



DOM JOÃO V BY DOMENICO DUPRA
COMMEMORATING THE BATTLE OF CAPE MATAPÁN, 1717

THE GOLDEN AGE OF BRAZIL · 1695-1750

Growing Pains of a Colonial Society



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II. THE GOLD RUSH IN MINAS GERAIS

THE BELIEF that Brazil must contain mines of precious metals and of precious stones was almost two centuries old when hope long deferred was at last translated into reality on a dazzling scale. There is no need to recapitulate here the various forms which the search for gold, silver, and emeralds took at different times and places, whether inspired by the Spanish tales of *El Dorado* ("The Golden Man"), which likewise haunted Sir Walter Raleigh, or by misunderstood Amerindian legends, or simply by the (misconceived) geographical propinquity of silver-bearing Potosí. The width of the South American continent was underestimated, and the conviction that the Cerro de Potosí was not so very far distant from the vaguely conceived Brazilian frontier encouraged people to continue the search westward in spite of repeated disappointments. This belief was reflected in a report of Consul Maynard, compiled at Lisbon in 1670, concerning Paulista activity (or, in Maynard's view, inactivity) in the hinterland of Piratininga. He referred optimistically to "the probability of the discovery of gold and silver and other riches, which the situation promises, as much as any place in the world, it lying in the same latitude and same continent with Peru, only separated by the River of Plate and the Amazons."¹ Since, in fact, it was the Paulistas who

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discovered alluvial gold in this region, we may consider this peculiar breed in more detail than was necessary in the previous chapter.

The most distinguishing feature of the Paulistas was their strong admixture of Amerindian blood, and in this they resembled the Spaniards settled in Paraguay, who mated with the Guaraní women on a similar scale. The majority of the Paulistas spoke Tupí-Guaraní (the *lingua geral* or lingua franca) in preference to Portuguese, at any rate when at home with their womenfolk or when absent on their far-ranging expeditions into the interior (*sertão*). This preference for the maternal tongue did not, perhaps, apply to those of them who had been educated at the Jesuit Colleges of Santos and São Paulo, but even these men were bilingual. Presumably because of their Amerindian blood, the Paulistas were infected with a wanderlust which was absent in the other settlers of coastal Brazil, who for more than a century made relatively few, feeble, and sporadic efforts to penetrate deeply into the hinterland. The Paulistas, on the contrary, were continually sending roving bands ever further into the *sertão*; and by 1651 they had blazed trails to High Peru and through the dense forests of central Brazil to the Amazon delta.² The highland region of São Paulo de Piratininga was a poor and isolated—though a healthy—one, and these expeditions were principally in search of Amerindians whom the Paulistas then enslaved (or domesticated) for use in their cultivated fields (*lavouras*). More or less as a sideline, they also searched for gold, silver, and emeralds; and they had discovered the alluvial gold-producing streams of Paranaguá by about 1572.

These roving bands were known as *bandeiras*, a term originally applied to Portuguese militia companies, and they were organized on a para-military basis.³ They varied in strength from a mere fifteen or twenty men to several hundred individuals provided with one or two friars as chaplains. The majority of any *bandeira* usually consisted of Amerindian auxiliaries, whether bond or free, for use as scouts, food gatherers, guides, porters, and so forth, with

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the white and half-breed Paulistas forming the kernel. In course of time, the Paulistas became as proficient in jungle and bush craft as the Amerindians already were, or even, according to some contemporaries, "as the very beasts themselves." These *bandeiras* frequently roamed the interior for months and occasionally for years on end. Sometimes they planted manioc in forest clearings, and camped in the neighborhood until they could harvest the crop; but they chiefly depended on the products of the chase, on fish from the rivers, on fruits, herbs, roots, and wild honey. They made as much use of bows and arrows as they did of muskets and other firearms, and except for their weapons they traveled remarkably light.⁴

Most modern representations of seventeenth-century Paulistas, whether in painting or in sculpture, depict them in a sort of "Pilgrim Father" attire with high jack boots; but in point of fact they seem to have worn little else but a broad-brimmed hat, beard, shirt, and drawers. They generally marched barefooted and in single file along jungle trails and bush paths, though they often carried a variety of weapons. Their gear likewise included thick wadded cotton jerkins, which were so effective against Amerindian arrows that in 1683 it was suggested they should be used in warfare against the bellicose Negroes of Angola on the other side of the Atlantic.⁵ The feminine element was not lacking in the larger *bandeiras*, for though the Paulistas did not take their lawful wives with them on their expeditions, they were often accompanied by Amerindian women as cooks and concubines.

Although the highland plateau of São Paulo de Piratininga is only about thirty miles from the sea as the crow flies, the region was isolated from the rest of the colony by the singularly rugged Serra do Mar. Communication with the port of Santos was by a mountain trail so winding and precipitous that in many places the traveler was obliged to use his hands as well as his feet in ascending it. There was a certain amount of livestock in the captaincy, but the shoulders and heads of the Amerindian porters formed the principal means of carriage. It was also the enslaved and domesti-

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cated Amerindians who cultivated the manioc and other food plants that were grown. As the town council of São Paulo wrote ingenuously to their lord-proprietor in 1606, "Your worship well knows that the Portuguese are not hard workers, especially when they are out of their own country."⁶

The geographical isolation in which the Paulistas lived naturally made this region a refuge for malcontents, deserters, and fugitives from justice, as likewise for foreigners who were regarded with suspicion by the colonial authorities. Spaniards, French, English, Dutch, and Italians were all represented among the founding fathers of São Paulo; but the assertion of some Spanish Jesuits that the Paulistas mainly consisted of "Jewish banditti" need not be taken seriously. Given these very mixed origins and the nature of their physical surroundings, it is not surprising that the Paulistas showed themselves suspicious and resentful of the representatives of royal authority, although they always professed a whole-hearted respect for the person of the reigning monarch. The colonial authorities, on their side, did not as a rule concern themselves overmuch with São Paulo; partly because it was not part of a Crown captaincy but of one belonging to a *donatário* or lord-proprietor, in the person of the Count of Monsanto, and partly because the region was sparsely populated and economically backward compared with the rich sugar-producing regions of Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, and Pernambuco.

When the officials at Bahia and Rio did have occasion to try and enforce their authority or their orders in São Paulo, they usually failed to do so, except so far as the Paulistas were prepared to obey these instructions for the sake of their own convenience. On occasion, the Paulistas expelled the Jesuits from both Santos and São Paulo, and the padres only gained readmittance to the latter town by compromising over the problem of the freedom of the Amerindians. Nor did the Paulistas send many men to fight against the Dutch during the campaigns of 1630-1654, though they were repeatedly urged by the colonial governors to do so. Similarly, the Paulistas only paid the quint, or tax of the royal fifths on all

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gold mined or washed, to the extent that it suited them. They were more than once accused of obstructing the efforts of the technicians who were brought in to improve mining methods, and of reluctance to allow outsiders to search for new mines. This obstruction was motivated by the fear that if gold or silver was found in abundance, the colonial authorities would have every inducement to bring São Paulo under their direct and effective control.⁷

A disgruntled colonial governor wrote in 1662 that São Paulo was a veritable La Rochelle, since deserters and criminals who took refuge there could never be arrested nor apprehended by the authorities. Thirty years later another exasperated governor-general wrote that the monetary reform of 1691 was enforced without difficulty or opposition in the whole colony, "save only in São Paulo, where they know neither God, nor Law, nor Justice, nor do they obey any order whatsoever." Dom João de Lencastre described the Paulistas in 1700 as being "people of an independent and inconstant character, most of whom are criminals; and above all they are deeply devoted to the freedom in which they have always lived since the creation of their town." Such unflattering observations abound in the official correspondence between Rio, Bahia, and Lisbon. Admittedly there were a few Crown officials and others who defended the loyalty and praised the pioneering spirit of the Paulistas, but the consensus of opinion was strongly hostile to them. It is no wonder that Dampier, Froger, and other foreigners who visited the Brazilian coast in the last decade of the seventeenth century were told that the inhabitants of São Paulo were "a sort of Banditti, or loose people that live under no government."⁸

Despite their truculent independence and their feeling that they were different from and not beholden to the inhabitants of the rest of Brazil, the Paulistas were surprisingly amenable to direct requests or orders from the Crown as distinct from those of its representatives. The desire of their leading men for titular honors and distinctions was remarkable even in an age when this was

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common form in all European countries. The Crown exploited this vanity to the full when soliciting the help of the Paulistas during the prolonged search for gold and silver mines in 1674-1682. These particular attempts failed; but a decade later the Crown explicitly authorized the governor of Rio de Janeiro to tempt the principal Paulistas to join in prospecting for mines by the promise of making them gentlemen of the royal household and knights in the three military orders of Christ, Aviz, and Santiago.⁹ These last orders reached Rio de Janeiro just about the same time as the Paulistas, who were already searching for silver and emeralds in the interior, struck alluvial gold in paying quantities.

The exact date and place of the first really rich strike will probably never be known. The traditional accounts vary, and the official correspondence of the governors of Rio and Bahia only tardily and inadequately reflect the finds of the first ten years. Collating such fragmentary and contradictory accounts as have come down to us, it would seem that gold was found almost simultaneously in different regions of what is now Minas Gerais by different individuals or parties of Paulistas in the years 1693-1695. *Bandeiras* from São Paulo had briefly traversed much of this region in the previous century, and with more thoroughness during the long search for emeralds by Fernão Paes and for silver by Dom Rodrigo de Castel-Blanco in 1674-1682.¹⁰ As mentioned above, these attempts failed; but a leading Paulista, Manuel de Borba Gato, who was implicated in the assassination of Don Rodrigo in the Sumidouro area (August 28, 1682), subsequently took refuge with his followers in the region of the Rio das Velhas, where he discovered alluvial gold in paying quantities. He is alleged to have kept this discovery to himself until the end of the century; but since he was not completely cut off from all contact with São Paulo and the outer world, it is probable that news thereof, in a somewhat garbled form, had filtered through to Rio de Janeiro by 1695. Moreover, the *bandeiras* which traversed the region between the Serra de Mantiqueira and the headwaters of the Rio São Francisco had noticed that the beds and banks of

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many of the rivers and streams which they crossed were similar to those at Paranaguá and elsewhere which produced alluvial gold, although in such small quantities as did not tempt them to try their luck for long in this region where Amerindians formed an easy quarry.

It has been argued that the first gold strikes in the region of the Rio das Velhas were not made by Paulistas but by adventurers from Bahia who had penetrated as far as Sabarábussú by way of the rivers São Francisco, and Rio das Velhas. This is admittedly a possibility, but the weight of evidence seems to me to confirm the traditional priority of the Paulistas, though only by a short head. Both contemporary and contemporaneous accounts usually ascribe the discovery to the Paulistas, even when written by persons who were hostile or unfriendly toward them. One of these Portuguese pioneers recorded in his old age, "there is no doubt that the Paulistas were the first discoverers of this continent of the Mines, and after they had found gold in them, both Europeans and Brazilians joined in the rush." Another pioneer of European origin, who had served in one of the Paulista *bandeiras* in Minas Gerais at the end of the seventeenth century, recalled that some Paulistas, roaming the region of the Rio das Mortes in search of the Cataguazes Indians who wore gold ornaments in their lips and ears, were shown by a local chief the site of the first gold finds in this region.¹¹ However this may have been, the discovery of alluvial gold in the valleys of the Rio das Velhas, Rio das Mortes, and Rio Doce, respectively, occurred at very short intervals in the years 1693-1695.

The scenery of the gold-bearing region of Minas Gerais is now very different from what it was 260 years ago, but the basic geological features are, of course, still the same. The region forms part of a vast plateau, whose most prominent feature is the Serra do Espinhaço, the oldest geological formation in Brazil. This range runs roughly north and south along a line drawn through Ouro Preto and Diamantina, separating the basin of the Rio Doce to the east from that of the Rio São Francisco to the west. It was on

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the flanks of the Serra do Espinhaço and its offshoots that the gold-bearing streams and valleys were chiefly found. These were sometimes in the *chapadas*, a name applied to small elevated plateaus, usually consisting of horizontal deposits and separated by deeply eroded valleys. To gain access to the gold-bearing region, the Paulistas had first to scale the formidable barrier of the Serra da Mantiqueira, in which lies the Pico do Itatiaiossu (8,900 feet), the highest point in Brazil, and then to cross the Campos Gerais which lay between the Mantiqueira and the Espinhaço, and was originally infested by the hostile Cataguazes Indians.

Ever since the first settlement of Minas Gerais, successive generations have burnt the trees and vegetation in order to clear the ground for mining or for agricultural pursuits, which accounts for the desolate appearance of most of the countryside today. The summits of the higher peaks, such as the Itacolomé and Itambé, were presumably as bare then as they are now, but the lower slopes of the hills were probably thickly wooded. This certainly applied to the deeply eroded river valleys, with a soil enriched by millennial deposits of humus, derived from the heavy annual rainfalls between September and April, often accompanied by violent lightning and thunder storms. In many districts the undergrowth that faced the first pioneers was evidently very tangled and thick. One of these men recalled in his old age that it had originally taken four days to go from the mining camp at Villa Rica de Ouro Preto to neighboring Ribeirão do Carmo (later Mariana): "for it took so long in that time because of the huge woods which barred the certainty and brevity of the way; whereas being subsequently frequented by travelers, it has become so short and easy that nowadays they take less than two hours to cover the two brief leagues which separate Villa Rica from the city of Mariana."¹²

The pioneer Paulista prospectors in Minas Gerais first found alluvial gold in the beds of rivers and streams. Deposits of this gold were called *faisqueiras*, because the larger particles gleamed or glittered in the sun; whence the word *faisqueiro* for an

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itinerant prospector or miner of placer gold. When the rivers were in flood and too deep to work, the *faisqueiros* turned their attention to the banks and their immediate vicinity (*taboleiros*) where they often found gold as well. When these deposits were exhausted, or when newcomers found them already being worked by their predecessors, the prospectors went farther afield, and searched for gold in the rifts and clefts of the neighboring hillsides (*grupiaras* or *guapiaras*). All the early gold workings were of the placer variety; and only when the alluvial gold was becoming scarce, did the miners drive tunnels and shafts into the hillsides, as we shall see in Chapter vii.

The original process of washing and panning for gold was of the simplest. The sole instrument required was the *bateia*, a large, shallow, cone-shaped basin, made of wood or metal, which the miner held with both hands. The gravelly subsoil mixed with quartz (*cascalho*) which contained the gold particles was placed in the *bateia* with a quantity of water just sufficient to cover it. The miner then gently rotated the *bateia* in a circular or elliptical motion, tipping out some of the water and *cascalho* at intervals, and allowing the gold to sink to the bottom until it was clearly visible. The *cascalho* was not usually on the surface of the soil, but at varying depths below a layer of sand, earth, or clay. The pits or diggings made in the course of extracting the *cascalho* were called *catas* and many parts of Minas Gerais were soon honeycombed with them.

As the gold deposits became fewer and deeper, the methods of extraction became more complicated in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Troughs and hydraulic machines were employed, and in some cases the bed of the river or stream was exposed by damming the water and artificially diverting the flow into another channel. Contrary to what is often stated, subterranean mining was sometimes carried out in colonial Minas Gerais, but this process was admittedly not a common one. This was partly owing to the friable nature of much of the rocky

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terrain, but mainly for want of expert knowledge. The Portuguese were far behind the Spaniards in mining techniques, and the most extensive underground works in Minas Gerais could not compare with those of Mexico and High Peru. The gold secured by these various methods ranged in color from bright yellow to a rusty gray or black. This latter variety was known as *ouro preto*, and another type of dulled and dirty appearance was called *ouro podre*. The touch of the gold found in Minas Gerais oscillated between $21\frac{1}{2}$ and $22\frac{1}{2}$ carats.¹⁸

When the news of the rich gold strikes finally percolated through to the settled districts of coastal Brazil in the years 1695-1696 there were only two practicable trails by which those who sought the gold diggings of Minas Gerais could reach them. The oldest was the one by which the *bandeiras* had traveled from São Paulo to the upper reaches of the Rio São Francisco, and it was known as the "highway of the Backlands" (*Caminho Geral do Sertão*). It ran by way of the river Paraíba, across the Serra da Mantiqueira to the north side of the Rio Grande, whence it bifurcated to the Rio das Velhas and the Rio Doce. Within a few years, by 1700 at the latest, a feeder route to this trail had been developed from the little port of Paratí, a few days sail below Rio de Janeiro. This trail, the "Caminho Velho" or "old highway" as it was soon called to distinguish it from the more direct "Caminho Novo" which was opened a few years later, ran inland for the distance of a five-day march over difficult country until it joined the original Paulista trail at Pindamonhangaba. These two trails then became a single one which took the traveler about twenty days to cover before he reached the first gold mining camps in the region of the Rio das Mortes. The Paulistas, incidentally, did not usually travel from sunrise to sunset, but only from sunrise to noon, or until two or three o'clock in the afternoon at the latest. The rest of the day was given over to pitching camp, and to hunting in the bush and fishing in the river (if there was one nearby). In this way they usually took a couple of months to travel from

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the town of São Paulo to the gold diggings, whereas the adventurers who made forced marches over the Paratí route averaged three or four weeks.

The other main route, which soon became the most important, ran along the right bank of the Rio São Francisco, which at that time formed the boundary between the captaincies of Bahia and Pernambuco. This river was usually approached from the coast by way of the little port of Cachoeira, center of the tobacco-growing district in the *Reconavo* of the city of Salvador. The Rio São Francisco could also be reached overland from Pernambuco, and even from the interior of the Maranhão by way of the recently opened region of Piauí. Trails from all over the hinterland of the captaincy of Bahia converged on the Rio São Francisco at a ranch called the camp of Matthias Cardozo (*arraial de Matthias Cardozo*), whence the way to the gold diggings ran along the bank of the river for about 160 miles as far as the junction with the Rio das Velhas. The mining camps strung along the Rio das Velhas were soon connected by a network of paths and trails with other similar camps, including the remote outposts established in the forbidding Serro do Frio and part of the valley of the Rio Jequitinhonha.

Although the Cachoeira-Rio São Francisco-Rio das Velhas route was longer than those from Paratí and São Paulo, it afforded on the whole easier going. Cattle ranches were established along much of the length of the Rio São Francisco, often separated from each other by only half a dozen miles. The terrain was far less rugged, and water was more easily available. Cattle and horses could traverse this route with relative ease, whereas the mountain trails from Paratí and São Paulo were in places only practicable for pedestrians, or for exceptionally sure-footed horses and mules.¹⁴

By the middle of 1697, even those who were inclined to be skeptical of the news of the first discoveries had come to realize that there was indeed "gold in them thar hills" on an unprecedented scale. Writing to the Crown in June of that year, Artur

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de Sá, the governor of Rio de Janeiro, reported that the Caeté mines alone "extend in such a fashion along the foot of a mountain range that the miners are led to believe that the gold in that region will last for a great length of time." New and rich workings were discovered almost daily over a wide area, where every river, stream, and brook seemed to contain gold. Inevitably, the Paulista discoverers and pioneers were not left in unchallenged possession of the diggings, and a swarm of adventurers and unemployed from all over the colony converged on the region by way of the routes described above. "Vagabond and base people, for the most part low-class and immoral" as the Governor-General Dom João de Lencastre unflatteringly described them at Bahia.¹⁵

The Jesuit Antonil, in his classic account of those bonanza days in Minas Gerais, described the current of immigration in less jaundiced terms. "Each year a crowd of Portuguese and of foreigners come out in the fleets in order to go to the Mines. From the cities, towns, plantations, and backlands of Brazil, come Whites, Colored, and Blacks, together with many Amerindians employed by the Paulistas. The mixture is of all sorts and conditions of persons: men and women; young and old; poor and rich; nobles and commoners; laymen, clergy, and religious of different orders, many of which have neither house nor convent in Brazil." The same authority adds that no proper control was exercised over these people when they reached the mining area. They lived in anarchic conditions, and obeyed only the local rules that had been evolved to settle the conflicting claims to ground in the gold diggings and river beds. Crimes went unpunished, save by private vengeance, and murders and thefts abounded. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction was likewise at a discount, since the bishops of Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, and Pernambuco disagreed as to their respective spheres of jurisdiction in this unmapped and undemarcated region. Moreover, many of the miners were itinerant, being frequently on the move in search of new and richer strikes.¹⁶

The senior colonial authorities regarded this gold rush with mixed feelings, and their ambivalent attitude was reflected in the

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reactions of the Crown and the Overseas Council at Lisbon. In his above-quoted dispatch of January, 1701, Dom João de Lencastre rejoiced that the latest news from the mines formed a singularly auspicious opening to the new century and gave promise of great wealth and prosperity to the mother country. Nevertheless, he added, there was a grave risk that Brazilian gold would ultimately be of no more use to Portugal than American silver had been to Spain. Gold, on entering the Tagus, might leave the same river soon afterwards to pay for imports from France, England, Holland, and Italy, "so that these countries will have all the profit and we will have all the work." Doubtless, he wrote, the king's advisers were seriously considering this matter, but meanwhile the repercussions in the colony itself were causing grave concern.

The chief danger, he explained, was that the hordes of adventurers who were now swarming into the mining region, "leading a licentious and unchristian life," would speedily transform that district into a "sanctuary for criminals, vagabonds, and malefactors," who could easily imperil the whole of Brazil if they developed the same freedom-loving propensities as the Paulistas. Another and more imminent danger was the fatal attraction exercised by the gold fields on people who otherwise would have contented themselves with cultivating the staple Brazilian crops of sugar and tobacco. Apart from the large white immigration into the mining area, many more Negro servants and slaves accompanied their masters. A shortage of field hands was already being felt in Bahia, Pernambuco, and Rio de Janeiro, "and will soon be felt in Portugal itself if something is not done in time to stop it." Last not least, was the difficulty in collecting the payment of the *quintos*, or royal fifths, from the unruly and uncontrolled miners in such remote and undeveloped a part of the country.¹⁷

Dom João de Lencastre proved a true prophet. Much of the gold that was so laboriously mined in Minas Gerais, quickly found its way to foreign countries, as Antonil and the Overseas Council bewailed in very similar terms ten years later.¹⁸ The adventurers

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who swarmed into the mining region likewise remained for more than a decade outside the effective control of the colonial authorities, despite two extended visits paid to the gold diggings by the governor of Rio de Janeiro in 1700-1702. Had the miners remained united, they might easily have defied effective Crown control for longer; but the outbreak of civil war between the Paulista pioneers and the newcomers of chiefly European origin in 1709, enabled the representatives of the Crown to assert their authority in the following year. Even so, another decade elapsed before the consolidation of Crown control was effected by the suppression of the revolt at Villa Rica. The shortage of Negro field hands continued to plague tobacco and sugar planters for the first half of the eighteenth century, being only eased by the subsequent steep decline in the gold and diamond mining industries. Finally, the problem of the royal fifths was never satisfactorily solved for as long as this hated tax continued to be imposed.

Since the government was unable to exercise any firm control in Minas Gerais itself for more than a decade, the authorities of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro tried to atone for this by limiting the traffic and policing the trails leading to that region, but likewise with little success. The construction of a new and (it was hoped) shorter route to the mining fields from the captaincy of Espirito Santo was begun in 1700; but work was stopped two years later by order of the Crown, whose advisers considered that the fewer the routes leading to the mines, the easier it would be to supervise them.¹⁹ In pursuance of this policy, the closure of the River São Francisco route was decreed by the Crown in February, 1701, despite the fact that most of the essential supplies for the mining camps came in by this way.²⁰ Another restrictive measure proposed by Dom João de Lencastre in 1701, was that nobody should be allowed to go to the mines without a passport signed by the governor-general at Bahia, or by the governors of Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco, and that these passports should only be granted to persons of credit and substance. This measure was in fact

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adopted by the Crown but its enforcement proved to be impracticable.²¹

The folly of these restrictions was pointed out to the Crown more than once. As regards the *caminho velho*, this ran through such rugged and thickly wooded country that the nature-wise Paulistas could evade any guards that were placed there, "even if these were as numerous as the trees of the same woods." The attempt to close the Rio São Francisco route was even more fatuous, for the miners could not live without the meat that they secured by this route. The Paulista officials who were entrusted with confiscating droves of cattle that entered Minas Gerais from the north, coöperated with the ranchers and cowboys in bringing them in, even to the extent of forcing reluctant owners to send supplies. Moreover, slaves, salt, flour, iron tools, and other necessities of life were cheaper to import from Bahia than from São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro; not only because the river route was easier going, but because the southern captaincies barely produced enough for their own consumption. The Bahia ranchers and merchants were equally keen on ignoring this prohibition, since the prices they got for their cattle in Minas Gerais were greatly in excess of anything that they could expect to get in the coastal towns. Oxen which fetched from three to five *oitavas* (drams) of gold a head in these last places, fetched from fifteen to thirty in Minas Gerais. Finally, cattle driven from the remoter backlands to the coast were sometimes more than a year on the road; whereas droves from the middle reaches of the São Francisco could reach Minas Gerais in about a month or six weeks.

Apart from the economic facts of life, the human element involved made nonsense of these paper prohibitions. Both the Paulistas and the *vaqueiros* (cowboys) were such adepts in bushcraft and use of ground, that any one of them who "sought refuge with his musket in the woods could not be prevented by all the armies of Europe from coming and going as he wished." The powerful Paulista leaders and the richer ranchers, with their scores of hired bravoos, armed slaves and hangers-on, behaved like in-

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dependent princelings, "insulting persons of the highest rank, without any regard for human or divine laws." The majority of the newly arrived immigrants from Portugal were also people who would stop at nothing, and most of the ill-paid colonial officials were easily bribed or intimidated. The mining code promulgated in 1702, to which reference is made on p. 52 below, allowed droves of cattle to be driven into the mining region by this route, but rigorously maintained the prohibition on all other forms of transit, trade, and traffic. Under these conditions the closure of this route was never more than a farce, and the authorities at Bahia admitted as much in their correspondence with the Crown.²²

Efforts to limit the number of Negro slaves entering Minas Gerais were equally futile. In January, 1701, the Crown decreed that only two hundred Negro slaves could be imported annually from West Africa via Rio de Janeiro to the mines, and the other slave markets in Brazil were expressly forbidden to sell slaves to the miners. This restriction was relaxed by another decree of March, 1709, but owing to the outcry from the planters, the Crown went into reverse again two years later. The decree of February, 1711 ordained that Negro slaves who were engaged in agricultural labor could not be sold for service in the mines, with the sole exception of those "who by the perversity of their character are congenitally unfitted for work in the sugar mills and fields." The obvious loophole which this concession provided was exploited to the full by the slaveowners, despite the threat of severe punishment for transgressors of the letter and spirit of this law. In 1703 the Crown had instituted an annual import quota of 1,200 African slaves for Rio de Janeiro, 1,300 for Pernambuco, and the balance for Bahia, while maintaining the existing limit of 200 on re-export for Minas Gerais. This law likewise remained largely a dead letter and the quota system was finally abolished in 1715.²³

The high prices given for slaves by the gold miners, settlers, and merchants in Minas Gerais were reflected in the expansion

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of the slave trade with Guinea. The governor of Rio de Janeiro complained in 1703 that the inhabitants of the southern captaincies, being unable to get sufficient slaves from Angola, had for some years past been sending ships from Rio and Santos to trade for slaves on the Guinea coast. These slaves were bought with tobacco, rum, and chiefly gold dust and gold bars, most of which had not paid the royal fifths. He admitted that the only way to stop this flourishing contraband trade was to forbid all navigation between Guinea and the southern Brazilian ports. All efforts to stop the large-scale smuggling of tobacco had failed, although this was a bulky commodity which was very difficult to conceal. Gold, on the other hand, was much more easily hidden, "and despite the most rigorous searches, it will not be possible to prevent people from smuggling as much gold as they wish, owing to the small space occupied by even a considerable quantity thereof."²⁴ Needless to say, the Crown did not endorse this defeatist attitude of Dom Rodrigo da Costa, but the subsequent history of the trade shows that he was not unduly pessimistic.

Much of this contraband commerce in gold and slaves was done with the English and Dutch on the Guinea coast, although the Hollanders often attacked and robbed the Brazilian slavers at sea. On other occasions the masters of slave ships pleaded that they had been forced by pirates to sell slaves against their will, but in many cases collusion was clearly involved. Dutch aggression was sufficiently disturbing for serious consideration to be given to a proposal by the King of Ardra that the Portuguese should build a fortified factory in his territory at Whydah. The Crown at first seemed inclined to accept the suggestion, and some merchants at Bahia offered to build and maintain the fort at their own expense if they were allowed to form a monopolistic slaving company for trade with Guinea. On second thoughts, the Crown rejected this proposal and preferred to seek redress from the Dutch through diplomatic channels.²⁵

In 1711, the Crown, always on the lookout for a pretext to replenish the exchequer, slapped an additional duty on African

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slaves who were allotted for re-export to the mines, those coming from Angola being taxed at a higher rate than those from Guinea. Commenting on this ruling three years later, the governor-general at Bahia pointed out that this valuation was made on a false premise. Experience had shown conclusively that the Sudanese slaves from Guinea were stronger and better workers than the Bantu from Angola, and the former accordingly fetched much higher prices, particularly in Minas Gerais. He therefore decided to amend the law of 1711, by imposing a flat rate of four and a half *milreis* per head on all imported Negro slaves irrespective of their origin, "so as to avoid the deals and deceits which usually occur in such valuations," and the home government accepted this modification.²⁶

This legislation and other similar enactments that I have no space to mention, failed to prevent the influx of all and sundry into Minas Gerais, including thousands of Negro slaves who were badly needed on the coastal plantations. Nothing like it had been seen before and nothing like it was seen again until the California gold rush of 1849. The only effective check on the number which came pouring in was the sterile nature of the soil and the impossibility of providing food for all those who wished to come. One of these pioneers recalled in his old age how some of the early optimists had started out on the month or six-week journey to the mines without carrying any provisions at all.²⁷ Many died of malnutrition or starvation before reaching their destination, and it was not unknown for a starving man to murder his comrade for the sake of a handful of maize. Antonil painted a similar picture when he wrote: "Since the land which yields gold is exceedingly barren of all that is necessary for human life, and the trails to the mines are for the most part equally sterile, it is incredible what the miners suffered in the beginning from want of food supplies, not a few being found dead with a spike of maize in their hand, having no other sustenance."²⁸

In their frantic haste to exploit the existing diggings, or to find new ones, the early pioneers neglected to plant sufficient

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manioc and maize, with the result that they suffered acutely from famine in 1697-1698 and again in 1700-1701. The governor of Rio informed the Crown in May, 1698, that the shortage of foodstuffs was so critical that most of the miners had been forced to abandon their diggings, and were wandering with their slaves in the woods, looking for game, fish, or fruits to eat. On his subsequent visit to the mines, he reported from the Rio das Velhas at the end of November, 1700, that famine had visited the region again, though he hoped for relief in March of the following year with the harvesting of crops that had been planted and the arrival of more cattle from the Rio São Francisco.²⁹ Fantastic prices were paid for food during this struggle for survival. A cat or a little dog sold for 32 drams of gold, an *alqueire* of maize for 30 or 40, and a scrawny chicken for 12. However, it was also admitted that about this time a Negro slave often produced 16 drams of gold as a result of his day's work.³⁰

Conditions improved considerably once the crisis at the turn of the century had been surmounted, although the food supplies of Minas Gerais were never superabundant throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Small farms and ranches were quickly established along the principal trails, and more attention was paid to planting vegetables, maize, and to raising livestock in the neighborhood of the principal mining camps which were slowly turning into townships. Indeed, many people soon found it more profitable to grow food for sale to the miners than to do any mining themselves, since prices remained very high owing to the demand being greater than the available supplies. The early settlers planted mainly maize, pumpkins, beans, and occasionally potatoes. By 1703 they were raising a fair amount of pigs and chickens, "which they sell for a high price to travelers, raising it higher according to the necessity of those who pass by. And this gives rise to the saying that all those who pass the Serra de Mantiqueira leave their conscience either hanging or buried there."³¹

After the tide of immigration was resumed at full flood in

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the opening years of the eighteenth century, it was calculated with a fair degree of probability in 1709 that there were then some thirty thousand people engaged in mining, agricultural, and commercial pursuits in Minas Gerais. Other contemporary estimates range from six to sixty thousand, but Antonil, who gives the figure of thirty thousand, took particular care to get his information from reliable persons who had visited the whole mining region. On the strength of a hyperbolic remark in the *Triunfo Eucharistico* of 1734, where the writer states that "half Portugal" was emigrating to the mines, it has been claimed by several modern authorities that no fewer than 800,000 persons reached Minas Gerais from the mother country between 1705 and 1750.³² This is palpably absurd. Considering the volume of shipping involved in the Brazil trade, and the limited carrying capacity of many of the ships, it is doubtful if more than five or six thousand people ever emigrated from Portugal in a single year—and not all those went to the mines. Probably three or four thousand would be nearer the annual mark in the "rush" years; but even this number was a considerable drain for a small country like Portugal, particularly since the majority were able-bodied men. At any rate, the drain of people emigrating from Minho province was sufficiently alarming to induce the Crown to promulgate a decree in March, 1720, drastically limiting the emigration to Brazil, which thenceforth was only permissible with a government passport. Of course this decree was not always strictly observed; but it may be doubted whether the annual number of emigrants ever exceeded two thousand thereafter.

The earliest mining camps were naturally of the most makeshift description, and even when they began to take on a more permanent form and become embryo townships, the housing elements were very simple. Walls were of crossed sticks and mud, or of poles on end (*pau a pique*), with roofs of palm thatch, leaves, or straw. The next development was dwellings of the wattle-and-daub type with a cover of thatch, but the floor in all cases was of bare earth. As the settlements grew in prosperity and stability,

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the walls became plastered, inside and out, wooden or stone floors were provided, and thatched roofs were replaced by tiled. Verandas and balconies were later refinements, and finally came the best type of colonial house with cedar corner posts and sleepers, tile roofs, and plastered-over bricks. This last type evolved slowly, and even in 1711 there was only a single tiled house in Ouro Preto, which was one of the oldest and most prosperous settlements.³³

Agricultural methods were equally simple, and can be defined as of the fire cum hoe variety. Ploughs were unknown, spades and shovels are rarely mentioned, and the axe, billhook, knife, and hoe were the chief tools employed. The first step was to cut down the trees and brushwood to the extent that the owner of a particular tract of land and his slaves could manage. The vegetation thus felled was left for a few weeks to dry out and then fired. The yield of the subsequent harvest depended largely on the success of this burning. If the whole was reduced to ashes, a good crop was forecast; if, through wet weather, the felled trees were only half burned, a bad one. When the ground had thus been cleared the Negro slaves dibbled it with their hoes and sowed the maize, bean, and other subsistence crops. After some years, when the soil became exhausted, a new felling and burning was made in another place. In other words, the cycle was felling, burning, clearing, planting, and harvesting. A rickety vegetation, the second growth, gradually took the place of the primeval forests and thick woods that originally covered a great part of Minas Gerais.³⁴

The early settlers' domestic animals were largely limited to pigs and chickens, which also fulfilled the functions of scavengers in the absence of any sanitary facilities other than chamberpots. As time went on, ranches of cattle were formed, but for many years the inhabitants of Minas Gerais depended mainly on the importation of meat on the hoof from Bahia and to a lesser extent from São Paulo. Horses were only owned by the wealthiest settlers and officials; and owing to the vile nature of the trails it

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was a considerable time before the use of mules, donkeys, and asses as pack animals became common. In the first decade of the eighteenth century, virtually all goods were transported on the shoulders and heads of Negroes and Amerindians.

The mining region was prospected, occupied, and to a lesser extent, settled with astonishing rapidity. The chief camps at Ribeirão do Carmo, Ouro Preto, and Sabará had become thriving settlements by the end of the century. Catas Altas, Villa do Príncipe, and others too numerous to mention, had followed suit a couple of years later. One of the first indications of permanent settlement was the erection of one or more chapels. These were naturally of the *pau a pique* or wattle-and-daub variety, though they were usually among the first buildings to be graced with a tiled roof. *Vendas*, or small trading shacks, sprang up about the same time; whether these or the chapels came first is a problem similar to that of the chicken and the egg. In any event, conglomerations of neighboring mining camps (*arraiais*) united to form the present towns, which still straggle up hill and down dale, with long winding streets and steep stairways connecting the original nuclei. This loose pattern of town settlement can clearly be seen today in cities such as Ouro Preto, Sabará, and São João d'El Rei, where some of the wards (*bairros*) retain the names of the original settlers, as, for instance, that of Antônio Dias in Ouro Preto.³⁵

The distribution of *datas* or mining allotments was carried out anything but smoothly in the first turbulent years. Rich and powerful miners who had numerous armed slaves were likely to usurp the *datas* of those who had none. As for these luckless wights: "when they were working the *datas* that had been allotted to them, if fortune should happen to give them more gold than it did to their more powerful neighbors, so overweening was ambition that these men, forgetful of their bounden duties, and especially that of Catholics, without fear of God and the justices forcibly expelled the former from their rightful property; or else they went and mined therein against their express wishes." To

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prevent this abuse and to settle other disputes which inevitably arose among the rough crowd of pioneer prospectors, the governor of Rio de Janeiro promulgated a mining code for Minas Gerais in March, 1700. With minor modifications and additions this code was accepted and enacted by the Crown a couple of years later and it remained in force for the rest of the colonial period.³⁶

Under the provisions of this code, the first man who discovered gold in any place had the right to choose the site of the first two *datas*. The third was allotted to the Crown, and the fourth to the Crown's representative or *Guarda-Mór*. These were called *datas inteiras* (complete allotments) and they each measured thirty square *braças*.³⁷ All the other *datas* were distributed by drawing lots, and they were demarcated in proportion to the number of working slaves that each miner employed, on the basis of two square *braças* for each slave. The Crown's *data* was immediately sold to the highest bidder to mine on his own account, the price being credited to the royal exchequer. Once the distribution of *datas* was made, miners could buy, sell, exchange, or amalgamate their holdings by mutual arrangement. Antonil notes that this system led to many strange twists of fortune: "one miner extracting a great deal of gold from a few *braças*, and others a very little gold from many *braças*. And there was a man who for just over 125 ounces sold his *data*, from which the buyer subsequently extracted 224 pounds of gold." The distribution of the *datas* was the responsibility of the superintendent, *Guarda-Mór*, and other Crown officials appointed for the purpose, all of whom received a handsome rake-off for their pains. There were a few districts where *datas* were not officially distributed, and where ownership of a gold digging (or washing) was established simply by prior possession. These were the so-called General Mines of the Ouro Preto district which soon gave their name to the whole region of the Serra do Espinhaço and beyond.³⁸ The district boundaries were, for the most part, vaguely or wholly undelimited, even on paper and such few maps as existed. Nobody had any clear idea of how far the region came under the authority of the

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governor-general at Bahia and how far under the governor of Rio and the southern captaincies.

During his visit to the mining district, Artur de Sá appointed various officials to look after the interests of the Crown in such matters as collecting the royal fifths, auctioning the Crown *datas*, and confiscating contraband goods brought in by the river São Francisco route. Among these officials was the old Paulista pioneer, Manuel de Borba Gato, who earned the hatred of the smugglers, "since he confiscated many of the convoys of goods coming from Bahia, remitting the proceeds in gold to the royal treasury at Rio de Janeiro, as also the proceeds from the sale of Crown mining allotments. The total yield from these sources amounted to more than eight *arrobas* in the time of Borba, who sent them through a certain João Martins, and this was the first gold that the King received from these mines."³⁹

Many fortunes were made—and lost—in those golden days. Generally speaking, the individuals who did best for themselves, derived their wealth not from mining alone, but from a judicious combination of mining, farming, slave trading, and merchandising. This was true of Francisco do Amaral, whom Antonil cites as the richest man in Minas in his day (1709), with a fortune of more than fifty *arrobas* in gold. As with the later California, Australia, South Africa, and Klondyke gold rushes, successful miners would pay any prices that were asked, and they made a point of spending their money extravagantly and ostentatiously. Wrote Antonil: "those who had amassed great wealth from their diggings were led thereby to behave with pride and arrogance. They went about accompanied by troops of matchlock men, ready to execute any violence and to take the greatest and most frightful revenge, without any fear of the law. The gold incited them to gamble lavishly, and heedlessly to squander vast sums on vain luxuries. For instance, they would give one thousand *cruzados* for a Negro trumpeteer; and double that price for a mulata prostitute, in order to indulge with her in continual and scandalous sins."⁴⁰

Nor was it only the laymen who were perverted by the tradi-

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tional *auri sacra fames*. The correspondence of the governors of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro with the Crown contains a litany of complaints concerning the renegade friars and "bad clergymen" (*clerigos maus*) who infested the mining region. They were stigmatized as being among the worst offenders in leading irregular lives, in defrauding the royal fifths, and indulging in contraband trade on a lavish scale. They early spread "the pestiferous doctrine that the defrauding of the royal fifths does not demand the restitution of the amount thus stolen, because of the application of civil punishment when the crime is discovered." Clerical immunity enabled many of these men to escape search at the control points along the trails; one of their favorite devices being to conceal contraband gold dust in hollow wooden saints' images (*santinhos de pau occo*). Ten years after the gold rush had begun, it was alleged in 1705 that not a single priest in Minas Gerais took an active interest in the religious needs of the people. So bad did the situation become, that six years later the Crown took the unprecedented step of banning not only unauthorized friars but the establishment of the religious orders in Minas Gerais. Another set of men who gave the authorities great concern were deserters from the garrisons of Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, and Sacramento. These men left their units and flocked to the mines in such numbers that the security of the seaports was seriously affected.⁴¹

The gold rush to Minas Gerais further unbalanced the already rickety price structure of Portugal's Atlantic empire. The excessively high prices given for both necessities and luxuries in the teeming mining camps and townships meant that merchandise, slaves, and foodstuffs tended to gravitate thither, irrespective of whither they were originally consigned. This resulted in a shortage of these commodities in their normal markets, with a consequent rise in prices, which all efforts at legislation failed effectively to control. Craftsmen and artisans flocked to the mines for more remunerative employment, and this in turn led to an increase in the cost of essential services in the rest of Brazil. In

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January, 1703, for example, the municipal council of São Paulo was informed that "there was a general complaint in the town that tailors and cobblers were charging outrageous prices for their work." Cattle owners in the district refused to supply the local market with meat, preferring to send their beasts for sale in Minas Gerais, where they fetched vastly higher prices despite the poor condition in which they arrived. In September, 1702, the governor at Rio complained that the city was without the requisite stocks of meat and flour, since the people who ordinarily supplied those products had left for Minas Gerais.

Everywhere it was the same or a similar story. In Bahia the immigrants from Portugal who normally filled the posts of overseers, bookkeepers, and cattle rangers were leaving en masse for the mines. New arrivals who were hired scarcely worked longer than the time necessary to earn the purchase price of a horse or some other means which would enable them to leave for the gold fields. The slave exporters of Angola preferred to ship their slaves to Rio de Janeiro, where they would fetch higher prices for re-export to the mines, thus aggravating the acute labor shortage in Bahia and Pernambuco. Worst of all, as Antonil wrote in unconscious fulfillment of Dom João de Lencastre's forecast of 1701: "the greatest part of the gold which is extracted from the mines is carried in gold dust and in coins to foreign kingdoms. The lesser part is that which remains in Portugal and in the cities of Brazil—save what is spent in braids, ornaments, and other fripperies with which the women of ill-fame and the Negresses are plentifully adorned nowadays, much more so than their lady owners."⁴²

Some years elapsed before the Crown and its advisers realized the full import of the gold rush in Minas Gerais, and then they were at first chiefly concerned with trying to check the movement of people to that region and with preventing the decline of the sugar and tobacco plantations. In March, 1701, the Crown still had only the haziest notion of what was going on in the mining districts, and Dom João de Lencastre was asked for a report on the

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conditions prevailing there, so that the Crown could decide on its future policy in the light of the information thus received. The official correspondence at this period reflects greater concern with the working of the tobacco monopoly than with the production of gold in Minas Gerais.⁴³ This concern was also mirrored in Antonil's *Cultura e opulencia* of 1711, which purported to show that the value of the Brazilian gold received in Portugal was far less than that of either sugar or tobacco and was equaled by that of hides. Presumably this estimate took no account of contraband gold; and another chapter of Antonil's book shows that the Crown was becoming seriously worried with the problem of collecting the royal fifths.

When the gold rush started in the late 1690's, the collection of the fifths was confined to four smelting-houses in the São Paulo region, of which only one, that of Taubaté (established in 1695) was anywhere near the newly discovered mines. The miners were supposed to bring their gold dust or nuggets to one of these establishments, where the ore would be cast into bars after deducting a fifth of the value for the Crown. Since compliance with the law was left to the honesty of the individual, and the nearest smelting-house was only reached after a toilsome journey, most of the miners naturally disposed of their gold clandestinely, or else used it to pay for the necessities and the luxuries which they required. Gold dust was used instead of coin for daily purchases, and the man who was finally left with it was theoretically responsible for paying the fifths at a smelting-house or a mint. Goldsmiths, who soon entered the region in considerable numbers, frequently melted gold for interested parties in return for a consideration and in defiance of reiterated laws against this practice. The smelting-houses were not mints, and they were not authorized to buy the melted proceeds. This could only be done by the mint at Lisbon, to which owners were freely permitted to send their smelted gold, and where it was paid for in coin.⁴⁴

As mentioned on page 29 above, a mint had been opened at Bahia in 1694 for the purpose of striking a provincial coinage

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of such reduced value as to discourage its being taken out of Brazil. At the suggestion of the governor of Rio de Janeiro this mint was moved thither in 1699, where it carried out a similar operation before being transferred to Pernambuco for the same purpose a year later. Both the governor of Rio and the city council repeatedly urged the Crown to establish a permanent mint at Rio which would, so they argued, secure a handsome return from collecting the fifths and from seigniorage and brassage. This step was taken in 1702-1703, a smelting-house being established at the same time for the convenience of those who might prefer gold bars to coin. The result did not come up to expectation so far as collecting the fifths was concerned, but the Crown made a handsome profit from the other two sources, as Antonil admitted in 1709.

During his visit to Minas Gerais in 1701-1702, Artur de Sá appointed agents to assess the fifths in various districts and he established inspection stations on the principal trails leading out of the mining region. All persons were prohibited from leaving this area without an official receipt (*guia*) showing the amount of gold that they were carrying, and the smelting-house for which they were bound and where the fifths would be paid. The mining code of 1702 reinforced these provisions, and arrangements were also made for collecting locally the fifths on the gold dust with which purchasers paid for the cattle imported from Bahia and elsewhere. As will be seen from the figures given in Appendix II, these measures met with relatively little success, the yield from the fifths being particularly disappointing. From another source we learn that there were only thirty-six persons who paid the fifths in Minas Gerais in 1701, these contributors including a woman, a priest, and a friar. Only one such payment is recorded in 1702, and though there were eleven next year (including one of 504 drams), not until 1710 did the number of contributors to the fifths reach more than three figures.⁴⁵ The proceeds from the confiscated cattle and the sale of the Crown mining allotments were far more substantial; but, even so, the total income of the

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Crown from all these and other sources was relatively small during the first decade of the eighteenth century, considering that more than thirty thousand people were then living in Minas Gerais. These figures do not, of course, tell the whole story, since we have only a few stray references to the payments made at Rio de Janeiro, and none to those made at São Paulo and Taubaté. In 1704 the closure of the smelting-houses at these places was ordered, their operations being transferred to the little ports of Santos and Paratí. It was hoped that the fifths would be easier to collect at these terminal points, but this expectation was not fulfilled.

An interesting sidelight on the amount of gold leaving Minas Gerais is supplied by some revealing entries in an account book kept by the Reverend Guilherme Pompeu, a Paulista secular priest and a wealthy landowner, who also acted as a moneylender and merchant banker. In January, 1699, for example, he received 7,360 drams (nearly twenty-six kilograms) of gold, to send for payment of the fifths on his own behalf and that of others. This was admittedly an exceptionally large amount; but he was not the only person who was acting in this capacity in his home town of Parnahyba, although he was undoubtedly the most important. From the same source we learn that the usual rate of interest which he charged on personal loans was eight per cent, by no means an excessive rate for his day and generation. Defaulting debtors were rare exceptions, and strict honesty on the part of his clients was the general rule. This is a point particularly worth noticing, since so much of the official correspondence of the period gives the impression that all the inhabitants of Minas Gerais were unscrupulous rascals who would defraud not only the Crown's fiscal agents but their next of kin. The priestly banker had business correspondents in Santos, Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Lisbon, Oporto, and Rome; and he prudently maintained deposit accounts in those places though he himself never left Brazil.⁴⁶

The amount of gold which left Minas Gerais through São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, whether legally or illegally, large as it

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evidently was, still remained far less than that which flowed out by the river São Francisco route to Bahia. As noted on page 45 above, all legislation which attempted either to restrict the use of this road or to close it entirely, failed to achieve any results whatsoever. Apart from the convoys of cattle, slaves, and goods which poured into the mines by the trail which led along the banks of the São Francisco, many miners came down this river from the Rio das Velhas in canoes, either to buy supplies or to leave with their winnings for the city of Salvador and beyond. As early as 1699, an Italian visitor to Salvador reported that "they sent a great number of gold bars to the city, the royal fifths yielding that year as much as twenty million [*cruzados*] to the Crown." The last part of this statement was entirely erroneous, since there was then neither mint nor smelting-house in Bahia, and the gold involved was virtually all contraband. "Your Majesty is losing millions," an anonymous observer informed the Crown six years later, "so much gold is sent to the said city of Bahia that the amount cannot be counted in pounds but in hundredweights."⁴⁷ The local authorities suggested that the best way of stopping this drain was to reestablish the mint in the colonial capital, but this was not done until 1714.

If we cannot estimate even approximately the amount of gold which left Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, and Bahia respectively, such figures as we possess for the amounts received annually at Lisbon are an equally unsafe guide. The latest writer on the subject shows that a steady increase in this gold was recorded during the first decade of the eighteenth century. From 725 kilograms in 1699, it rose to 1,785 kilograms two years later, and to 4,350 kilograms in 1703. This rise continued until the impressive total of 14,500 kilograms was reached in 1712.⁴⁸ In addition there was a parallel stream of contraband gold imported, and this is naturally where the official figures fail us, except for registering occasional seizures and intelligent guesses. Antonil estimated that less than one third of the gold actually mined was declared, and another contemporary authority alleged that less than a tenth

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of such gold eventually found its way to the smelting-houses and the mints.⁴⁹ This last estimate may well be an exaggeration, but it is undeniable that a vast amount of Brazilian gold was soon in circulation, whether lawfully or otherwise, on both sides of the Atlantic. Magalhães Godinho states that by 1703 at the latest the amount of gold secured from Minas Gerais greatly exceeded all the gold that Portugal had hitherto received from Guinea since the foundation of Mina in 1482, or all that Spain had ever received from her American possessions during the whole of the sixteenth century.

In November, 1695, and thus on the eve of the startling discoveries of the next two years, the authorities at Lisbon had viewed the prospect of extensive gold smuggling with enlightened complacency. The Overseas Councillors then observed that even though contraband gold which reached the Tagus did not enrich the royal treasury it did enrich the king's subjects, "who as much and even more than the treasury itself, made kings rich."⁵⁰ When the Crown and its advisers belatedly realized the extent and permanence of the new gold fields, they resolved to change their declared policy of subordinating the interests of the mining industry to those of the sugar and tobacco plantations. The first efforts to channel the flow of gold through the authorized smelters and the mint at Rio de Janeiro having conspicuously failed by the end of the first decade of the eighteenth century, they determined to tighten up the collection of the fifths in Minas Gerais itself. Luckily for them, the unexpected outbreak in 1708 of civil strife between the Paulistas and the later arrivals in that region afforded the Crown both a pretext and an opportunity for effective intervention.

III. PAULISTAS AND EMBOABAS

A GREAT DEAL of ink has been expended by Brazilian writers in discussing the so-called *Guerra dos Emboabas* (War of the Emboabas) which plunged Minas Gerais into civil strife at the end of 1708, but the actual course of events is still far from clear. Such contemporary—or contemporaneous—accounts as have found their way into print, virtually all stem, directly or indirectly, from the opponents of the Paulistas. The sole important exception is the dispatches of the governor of Rio de Janeiro, Dom Fernando Martins Mascarenhas de Lencastre, who favored the Paulistas, but he made only a tardy and fleeting appearance on the scene of action. The historian is faced, therefore, with a dearth of evidence on one side of the contending parties, but the basic reasons for the outbreak are fairly clear.

From the beginning of the gold rush there was little love lost between the pioneer Paulista discoverers and the *forasteiros* ("strangers" or "outsiders") who came in their wake. This was natural enough, for the Paulistas not only felt that they had prior claims as the original discoverers, but their way of life was in some respects more Amerindian than European. Inured to a nomadic existence, speaking Tupí among themselves, and thoroughly at home in the wilds of the *sertão*, they had little enough in common with the newcomers from the coastal ports, whether