



Indigenous Struggle at the Heart of Brazil: State Policy, Frontier Expansion, and the Xavante Indians, 1937-1988

Seth Garfield

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Indigenous Struggle at the Heart of Brazil examines the dynamic interplay between the Brazilian government and the Xavante Indians of central Brazil in the context of twentieth-century western frontier expansion and the state's indigenous policy. Offering a window onto Brazilian developmental policy in Amazonia and the subsequent process of indigenous political mobilization, Seth Garfield bridges historical and anthropological approaches to reconsider state formation and ethnic identity in twentieth-century Brazil. Garfield explains how state officials, eager to promote capital accumulation, social harmony, and national security on the western front, sought to delimit indigenous reserves and assimilate native peoples. Yet he also shows that state efforts to celebrate Indians as primordial Brazilians and nationalist icons simultaneously served to underscore and redefine ethnic difference. Garfield explores how various other social actors—elites, missionaries, military officials, intellectuals, international critics, and the Indians themselves—strove to remold this multifaceted project. Paying particular attention to the Xavante's methods of engaging state power after experience with exile, territorial loss, and violence in the "white" world, Garfield describes how they emerged under military rule not as the patriotic Brazilians heralded by state propagandists but as a highly politicized ethnic group clamoring for its constitutional land rights and social entitlements.

Indigenous Struggle at the Heart of Brazil will interest not only historians and anthropologists but also those studying nationbuilding, Brazil, Latin America, comparative frontiers, race, and ethnicity.

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