

GOLD EXPLOITATION IN THE BAHIA STATE, BRAZIL: A HISTORICAL REVIEW

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The gold exploitation flourished in Bahia state during the 18th. and 19th. Centuries, mainly by garimpos located in Jacobina and Almas hills, in the districts of Jacobina and Rio de Contas. This phase was named Gold Cycle. However, the first half of this century faced the continuous decline of the gold output, while other minerals raised in importance. The gold price increase in the international market led to the creation of government incentives in the 80's, which in turn intensified the exploration effort and investment expenditures. This new cycle presents different features as compared to the former one: (1) gold has been mined from primary deposits; (2) the producers are organized in mining companies and (3) the modern technologies replaced the rudimentary techniques used by garimpeiros. Nevertheless, some remnant garimpos are still producing gold from low grade secondary deposits, using primitive methods and receiving no support from the government.