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A lavoura dos pobres: Tobacco Farming and the Development of Commercial Agriculture in Bahia, 1870–1930*

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Abstract. The social and economic history of North-Eastern Brazil has largely been written as the story of slave-holding plantations. In contrast, this article focuses on the peasant agriculture of tobacco in the state of Bahia. It shows how the small-scale cultivation of tobacco for the European (mainly German) export market had already started well before the end of slavery. Tobacco cultivation gradually expanded to become the most important export product in the first decade of the twentieth century. Apart from its economic significance, the history of Bahian tobacco agriculture throws an interesting light on the social and political relations in the region. Land ownership among the tobacco farmers expanded, but most of them remained locked into ties of dependency to commercial intermediaries and large landowners. On the other hand, the latter's dominant position did not lead to a strong position for tobacco interests in the regional political arena. Finally, the tobacco producers originated in the black (ex-)slave community. This article argues that this specific ethnic make-up played an important role in the organisation of the tobacco sector and its relative neglect by regional and national politicians.

Introduction

> In some places, tobacco is already invading the market and is surpassing sugar … (*Falla* 1874, Antonio Candido da Cruz Machado)
>
> Besides being one of the principal export products of our State, tobacco agriculture provides a means of subsistence for thousands of persons employed in the selection and packing warehouses, and in the cigarette and cigar factories.
> (*Jornal de Noticias*, 33, 9661, 5 June 1912; 'Lavoura de fumo' (V. A. Argollo Ferrão)).
>
> Tobacco is the most widespread crop in Bahia, where, in the interior, almost everybody is planting it.
> (*O Imparcial*, II, 597, 21 April 1920; 'A cultura do fumo em perigo')

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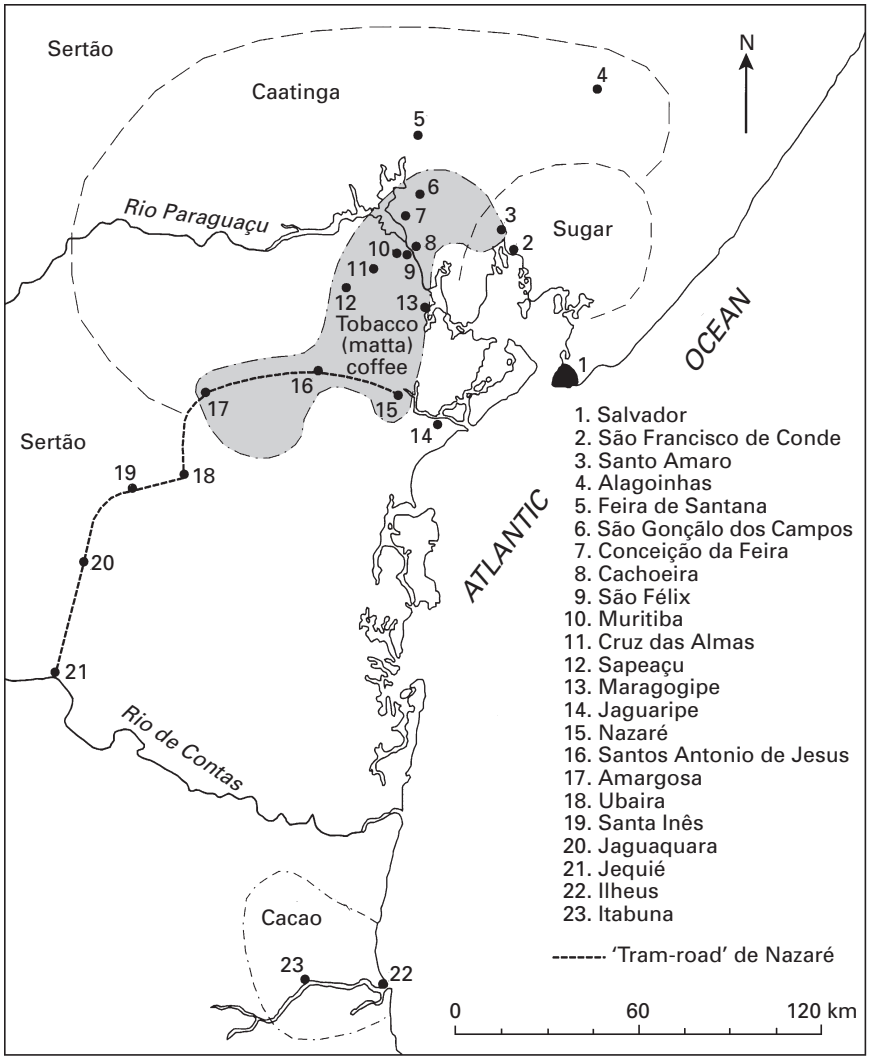
The social and economic history of Bahia in North-Eastern Brazil has tended to focus on what are considered to be the two essential export commodities: sugar and cacao. Sugar, produced on large slave-holding *engenhos* owned by a small and powerful (Portuguese) elite, is considered to be the key product during the colonial period and much of the nineteenth century. With the abolition of slavery and the subsequent crisis of the sugar sector, the focus of politicians and intellectuals shifted to the southern coastal area of the province where, around the port of Ilheus, cacao produced a dramatic – although short-lived – burst of economic dynamism. Cacao became the hope of the Bahian elite, and the subsequent focus of subsequent attention.[1]

In this article we draw attention to another agricultural commodity – tobacco – which played a crucial role in the Bahian economy between 1870 and 1930. Tobacco provided a livelihood for many poor peasant families and employment for many workers in the processing industries. In addition, it was an important source of revenue for the state treasury. In certain periods it was the single most important source of tax income for the government.

Tobacco was already an important product in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when it was closely linked to the slave trade. Rolls of sweet pressed or twisted tobacco (*fumo de corda*) were highly appreciated on the West African coast, and played a crucial role in paying for slaves for the sugar industry. The importance of tobacco for the colonial economy of Bahia has been widely recognised by historians,[2] but the fact that it continued to be an important export product in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries is generally ignored. After a relatively short period of stagnation, from the 1840s onward, tobacco once again became an important export commodity, although the character of the sector had changed. It was now predominantly tobacco leaves (*fumo em folha*) which were exported to European markets. Production was centred on the Recôncavo, the region west of the Bay of All Saints (Bahia de Todos os Santos), which is one of the oldest agricultural regions of Brazil (see map). In the last decades of the nineteenth century Bahia was the second most

[1] See for instance the monumental monograph by Kátia M. de Queirós Mattoso, *Bahia, Século XIX. Uma Província no Império* (Rio de Janeiro, 1992). She writes on page 23; 'Only cacao production and the nascent petrol industry showed some dynamism within the economic panorama of Bahia.' Also Dain Borges, *The Family in Bahia, Brazil, 1870–1945* (Stanford, 1992), p. 23.

[2] Pierre Verger, *O fumo da Bahia e o tráfico dos escravos do gôlfo de Benim* (Salvador, 1966); Stuart Schwarz, 'Plantations and Peripheries, c. 1580–c. 1750', in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *Colonial Brazil* (Cambridge, 1987); Stuart Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery* (Urbana and Chicago, 1992). For a recent study see Jean Baptiste Nardi, *O fumo brasileiro no período colonial. Lavoura, comércio e administração* (São Paulo, 1996).



Main production zones of the principal cash crops, Bahia, c. 1920.

important exporter of tobacco (after Kentucky) to the German tobacco markets of Hamburg and Bremen, and was by far the most important Latin American tobacco exporter. Between 1900 and 1910 tobacco was Bahia's principal export product in terms of state finances, and the crop retained its regional importance far into the twentieth century. In view of this, it is surprising that no serious historical study exists of the tobacco economy of nineteenth and twentieth century Bahia.[3]

[3] For the modern period we have only Jacques Jules Sonneville, 'Os lavradores de fumo: Sapeaçu-BA, 1850–1940', unpubl. MA diss., Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, 1982, and S. F. C. Costa Borba, 'Industrialização e exportação do fumo na

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In this article we aim to remedy this gap. We demonstrate the social and economic importance of tobacco for small-holding peasant families, as well as for the Recôncavo region and Bahia in general. After a brief overview of the role of tobacco in colonial and early nineteenth-century Bahia, we examine the role of tobacco as a regional export product during the period 1870 to 1930. The reason for focusing on this period is twofold. First, it coincides with the rise, expansion, consolidation, and eventual decline of classical capitalist export agriculture in Brazil, as analysed by mainstream scholarly work on Brazil's economic history.[4] As is well known, this view of the cycle of agrarian exports, which Evans has called 'classical dependency', was strongly inspired by the dynamics of the coffee sector.[5] Indeed, coffee has often been used as a metaphor for a series of important economic and social transformations which marked the 1870–1930 period. Whilst this one-sided emphasis on capitalist coffee production in the São Paulo region is unsatisfactory,[6] the period 1870–1930 remains crucial for the study of agricultural development in Brazil.

A second consideration relates to a key aim of this article, which is to assess the relevance of 'free' peasant production in a broad regional context marked by the historical legacy of slave labour. The period under study runs roughly from the start of the decline of slavery (twenty years after the effective ending of the slave trade and on the eve of the passing of the 'law of the free womb' in 1871), through abolition in 1888, to the consolidation and subsequent decline of diversified commercial agriculture in Bahia, and indeed throughout Brazil. The year 1870 did not mark any clearcut or abrupt change in the structure of Bahian agriculture (nor indeed did 1888), but can be seen as the beginning of a dramatic transformation within Bahian society. In this process tobacco became an important regional export crop produced principally by peasant cultivators.

The case of the Bahian tobacco sector not only provides a new

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Bahia, 1870–1930', unpubl. MA diss., Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, 1975. For the early period see B. J. Barickman, *A Bahian counterpoint: Sugar, tobacco, cassava, and slavery in the Recôncavo, 1780–1860* (Stanford, 1998). We thank B. J. Barickman for generously providing us with the relevant chapters in advance of publication.

[4] See for instance Caio Prado Júnior, *História econômica do Brasil* (São Paulo, 1986 [1945]); Celso Furtado, *Formação econômica do Brasil* (São Paulo, 1986 [21st ed.]); João Manuel Cardoso de Mello, *O capitalismo tardio* (São Paulo, 1982).

[5] See Peter Evans, *Dependent Development* (Princeton, 1979).

[6] See for instance Hebe Maria Mattos de Castro, 'Beyond Masters and Slaves: Subsistence Agriculture as a Survival Strategy in Brazil During the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Hispanic American Historical Review* vol. 68 no. 3 (1988), pp. 461–3.

perspective on Bahian history, but may also have some wider theoretical and comparative relevance. Many authors have pointed to the importance of cash crop producing peasantries in bringing about processes of dynamic regional economic development. The importance of small-scale coffee production for regional industrialisation in Antioquia, western Colombia, constitutes a classic example. Other cases can be drawn from coffee producers in Costa Rica, and on a more modest scale, from tobacco producers in Colombia and the Dominican Republic.[7] In Brazil, the importance of commercial small-scale farming has been demonstrated for the rise of regional commerce and industry in Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina. Even in the case of São Paulo it has been shown that small-scale agriculture and the constitution of local and regional networks of petty trade and manufacture have been important for the onset of industrialisation, alongside the conventional large-scale coffee plantations and related commercial and financial interests.[8] This study of the Bahian tobacco sector also draws attention to the complexity and fragmented nature of the export-oriented development that took place in Latin America after 1870. It thus connects to recent scholarship which has stressed the varied nature of historical processes of long-term social and economic change.[9]

[7] For the case of coffee see William Roseberry, Lowell Gudmundson and Mario Samper Kutschbach (eds.), *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America* (Baltimore and London, 1995); for Antioquia see Marco Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia (1850–1970): An Economic, Social and Political History* (Cambridge, 1980). Roger Brew, *El Desarrollo Económico de Antioquia desde la Independencia hasta 1920* (Bogotá, 1977); Kees Koonings and Menno Vellinga, 'Origen y Consolidación de la Burguesía Industrial en Antioquia', in Mario Cerutti and Menno Vellinga (eds.), *Burguesías e Industria en América Latina y Europa Meridional* (Madrid, 1989), pp. 55–104; for Costa Rica see Carolyn Hall, *El café y el desarrollo histórico-geográfico de Costa Rica* (San José, 1976) and Mitchell Seligson, *Peasants of Costa Rica and the Development of Agrarian Capitalism* (Madison, 1980). Lowell Gudmundson, 'Peasant, Farmer, Proletarian: Class Formation in a Smallholder Coffee Economy, 1850–1950', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 69, no. 2 (1989), pp. 221–57. For tobacco the bibliography is much smaller. See Michiel Baud, *Peasants and Tobacco in the Dominican Republic, 1870–1930* (Knoxville, 1995). Also Luis F. Sierra, *El tabaco en la economía colombiana del siglo XIX* (Bogotá, 1971); Jean Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery: A Case Study in Cuban Labour History, 1860–1958* (Cambridge, 1985).

[8] For a number of regional cases in Brazil see Paulo Singer, *Desenvolvimento econômico e evolução urbana* (São Paulo, 1974); for São Paulo see Mauricio Font, *Coffee, Contention, and Change in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Oxford, 1990); for Rio Grande do Sul see Kees Koonings, *Industrialization, Industrialists, and Regional Development in Brazil*; *Rio Grande do Sul in Comparative Perspective* (Amsterdam, 1994); Sandra Pesavento, *RS: Agropecuária Colonial e Industrialização* (Porto Alegre, 1983); Jean Roche, *La colonisation allemande et le Rio Grande do Sul* (Paris, 1959) focuses upon the key role of German immigrant smallholders and traders in Rio Grande do Sul.

[9] For instance see Frederick Cooper et al., *Confronting Historical Paradigms. Peasants, Labor, and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America* (Madison, 1993); Evelyne Huber and Frank Safford (eds.), *Agrarian Structure and Political Power. Landlord and Peasant in the Making of Latin America* (Pittsburgh and London, 1995); Nils

Hence, the kind of questions we address in this article are: How did tobacco agriculture insert itself in an economy dominated by the cultivation of 'big' export crops like sugar, coffee and cacao? What were its special characteristics? What did this mean for the economic and social position of tobacco producers, especially the 'free' peasantry? We start by analysing the development of tobacco agriculture within the wider context of changes in the export economy of Bahia between 1870 and 1930. We subsequently discuss the organisation of tobacco agriculture by poor peasant households, and assess the economic insertion of this peasantry, and the changes in the position of small tobacco cultivators within the broader context of social relations in the Bahian Recôncavo. In the concluding section we make a provisional assessment of the importance of the tobacco sector in the period 1870–1930. These questions may also provide clues about the place of the tobacco sector in the more general political and economic make-up of Bahia. Why has a sector which played such an important role in the region's economic development attracted so little attention? We suggest that part of the answer can be found in the legacy of slavery and slave-based sugar production, which gave the tobacco sector a specific social and ethnic or racial context.

Tobacco production in Bahia up to the nineteenth century

Although tobacco cultivation originated in the colonial period, a clear difference should be drawn between the colonial and what we might call the 'modern' tobacco sector of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the early-colonial period, most of the tobacco was produced on relatively small *fazendas*, where agricultural activities were carried out by a combination of family and slave labour.[10] It was reported in 1739 that during the tobacco harvest:

> Everyone within the family is involved, adults and children, the elderly and youngsters, white and black, free men and slaves, and only the work of twisting and rolling is left to the slaves, not only because it requires greater force but also because they themselves become more soaked in honey than the leaves.[11]

Jacobsen, *Mirages of Transition. The Peruvian Altiplano, 1780–1930* (Berkeley, etc., 1993); David McCreery, *Rural Guatemala, 1760–1940* (Stanford, 1994).

[10] For this early history of tobacco cultivation in Bahia see, Nardi, *O fumo brasileiro*; Verger, *O fumo da Bahia*. Also Catherine Lugar, 'The Portuguese Tobacco Trade and Tobacco Growers of Bahia in the Late Colonial Period', in Dauril Alden and Warren Dean (eds.), *Essays Concerning the Socioeconomic History of Brazil and Portuguese India* (Gainesville, 1977), pp. 26–70.

[11] 'Discurso preliminar, historico, introductivo, com natureza de descripção economica da comarca e cidade da Bahia' [c. 1790], *Annaes da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*,

The tobacco, sweetened with honey and processed into rolls of twisted tobacco, found a high demand in West Africa and served as the basis for the Portuguese slave trade.

From the 1750s until the end of colonial rule in the early 1820s, a new period began, first under the influence of the Pombal reforms and, after 1807, with the partial opening-up of Brazilian trade. More attention was given to the quality of the tobacco and new means of control were established. It is interesting to note that this new policy discriminated against small-scale cultivators, who had ostensibly captured part of the market. Lugar mentions that cultivators who produced only a small amount of tobacco annually, 'the poor, slaves, and miserable people', were forbidden to sell their tobacco directly. They could only do so through registered growers in the vicinity.[12] This indicates that poor, small-scale tobacco growers had gained some importance in the tobacco sector. On the other hand, it shows their dependence on the rural elites for the commercialisation of their product. This dependence would become a prominent feature of the tobacco sector in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In the decades following 1750, Bahian tobacco exports experienced substantial expansion in the wake of the Pombal reforms. Portugal, some other European ports, and especially the West-African Mina coast being the main recipients. But after Brazil's independence in 1822, the character of the trade started to change. The export of *fumo de corda* to the traditional destinations gradually declined.[13] While sugar exports increased after independence (although subject to fluctuations in demand and prices as well as droughts), the tobacco trade suffered from the severance of traditional mercantilist ties with Portugal. Growing pressure to end the slave trade led to the decrease of the traditional exports of *fumo de corda* to the African coasts of Mina and Angola, especially after 1830.[14] In 1835

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vol. 27 (1905), p. 323. See also André João Antonil, *Cultura e opulência do Brasil por suas drogas e minas* (Recife, 1969 [1711]), pp. 107–25.

[12] Lugar, 'The Portugese Tobacco Trade', p. 44.

[13] Barickman, *A Bahian Counterpoint*, chap. 2, provides a comprehensive overview and analysis of trends in the export of Bahian cash crops between 1780 and 1860. For the role of Bahian tobacco in the general revival of Brazilian agricultural exports during the final decades of colonial rule see Dauril Aulden, 'Late Colonial Brazil', in Bethell, *Colonial Brazil*, pp. 310–36, especially pp. 314–18. For the subsequent decline, see Romulo Barreto de Almeida, 'Traços da história econômica da Bahia no último século e meio', *Planejamento*, vol. 4, no. 4 (1977) [reprinted from *Revista Econômica e Finanças*, vol. 4, no. 4, (1952)], pp. 19–55, esp. pp. 32–3.

[14] In 1817, for instance, the quantity of exports of *fumo de corda* was half that of the late eighteenth century. See Johann Baptist von Spix & Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, *Atraves da Bahia: excerptos da obra 'Reise in Brasilien'* (Salvador, 1928 [1820]), table 33.

Miguel Calmon du Pin e Almeida observed that the production of tobacco, 'one of the most valuable of this Province', had entered into a state of protracted decadence from 1824 onwards.[15]

However, by the mid-nineteenth century tobacco exports from Bahia recovered and surpassed the yearly volume attained during the late eighteenth century. Tobacco was now sold abroad as leaves, mainly on the European markets. This change meant a first step towards the incorporation of the Bahian region into the modern world economy. It symbolised the transformation of Bahia from a colonial economy into an economy oriented towards the export of agricultural commodities to the European, especially the German market. During the transformation of the Bahian tobacco economy the logic of production also changed. Unfortunately we do not possess much information about the production sector, and the changes it experienced in the nineteenth century. However, it seems clear that there was a gradual increase in the smaller-scale tobacco farms. In the course of the nineteenth century the larger-scale farms, sometimes linked to the *engenhos*, producing twisted or pressed tobacco for the slave trade, gradually gave way to small-scale cultivators producing leaves for the German market.

This change was directly connected to the demographic and social changes occurring in the region in the course of the nineteenth century. The Recôncavo had always been an important slave-owning area, especially the sugar sector, and it directly felt the consequences of the end of the slave trade in 1850–51 and of abolition in 1888. The region's slave population had never experienced a natural demographic growth, and the slave owners therefore depended on the constant importation of new slaves. The end of the slave trade meant the beginning of the end of the Bahian sugar sector. The influx of new slaves stopped and the simultaneous demand for slaves in the booming southern coffee sector caused a massive outmigration of slaves. The German traveller Von Tschudi wrote about 'a huge migration of Blacks' which reached its peak around 1860.[16] It was estimated that some 24,000 Bahian slaves went south in the three decades after 1851. This led to a rapid decrease in the number of slaves in the Bahia region.

We do not have exact data about the changes which resulted from these

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Poppino places the beginning of the decline at 1815 when 'the prohibition of the slave trade north of the equator caused a drop in shipments from Bahia'; Rollie E. Poppino, *Brazil. The Land and People* (New York, 1973); p. 129.

[15] Miguel Calmon du Pin e Almeida, *Memoria sobre a cultura do tabaco* (Salvador, 1835).

[16] He writes about 'eine gewaltige Rückströming von Negern'; J. J. von Tschudi, *Reisen durch Süd-Amerika*, vol. II (Stuttgart, 1971 [1866–69]), pp. 170–1.

processes of demographic change. Already by around 1800, almost one third of the total population of Bahia consisted of 'free blacks and mulattos'.[17] The data from the 1872 census provide some clues about the situation in the second half of the century. The total provincial population consisted of 1,379,616 persons, of which circa a million were described as non-white. Of this population 167,219 persons or a little over 12 per cent were counted as slaves.[18] The largest part of the provincial population can therefore be considered to be free peasants even before the abolition of slavery. It appears that slave and non-slave labour co-existed in multiple combinations. It would be wrong to suggest that slave labour was confined to plantation agriculture. Barickman convincingly shows how tobacco farmers and even producers of cassava also used slave labour.[19] He points out the paradox that the profitability of tobacco growing allowed tobacco growers to acquire slaves. According to a census undertaken in São Gonçalo dos Campos in 1835, over half of the farmers owned fewer than five slaves; one-third had only one or two slaves. On the other hand, the traditional *senhores de engenho* took advantage of the more or less independent peasant sector which came into existence alongside the sugar plantations. The 'free' peasant producers managed to make a living outside the plantation sector, but also supplemented plantations with extra field hands in times of labour scarcity.[20] As early as the 1820s it was observed that the large landholdings were worked by 'countless captives, sharecroppers, and vagabonds'.[21] The sugar plantations combined slave labour with various forms of free labour of tenants, *agregados* and peasants.

This was a tenuous co-existence, however, which started to work against the sugar plantations in the course of the nineteenth century. The free black population was 'free' in the legal sense, but in the context of slavery and a society based on racial divides they were subject to clear discrimination. The practice of occasionally performing wage labour on the plantations persisted, but the majority of the peasants became independent agricultural producers who worked their *roças* with their families. They can be compared to the Caribbean peasantries described by

[17] Alden, 'Late Colonial Brazil', p. 290.

[18] Data reproduced in Manoel Jesuino Ferreira, *A Provincia da Bahia. Apontamentos* (*Exposição de Philadelphia*) (Rio de Janeiro, 1875), pp. 32–9. Barickman gives much lower figures: between 70,000 and 80,000. See *A Bahian Counterpoint*, chs. 1 and 6.

[19] Barickman, *A Bahian Counterpoint*, chap. 6.

[20] B. J. Barickman, 'Persistence and Decline: Slave Labour and Sugar Production in the Bahian Recôncavo, 1850–1888', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3 (1996), pp. 581–634, esp. pp. 605–15.

[21] José João de Almeida e Arnizau, 'Memoria topographica, historica, commercial e politica da villa da Cachoeira da provincia da Bahia' [1825], *Revista do Instituto Histórico, Politico e Ethnographico do Brasil*, vol. 25 (1862), pp. 127–42, especially p. 134.

Sidney Mintz, who considers these peasantries as a mode of response and resistance to the plantation system.[22] Peasant agriculture enabled the population of free poor to avoid the detested work of the sugar harvest. This led to what the provincial president called in 1867 'the big problem of field labour': a dramatic labour shortage which hampered plantation production.[23] Alongside these labour problems, periods of severe drought (especially in 1857–61 and 1888–91) sealed the fate of the Recôncavo sugar sector, which entered into a severe crisis from the 1860s onwards.

As a result of the decline of the sugar sector, the more or less independent peasant sector expanded further. Part of this peasantry rented land from the plantations. Others became small landowners. Poor families, who combined production for the market with subsistence agriculture, became the backbone of the tobacco sector. For that reason tobacco was generally known in Bahia as the *lavoura dos pobres*, the agriculture of the poor. This characterisation, which persists up to the present, has been seen as an indication that tobacco was of only secondary importance in the agricultural economy of Bahia. But this was certainly not the case. In the next two sections we will show how tobacco developed between 1870 and 1930 into one of the important export products of the province (and after 1889 the state) of Bahia.

Shifting exports from Bahia, 1850–1930

From the mid-nineteenth century onward, the export of tobacco developed as part of a complex and rapidly changing outward-oriented economy in which the capital city, Salvador, was the nodal point (see map). Contrary to the view held by some historians, Barickman stresses the abundance of land in the province of Bahia, even in the most densely

[22] Sidney W. Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (Chicago, 1974); pp. 132–3; 'Slavery and the Rise of Peasantries', *Historical Reflections*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1979), pp. 213–42; 'From Plantations to Peasantries in the Caribbean', in Sidney W. Mintz and Sally Price (eds.), *Caribbean Contours* (Baltimore and London, 1985), pp. 127–53. Also: Angel G. Quintero Rivera, 'The Rural–Urban Dichotomy in the Formation of Puerto Rico's cultural identity', *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids/New West Indian guide*, vol. 61, no. 3/4 (1978), pp. 127–44 and Michiel Baud, 'A Colonial Counter Economy: Tobacco Production on Española, 1500–1870', *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids/New West Indian guide*, vol. 65, no. 1/2 (1991); pp. 27–49. Compare also the observation in the report of the Imperial Bahian Institute of Agriculture in 1871: these peasants 'prefer any other crop [to sugar cane]', cited in Barickman, 'Persistence and Decline', p. 621.

[23] *Relatório* João Ferreira de Moura, 1867, p. 95. (In this paper, we refer to the yearly reports (*mensagem*, *falla*, *relatório*, *exposição*, etc.) rendered to the legislature by the provincial president or state governor by stating only the president's or governor's name and the year reported.) See also B. J. Barickman, '"A Bit of Land, which they call *Roça*"': Slave Provision Grounds in the Bahian Recôncavo, 1780–1860', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 74, no. 4 (1994), pp. 649–87.

Table 1. *Share of sugar, tobacco, coffee, cacao in the total value of Bahian exports, selected years from 1851–1887 (percentages)*

Year	Sugar	Tobacco	Coffee	Cacao	Total exports (thousand milreis)
1850/51	70	13	5	—[a]	9,854
1855/56	49	13	8	1	12,860
1860/61	44	18	12	2	8,443
1865/66	37	20	9	1	19,248
1870/71	39	29	6	2	18,182
1875/76	20	41	23	2	15,038
1880/81	42	22	15	6	15,008

[a]—, Less than 0.5 per cent.

Sources: Elaboration of *A inserção da Bahia na evolução nacional. 1a. etapa: 1850–1889* (statistical annex), p. 101; *Mensagem apresentada à Assembléa Geral Legislativa* (1903), pp. 49–52; *A inserção da Bahia, 2a. etapa: 1890–1930* (1980), pp. 121–5.

populated area around the bay.[24] The open land frontier allowed for the rapid expansion of new agricultural sectors in the second half of the nineteenth century. Statistics on the main export crops of Bahia – sugar, tobacco, coffee, cacao – confirm this general tendency. They show the decline of sugar and the rise and consolidation of tobacco, coffee and cacao as the mainstay of the Bahian economy in the period 1870–1930.[25] Between 1850 (on the eve of the ending of the slave trade) and 1888 (the abolition of slavery) the volume of sugar exports clearly declined. This was especially marked during the years of drought at the end of the 1850s. At the same time, tobacco and coffee exports increased. Cacao entered the scene, but only became an important export product towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The dramatic shift towards the new export crops occurred after 1889, as can be seen in Table 2. Structural weaknesses, related to the lack of technological innovation and the dependence on slave labour, in combination with the devastating drought that accompanied the transition to free labour and the change from monarchy to republic in Bahia, dealt the sugar estates a heavy blow around 1890. While in 1881, more than 47 million kilos of sugar were exported, in 1892 only 2.2 million kilos were sold abroad. Although this decrease may have been compensated, to a certain extent, by increasing sales of Bahian sugar to other parts of Brazil, there is no doubt that the volume of sugar production decreased, while

[24] Barickman, *A Bahian Counterpoint*, chap. 5.

[25] The data on the value of *exports* also serve as a useful proxy to measure the relative overall importance of these crops within the Bahian economy, given the outward orientation of commercial agriculture in Bahia and Brazil as a whole. Crops and products – such as cigars – were also sold within Brazil, but exact data are scarce. See *A inserção da Bahia na evolução nacional, 1a. etapa: 1850–1889* (anexo estatístico) (Salvador, 1978). Data on volumes of *harvests* of the major cash crops are on pp. 25–30.

Table 2. *Share of sugar, tobacco, coffee, cacao in the total value of Bahian exports, selected years from 1890–1930 (percentages)*

Year	Sugar	Tobacco	Coffee	Cacao	Total exports (thousand milreis)
1890	—	11	54	13	11,393
1895	—[a]	23	56	14	31,012
1900	2	44	13	27	58,208
1905	6	19	7	19	46,076
1910	5	23	7	20	67,308
1915	6	15	2	36	102,199
1920	4	22	5	33	145,403
1925	4	23	17	31	281,085
1930	—	29	13	25	205,951

[a]—, less than 0.5 per cent.

Sources: Elaboration of official statistics compiled in *Relatorios da Associação Comercial* (1890–1930); *Mensagem apresentada à Assembléa Geral Legislativa* (1903), pp. 49–52; *A inserção da Bahia, 2a. etapa: 1890–1930* (1980), pp. 121–5.

tobacco and coffee production increased.[26] Table 2 shows that, after abolition and throughout the Old Republic (1889–1930), the share of sugar rarely exceeded the five per cent mark.

Tobacco and cacao emerged as the two leading export crops, especially after 1900, when Bahian coffee exports started to decline. The cacao boom was located in the Ilheus–Itabuna enclave, 200 km south of Salvador. Tobacco developed as the principal export crop of the Recôncavo.[27] Tobacco exports peaked between 1900 and 1910, but throughout the entire period, tobacco retained its importance despite considerable fluctuations in volume and prices from one year to another.

Let us take a brief look at the principal factors affecting the cultivation of sugar, cacao and coffee, before turning to the implications of the tobacco sector for the economy of the Recôncavo.

Sugar

The decline and eventual abolition of slavery was the single most important factor undermining the position of sugar. The main sugar-

[26] *A inserção da Bahia, 1a. etapa* (anexo estatístico), p. 101. We also used the export statistics provided by the yearly *Relatorios da Associação Comercial da Bahia*, 1898–1931; *Mensagem*, S. Vieira, 1903, pp. 49–52; *A inserção da Bahia na evolução nacional, 2a. etapa: 1890–1930* (Salvador, 1980), pp. 121–5. Unfortunately, statistics on sugar are lacking for the crucial 1880s in the *fallas* and *mensagems* of the time.

[27] Other less important export products during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth were cotton, leather and hides, diamonds, *piaçaba* palm fibres, coconuts (*coquilhos*) and *aguardente*. See *A inserção da Bahia, 1a. etapa* (anexo estatístico); *A inserção da Bahia, 2a. etapa*, pp. 121–5; see also the *Mappas* of the main export products listed in the yearly *Relatorios da Associação Commercial da Bahia* of the period.

producing area was that part of the Recôncavo to the north of the Bahia de Todos os Santos, upon the town of Santo Amaro. As shown by Barickman, the difficulties of labour supply on the *engenhos* of the northern Recôncavo maintained sugar's dependence on slave labour until abolition in 1888.[28] This stood in notable contrast to the situation in Pernambuco, where a more gradual shift to (abundant) free labour attenuated the ending of the slave regime.[29] The dependence on slave labour explains why the abolition of slavery had such devastating consequences for Bahian sugar production. Contemporary observers in Bahia also mentioned other factors such as the adverse effects of the war against Paraguay (1864–1870), and the devastating effects of a '*molestia devastadora*', an 'unknown' plague which decimated the sugar cane harvests.[30] At the end of the 1870s, the provincial president singled out deficient infrastructure and the lack of technological innovations as explaining the stagnation of the sugar economy.[31]

Barickman also notes that given the nature of the soil and the heavy capital outlays in slaves and machinery (a number of *engenhos* were equipped with steam engines during the second half of the nineteenth century), the large sugar planters of the northern Recôncavo had no alternative to planting sugar.[32] Given the downward trend of sugar prices, it may well be that the large outlay of wages required by a shift to free labour was beyond the financial capacities of the northern Recôncavo sugar mills. In his report to the provincial Assembly in 1879, the provincial president, Antonio de Araujo de Aragão Bulcão, referred to the growing problem of obtaining field labour for the sugar cane plantations:

> I still think that we can obtain labourers if only they were well paid. But since the agriculture is so indebted with short-term obligations and under the pressure of large interest payments, obtaining very little profit from the yearly harvests compared with the large amounts of invested capital, how can it afford to pay its workers well?[33]

The regional authorities attempted to remedy the situation by setting up government-controlled central sugar-mills. They also tried to encourage European immigration, imitating successful immigration schemes in São

[28] Barickman, 'Persistence and Decline'; *Falla*, A. Ferreira Espinheira, 1889, pp. 156–62; *Mensagem*, J. M. Rodrigues Lima, 1894, p. 10.
[29] Barickman, 'Persistence and Decline', pp. 617–18.
[30] See *Relatorio da Associação Commercial*, 1870, doc. 7, p. 53; also Barickman, 'Persistence and Decline', p. 592.
[31] Cf. *Falla*, A. de Araujo de Aragão Bulcão, 1879, pp. 66–7. The problem of the *falta de braços* was merely mentioned as one of the problems, especifically in relation to the law of the Free Womb, enacted in 1871. This law, which freed children of slave women, reduced the number of slaves available to the sugar estates (*ibid.*, p. 68).
[32] Barickman, 'Persistence and Decline', p. 592.
[33] *Falla*, A. de Araujo de Aragão Bulcão, 1879, p. 68.

Paulo and southern Brazil. Immigration to Bahia never got off the ground, however, as European settlers were hardly attracted by the arduous labour in the canefields. In addition, the provincial government and the Instituto Imperial Bahiana de Agricultura, charged with setting up immigration, lacked the necessary resources.

As a result of both the financial weakness of the sector and the alternatives open to the poor free population, large-scale *engenhos* in Bahia were unable to shift to wage labour.[34] Throughout the Old Republic, Bahian sugar never recovered from the blows of the late 1880s, despite supportive measures by the state government such as financial measures and tax exemptions. Only occasionally, as during the First World War and in some years during the 1920s, did sugar production experience a slight increase, but the *lavoura condemnada*, the 'condemned crop' as a local newspaper called it, never returned to its mid-nineteenth century level.[35]

Cacao

Cacao was probably introduced in Bahia sometime during the eighteenth century, but its significance for the Bahian economy only increased after 1880. In the early 1900s the production of cacao boomed and it became the leading export product of the state, as well as an important source of state revenue.[36] For a short period, between 1905 and 1910, Bahia became the world's largest cacao exporting region.

During its formative phase, in the final decades of the nineteenth century, cacao cultivation was a clear frontier activity.[37] Small-scale pioneers tried their luck, but had to deal with ruthless land speculators in a climate of violence and lawlessness. After 1900, the 'cacao society' was consolidated under the dominance of larger scale planters and traders, constituting a class of *coronéis*, political bosses, landowners and urban commercial entrepreneurs, who were based in the town of Ilheus. Towards the 1920s, large-scale commercial interests, many of foreign

[34] Barickman, 'Persistence and Decline', pp. 623–8. For a comparative perspective see Rebecca Scott, 'Defining the Boundaries of Freedom in the World of Cane: Cuba, Brazil, and Louisiana after Emancipation', *American Historical Review*, vol. 99, no. 1 (Feb. 1994), pp. 70–102, and Michiel Baud, 'Sugar and Unfree Labour: Reflections on Labour Control in the Dominican Republic, 1870–1935', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2 (Jan. 1992), pp. 301–25.

[35] Barreto de Almeida, 'Traços da história econômica', pp. 31–2. The quote is from *A Bahia*, vol. 2, no. 1871 (11 March 1902), 'A lavoura condemnada'.

[36] Gustavo Falcôn, *Os coronéis do cacau* (Salvador, 1995), pp. 39–40. *A inserção da Bahia, 2a. etapa*, pp. 77–8.

[37] The cacao sector has been studied by Mary Ann Mahony. See for instance '"The Cleanest, Softest, and Most Profitable Crop in Brazil": Cacao in the Bahian Economy, 1789–1920', Paper for the 1997 Conference of the Latin American Studies Association (Guadalajara, April 1997).

origin, increasingly dominated the cacao economy. Land concentration increased, and cacao production increasingly took the form of wage labour or sharecropping.[38] Only after 1930, in the wake of the Great Depression, did the cacao boom come to a gradual end.

The cacao boom had limited effects on the rural economy of the Recôncavo, but for the city of Salvador it was an important product. In fact, the expansion of cacao cultivation created new opportunities for trading and financial enterprises in Salvador. These firms, which often had subsidiaries in Ilheus, were very active in financing the acquisition of new lands on the cacao frontier, and in the cultivation and marketing of the crop itself.[39] In addition, all cacao shipments passed through the port of Salvador, since Ilheus lacked a port for ocean-going vessels.[40] The taxation of exports was the main source of revenue for the state government, both before and after 1889. Cacao was taxed seriously from 1888 onwards, with a seven per cent levy on the official export value. In 1892, this levy was increased to 14 per cent, with some additional (small) charges.[41] As we shall see below, during the Old Republic cacao and tobacco combined accounted for about two-thirds of total export revenue obtained by the state treasury.

Coffee

The third crop which gained importance in the last decades of the nineteenth century was coffee. The cultivation and exportation of coffee and tobacco were to a certain extent closely linked in the Recôncavo. Between 1870 and 1900, the two crops were of equal importance in Bahia (cf. Tables 1 and 2, above). Coffee had been regularly exported from Bahia since 1770, and maintained a certain importance throughout the nineteenth century.[42] Coffee and tobacco possessed characteristics which made them attractive to small-scale rural producers. This was especially true in the more elevated and sandier soils of the western Recôncavo.

Coffee was suitable for cultivation by small and mostly poor peasant households, but not exclusively so. Coffee is a perennial crop and, unlike tobacco, the coffee tree requires three or four years to start producing. The stagnation of the sugar economy drove some sugar planters in

[38] Falcôn, *Os coronéis do cacau*.
[39] *A inserção da Bahia*, *2a. etapa*, pp. 77–88, 193–7.
[40] Falcôn, *Os coronéis do cacau*, p. 44.
[41] *Mensagem*, J. J. Seabra, 1922, p. 121.
[42] See Alden, 'Late Colonial Brazil', pp. 327–8. Coffee was also introduced in southern Bahia towards the end of the eighteenth century; see João Antonio de Sampaio Vianna, 'Breve noticia da primeira planta de café que houve na Comarca de Caravellas ao Sul da Bahia', *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográphico Brasileiro* vol. 5 (1847), pp. 77–9. Coffee was subsequently introduced in the German/Swiss slave-owning settlements near Caravelas. Yet later, coffee acquired some importance in the mining region of the Chapada Diamantina, around the town of Lençôes; see *A inserção da Bahia*, *1a. etapa*.

municipalities like Cachoeira, Maragogipe and Nazaré to diversify into this product.[43] This may be the principal reason why coffee became associated with the somewhat more market-oriented attitude of larger-scale cultivators. Nevertheless, coffee in the Recôncavo also developed into a cash crop for market-oriented peasant households. On the hillsides of the Nazaré inlands, for instance, coffee cultivation was carried out 'not only by a large number of small farmers, but also by important estates from where perfectly treated coffee enters the trade'.[44] It is not clear to what extent coffee and tobacco were grown by the same producers. On the larger estates of the western Recôncavo, planters (using slave labour on a modest scale until 1888), were reported to combine sugar, coffee, tobacco, maize and manioc.[45]

After the international price slump of 1906, coffee lost some of its importance both for rural producers and for the overall economy of Bahia. Many small-scale cultivators abandoned coffee in favour of the more secure tobacco and manioc.[46] Coffee lost importance as an export crop and was increasingly produced for the regional market of Bahia. Probably for this reason, the Bahian merchant class opposed the covenant of Taubaté, in 1906, which secured federal financial support for the large-scale coffee producers in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais.[47] Nevertheless, coffee retained a presence within the agricultural economy of the western Recôncavo communities, particularly in the region served by the 'Tram-Road' of Nazaré (see below). Up to the early 1930s towns along this railway, such as Santo Antonio de Jesus, Amargosa, Jaguaquara and Jequié, produced about one third of all the coffee produced in the state. From 1930 onwards, coffee lost its place among the principal cash crops of Bahia and, despite recommendations to improve coffee cultivation in the state, it never regained its erstwhile importance within the agricultural sector of Bahia.[48]

[43] Barickman, 'Persistence and Decline', pp. 618ff.
[44] *Mensagem*, J. M. Rodrigues Lima, 1894, 'Tram-Road de Nazareth', p. 3.
[45] Barickman, 'Persistence and Decline', p. 622.
[46] *Mensagem*, S. Vieira, 1903, p. 53.
[47] On the decline of Bahian coffee exports see *Relatorio da Associação Commercial*, 1906, pp. 366–7. On the position of the Associação Comercial da Bahia on the Taubaté covenant see *ibid.*, pp. 73ff.
[48] Report by Joaquim Bonilho de Toledo to the Secretary of Agriculture, Dr Ignacio Tosta Filho, 10 Aug. 1931; Report by Victor Andre Argollo Ferrão to the members of the executive board of the Conselho Nacional do Café, 11 Aug. 1931 (Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia, hereafter APEB, section SAR-SECAGR, caixa 2388, maço 187, doc. 728).

The changing rural economy of the Recôncavo

The export-oriented agricultural development of the Bahian countryside was accompanied by a gradual diversification of food crop agriculture that was geared towards subsistence and local and regional markets. The gradual increase in agricultural prosperity brought in its wake the expansion of trade, manufacture, infrastructure and urbanisation. Bahia was eminently an agricultural province. Although the city of Salvador was without doubt the administrative, commercial and financial centre, the region's economy was quite evenly balanced around the turn of the century. The agricultural economy gave rise to a number of regional towns. Towns in the upper Recôncavo such as Cachoeira, its twin town São Félix, Feira de Santana, Cruz das Almas, Maragogipe, and Nazaré experienced moderate growth in this period. They were regional centres and contained warehouses and small manufacturing enterprises. For instance, Cachoeira had a number of warehouses in the 1890s, where tobacco leaves were prepared for exportation. The town also possessed sawmills which produced cigar boxes.

Infrastructure was of the utmost importance for the development of the commercial economy of the region. Traversed as it was by water and rivers, fluvial and maritime transport was important. Export crops were transported on small boats over the Paraguaçu and other rivers.[49] They were transferred to larger steamboats in the small port towns on the south side of the Bay, the most important of which was Maragogipe. The absence of transport delayed the development of commercial agriculture in higher regions without river transport. These regions had to wait until they were opened up by new infrastructural projects such as railways. This can be illustrated by the development of the municipality of Nazaré and its hinterland. Here the construction of a narrow-gauge railway was begun in 1871, the Estrada de Ferro (or 'Tram-Road') de Nazareth, to serve the expansion of commercial agriculture in this region on the south-western shore of the Bahia de Todos os Santos.[50]

[49] See for instance a 1862 report on Cachoeira: 'the flourishing agriculture and commerce that this town sustains each day with the capital (Salvador), through frequent coastal shipping in large vessels'. José João de Almeida e Arnizau, 'Memoria topographica, historica, commercial e politica da villa da Cachoeira da provincia da Bahia', *Revista do Instituto Histórico, Politico e Ethnographico do Brasil*, vol. 25 (1862), pp. 127–42, esp. p. 129.

[50] The following description is based on observations and statistics contained in various yearly reports by the state governor, including reports sent in by the railroad officers: *Mensagem*, J. M. Rodrigues Lima, 1893; *idem*, 1894, pp. 2–5, 12; *Mensagem*, J. J. Seabra, 1913, p. 64; *idem*, 1915, p. 138; *Exposição*, J. J. Seabra, 1916, p. 56; see for the complaints the *Diário de Notícias*, 18 Jan. 1920 and 26 March 1920. For more general

Table 3. *Volume of coffee, tobacco and sugar transported by the 'Tram-Road' de Nazareth, in selected years (kg)*

Year	Coffee	Tobacco	Sugar
1891	2,205,903	1,757,955	2,186,766
1893	10,813,998	4,666,565	3,046,745
1912	13,377,380	9,930,479	1,613,060
1915	13,299,651	8,958,018	1,394,885

Sources: Various reports on the 'Tram-Road' in *Mensagem* Joaquim Leal Fereira, 1892; *Mensagem* Joaquim Manuel Rodrigues Lima, 1893; *idem*, 1894, pp. 2–5, 12; *Mensagem*, J. J. Seabra, 1913, p. 64; *idem*, 1915, p. 138; *Exposição*, J. J. Seabra, 1916, p. 56.

The 'Tram-Road' was founded in 1871 as a society of local investors, with the provincial government of Bahia putting up a guarantee for the invested capital. In 1890, the railroad had an extension of just 34 km, from the town of Nazaré westward to Santo Antônio de Jesus. Subsequent extension during the first two decades of the twentieth century was rapid. Moving westward and southward, the 'Tram-Road' reached Amargosa in 1892, Ubaíra in 1906, Santa Inês in 1908, and Jaguaquara in 1914. During the 1920s the railway was further extended to the town of Jequié, acquiring a total length of about 250 km.[51]

The construction of the Nazaré railway had immediate results. Twenty years after its construction the railway was praised as 'the first railway in the State of Bahia that will exist by its own resources'.[52] In the 1890s, the prosperity of the region was commented upon. The 'Tram-Road' cut through hilly and fertile woodlands, which were being opened up for the cultivation of coffee, sugar, tobacco, and various foodcrops. A government report observed in 1894:

> As it crosses a zone of magnificent fertility for tobacco, cereals and especially for the economic and very lucrative cultivation of coffee, even if one takes into account the hypothetical assumption of a decrease in the present prices of these products, everything makes us believe that this railroad will never discredit its well-deserved title of *primus inter pares*.[53]

The fertile river valleys were suitable for the cultivation of sugar cane. The plateaux (*planaltos*) were used for tobacco growing, and the hill-sides for coffee production. The railroad stimulated a process of steady agricultural expansion based on coffee and tobacco (see Table 3). Sugar

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accounts of the region's infrastructure and the growth of railroad transportation see Mattoso, *Bahia. Século XIX*, 468–86; also see Borges, *The Family in Bahia*, pp. 21–3.

[51] *Diário Oficial* (*edição especial do Centenário*) (1923), pp. 135–6; *Quatro Séculos de História da Bahia* (Salvador, 1949), pp. 186–7.

[52] 'Relatorio Tram-Road de Nazareth', in *Mensagem* and *Relatorio*, J. M. Rodrigues Lima, 1893, p. 2.

[53] *Mensagem*, J. M. Rodrigues Lima, 1894, p. 40.

production fell behind, despite the initial expectations that the new opportunities of this frontier area would revive sugar prosperity in Bahia. Coffee and tobacco agriculture soared. Tobacco in particular attracted many farmers. A letter from the railroad company to the provincial president in 1886 stated: 'The easy cultivation of [tobacco] and the short timespan between planting and harvest, together with the abundance of land suitable for this agriculture, constantly attract national immigration from the sertão to these places.'[54] Besides serving as the outlet of two major cash crops, the railroad transported locally-produced food crops, leather and hides, imported goods such as dried meat (*charque*), codfish (*bacalhau*), wheat flour, ironware, textiles, salt, building materials, as well as a considerable number of first and second class passengers and livestock.[55] The railroad transformed the Nazaré region into an important commercial centre of the Bahian economy.

The railroad fostered a sense of optimism among contemporary observers about the social and economic future of the region. The region prospered and the people were reported to be 'healthy and hardworking, all being satisfied with their lot'. The report continued:

> [I]t is also noteworthy that a large part of the population, supported by the fertility of the land, has managed to secure a certain measure of independence and well-being that immediately impresses the traveller who passes through these places.[56]

A clear undertone of optimism is evident here. The usual references to peasant producers as 'poor' and 'humble' – common for the traditional tobacco-cultivating regions – were notably absent in these reports.

Many of the traditional means of communication, especially maritime ones, became obsolete with the development of new railroad and road systems in the first decades of the twentieth century. This resulted in the restructuring of the regional economy. An important colonial market centre like Cachoeira, which continued to rely on river transport, lost part of its regional function, while its twin city São Félix became the site of a bustling tobacco manufacturing sector in the late nineteenth century.[57] In

[54] Letter of H. Matheo to Governor Aurelio Ferreira Espinheira on 'prolongamento de estrada de ferro Tramroad de Nazareth', 3 Aug. 1886 (APEB, Presidencia da Provincia, serie: viação, maço 4980).

[55] *Exposição*, J. J. Seabra, 1916, p. 62.

[56] *Mensagem*, J. M. Rodrigues Lima, 1894, p. 4.

[57] We lack data to explain why the linking of Cachoeira to the railroad – crossing the Paraguaçu by an iron bridge to São Félix – did not have a revitalising effect on local trade in this town. One hypothesis is that the new tobacco trading and processing firms in São Félix could avoid the services of Cachoeira shipping companies once the railroad was there. The line had stations at both ends of the bridge, but the São Félix station gives the impression of greater prominence, at least as far as the present-day visitor is concerned.

1917 it was observed that Cachoeira was decaying, 'because of the impoverishment of its commerce, the disappearance of its industries and the voluntary emigration of many of its most wealthy sons'.[58]

But it was not only the old regional centres which suffered from the vagaries of export-oriented growth, as is clear in the case of the 'Tram-Road' of Nazaré. It was built with technology that was not equal to the region's climate. It was a one-track, small-gauge railroad, which severely limited its capacity and made it prone to accidents and delays. In 1914 for instance, the railroad was badly damaged by floods, causing the suspension of traffic for seven months along more than 100 km of track.[59] In addition, everything depended on the efficient and rapid shipment of the commodities loaded on the wharfs of Nazaré. This combination of factors conspired against the success of the railroad. After the initial enthusiasm had subsided and the alternative of more flexible road transportation became available, the railroad was increasingly criticised and gradually lost its regional function. Early in the year 1920, complaints were recorded concerning the high freight tariffs and the deficient performance of the 'Tram-Road'. A 'concerned' observer wrote in the *Diario de Notícias* that merchandise was waiting for months to be transported on the railway: 'We know of tobacco traders who saw their merchandise decaying at the Stations, without even the most simple measure being taken to prevent such shameful negligence.'[60]

In 1925 it was reported that the situation in the agrarian region around Nazaré had become 'unbearable'.[61] After 1930, the 'Tram-Road' entered a process of gradual decay. Although in 1941 a northward extension was completed to the port of São Roque, almost at the point where the Paraguaçu river enters the Bahia de Todos os Santos, insufficient maintenance during the years of the Second World War left the railway in disrepair. Post-war efforts to revitalise the 'Tram-Road' failed.[62] At present, the only traces of the railway between Nazaré and Santo Antonio de Jesus are parts of a narrow track from which the rails have long since been removed, and which is barely visible from the road which connects the sleepy river port of Nazaré to the Recôncavo interior.

[58] *O Norte* (Cachoeira), vol. 4, no. 32 (28 March 1917); 'Uma Era Nova no Municipio'.

[59] *Mensagem*, J. J. Seabra, 1915, p. 138. See also *Relatorios*, *Estrada de Ferro de Nazareth*, *ano* 1915, presented by its director, engineer José Barbosa de Sousa, to the director of the Department of agriculture, industry, transport and public works of the state government of Bahia (APEB, section SAR-SECAGR, caixa 58, maço 175, doc. 617 [730]).

[60] *Diário de Notícias*, vol. 45, no. 4871 (26 March 1920), 'Estrada de Ferro de Nazareth. Reclamações sobre reclamações.'

[61] *Correio Agricola*, vol. 3, no. 3 (Março 1925); 'A lavoura e a falta de transporte', pp. 61–2.

[62] *Quatro Séculos*, pp. 187–8.

Tobacco in the regional economy

Although the centre of the Bahian tobacco sector was located in the Recôncavo, tobacco was also produced in the old sugar zones, in the *caatinga* and in the semi-arid *sertão* (see map). The specific nature of the climate and soil influenced the quality of the tobacco. It was (and still is) common practice to distinguish three different kinds of tobacco, according to geographical circumstances. Tobacco from the central Recôncavo region was called *fumo da matta*. This tobacco, considered to be of superior quality, was cultivated in the regions around Cruz das Almas and São Gonçalo. The tobacco around Feira de Santana was referred to as *fumo da caatinga*. Finally, tobacco from the sertão regions of the province (*fumo do sertão*) was produced by poor cultivators who gave little attention to the preparation of their tobacco. It was therefore generally considered to be of inferior quality. But some more market-oriented cultivators in the *sertão* succeeded in producing binder (*capa*), fetching high prices. Until the twentieth century the sertão also producted *fumo de corda*. This is a clear example of local variation in tobacco cultivation. To this general three-fold distinction, many more subdivisions were made by experts and traders.

The most important centres of the Bahian tobacco sector were Cachoeira, São Félix, Nazaré, Maragogipe, Cruz das Almas, Feira de Santana and Alagoinhas. Exporting firms had representatives in these rural towns, who coordinated the buying of the tobacco and informed the main offices in Salvador about the current quality of the tobacco, the prices paid by competitors, and the estimated volume of the harvest. As a consequence, these towns possessed numerous warehouses where the tobacco was stored and repacked. Closely linked to this activity was the processing of tobacco. A great number of small-scale cottage industries or family enterprises and a handful of modern, large-scale companies bought tobacco for the preparation of cigars. These activities provided employment for the rural and urban population. The larger cigar factories employed hundreds of cigar makers (*operários*): men, women and children.

From the the 1870s onwards, an increasing proportion of Bahian tobacco production was processed by cigar-producing factories in the region itself. This internal consumption of Bahian tobacco became more important in the twentieth century. São Félix became the centre of cigar production. The most important company of the region was without doubt Dannemann and Co. which was established in São Félix in 1873. Other companies were Suerdieck in Cruz das Almas, Costa Ferreira & Penna in São Félix and Poock and Co. in Cachoeira. These companies, often owned by European (mostly German) entrepreneurs, were directly

linked to the European market, and combined the export of tobacco with its (industrial) processing. Maragogipe also developed into a cigar-producing town.

In 1910 it was estimated that the five large enterprises in the São Félix region together used between 600,000 and 700,000 kilos of tobacco for the production of cigars (*charutos*). By the end of the nineteenth century, São Félix was already the principal cigar-exporting town of Brazil, although cigar exports from Bahia never accounted for more than approximately ten per cent of the value of tobacco leaf exports. In addition, cigars were sold in other Brazilian markets such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Belem and Recife.[63] Some cigarette factories in Salvador, of which Leite & Alves was the most important, also consumed Bahian tobacco. Cigarette companies in the São Paulo region were also important buyers in the twentieth century.[64] Apart from the larger companies, local cigars were produced by a multitude of small enterprises which produced cheap cigars with family labour. It was reported in 1929 that Bahia possessed a total of 260 tobacco processing firms, of which 24 were located in Alagoinhas, 20 in Cachoeira, 18 in Maragogipe, 14 in Muritiba, 15 in Nazaré, 30 in Salvador, 11 in Santo Amaro, 18 in Santo Antonio de Jesus, and 12 in São Félix.[65]

It can therefore justifiably be said that these towns breathed to the rhythm of the tobacco cycle. To give an impression of this phenomenon, we quote from a 1903 report from Maragogipe:

> The warehouses for the selection of the tobacco are already functioning and with a certain liveliness. Regular loads of this product from our agriculture, one of the riches of the country, enter the city each day. Some enter our warehouses, while others, already treated in the neighbouring municipality of S. Felippe, pass in transit to the capital.[66]

Tobacco was cultivated almost everywhere in Bahia. Contemporary observers spoke of 81 tobacco municipalities.[67] In a report on tobacco production in 1922, the region of São Félix appeared as the largest tobacco producer. Together with production in Cachoeira it accounted for almost half the tobacco production reaching Salvador. After the completion of

[63] *Mensagem*, J. J. Seabra, 1915. *A inserção da Bahia, 2a. etapa*, pp. 121–5.

[64] *De Tabaksplant*, vol. 38, no. 1933 (4 June 1910); 'De tabakproductie en bewerking in Brazilië'.

[65] These 260 firms were subjected to the federal consumption tax in 1929; 199 of these employed unpaid family labour alone, and only 13 employed more than 12 workers. Barboza, *Relatorio apresentado ... Secretario da Agricultura*, 1930 (APEB, section SAR-SECAGR, caixa 2388, maço 187, doc. 740). Doubtless many more unregistered artisans rolled cigars from their homes.

[66] *A Bahia*, vol. 8, no. 21 (17 March 1903); 'Maragogipe'.

[67] João Pitanguy Albano, 'O Fumo e sua cultura na Bahia' (These Inaugural) (Bahia, 1927).

the railroad, Nazaré also became an important tobacco centre, receiving a considerable amount of tobacco from its hinterland.[68]

However, these commercial figures are not completely reliable, as they do not give the exact region where the tobacco was cultivated. In reports of the newly-established Instituto Bahiano do Fumo in the 1930s, 81 tobacco municipalities were listed together with their production. All the municipalities of the southern Recôncavo produced several hundred thousand kilos. These statistics also show the growing importance of São Félix as a centre of tobacco commerce and manufacturing, and the decline of the Nazaré region as a tobacco producer. In the 1920s and early 1930s the regions around São Félix and Nazaré produced more or less equal amounts of tobacco. From 1934 onwards the predominance of São Félix was evident. Its annual production was two or three times more than that of Nazaré.[69]

The regional significance of tobacco as an export crop depended on two things; the volume of the crop, and the price paid for the tobacco on the international market. As tobacco is an annual crop which was cultivated without extensive technological support, such as irrigation, the yearly volume of the Bahian tobacco harvest varied quite substantially. These variations explain the nervous tension in commercial circles every year at the approach of the harvest. Small harvests could mean high prices, but could also result in commercial losses. Large harvests did not guarantee good quality, and might result in low prices. The Bahia tobacco harvest usually oscillated between 20 and 30 million kilos in the period under study, but production could fall almost to ten million. In other years production surpassed the 40 million kilos.

It is impossible to generalise about tobacco prices, as quality varied enormously from year to year. In addition, the tobacco trade was very complicated. Prices were set according to the production region, quality of the crop, and the uniformity of its selection. Different kinds of tobacco were distinguished, fetching widely different prices. Leaves which could be used for the *capa* of cigars were the most expensive. In 1936 a bag of this tobacco was sold for 800 and 1000 milreis, while good *matta* tobacco was sold for 35 to 40 and *sertão* and *caatinga* tobacco for ten to 20 milreis.[70] The statistics of the period clearly show substantial yearly variations in tobacco prices.

Most Bahian tobacco was exported to the German market, particularly

[68] Entradas de fumo durante o anno de 1921', in *Mensagem*, J. J. Seabra, 1922.

[69] Instituto Bahiano do Fumo, 'Lavoura de fumo no Estado da Bahia' (mimeograph, 1937), pp. 7–8. For the difference between São Félix and Nazaré, see 'Entradas de Fumo, na praça da Bahia, durante os annos de 1932–1942', in *Anuario Estatistico do Fumo*, 1970/71.

[70] Instituto Bahiano do Fumo, 'Lavoura de fumo', p. 4.

to the two Hanseatic towns of Hamburg and Bremen. These two cities were the most important markets for dark tobacco in Europe. In the last decades of the nineteenth century it was common knowledge that the German tobacco market depended to a large extent on the supply of Bahian tobacco. In the years 1873 to 1877 the city of Bremen alone imported between 18,000 and 25,000 tons of tobacco a year, with a value of more than 15 million Marks in 1876.[71] In the twentieth century the Dutch tobacco market, which had previously traded almost exclusively in tobacco from the Dutch East Indies, became more important. This was, above all, the result of the First World War which cut Germany off from its international markets.

Bahian tobacco was in demand because of its strong taste. Even when, in the first years of the twentieth century experts denounced the decreasing quality of Bahian tobacco, they had to admit that the cigar industry depended on it. An observer wrote in 1904:

> Brazilian tobacco forms a necessary element in the manufacturing of cigars almost everywhere in the world. […] There is no tobacco which can substitute it, for its taste as well as for its smell. […] It is indispensable for mixing and the creation and strengthening of the aroma of cigars.[72]

This unique position explains the strength of Bahian tobacco. Whilst other types of tobacco were easily replaced, Bahian tobacco enjoyed a secure position in the European market. However, just as happened with other dark tobaccos, the competition of Java tobacco, the changing taste of the European public and the increasing substitution of cigars by cigarettes augured ill for Bahian tobacco in the twentieth century. Already by 1905 Germany imported twice as much tobacco from the Dutch East Indies as from Brazil with a value of almost four times higher.[73]

The guaranteed demand of the European monopolies (*régies*) gradually disappeared, and the price of Bahian tobacco on the European markets fell. European tobacco journals became increasingly critical of the quality of Bahian tobacco. Whereas in the period 1870–1900 Bahian tobacco was generally acclaimed, it came under increasing criticism in the first decades of the twentieth century. Importing companies complained about inadequate curing and selection of leaves, resulting in inferior taste and lack of uniformity. These complaints should be seen in a comparative

[71] 'Gesammt-Eingang von Rohtaback in Bremen', in *Tabackbau, Tabackfabrication und Tabackhandels im Deutschen Reich und in Luxemburg nach den statistischen Ergebnissen der Arbeiten der Taback-Enquête-Kommission*, Herausgegeben vom Kaiserlichen Statistischen Amt. (Berlin, 1880), p. 80

[72] *De Tabaksplant*, vol. 32, no. 1640 (1 Nov. 1904); 'Is het verbruik van Brazieltabak achteruitgegaan?'.

[73] Otto Heyman, *Die Entwicklung des Pfälzer Tabakhandels seit den 70er Jahre* (Karlsruhe, 1909); p. 160. Also: *De Tabaksplant*, vol. 40, no. 2033 (14 April 1912), 'Braziel tabak'.

perspective. Competition had increased, and the standards for judging tobacco had been raised. On the other hand, some complaints were presumably justified. The tobacco sector had become an overwhelmingly peasant sector in this period, resulting in a very diversified sector producing low-quality tobacco. In the region itself the tobacco-growing peasantry was increasingly criticised for its deficient agricultural practices. The State Secretary of Agriculture, Dr. Joaquim Arthur Pedreira Franco, wrote in 1917:

> The tobacco agriculture [in Bahia] is simply moving to its ruin. In short, if existing agricultural practices are not modified, this crop will have little value on the consumer markets. From the selection of seed to the lack of preparation and fertilizing of the land; from the cutting of the plant and the picking of its suckers, to the practice of fermentation, everything combines to undermine Bahian tobacco.[74]

Of course, this kind of criticism was not devoid of self-interest. The mercantile elite of the region saw profits dwindle and felt its economic position to be endangered. Being unable to stem the changing tide of the tobacco trade, merchants tried to shift the blame on to the peasantry. So, despite the fact that tobacco was an important regional commodity, little recognition was given to the small-scale peasant producers, who formed the mainstay of the Bahian tobacco sector. It is to these producers and their crop that we now turn.

Small-scale tobacco agriculture in Bahia

Tobacco is an annual crop, which sprouts, grows and flowers within a period ranging from 60 to 150 days, depending on the climate. The plant can reach a height of 1.5 to two metres. Its leaves can reach up to one metre, but they are usually smaller. At the end of its growing period it bears pink flowers. One plant can produce up to 40,000 seeds. When the Europeans arrived in the New World, different types of tobacco plant existed, of which only the *nicotiana rustica* and the *nicotiana tabacum* were used for consumption by the indigenous population. It was this latter type which the Spaniards started to cultivate and which eventually became the commercial crop referred to as 'tobacco'.[75] In the course of time, through spontaneous hybridisation or selection, many different varieties of the *nicotiana tabacum* have come into existence.

[74] *Boletim da Agricultura*, *Comercio*, *Industria*, 2, Julho 1917; 'Pela nossa agricultura. As ideas do snr. Secretario da Agricultura, Dr Joaquim Arthur Pedreira Franco', pp. 43–52; citation on p. 51.

[75] Manuel Llanos Company, 'Evolución de las tecnicas para el cultivo del tabaco en las colonias hispano-americanos', *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, vol. 40 (1983), esp. p. 472.

Tobacco grows spontaneously, and the plant matures rapidly. Two months after sowing, tobacco leaves can be picked and hung to dry. This makes it a highly seasonal crop. Many observers have commented on tobacco as a crop favouring small-scale production, and an equitable distribution of material prosperity.[76] They stress the close attention required by the plant during the period that it is growing. The labour needed for the harvest and preparation can easily be provided by the peasant family. As the state governor Dr Vital Henriques Baptista Soares observed in 1929:

> [Tobacco is] the crop of the small agriculturalist, the useful occupation of women and children. It is the 'estate' of the humble, grown around their huts, in their gardens, in front of the shacks.[77]

Tobacco agriculture also left peasant families ample time to cultivate food crops during the remainder of the year. It guaranteed a rapid cash income for poor families. In the words of a late nineteenth-century observer: tobacco was 'easy, with prompt results and by its nature appropriate for the small free cultivator'.[78] The short agricultural cycle also tends to reduce the risks. Finally, it can sustain relatively long periods of drought, and can therefore also be cultivated in semi-arid zones such as the so-called *caatinga*, around Feira de Santana or the *sertão*. In 1928 the Secretary of Agriculture in Bahia remarked that 'tobacco is extensively cultivated, being rare the backwoodsman who does not have a small plantation, in the vicinity of his home'.[79]

The agricultural cycle of tobacco began with the preparation of seedbeds in March or April.[80] These seedbeds needed daily attention. They had to be watered daily and controlled regularly for disease or caterpillars. These seedbeds were planted close to the house, and their maintenance was usually the responsibility of women, assisted by their children. During the same period the men prepared the land. Ploughs were scarcely used before the 1940s, and most work was done with a hoe. The land was turned over and mixed with cow manure. Fertilisation was essential to tobacco agriculture in the Recôncavo. Artificial fertilisers were not used, because of cost and their poor yield given the sandy soil. Manure

[76] The classic text comes from Cuba; Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint. Tobacco and Sugar* (New York, 1970 [Spanish original 1940]). Also Baud, *Peasants and Tobacco*, pp. 49–72.

[77] *Mensagem*, V. H. Baptista Soares, 1929, p. 56.

[78] Affonso Glycerio da Cunha Maciel in 1889, cited in Costa Borba, 'Industrialização e exportação do fumo na Bahia', p. 13.

[79] 'Relatorio do Secretario da Agricultura, Industria, Commercio, Viação e Obras Publicas ao Governador do Estado da Bahia, anno de 1928' (mimeograph), p. 26 (APEB section SAR-SECAGR, caixa 2987, maço 184, doc. 682).

[80] The following description is based on Egler, 'Aspectos gerais'; Instituto Bahiano do Fumo, 'Resumo de seus trabalhos durante o anno de 1936'; Sonneville, 'Os lavradores de fumo'.

was commonly bought from cattle-farmers in the neighbourhood, but an important proportion was imported on ox-carts from the sertão. Some cultivators used the manure from their own cows. They could do so in two ways. They sometimes left the cows on the tobacco fields, a practice called *pé de boi*. Some cultivators kept their cows in a small corral and later spread the manure over the tobacco field. To reduce the costs of fertilizing the land, many cultivators adopted a system of rotation. Following tobacco, beans or maize were planted, which benefited from any remaining fertiliser. The next year the land was used for manioc, which does not need a fertile soil. Often poor families only alternated tobacco and manioc.

After the field was prepared it was arranged in so-called *covas* (slightly elevated beds), with side elevations of soil. After 30 to 40 days the small tobacco plants were transplanted by hand, a process which usually involved all available family labour. In 1927 the tobacco expert, Albano, made the following observation about this stage of the agricultural cycle:

> This task is very well known in Bahia and is generally performed by women and boys who walk with baskets filled with plants, distributing them over the *covas* [mounds] or *sulcos* [furrows] while others who come behind carry out the planting making a hole with their hands where they put the seedling that is lying over the *cova*, covering it directly with earth.[81]

The plantlets were normally planted out in May or June. This was preferably done on rainy or cloudy days, to minimise loss from excessive sun. To encourage large leaves, suckers which grow in the armpits of the leaves had to be removed (the so-called *desolha*) every two weeks, and flowers which started to bloom at the top of the plant had to be broken off (*capação*).

The most important stage of tobacco cultivation was the harvest, which began in August, when the plant reached maturity and the lowest leaves, the so-called 'sandleaves', turned yellow. The best way of picking was to begin with the lower leaves, then wait for the next leaves to mature and so on, until the plant was stripped. However, the Bahian cultivators normally cut the entire plant, which they then hung up to dry. The remaining stumps were left to grow and produced more tobacco leaves. Traders and state officials were very critical about this practice, because the quality of the leaves produced in this way was clearly inferior. However, cultivators have persisted in it to this day because it provides more production with very little additional labour. They sometimes even repeat this procedure up to ten times. Albano observed in 1927 that '[the farmers] are only concerned with one goal, which is the quantity of the harvest'.[82]

[81] João Pitanguy Albano, *Fumo e sua cultura na Bahia* (Salvador, 1927), p. 97.
[82] Albano, *Fumo e sua cultura*, p. 101.

After the leaves had been dried they were collected into piles and left to ferment for four to six days. Then eight to ten leaves were tied together in the so-called *manocas*. These *manocas* were stacked in a closed shed and left until the tobacco was sufficiently cured. This process required great care and lasted several months. Pressured by landowners or creditors, cultivators did not always allow enough time, often selling their tobacco when it was still not completely cured. This resulted in an inferior quality of tobacco leaf, and meant that most Bahian tobacco was almost solely of interest to European importers as a filler for cigars.[83]

When traders took processing and selection into their own hands, a better quality tobacco resulted, fetching higher prices. A German source already noted these differences in the late 1870s.[84] We have seen how the agricultural practices of the Bahian peasantry came under increasing scrutiny in the first decades of the twentieth century. Mercantile circles became convinced that they could only maintain the position of Bahian tobacco on the international market by taking charge of the processing. In the course of the twentieth century most exporters and tobacco manufacturers started packing the tobacco themselves.

Bahian producers cultivated local types of black tobacco and aimed to maximise the harvest, rather than produce high-quality tobacco, mainly because demand from cigar manufacturers was more or less guaranteed. Thus, Bahian tobacco growers were not meticulous agriculturists like, for instance, their Cuban colleagues, who used sophisticated techniques and closely attuned their agriculture to the market. Bahian producers could produce tobacco as part of a relatively simple agricultural system. For them tobacco was part of a subsistence economy which aimed to reproduce the household. The peasant producers favoured tobacco cultivation because of its ready market, but above all because it left enough time for other agricultural activities, especially growing food crops. Tobacco agriculture for the market was closely linked to the cultivation of manioc (*mandioca*) both for family consumption and for commercialisation. Small-scale production of manioc – processed into flour (*farinha*) – for the market has been common practice from colonial times to the present.[85]

[83] *Relatorio*, J. Ferreira de Moura, 1867, p. 107. *Falla*, A. C. da Cruz Machado, 1874, p. 129.

[84] *Bericht der Taback Enquête Kommission*, Bundesrath (1878/79); 'Chapter XXII: Bezirkskommission in Bremen', p. 6.

[85] See Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels*, pp. 84–92, for the importance of commercial manioc cultivation in Bahia in colonial times. See also Barickman, *A Bahian Counterpoint*. For the significance of manioc for late twentieth-century peasant households see Sylvia M. dos Reis Maia, 'Market Dependency as Subsistence Strategy: the Small Producers in Sapeaçu, Bahia', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 10 no. 2 (1991), pp. 193–219; Sandra Cats, 'O sol é limpo e pobre, a chuva é porco e rico:

The fields of tobacco cultivated by peasant families were small, sometimes very small. The average field was one or two hectares, but many fields were not more than 40 or 50 square metres, called *roças*. Tobacco was cultivated in even smaller patches, in gardens or backyards. The crop was therefore sometimes called a 'backyard crop' (*uma lavoura de fundo de quintal*), and the patches of land with tobacco, *malhadas*.[86] However, even small pieces of land could produce reasonable quantities of tobacco. Half a hectare could produce some 70 *arrobas* of good-quality tobacco.[87]

Tobacco agriculture was a labour intensive activity, especially in the first stage – when seedbeds were made and the little plants transplanted – and the last stage, when labour was needed for harvesting and processing. In these labour-intensive periods all the labour of the household was required. Given the endemic labour shortage in the region in this period, no attempts were made to produce tobacco on a larger scale. The agricultural expert, Gregorio Bondar, wrote in 1923:

> Large tobacco plantations do not exist. The important landowners, who possess extensive tracts of land, dedicate themselves to cattle raising, not seeing any benefit in tobacco cultivation, because of the costs of labour, since the expenses are not always compensated.[88]

Poor farmers sometimes organised work-gangs to help each other with labour intensive tasks. In the nineteenth century this was called *boi-de-cova*. These forms of reciprocal help have persisted to the present.[89] This demonstrates once again how tobacco cultivation was basically a small-scale enterprise.

Patterns of landholding in the Recôncavo

The question of landownership is crucial for assessing the social position of tobacco-growing households. However, we have to take into account the specific context of Bahia, and particularly its relationship to slavery. In

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small-scale tobacco farmers in the Recôncavo, Brazil', unpubl. MA diss., Utrecht University, 1997.

[86] Walter Alberto Egler, 'Aspectos gerais da Cultura do Fumo na Região do Recôncavo na Bahia'. *Boletim Geográfico*, vol. 10, no. 111 (1952), pp. 679–88, esp. p. 681.

[87] It was reported in 1886 that $2\frac{1}{5}$ tarefas yielded 162 arrobas. Letter of H. Matheo to Governor Aurelio Ferreira Espinheira on 'prolongamento de estrada de ferro Tramroad de Nazareth' 3 Aug. 1886 (APEB, Presidencia da Provincia, serie: viação, maço 4980).

[88] Gregorio Bondar, 'Fumo na Bahia', *Diario Oficial. Edição Especial do Centenário do Estado da Bahia*, vol. 8 (1923), pp. 294–6; quote on p. 295.

[89] Barickman, *A Bahian Counterpoint*, chap. 7.

a 'normal' agricultural context, the possession of land can be considered a crucial precondition for the peasantry to enjoy a degree of independence. However, in the context of slavery, the existence of a 'free' peasant agriculture, outside the slave system, was a sufficient criteria of independence. Even though linked to – and to a large extent dependent on – landowners by way of sharecropping or rent arrangements, compared to the slave population from whom they largely descended, they could be considered 'free' peasants. It is therefore important to be aware of the changing social significance of landownership in the Recôncavo.

It is possible to distinguish three – admittedly somewhat speculative – stages in this respect. First, in the decades prior to 1888, a relatively large proportion of tobacco-cultivating families did not possess land, although a certain number of medium-sized tobacco farmers did, and often employed slave labour on a modest scale. The position of the free peasants, who rented land from larger landowners, was determined above all by the fact that they were not slaves. They were called *pequenos lavradores livres* to distinguish them from the large slave population, but they did not have free access to land themselves. The land was largely in the hands of larger landowners, and the peasants were generally dependent on these owners. Yet the distinction with the slave population was important, since the use of slave labour in tobacco, coffee and manioc cultivation was far from uncommon in the western and southern parts of the Recôncavo.[90]

After the abolition of slavery a new situation developed. As we saw, the large-scale, formerly slave-holding sugar plantations entered into crisis. As pointed out by Barickman, the sugar plantations established in the western and southern parts of the Recôncavo – which were smaller and more recently established than the large *engenhos* of the heavy clay soils in the north and east of Santo Amaro – were able to shift to tobacco and coffee cultivation.[91] Furthermore, medium-sized tobacco farmers, who used to employ small numbers of slaves, now had to find other forms of labour recruitment and land use. One way of making these possessions pay may have been to rent out land to small-scale peasant families, among whom were an unknown number of recently-freed slaves. While this clearly reproduced their dominant position in the social and economic structure of the region, this system also functioned as a Trojan Horse. It allowed peasant producers to obtain a more or less independent living. As

[90] Schwartz notes the expansion of slave labour in small-scale manioc cultivation in the late colonial period; see Schwartz, *Slaves*, *Peasants*, *and Rebels*, pp. 90–2. Barickman notes the average number of slaves employed by relatively better-off tobacco farmers as being around 15 in the late colonial period and dropping to below 10 towards the mid-nineteenth century; Barickman, *A Bahian Counterpoint*.

[91] Barickman, 'Persistence and Decline', pp. 618ff.

Table 4. *Land tenure in the Recôncavo: numbers of small farms, property-holders and tenants in selected tobacco growing municipalities, 1920*

Municipality	Total no. of farm establishments	No. of establishments smaller than 41 ha.	No. of establishments occupied by owner	No. of establishments occupied by tenants
Cachoeira	394	116	354	5
Cruz das Almas	197	159	170	9
Jequié	1,054	736	985	2
Maragogipe	1,133	1,014	727	368
Muritiba	424	355	268	137
Nazaré	156	76	146	2
São Félix	220	178	130	82
São Gonçalo dos Campos	491	254	389	38

Source: *Recenseamento* 1920, vol. 3, parte Agricultura, tables II and IV, pp. 126–35, 302–11.

tobacco (and to a certain extent coffee) were in great demand, the combination of subsistence agriculture and production for the market became the basis of a more or less independent peasantry. This independence was evidently precarious and incomplete. The producers depended on landowners for access to land, fertilizer and the commercialisation of their tobacco. They were in many ways caught in a debt-trap as a result of their need for cash before the tobacco sales. As we will see, credit was essential for the peasant families' survival. Nevertheless, this informal dependence was a far cry from the legal servility of the slave system.

The third period begins in the first decades of the twentieth century. Although elements of the former dependence remained, some peasant producers succeeded in this period in escaping the debt-trap, and establishing themselves as more independent small farmers. The most common way of reaching this goal was through the acquisition of land. Interviews carried out by Sonneville indicate that the acquisition of land by the tobacco growing peasantry was a common practice in the central Recôncavo in the period 1910–1940. The 1920 agricultural census shows that, in the principal tobacco growing municipalities of the Recôncavo, a considerable proportion of smaller farms was *owned* by the occupants. Table 4 shows that in the typical tobacco municipalities, a half to almost 90 per cent of farming establishments were smaller than 40 ha (approximately 88 *tarefas*). In São Félix, Muritiba and Maragogipe, around one third of the recorded occupants of the farms were tenants. Tenant farms had an average value of about half the average for all farms, so that

it is likely that many were relatively small, family-size holdings. But even if this were the case, it would suggest that at least two-thirds of the smallest holdings were owner-occupied. In other tobacco municipalities, the proportion of owners was even larger.

However, we must bear in mind that the 'smaller than 41 ha.' category also included, in terms of tobacco cultivation, a considerable number of medium-sized farms. We have already noted that small scale tobacco farms tended to be very small. Indeed, it was not unusual for medium-sized owners to rent out part of their land to tenant families. These informal tenants were not listed in the 1920 agricultural census. They depended on landowners for access to land and were usually forced to enter into some kind of share-cropping arrangement. Often called *agregados*, they had to pay a sixth or fifth of their crop as rent. Bondar states that in 1923 a rent of one arroba tobacco (approximately 75 kg) per *tarefa* (0.4356 ha.) was normal. Others worked for the landowner to pay the rent. The cultivator without land, 'J.S.', who 'paid a rent of one day [of work] per week' and sold his tobacco to the owner of the land, may be seen as representative of this kind of arrangement.[92] Some compensated the landowner by working a number of days as agricultural labourers; others worked as day-labourers in the sugar mills. Bondar mentions that in 1923 many peasant families did not cultivate more than 40 to 50 square metres of tobacco. Exceptionally, farms of two or three hectares could be found.[93] Egler, reporting on the situation in the early 1950s, notes that one particular owner of a tobacco farm of 39 ha. – of which 25 ha. was used for crops like tobacco, beans, maize, and manioc – had four tenant families on the property, supplying the farmer with extra labour power. A tenant, 'the most sacrificed of all…', worked part of his time for his landowner.[94] These tenants had normally less than one *tarefa* for planting tobacco and manioc. Under such conditions, tenant farmers normally produced tobacco of inferior quality:

> [The tenant farmer] lives a difficult life in a permanent vicious circle of debts with the nearest store. Under these conditions he is also the one who produces the worst tobacco, inadequately cured.[95]

As a result, despite the apparent trend of expanding small landownership, many peasant families were not able to acquire land, and continued to rent well into the 1950s and 1960s. Presumably differences of skill, family size, frugality or commercial luck differentiated those families who were able to save enough money to buy land from those who could not.

Nowadays most peasants in the western and south-western Recôncavo

[92] Cited in Sonneville, 'Os lavradores de fumo', p. 71.
[93] Bondar, 'Fumo na Bahia', p. 293.
[94] Egler, 'Aspectos gerais', p. 688.
[95] *Ibid*., p. 686.

are small landowners.[96] This may be seen partly as a sign of the relative success of tobacco cultivation. In good years tobacco yielded enough income to allow individual cultivators to buy small pieces of land. On the other hand, it resulted from the closing of the agricultural frontier and the partial disappearance of large landholdings in the region. Remaining large landowners tried to modernise their enterprises by shifting their attention to new cash-crops. They were no longer interested in offering part of their land to sharecroppers. Landless peasants therefore lost access to land, and migrated to the city or other parts of the country.

Commercialisation and credit

Tobacco was a cash crop destined for the international market. However, it had to travel a long way from the peasants' *roça* to the German or Dutch warehouses. The commercialisation of tobacco, and the relationships between tobacco grower and the market, varied according to changes in Bahian society. Initially, tobacco agriculture existed side by side with slave-holding sugar plantations, and for many peasant producers was a way of obtaining access to land. In this stage, during and just after slavery, tobacco cultivation was part of a tenuous independent (non-slave) peasant existence, which reproduced much of the dependency which characterised the system of slavery. In this situation tobacco was inevitably sold to the landowner, who paid the cultivator after deducting his own share. More independent peasants sold their tobacco to local buyers, whose power was often based on a combination of economic and political dominance. The price paid was extremely low in this period, but it may be assumed that freedom mattered more to small-scale producers, and that they accepted their economic subordination as part of the bargain.

When the position of large landowners deteriorated in the last decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, local strongmen, the *coronéis* of the tobacco producing region, became the axis of the tobacco trade. As well as owning land, they owned the warehouses for storing and packing the tobacco. As they packed the tobacco in *fardos* they were often called *enfardadores*. According to Maia these warehouse owners were often controlled by the large landowners.[97] Sometimes even more hands were involved. Local intermediaries bought the tobacco from small-scale producers, and sold it on to the warehouses. These intermediaries lived alongside the cultivators. Egler described (and deplored) the logic of this system:

[The tobacco], when it does not end up in the hands of the shopkeeper, is

[96] Maia, 'Market Dependency', p. 198.

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

acquired by the landlord, so that the small farmer, as a rule, sells his produce to an intermediary and not directly to the wholesaler.[98]

This dependence made it impossible for the peasantry to obtain a fair price. As was observed in 1923, 'The small farmer is heavily exploited by intermediary traders, who buy his produce reaping disproportionate gains'.[99] In 1920 it was estimated that small-scale cultivators were left on average with 200 milreis after selling their tobacco, a very small sum according to contemporary observers.[100]

The entire commercial chain appears to have been governed by the logic of credit. Tobacco cultivating families usually built up debts with local creditors. After the tobacco harvest cultivators paid off their debts. The intermediaries received money from the exporting firms, which in turn received an advance from the German importers. By means of these credit arrangements the German companies tried to corner a share of the Bahian market. An indication of their importance can be gauged from the consequences of the First World War. When trade with Germany was suspended and access to the German market through Amsterdam was prohibited, the Bahian tobacco sector was directly affected. German commercial firms stopped their transactions. As a result, the availability of credit to small-scale farmers through intermediaries came to a standstill.[101]

On the other hand, intermediaries depended on the cultivators for their tobacco supply. The market was to a certain extent competitive. These middlemen were themselves only one part of a long mercantile chain. The research by Sonneville demonstrates how they were a rural class, with an uneasy relationship both to cultivators and to the large exporting houses.[102] Their profit margins were very low, and they were in constant danger of being squeezed between producers and export firms. In addition, the tobacco trade was highly speculative. Prices tended to go up during the season, but no-one knew exactly when this would happen. Exporters and intermediaries eagerly eyed each other to see whether the competition was raising its prices in order to buy as much tobacco as possible.

Tobacco was packed for export by large exporting firms, which had modern facilities in the municipalities of the western Recôncavo. Many firms had well-established links with the mother company in Europe, which provided them with money and controlled the prices and the

[98] Egler, 'Aspectos gerais', p. 686.

[99] Caio Moura, 'O despovoamento rural da Bahia, suas causas e meios de combatel-o', *Correio Agricola*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1923), pp. 6–7.

[100] *O Imparcial*, vol. II, no. 597 (21 April 1920); 'A Cultura do fumo em perigo'.

[101] Mário Augusto Santos, *A Associação Comercial da Bahia na Primeira República. Um grupo de pressão* (Salvador, 1991), p. 44. See also *De Tabaksplant*, vol. 47, no. 2418 (30 Sept. 1919); 'Braziel tabak'.

[102] Sonneville, 'Os lavradores de fumo', chap. 3.

conditions of sale.[103] Others worked more or less independently, and sold their tobacco to the highest bidder. These buyers were generally from Europe but, in the course of the twentieth century, increasingly came from southern Brazil and Argentina. The picture was complicated by the fact that some of the larger tobacco buyers combined the export of tobacco with the manufacture of cigars in the region. These companies, together with (smaller) enterprises which bought tobacco exclusively for export, dominated tobacco commerce in the province. They determined the conditions of sale in the region, and did all they could to influence prices on the international market. The Dutch tobacco journal, *De Tabaksplant*, depicts the Bahian exporters as a very demanding and self-conscious class, eager to manipulate the market.

Tobacco, social relations and regional politics

One of the enigmas of nineteenth century Bahian social history involves the complex relationship between large-scale, slave-based agricultural production and the (semi-) independent peasant family production. Barickman, meticulously charting the pre-1860 social structure of the Bahian countryside, found that independent peasant farming predominated in the tobacco-growing districts of the Recôncavo. On the other hand, many small- and medium-scale tobacco growers also used slave labour. Barickman rightly states that '[t]he presence of so many farmers with small slaveholdings blurred the distinction between peasant and slave-based agriculture in the tobacco districts of Cachoeira'.[104]

After the abolition of slavery, class distinctions remained quite pronounced. A crude three-tier rural stratification was evident. The large lowest stratum consisted of poor or very poor peasant households, which tenuously combined tobacco growing and food production within a framework of tenant or share-cropping relations. A much smaller medium stratum of landowners existed. During the 1920s, this class probably numbered some 2,000 to 3,000 households in the traditional tobacco municipalities. The third category of *fazendeiros*, industrialists and commercial and financial intermediaries was even smaller. This rural and small-town elite was the determinant element in the tobacco-producing countryside.

The picture was further complicated by the fluid and varied composition

[103] A good analysis of the international trading networks of Bahian tobacco can be found in W. Mehrmann, *Dissertation über die Organisation des Bremer Tabakimports und Tabakwarenhandels* (Frankfurt am Main, 1921), p. 62. See also Franklin S. Everts, *The Brazilian Tobacco Industry* (Washington, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agriculture Report no. 16, 1947).

[104] Barickman, *A Bahian Counterpoint*, p. 149.

of peasant households. This topic needs more research, but it is evident that the independent peasantry which emerged in the nineteenth century consisted of a multitude of large extended households. These usually revolved around land-owning individuals or nuclear families, but also included temporary or more or less stable combinations of people with different functions and social status. Rural households could include *agregados* (tenant farmers), *domésticos* (domestic labour), boarders, slaves, foster children, friends or family, as well as different generations. As in rural societies in other parts of the world, these arrangements responded to social and economic needs. For the family economy, they guaranteed sufficient labour for agricultural production; for the individuals concerned they ensured food and shelter. In a context where most livelihoods suffered insecurity and there were sharp social and racial cleavages, extended households were the glue holding rural society together.

There is one other aspect which sets small-scale tobacco agriculture apart in nineteenth and twentieth century Bahian society. Tobacco symbolised the struggle of the (ex-)slave population against the sugar plantations and slavery. Although larger-scale farms have always existed, tobacco was and remains the crop of the poor, black and mulatto population. Tobacco cultivation thereby acquired a specific ethnic or racial connotation.[105] It was the crop of free but poor peasants, who tried to eke out a living in a society which offered them little hope. It maintained its 'maroon' character even into the twentieth century. This may explain both the pejorative comments of the regional elite, and the relative neglect of the tobacco sector in regional politics.

A final important issue is the link between tobacco agriculture and the formation of local and regional elites, and hence with politics and the state.[106] We have already argued that, in addition to a process of the stratification among rural producers, a class of small-town merchants emerged as intermediaries between the farmers and the trading firms. In a number of instances, such local entrepreneurs diversified into tobacco

[105] This simple contrast does not do justice to the everyday complexity of social and racial relations. Here we only wish to point out the ethnic/racial connotation of tobacco agriculture. For a more elaborate discussion of the issue of ethnicity and race in Latin America see Michiel Baud, Kees Koonings, Gert Oostindie, Arij Ouweneel and Patricio Silva, *Etnicidad como estrategia en América Latina y el Caribe* (Quito, 1996) and Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (London, 1997). For the Brazilian situation see Thomas Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (New York, 1974) and 'Racial Ideas and Social Policy in Brazil, 1880–1940', in Richard Graham (ed.), *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870–1940* (Austin, 1990), pp. 7–36. See also Howard Winant, 'Rethinking Race in Brazil', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1992); pp. 173–92.

[106] Here we provide only a very brief discussion. We hope to publish a more profound treatment of this specific dimension of Bahian 'tobacco society' in the future.

processing and cigar manufacturing. In a number of towns and municipalities, especially São Félix, Maragogipe, Muritiba, and Cruz das Almas, tobacco traders and industrialists were prominent figures in local society. Some, such as the Dannemann and Suerdieck families and other entrepreneurs (such as the Costa & Penna firm) gained a degree of regional prominence. However, it is hard to assess the extent of their influence on Bahia's regional politics as few organisations to advance tobacco interests existed, even in the opening decades of the twentieth century (the Centro Industrial do Fumo da Cidade de S. Félix being a notable exception). The demands of the tobacco sector were generally voiced through the Associação Comercial da Bahia (Commercial Association of Bahia), founded originally in 1811.[107] Nevertheless, the growing importance of tobacco exports and manufacturing gave rise to a number of political issues. Among these taxation stood out, especially after the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, and the subsequent increasing importance of the regional political level.

Tobacco played an important role in the region's financial structure. National, state and municipal authorities attempted to increase public income by taxing various tobacco-related activities. Despite the precarious position of the majority of small-scale farmers, tobacco was an important source of export tax revenue for the state government. Taxation of tobacco exports yielded 31 per cent of total export taxes in 1909, 26 per cent in 1912, and 29 per cent in 1918. Only cacao yielded more, the corresponding figures being 40 per cent, 37 per cent and 36 per cent respectively. Between 1905 and 1915, the tobacco export tax netted almost 22 million milreis for the state's treasury, again only surpassed by cacao, with almost 35 million milreis.[108]

The mercantile community did all it could to minimise these levies, and taxes were a constant point of contention between the state government and the tobacco entrepreneurs. Initially, only tobacco exports were taxed. During the Old Republic, this tax was set at 12 per cent of the value (with small additional charges for statistical registration and agronomic support). Exporters persistently complained that taxes were too high. During the 1900s and early 1910s, tobacco growers and merchants from

[107] Between 1811 and 1846, the association was called the Praça do Comércio. On the basis of a survey of the Association's annual reports between the late 1860s and the early 1930s, we venture the hypothesis that the Association was dominated by Salvador-based merchants and bankers who had no specific links to agricultural production, with the probable exception of cacao. This point needs further substantiation, however. See for an overview Angelina Nobre Rolim Garcez, *Associação Comercial da Bahia 175 Anos: Trajetória e perspectivas* (Salvador, 1987), and Santos, *Associação Comercial da Bahia*.

[108] Figures from *Relatorio da Associação Commercial*, 1909, annexo no. 19; *Mensagem*, J. J. Seabra, 1913; *Exposição*, J. J. Seabra, 1916; *Mensagem*, F. Moniz de Aragão, 1918.

the interior as well as the large exporter from Salvador regularly deplored the imposition of an export tax on tobacco leaves. Although the rate was fixed at 12 per cent it was charged by the tax collectors on the basis of an estimated official value, expressed in reis per kilo (the so-called *pauta de fumo*). Tobacco producers often felt that the *pauta* was set too high, thereby increasing the real tax burden. In 1913, for instance, a group of exporters from Salvador complained against

> the absurd increase of the *pauta* for the levy of the export tax, which was 500 reis and has now been raised to 700 reis, which means an increase of 40% against the previous *pauta*. We, as buyers and exporters of the product, guarantee that we do not have in our acquisitions an average higher than Rs. 7$500 for 15 kilos, (…) the highest prices today being Rs. 9$000 to 9$500 for the best *matta* tobacco and 7$000 for the ordinary tobacco from other origins, so that it can be concluded that it is not reasonable to use an average of Rs. 10$500 to arrive at a *pauta* of 700 reis per kilo.[109]

This balance between taxation and the ability to pay for the tobacco sector was highly precarious. When in 1920 the federal government attempted to tax cultivators with a head tax of 300 milreis, *O Imparcial* warned of the dramatic consequences for 'small farmers, who generally obtain an income that is less than the required tax'. The newspaper reported that producers abandoned cultivation, leading to a decrease in production.[110] The imposition of this tax led to vehement protests by merchants, supported by the state governor J. J. Seabra. This demonstrates that the struggle against the tobacco taxation acquired regionalist connotations in this period. This became particularly clear when the federal government attempted to tax the cigar-making industry. Under the energetic leadership of Joaquim Ignácio Tosta, a politician from São Félix, and a member of the federal Chamber of Representatives in Rio de Janeiro, the Bahian merchants vehemently protested. The struggle against the so-called 'imposto de fumo' began in the 1890s and flared up each time the federal government announced an increase on cigar tax.[111] As late as 1929 the state governor, Dr Vital Henriques Baptista Sodreu, commented that it was time to bring tobacco cultivation to the attention of the political authorities, 'who only remember the unfortunate [tobacco cultivation] when, pressured by the claws of finance, they ask for the fiscal tithe'.[112]

[109] Letter to the president and directors of the Associação Commercial da Bahia, 18 Feb. 1913, in *Relatorio da Associação Commercial*, 1912, p. 166.

[110] *O Imparcial*, vol. 2, no. 597 (21 April 1920); 'A Cultura do fumo em perigo. Por causa de impostos'. See also 'Relatorio presentado ao sr. governador do estado pelo secretario da agricultura, industria, commercio, viação e obras publicas da Bahia, ano de 1920', p. 7 (APEB, section SAR-SECAGR, caixa 2386, maço 178).

[111] For instance see *A Bahia*, vol. 4, no. 1006 (21 March 1899); 'O novo regulamento do imposto de fumo', and *A Tarde*, vol. 5, no. 1275 (4 Jan. 1917); 'O Imposto prohibitivo do fumo'.

[112] *Mensagem*, V. H. Baptista Sodre, 1929, p. 56.

These examples show that the mercantile community organised itself in various ways to win support for the tobacco sector and to block unfavourable state intervention. To enhance the legitimacy and urgency of their claims they often pointed to the miserable lives of the poor peasantry. In his protest against the new 1920 tax, the president of the Associação Commercial da Bahia expressed apprehension that the small farmers, from whose ranks 'stem the large annual production of tobacco that we have', would stop growing tobacco as their revenue from the harvest could well be less than the tax of 300 milreis: 'The planters, after two harvests, often end up with an infinitesimal profit of 200 milreis.'[113] In a telegram to the president of the Republic, Epitacio Pessôa, the Associação Commercial made a plea for abolishing this tax. The merchants stated that it was beyond the small farmers' capacity to pay, despite the apparent large sums brought in by the tobacco sector. It was, according to the merchant's association, usually forgotten that the sector was

> divided into countless insignificant planters, who cultivate even in backyards, obtaining at the end of the harvest a total income inferior to the tax demanded. Enforcing this taxation will mean the end of agriculture here.[114]

As late as 1931, the Centro Industrial do Fumo da Cidade de S. Félix protested against the level of the federal tax on cigars and solicited the support of *interventor* Juracy Magalhães against the federal minister of finance. The industrialists of São Félix referred to the need to 'defend the vital interests of the Bahian proletariat'.[115] A leaflet produced by this Centro stated that:

> [I]t involves tobacco – *lavoura do pobre* –, and cigars – a genuinely national industry […]. Hence, the formidable drop in production of the factories, and, as a result, in the fiscal revenues […] forcing the factories to fire thousands of workers, condemning some of these to starvation (*morte pela fome*). […] tobacco, as the crop of small producers who are unable to organise themselves in unions nor to obtain bank loans to capitalise their production, suffers from the most profound negligence on the part of the government who until today did not provide even minimal support.[116]

We may with reason question the sincerity of these mercantile expressions of sympathy for the tobacco-growing peasantry. While the Bahian elite

[113] Both quotations are from *Relatorio da Associação Commercial*, 1920, pp. 61–2.

[114] Telegram from the president of the Associação Commercial da Bahia to president Epitacio Pessôa, 20 May 1920, in *Mensagem*, J. J. Seabra, 1922, p. 58.

[115] Letter from Arlindo Leoni to Juracy Magalhães, 18 January 1931 (Rio de Janeiro, Fundação Getúlio Vargas, CPDOC, Arquivo Juracy Magalhães/correspondências/municípios, pasta CCLIII São Félix).

[116] Reclamação do Centro Industrial do Fumo da Cidade de S. Félix, Rio de Janeiro, 14 Dec. 1931, pp. 4, 6, 10. (Rio de Janeiro, Fundação Getúlio Vargas, CPDOC, Arquivo Juracy Magalhães/correspondências/municípios, pasta CCLIII São Félix).

acknowledged the importance of the small producers and was aware of their rather precarious economic position, the sources do not give any indication of a real interest in the peasantry. We must assume that the social and cultural distance between the 'white' Bahian elite and the 'black' peasantry was too great. The principal concern of the Bahian tobacco elite was to safeguard its profit margins and to fend off taxation, rather that to sympathise with a peasantry which was still viewed with many of the prejudices of the slave system.

Conclusion

In this article we have demonstrated the importance of tobacco for the economy and society of Bahia from 1870 until the 1930s. This export crop was cultivated by a multitude of small-scale peasant families, in general descendants of the slave population brought to the region during the colonial period and the first half of the nineteenth century. We have shown how tobacco evolved from a colonial cash crop closely linked to the slave trade into an export crop which linked the region to the expanding world market. During the period 1870–1930 tobacco was the second export crop of Bahia. In the Recôncavo it was without doubt the most important cash crop. It provided the government with much needed income, and it gave rise to a small but dynamic cigar manufacturing sector. In addition, it guaranteed Bahian peasant families a source of cash income to supplement their subsistence agriculture.

It is clear that tobacco was important for the socio-economic development of Bahia. Taxes on tobacco exports, but also of the cigar industry and the small-scale farmers, yielded a substantial part of the income of the government of Bahia. Furthermore, tobacco (together with coffee and some basic foodcrops such as beans, maize and manioc) lent some dynamism to the rural and small-town economy of the Recôncavo. On the other hand, tobacco did not stimulate much diversified agro-industrial development beyond the direct processing of tobacco. The poverty of the peasantry precluded the development of an internal regional market with sufficient potential for the wider accumulation of commercial and industrial capital in the Recôncavo, unlike the more dynamic regional commercial and industrial development based (in part) on family farm agriculture which took place in other parts of Brazil, such as São Paulo and the southern states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina. Nevertheless, this study shows that export-oriented agriculture in Brazil was not confined to large-scale plantations. It is significant that small-scale peasant production in Bahia was an essential and sustainable element of export-oriented economic development.

Tobacco is a crop which favours small-scale peasant cultivators. This is supported by the fact that no large-scale capitalised tobacco plantations emerged in Bahia between 1870 and 1930. However, tobacco production in Bahia also points to the limitations of too rigid a crop determinism. In this region, tobacco was not a high-quality cash crop. Historically, Bahian tobacco agriculture was determined by its insertion into a plantation system dominated by slavery and sugar. Tobacco offered an option for 'free' rural producers to secure access to land, on which they could also cultivate basic food crops. After the abolition of slavery in 1888, tobacco growing became the basis of a peasantry who supplied the market with cheap tobacco. The resilience of peasant production was also a consequence of the complementarity of peasant production and rural capitalism. In general, landowners lacked the capital to pay wage labour or to modernise their landholdings. By giving the peasantry access to their land, they could control the labour of the peasant population and at the same time secure the production of a profitable cash crop.[117] Although the tobacco growers had to pay for the land by providing both labour for the landlord and a part of their tobacco, they were able to sustain their small-scale agriculture by combining subsistence and market crops. Tobacco cultivation thus granted a degree of economic autonomy to the peasantry. The system was thus mutually rewarding for tobacco cultivators and for landowners. The Bahian example makes clear that the existence of large land-holdings does not always lead to the destruction of peasant production.

This positive link between tobacco and small-scale peasant production was offset by the insecurity and inequality which also characterised the tobacco sector in Bahia. The climate, with its extremely dry or wet periods, meant that tobacco growers ran the risk of losing their crop (although this was more severe in the *caatinga* and *sertão* regions than in the Recôncavo itself). More importantly, access to the means of production, most notably land, was determined by patterns of marked social inequality. Most peasant producers were dependent on medium-sized, relatively better-off farmers and local notables for access to land, credit, inputs (especially manure), consumer goods, and for the sale of their tobacco. Locked in a permanent 'debt squeeze', they had to hand over part of their produce and labour time to landowners and creditors.

The regional tobacco elite was linked to the world market through an international system of trade and credit dominated by European (mostly German) importers. Some of the large exporting houses in Salvador were foreign-owned; others were directly linked to commercial firms in

[117] In this sense the Bahian tobacco growers resembled their counterparts in the Dominican Republic in the same period. See Baud, *Peasants and Tobacco*.

Hamburg and Bremen. This article has left these international networks largely out of consideration, but it is noteworthy that Bahian exporters were not completely helpless in the face of this international domination. The European importers depended on the Bahian exporters for access to the much valued Bahian tobacco, and the regional tobacco elite successfully defended their position until the First World War. The Bahian merchants were generally seen as astute bargainers in the international tobacco trade, and managed to establish some very successful firms. However, the financial benefits derived from this position did not reach the cultivators. The tobacco-producing peasant households have continued to be associated with extreme rural poverty right up to the present day.

This brings us to an essential difference between the position of the Bahian tobacco peasantry and that of tobacco growers in the Dominican Republic and Colombia, or of coffee producers in Antioquia or Costa Rica. The social inequality that was evident in the tobacco sector of the Bahian Recôncavo rested upon marked ethnic cleavages. Most peasants were descended from the black slave population. The archives throw little light on this aspect of rural society, but there is no doubt that a large proportion of the poor tobacco peasants were of Afro-Bahian (black and mulatto) descent. During the period under study, the social and cultural legacy of slavery, together with the overt and more subtle forms of discrimination which pervaded social life in Bahia, contributed to the social exclusion of poor peasants. In the Dominican Republic and Antioquia social differences were mitigated by the (perceived) ethnic homogeneity of the rural population. This homogeneity formed the basis of paternalistic relations, which provided the peasant producers with a minimum level of security. It also led to political projects which aimed to incorporate this population, articulated in 'inclusive' regional or national ideologies. The ethnic homogeneity of the population, and especially of peasants and elite, formed the basis of a nationalist romanticisation of the peasantry and fostered a discourse of social integration, economic progress and regional chauvinism. On a more practical level, it tended to mitigate the worst consequences of the social stratification taking place in these societies. This is not to say that there was no social inequality, but just that peasants had more space for negotiation and upward mobility.

The situation in Bahia was completely different. Although paternalism between peasant cultivators and local *coronéis* certainly existed, social relations in the Bahian countryside were governed by ethnic or racial distance, which served to reproduce the socio-economic subordination of the tobacco peasantry. It may also have contributed to the relative lack of interest in the peasant population displayed by the various segments of the

Bahian elite. Whereas the archives in Antioquia and the Dominican Republic provide abundant – admittedly often distorted – information about rural society, the Bahian situation is met with silence. Tobacco, as the *lavoura dos pobres*, hardly aroused any interest among the economic and political elites of the Recôncavo or Salvador. Bahian 'capitalists' and politicians directed their attention (and their money) to the booming cacao region in the south, and for many years to the hopeless project of reviving the sugar industry. Tobacco was only discussed when it was necessary to oppose undesirable state intervention.

Although this issue needs further substantiation and reflection, the Bahian tobacco growers can be situated somewhere between the 'reconstituted peasantries' of the Caribbean described by Sidney Mintz for slave societies, and the 'creole peasantries' found in Costa Rica, Colombia and the Dominican Republic. Whereas peasant production proved unsuccessful for ex-slaves in the Caribbean, the Bahian peasant sector was able to insert itself into the market economy, and continues to exist until the present day. On the other hand, it never obtained the political and ideological support enjoyed by the 'creole' peasantries which came into existence in many parts of Spanish America. Our analysis of the Bahian tobacco sector thus suggests that a very specific form of peasant production came into existence in the Recôncavo. It also shows that the one-sided attention given to plantation-based export agriculture in Brazilian historiography is unwarranted. In this way this article may therefore stimulate historical research on other instances of small-scale export agriculture in Brazil.