviction of the prince regent. Nevertheless, the fact that the conflict commenced long before he declared war demands a rethinking of the basis of this action. Far from a sudden reversal marking the deterioration of relations between a strengthening colonial state and the remnant of once numerous Brazilian Indians, the military action capped a long history of conflict caused by settler and state incursions into the Eastern Sertão. This chapter details this long assault sponsored by the captaincy government, especially in the form of wilderness expeditions known as *bandeiras* (literally, banners). During the half-century prelude to declared war, these expeditions institutionalized the mounting military threat. Committed more than other less fortunate colonists to the constituted centers of settled, urban authority, the regional elite lagged behind impoverished migrants seeking to put distance between themselves and the oppressive structures of a slave-owning society. As economic problems deepened with the sharp decline in gold production, established miners, ranchers, farmers, merchants, and even clergymen sought to salvage their languishing fortunes by enlisting the state to conquer and safeguard new lands. The revival of the bandeira, a mobile institution of conquest first employed in Portuguese America in the sixteenth century, served this advance. It did so long after the historiography asserts that the bandeira era had closed. As the decades passed, the aggressive push into Indian territory gradually relinquished its ties to a bygone golden age and emphasized the burgeoning commerce of the Atlantic world that could be tapped by opening the river valleys leading out of the mining district to the sea.

For native peoples, intensive bandeira activity and the settler influx it accompanied forever broke the protective isolation of the Eastern Sertão. With

the geography of the conflict demarcated, its chronology revised, its ideology articulated, and its mechanisms clarified, two chapters elucidate how, from the far side of the frontier, various native groups experienced and, to the extent sources allow, understood the eastward migration and its militarization. Chapter Six considers the pitfalls of relying too heavily on conventional sources, namely the published accounts of European naturalists and colonial memorialists, to understand developments in the forests. Unexplored archival materials provide alternative narratives that make better sense of the options available to natives. Even as captaincy policy hardened, numerous indigenous groups found ways to maintain peaceful, cooperative relations with settlers and soldiers alike. When such accommodation failed, Indians tenaciously resisted invasion of their domain. They felt the effects of state-sponsored aggression near the wilderness outposts now established by the captaincy government. Even more disruptive was the slow-moving invasion of slaveholding colonists on the very edge of the mining district. Despite a mounting state of calamity, natives took advantage of still salient prohibitions on uncontrolled settlement and, more generally, of the contradictions in Crown and local policy, as well as the vulnerabilities of a society dependant on slavery. Their actions belie the common supposition that violent indigenous resistance had become all but ineffectual by the late colonial period. At the same time, they created a refuge, insecure though it may have been, in increasingly remote forests. In each instance, they struggled to prolong their own survival and did so at times with marked success but also at great cost.

Chapter Seven presents the pervasive violence in the eastern forests as, paradoxically, evidence not of the cessation of cultural exchange but as a primary mode of interethnic commerce. The peculiarities of the encroaching slaveholding Luso-Afro-Brazilian society presented Indians with specific opportunities to impede expansion. They did so by understanding their adversary's culture and translating that understanding into acts orchestrated to achieve the greatest possible effect. Settlers, soldiers, and Indians alike learned and appropriated the rules and techniques of barbarous conduct from one another according to fear-laden assumptions about their respective adversaries. Warring parties found in terror an essential language of contact and communication. This chapter explores this dynamic by disaggregating various types of reported native atrocities. Attacks on property and possessions, on slaves and settlers, and on soldiers in the field are considered as separate issues, each revealing another aspect of the cross-cultural meanings associated with frontier violence, including those attached to the alleged practice of cannibalism. These observations are then extended to retaliatory attacks launched by the Portuguese and characterized by the same inclemency they denounced in their adversaries' actions.

The final chapter, an exploration of the 1808 war and its immediate aftermath, begins by focusing on the sustained ability of the Indians to force settlers

to retreat from previously unicorporated lands. Beyond resisting incursions, they attacked weak points on the edge of colonized territory. Close analysis of the geography of the conflict illustrates that this characteristic held true not only for lands recently settled but also those occupied by the Portuguese for decades. More than any other single affront, this strike at the colonial claim to territorial dominion, a claim formalized in royal land grants, demonstrated enduring native proficiencies and convinced captaincy authorities to transform what they described as defensive war into an openly offensive posture. After decades of reluctance, Crown officials now concurred, relinquishing all remaining allegiance to their obsolete policy of maintaining the Forbidden Lands off-limits and, at least at the moment of crisis, all adherence to their official rhetoric of benevolence. Reinterpreting these early nineteenth-century developments in light of the long buildup to declared war, this chapter stresses the many historical continuities of the military response. At the same time, it argues that the coordinated reaction by Crown and captaincy distinguished the 1808 war from an earlier period during which these two seats of colonial authority often strained against one another when crafting policies pertaining to unsettled lands and unconquered indigenous peoples. The policy of military invasion remained in place until 1831 even though its failings quickly became apparent.

In a concluding section, the ambiguous outcome of even this unified drive to subdue remaining strongholds of native resistance informs a series of final considerations about the significance of the frontier in late colonial Brazil. Phrasing the issue in this way echoes, ironically, the famous essay of Frederick Jackson Turner, the towering figure of North American frontier scholarship whose work energized generations of disciples and, later, revisionists not only in the U.S. but also Latin America. Because writing about the frontier inevitably means writing about the birth of the nation-state, one element of its significance must always be the place it occupies, or fails to occupy, in the national psyche and a nationalist historiography. I therefore take up the question of scholarly ambivalence about Brazil's frontier experience along with the subtle process of forgetting about that experience. Both are byproducts of insistent pessimism about the nation's territorial formation, profoundly shaped by racial and economic hierarchies. In this context, I find further cause to reflect on the important implications of Brazilian internal colonization for comparative frontier and Atlantic studies.

The territorial dynamic forged by these multiple phenomena must be understood as part of a broad, ongoing, frequently unsuccessful effort by colonial administrators and the local elite to exert control over the Minas frontier and its straying peoples, be they natives, runaway slaves, or migrating subsistence farmers cut loose from a disintegrating gold-mining complex. The increasing inability to cordon off the Eastern Sertão as restricted territory betrayed the

tensions between the Crown, its captaincy governors, their civil and military officials, and the vassals they governed. The presence of slaves as an essential component of the frontier labor force deeply influenced landholders' calculations about the merits of advancing eastward into unincorporated forests. The long struggle to bend free persons of color to the demands of colonization efforts further complicated colonization. Seminomadic aboriginal peoples who had long found a refuge in the Eastern Sertão exercised their own options concerning the proper use of this territory. Frictions stemming from the formation, reproduction, maintenance, and self-defense of these various groups in the wilderness—in short, the discordant territorialization of their respective cultures—accounted for the conflicts documented in this study.

To support this view, the chapters that follow probe beyond the laws, decrees, and official ideologies promulgated by the Crown and its ministers, privileging instead the local origin of frontier policy. They do so by employing diverse unpublished sources from numerous local, state, and national archives in both Brazil and Portugal, including records of frontier expeditions, military correspondence, manuscript maps, property surveys, land grant titles, local census data, wills and testaments, post-mortem estate inventories, judicial proceedings, settlers' petitions, dispatches from Indian villages, ecclesiastical documents, and marriage, birth, and baptism records. The study thereby pinpoints the contact and clash of cultures on the frontier as the source from which official policy emerged rather than the other way around. It stresses the persistence of frontier violence as central to the history of a region and period long considered quiescent in this regard.

The frontier scrutinized in this book bordered Brazil's great gold and diamond fields and divided the South Atlantic's two major mercantile entrepôts, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador da Bahia. As Crown officials recognized, the zone was of singular importance for the entire colony for its geographic and economic cohesion and for its integration into the Atlantic system. Illuminating these connections while applying a more flexible conception of Brazilian territorial incorporation, the following analysis helps situate the Eastern Sertão among other frontiers located at key points along the American perimeter of the Atlantic world, especially those zones where African and indigenous peoples together formed part of the cultural matrix. While every one of these frontiers remained distinct, each also responded to a larger historical process in which states, settlers, slaves, and Indians struggled for control of land, labor, and resources adjoining the wider world.