Economic History of Cocoa in Southern Bahia
Its role on economy, society and culture
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Thesis presented to Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo of Fundação Getulio Vargas, as a requirement to obtain the title of Master in International Management (MPGI).

Knowledge Field:
International Economy and Finance

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ABSTRACT

Using an historical point of view and using the analysis of Jorge Amado in his books and works on cocoa, I will analyze the relation between Cocoa’s crop and the Bahian society that created the “cocoa civilization” using Adonias Filho’s words. “Cocoa” is the umbrella encompassing the varying and often conflicting demands and agendas of cocoa men and women, agencies and authorities. I will analyze the possible causes of the actual crisis of the cocoa economy in Southern Bahia.

RESEARCH QUESTION: How and why cocoa was important locally for economic development, social and political reasons?

RESEARCH TASKS: The purpose of this project is to explore the possible role of the economy of cocoa in the developing process of the southern region of Bahia. The study also aims to explain the effect of the cocoa culture in the creation of a “cocoa civilization”.

KEY WORDS: Cocoa Civilization, Jorge Amado, Cocoa Cycle
RESUMO

Utilizando um ponto vista histórico e usando a análise feita por Jorge Amado nos seus livros e estudos sobre o cacau, analisarei a relação entre a cultura do cacau e a sociedade baiana que criou, segundo a definição de Adonias Filho, a “civilização do cacau”. “Cacau” é um conceito que reúne as múltiplas, e muitas vezes conflitantes, demandas e programas dos homens e mulheres, agências e autoridades do cacau. Analisarei as possíveis causas da crise atual da economia do cacau no Sul da Bahia.

QUESTÃO DA PESQUISA: Como e por que o cacau foi importante localmente para o desenvolvimento econômico, e para as razões políticas e sociais?

OBJETIVO DA PESQUISA: O objetivo desse projeto é de explorar a possível função da economia do cacau no processo de desenvolvimento do sul da Bahia. Este estudo pretende também explicar o efeito da cultura do cacau na criação da “civilização do cacau”

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Civilização do cacau, Jorge Amado, Ciclo do cacau
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Source: IBGE – 2006
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Source: IBGE - 2006
Figure 3: Municipal subdivision of Ilhéus-Itabuna microregion

Source: IBGE - 2006
Introduction

“Cacau acabou” (“cocoa’s finished”) were among the first words of Portuguese I heard in Bahia. Attempting to explain that I had come to study “the crisis”, the librarian shook his hand and assured me that cocoa was done for. Tourism was the thing now, Ilhéus hopes that the growing tourist trade will be its salvation. These words and the accompanying shake of head became a common reaction to the first mention of “cocoa”. Workers and producers alike – usually those who had given up on cocoa, selling their farms or joining the landless movement – insisted that the crop was done for and it was time to try something else. It appeared from talking to these people that I had travelled several thousand miles for nothing. And yet, for every person who had decided that cocoa was a dead loss, another remained convinced not just that it would survive, but that it had to survive.

It is not my contention that, as I was often told, “cocoa is finished”, but that one particular model of cocoa and regional development is coming to an end. Why this mode of cocoa-dominated and, specifically plantation-dominated development prevailed, how and why it has collapsed in the southern Bahian municipalities and their two million inhabitants (IBGE – Instituto Brasiliiero da Geografia – Estatistica – 2007), largely dependent on the cocoa crop for the last century, are the subjects of this study.

After a few months of preliminary research in Italy, I spent one year in Brazil and I went to the cocoa region, researching in the library at the local university and at CEPLAC – Comissão Executiva de Plano da Lavoura Cacaueira, the federal cocoa agency – and talking to as many of those directly involved in cocoa as I could. This work seeks to address the collapse of the cocoa economy as a whole, it takes an integrated approach to economical, historical, socioeconomic and political aspects of cocoa production. The danger of such an approach is, of course, that it remains superficial and that by attempting to examine the connections and interactions of a number of aspects, the researcher does violence to each of them. Each of the areas examined in this work could undoubtedly be (and elsewhere have been) examined in greater depth. In this sense, the work is unfinished. Its value is that it brings together disciplines which have traditionally remained discrete.
Why Cocoa, why Bahia?

The question which any choice of subject matter raises, particularly in the realm of social sciences, is why this and why now. Why cocoa and why Bahia? The answer in this case is straightforward. For most of the last century, the population of southern Bahia has depended on cocoa. Indeed, for a large portion of that time, cocoa money was essential to the state as a whole. In 1930, for example, earnings from cocoa taxes provided nearly 30% of the state’s income (Bondar; 1938). Half a century later, as the petrochemical industry of Camaçari reduced the state’s dependence on the cocoa crop, cocoa was still a major contributor to Bahian state finances and the principal source of agricultural revenue. In the harvest year 1979, cocoa and its derivatives generated a little under US$1 billion in export nominal value, more than the 70% of the total Bahian exports. While this was a great value to the state, it was essential to the municipalities of the cocoa belt, which were almost entirely dependent on cocoa income for jobs, the provision of services and the preservation of social structures.

Yet by 1997/98 production had fallen to 170.000 tons (lowest level since the crises of the late 60s), while the grindings had risen to 188.000 tons (ICCO Annual Report; 1998/1999). In other words, Brazil, once the world’s largest producers of cocoa and, for most of the twentieth century one of the top three global producers, was importing cocoa. By 1995, cocoa contributed less than 20% of the state export revenues (PROMOEXPORT BAHIA; 1996). From a state of regional dependency, by 1994, the collapse of the monoculture economy led to the dismissal of thousands of workers (250.000 according the CNPC – Conselho Nacional dos Produtores de Cacau, a workers’ organization, but this data is almost certainly overestimated), and to the collapse of municipal income, with previously rich municipalities, such as Ilhéus, running up deficits of tens of millions of dollars. As the

![Cocoa Export % on Total State Export](chart1.png)

_Chart 1 – Source: CEPLAC, Informações Estatísticas do Cacau, 1996_
The cocoa economy collapsed, existing social problems of chronic poverty, migration and the growth of the rural and urban slums were exacerbated, the remaining areas of the Atlantic Forest came under renewed and greater threat and wealthy planters felt the squeeze of the debts that they had no means (and little intention) of paying off. By 1998 it was clear that golden age of Bahian cocoa was over and until now a valid solution for the region and for profitability of the cocoa economy wasn’t restored.

The ostensible causes of this collapse were external: historically low cocoa prices in the late 80s and early 90s, unfavorable rainfall patterns and the appearance of the Witches’ Broom disease. While many saw these as the sole culprits, exacerbated by the inaction of an ungrateful government, and based their solutions on this “situational” analysis, others saw the crisis as a manifestation of structural weaknesses in the sector, these weaknesses were identified as the lack of vertical integration (the absence of an efficient and well-integrated agro-industrial model) the absence of producer organization, the land-holding structure and the associated mode of cultivation prevalent in the region.

The answer to the question “why cocoa”, then, is not so much that cocoa matters (not in the terms of this study, at least) but that the incomes and people dependent on cocoa matter. The crop, the bean and its derivatives are not the focus of this study. “Cocoa” is rather the umbrella encompassing the varying and often conflicting demands and agendas of cocoa men and women, agencies and authorities. Understood in this sense, cocoa is important locally for economic, social, political and environmental reasons, and to demonstrate this is my research task. By extension, it has resonances for others areas of tropical agriculture, for economies, regions and countries which attempt or fail to reconcile social, economic and environmental aspects of their agricultural economies.

Cocoa: the Crop and the Region

Cocoa is a tropical crop. It requires a hot humid climate with a temperature varying between 20-22°C and annual precipitation of between 1200-2000mm with a monthly minimum between 100-130mm. The major producing regions of the world are situated between 15-20° north and south of the equator, with the greatest production sites within 10° of the equator.

Cocoa-growing areas in Bahia are found in a belt up to 70km from the coast. The areas are typified by two climatic zones. Near the coast, in a belt averaging 40km wide, the climate is that of the tropical forest: hot humid with no defined dry season and average...
rainfall in the driest month of 60mm and total annual rainfall around 1300mm. The wettest months are generally between February and July. Average temperature is high and vary little during the year. The majority of municipalities traditionally associated to the cocoa monoculture are in this zone: Arataca, Camacã, Ilhéus, Itabuna, Itajuípe, Itamaraju, Ubaitaba, Una and Uruçuca.

Between 40 and 70 km from the coast, average temperatures are again high and vary little over the year. However, there is a drier period between August and September. This region was typically characterized by the presence of the cocoa culture but not as a monoculture.

Given that the geographical and topical foci of this study are the cocoa region and the cocoa economy, a few observations should be made about the use of the terms “region” and “economy”. In truth, the “cocoa economy” is merely the economy of what has traditionally been called the “cocoa region” a region in which the petrochemical, retail, tourist, health, telecommunications and – to a lesser extent – industrial sectors have been or are becoming important. The idea that this region is discrete and subject to little interaction with the rest of Bahia or Brazil is itself a fiction.

This region can be defined in a number of ways. Based on an IBGE classification of 1985 the cocoa “region” covers 70 municipalities and is called “Mesorregião do Sul Baiano”. But, as Gasparetto (1993) point out, the unity of cocoa-growing areas as a “region” is artificial. Cocoa is not an important part of the economy of Porto Seguro, now a major center of tourism or of the municipalities in the extreme south of the state such as Canavieiras. The same can be said of Valença area, more influenced by the Salvador metropolitan region. Even within the cocoa “core”, the Ilhéus-Itabuna axis, where cocoa has historically dominated, less than a third of the municipalities can be called “cocoa municipalities” in the sense that cocoa is their dominant crop or source of income. The extension of the concept of “cocoa region” to other municipalities concern the regional identity and the political function. Clearly, if 70 municipalities, over one fifth of the total Bahian municipalities, and their population can be considered a homogenous region, with one economy and common political aims, they represent a powerful constituency for those who claim to represent the interest of cocoa. Gasparetto (1993) considered that 30-some municipalities constituted the cocoa region, this reduction is symbolic.
Part I – Cocoa: A long journey to Bahia

This section is based on the premise that history and anecdotes about history have played and continue to play a significant role in the development of the cocoa “region” and its inhabitants. A wide variety of institutions and arrangements, whether social, economic, political or cultural are created whose form at any one time is to a large degree determined by their history. This is, of course, not to say that phenomena cannot be legitimately analyzed without their historical context. It would be reasonable to adopt a synchronic approach or to present historical aspects for their background or contextual interest. Such is the method commonly adopted by much social and economic research in developing countries. However, there can be a particular value in the historian’s approach to the study of contemporary social, political and economic arrangements. This approach allows us to, “exploit the diachronic focus of history to bring to life the social processes that are vital to our understanding of community life” (M. Bullmer, D.P. Warwik; 1993). In the case of the Bahian cocoa economy, this seems particularly appropriated. The aim of this study is to adopt an integrated approach to the understanding of the dynamic process in which political, socio-economic and agronomic aspects of the cocoa region interact over time.

This section does not pretend to be a complete history of the cocoa economy or its producers. Nor is it an institutional history. The focus of this work is the birth and early growth of the region, its economy and social structures in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After a brief introduction to the history of cocoa cultivation in South and Central America this work examines features of the history of cocoa and the cocoa region which contribute to an understanding typical of social processes, economic structures and agricultural practices. The features that continue to define the cocoa region were established long before the advent of effective government intervention in the form of credit, export, extension and research services. These interventions, innovative in promise but rarely in practice, did little to change, and in many cases served to reinforce more fundamental patterns of behavior and modes of development. For this reason, most attention is given to the history of cocoa until 1931, the time of the first significant direct state intervention in the cocoa economy in the shape of the Institute do Cacau da Bahia (ICB). The conditions surrounding the formation of the ICB in 1931 and of CEPLAC (Comissão Executiva do Plano da Lavoura Cacaueira) in 1957.
Origins: Cocoa in Meso- and Latin America

*Thenbroma cacau*, variously interpreted as the “drink of God”, “drink of the gods” or more correctly as “food of the gods”, has always been a prestige crop. The cocoa bean has been used as currency and its consumption, for most of the recorded history of its interaction with people, has been a mark of wealth and status. Originating in the tropical regions of South and Central America and common in the Orinoco and Amazon basins, cocoa has been widely cultivated in humid tropical lowlands for thousands of years. To the Maya, Toltec, Aztecs and Inca the cocoa tree was known by a variety of names. The word “cocoa” or “cacao” used today, derives from “*cacauatl*”, meaning “cocoa tree” in Nahuatl, the language of the Toltec and subsequently of the Aztecs. The Mesoamerican Quetzalcoatl myth, which describes cocoa’s divine origins, endorsed its prestige status. Traditionally the Toltec and Aztec god of the morning and evening star, Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent god, was also the patron of priests. Linnaeus’ *Theobroma Cacau* accepted into the scientific idiom this mythic provenance and sacerdotal usage. The following version of the myth derives from Bondar (1938: 7-8):

“Quetzalcoatl, the prophet farmer, had brought from paradise seeds of the cocoa tree and from them had nourished himself, acquiring knowledge of all things. In his magnificent gardens near the city of Talzitepec, these seeds germinated and the cocoa tree became one of the most beautiful adornments of the gardens.

His palaces in Tula were the most beautiful in the world; gold, precious stones and the rarest metals were the only materials used in their construction. The prophet was surrounded by fortune and by the veneration of his disciples and was adored by his people. Human ambition, however, knows no limits and Quetzalcoatl, unfulfilled, aspired to immortality. A wicked sorcerer, envious of his happiness, persuades him to taste a drink that will satisfy his desire, claiming that he will receive the marvelous gift of immortality, if he drinks from the cup. Quetzalcoatl does not hesitate to empty the cup, but instead of immortality the promised prize is the loss of his reason. And so, he destroys all he has built, his palaces and his magnificent gardens, and crosses the Yucatan, demented, until the Great Spirit carries him off and turns him into the god of rain and dew.

His disciples retained many of his teachings and passed them on to new followers and in thanks to the prophet who had taught them the cultivation of the cocoa tree,
the peoples of America, from the Amazon to Niagara worshipped him under the name of Votam, which in the tzindale and tzolzila languages means “snake dressed in precious and divine feathers”.

Cocoa, in early legend, is associated with the divine and the sacerdotal, wealth and prestige, with *hubris* and the fall, but also with endurance: its cultivator may fail, but cultivation and the myths that surround it, passed on down the generations, is assured.

When the Aztecs extended their dominance in the fifteenth century through the lands previously held by the Toltec, they found cocoa to be widely cultivated. If cocoa consumption was widespread among the Maya, in the Aztec Empire the manner in which the bean was consumed was determined by social status. While the majority of the population ate bitter cocoa, “cacao bravo” or “patluxe”, the noble classes ate *socunusco*, fine cocoa deriving from the region of that name.

For the majority of the Aztec population, cocoa was a staple. Boiled with water, possibly corn flour and spices, it was a food of the poor, in much the same way as “*pirão de milho*” (corn flour boiled in water) is a staple of the Bahian cocoa region today. With the Spanish arrivals of the sixteenth century, however, this drink was too bitter and they quickly produced a mixture more suited to the European palate by adding sugar and cinnamon or vanilla.

The last Aztec emperor, on hearing the news of the landing of Cortés and his men in 1519, thought that Quetzalcoatl had returned and honored him with the offer of a cup of cocoa. Montezuma was reported by Cortés both to consume and to stock huge quantities of the cocoa bean, received as tribute from the regions of the empire. The value of the bean was such that it was also used as currency — which promoted the counterfeiting of cocoa beans (Coe and Coe; 1996: 99). The district of Tabasco is reported to have paid its tribute in beans, contributing 200 "xequipil" or 1.6 million beans to Montezuma’s stores. Beans were even given to the poor as aims and Bondar reports that 100 beans were also sufficient to buy a relatively good slave. An Aztec price-list for 1545 (Coe and Coe; 1996: 98) suggests a more modest trade-off, with 100 beans buying only a forest rabbit.

**Early exports**

Cocoa was initially produced in the traditional areas of present-day Mexico and Guatemala. At the end of the sixteenth century, however, the labor force in the premier producing region of Soconusco in Guatemala was devastated by disease. With the
collapse of production, cultivation shifted to Venezuela. While Johns (1996) suggests that the characteristics of cocoa as an international trade commodity (namely that it is both highly valuable and highly vulnerable to disruptions in the human and natural environments) had emerged by the mid-eighteenth century, it could be argued that already at the end of the sixteenth century these characteristics were established.

The pattern of shifting production centers, a function of the “forest rent” principle (Ruf; 1993) has marked world cocoa production ever since. This “law”, elaborated by Ruf and deriving from Ricardo's work on wheat, accounts for shifting production centers both within and between regions and countries. The “forest rent” is the difference in costs between cocoa planted on cleared or thinned forest land and cocoa replanted on previously cultivated land. The greater costs of replanting over new plantings accounts for the shift in production centers. It also accounts for cocoa’s consumption of forest capital and is the principal factor to be addressed in the search for a sustainable model of cocoa production. By 1634 cocoa was being exported from present-day Venezuela, which remained the world's principal exporter to seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe (Coe and Coe; 1996: 189-190). As demand increased, so production spread throughout the Caribbean and Central America moving eventually to Africa, Asia and Oceania. Chart 1 shows the shift of production centers between 1500 and 1900.

Exports of cocoa to the Old World were first recorded in 1521, two years after Cortés’ landing, but was the only attempt. Therefore, for the rest of the century, the indigenous people and immigrants in the New World remained the sole consumers of cocoa. It was
only at the beginning of the-seventeenth century that an early version of modern chocolate became popular among the Spanish nobility from where it spread throughout Europe. Chocolate was introduced to the court of France by the marriage of the Infanta, Maria Theresa, to Louis XIV and, by around 1657, had reached the coffee houses of London.

The growth in demand for chocolate in the Old World led Spain to organize and increase cocoa cultivation in the traditional core areas of present-day Mexico and Guatemala. By the first decades of the seventeenth century, the Spanish were exporting large quantities of cocoa. The wealth generated by the export of cocoa beans and products and the interest this raised among other European powers led to several mercantile dilemmas for the Spanish Crown. Keen to maintain their monopoly of the export and processing sectors the Spanish stopped exports of the cocoa bean. A pre-fabricated form of chocolate was produced in the New World, a sort of cake made with sugar, cinnamon and vanilla which could be dissolved in water. The Spanish Crown’s aim was to maintain the monopoly of bean exports and the knowledge required for processing, thus preserving its control over the increasing and increasingly profitable cocoa market. Unsurprisingly, the success of this scheme was short-lived. Black market trade in cocoa exploded and those returning from the New World, familiar with the manufacture of chocolate, started production in the Old World. It was in Spain that the first European factory started operations. With the arrival in the Old World of processing knowledge and the growth in black market trade and the predations of English and Dutch piracy, the Spanish Crown’s attempts to maintain a monopoly collapsed.

Despite Spain’s efforts to control cocoa exports. The trade was hit hard by contraband. This was dominated by the Dutch, who brought hundreds of thousands of slaves to the province in exchange for silver and cocoa beans for the coffee houses of London (Coe and Coe; 1996: 191). Thus, cocoa entered the highly lucrative transatlantic triangle. For the Spanish this led to a new approach. Contraband had assumed such proportions that in 1728 Felipe V sold the monopoly to the Real Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas on condition that they halted all contraband in cocoa from Spanish America at their own cost (Coe and Coe; 1996: 52). It was too late, however. The cultivation of and trade in cocoa was rapidly spreading throughout the New World. The expansion of the golden crop was uncontainable.
Arrival in Bahia

While cocoa cultivation for export characterized Spanish Latin American production from 1600 onwards, cultivation in Brazil remained insignificant in economic terms until the eighteenth century. Wild cocoa was found in the Amazon in the 1650s and the first plantation was established in 1678, but it was only from the end of the eighteenth century that Brazilian cocoa production was of any economic significance. Production was centered in the state of Pará from where missionaries exported cocoa collected from the forest by indigenous laborers. By the middle of the eighteenth century, according to Bondar (1938), cocoa plantings in Brazil reached only 7,000 trees. This may represent an underestimate, however, as by 1780 cocoa production in Pará amounted to 60,395 arrobas (906 tons). Nevertheless, by 1818 production, having peaked in 1814, had only increased to 101,627 arrobas or 1524 tons (Simonsen; 1969: 346-348).

The details of the introduction of cocoa from Pará to Bahia are subject to a measure of disagreement. An Ordem Régia sent in 1665 by Dom Vasco Mascarenhas, Viceroy of Salvador to Paulo Martins Garro, Governor of Pará, instructed the Governor to send seeds, saplings and cultivation instructions to Bahia. While one writer believes that this accounts for the birth of the Bahian cocoa economy (Seligsohn; 1971: 690-694), there is no evidence that the Governor ever met the Viceroy's request and there is no documentary evidence that cocoa plantings in Bahia date from the seventeenth century.

The generally accepted account is that put forward originally by the Jesuit Joaquim da Silva Tavares. Beans brought to Bahia in 1746 by the French colonist Luis Frederico Warneaux were given to the planter Antonio Dias Ribeiro. He planted them on the Fazenda Cubículo, on the right bank of the Rio Pardo in Canavieiras — then part of the Captaincy of São Jorge dos Ilhéos. From here seeds were taken to the present-day municipality of Ilhéus in 1752 giving rise to small plantings there. Zehntner (1914) situates the introduction of cocoa to the present-day municipality of Ilhéus between 1755 and 1760. Whichever is the case, these early plantings were of little significance in terms of the later cocoa boom. Cocoa was abandoned within a few years of its arrival, despite conditions for its cultivation in the region being ideal. Nevertheless, in light of the successful reintroduction of cocoa 80 years later, the failure of this first attempt merits some attention.
A False Start

For the duration of the eighteenth century the Captaincy of Ilhéus was largely absent from the economy of the region. The Carta Régia from Dom João III established the Captaincy of Ilhéus, one of the twelve Captaincies that constituted Colonial Brazil, in 1534. Captaincies were conceded by the Portuguese Crown to the sole exploitation of their recipient who had hereditary rights, could make land grants, raise taxes, license trade and exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction. The aim of the Captaincies was to promote the exploration and colonization of the New World at minimal expense to the Crown. The first donatory, Jorge de Figueiredo Corrêa, like the donatory of the neighboring Captaincy of Porto Seguro, was the archetypal absentee landowner. He had never set foot on his conceded lands when he sold them for 4,825 cruzados to Lucas Giraldo, alleging constant attacks by indigenous tribes and pirates as the cause of the Captaincy’s failure. Under Giraldo’s administration, activity in the Captaincy increased. The first sugar engenhos were established around Canavieiras. Sugar together with tobacco and cotton remained one of the principal export crops of Bahia, with the economy of southern Bahia (the future cocoa region) relying largely on sugar cultivation, timber extraction and food agriculture. Nevertheless, settlement in the Captaincy was slow. The failure of the Captaincy to promote the region was such that in 1761 the Crown repossessed it from the heirs of the donatory (Pang; 1979: 53).

The failure of cocoa to establish itself in the eighteenth century is commonly attributed to a lack of technical knowledge of the imported crop and the lack of sufficient international demand (Garcez; 1975). However, a more important factor may have been the temporary recovery of the sugar industry, whose fluctuating but inevitable decline was intimately connected to the irregular start of cocoa in the southern coastal region. Sugar had been in long-term decline since the birth and growth of the production centers of the Caribbean towards the end of the seventeenth century. These proved both more productive and more accessible to European markets than the traditional Brazilian plantings. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, however, due to disruptions in supply in the Caribbean and particularly in Haiti, the sugar economy of Bahia experienced a temporary revival. This may have captured the attention of the Captaincy, where, compared to the traditional centers of the Recôncavo, sugar production was still limited.

Despite the decay of the sugar economy, the interests of the colonial élite remained in sugar, the prestige crop of the period. As with cocoa at the end of the twentieth century,
this tenacity itself reflected a commitment to the social, economic and political structures associated with the crop. The limited labor and capital resources that were available were focused in other agricultural activities. This factor and the comparative weakness of international demand (chocolate consumption in the Old World was limited to the wealthy and the aristocratic and had not yet been “democratized” and so made available to the mass market) seem to account for the failure of Bahian cocoa in the eighteenth century.
Part II - Cocoa Narratives: The Pioneer Myth

Before looking at the historical record and what critical examinations of that record say about the growth of cocoa in Bahia, it is essential to look at the historical narrative on which the planter élite, as well as most historians and writers, regardless of political perspective, agree. Without examining this narrative, it is questionable to what degree the present economy and the discourse of crisis can be understood. It is a narrative whose key elements - particularly the pioneer planter — are accepted by writers whose views on the process of socio-economic differentiation may differ substantively (such as Adonias Filho and Jorge Amado) and by the region’s historians and sociologists, who may examine critically other aspects of the history or social structures of the region.

For the cocoa élite, the mythology of the pioneer front, specifically the “myth” of the pioneer planter conquering the forest, establishing the stands of cocoa beneath the forest canopy with nothing but the sweat of his own labor, has performed a significant social function throughout the twentieth century. Like the Quetzalcoatl myth, it is an origin myth, describing the birth of an economy, society and civilization ex nihilo. It has fostered and sustained a particular history of the region: that of the essentially democratic and meritocratic origins of the cocoa economy, of an export monoculture to which slave labor was anathema, in sharp contrast to the sugar monoculture that preceded it. The details of this history have been exposed to some critical examination, yet its central figure, the cocoa pioneer as father of the region, remains relatively untouched. It also remains a powerful narrative for the white coastal élite, among whom ownership of cocoa properties is concentrated.

A particularly coherent expression of the pioneer narrative and its implications is to be found in an historical essay, Sul da Bahia: Chão de Cacau by the writer Adonias Filho (1978). This is not the only version of the myth. Indeed, the basic formulation of the narrative, originally an attack on a more established élite group, was that of Antonio Pessoa, the most influential figure in the cocoa region for most of the life of the Old Republic. As Lévi-Strauss (1994: 218) says, “There is no single ‘true’ version of which all the others are but copies or distortions. Every version belongs to the myth”. Adonias Filho’s version is, however, an eloquent exposition of the cocoa narrative. This is a narrative that seeks not only to justify the region’s socio-cultural matrix, but to argue that the characteristics of the developing cocoa economy produced not only a regional culture, but a distinct regional civilization. Founded on the humble origins of the Bahian planter,
this civilization, endemic of southern Bahia, is democratic, anti-aristocratic and opposed both in theory and in practice to slavery.

For Adonias Filho, the history of the cocoa region is characterized by five distinct phases. The first, stretching from the introduction of the cocoa bean to Bahia in 1746 to 1820, the eve of the arrival of the European migrants, was marked by weak attempts at exploration and colonization by the Portuguese. A period of stagnation, it was without consequence in the history of the cocoa region. The second period dates from 1820 to 1895, from the reappearance of cocoa to the time when it was established as a major export crop. This is the age of the *desbravador*, the frontiersman or pioneer, the farmer of humble origins who cleared the forest through his own labor, building the villages that were to become the region’s urban centers. The third age from 1895 to 1930, the year of Vargas’ revolution and the end of the First Republic, was the age of the *coronel*, descendant of the first *desbravadores*. Cocoa became the economic base of the region and Brazil one of the world’s largest producers.

The *coronéis* transformed villages into towns and these, in turn, into cities. The fourth age, dating from 1930 to the creation of CEPLAC in 1957, embraces the period when cocoa was second in the ranks of the nation’s foreign-exchange earners to the time when stagnation, indebtedness and falling productivity led to federal intervention in the shape of CEPLAC. Although this period may have seen the replacement of the *coronel*, his influence had already proved decisive in determining the nature of the region; the progress he set in motion had seen the development of a nascent region. The final phase, from 1957 onwards, saw the modernization of the cocoa business through technological innovation, the restructuring of industry and the formation of a regional conscience.

**Desbravador and Coronel**

Civilization in the region, Adonias Filho argues, remained coastal and precarious well into the nineteenth century. The predations of the indigenous *aimoré* contributed to the depopulation of the *engenhos* and the reluctance of immigrants to progress beyond subsistence agriculture and move away from the coast. However, it was principally the impenetrable jungle and difficulties caused by climate and disease which meant that the exploration and development of the region was not driven by the *engenho* or the *latifundio* (cattle-ranch). Cocoa, arriving centuries after the patriarchy and aristocracy of the colonial era, gave birth to a distinctive civilization. To the *desbravador*, slave labor, whether
indigenous or African, was anathema. While black slaves were employed on the coastal properties, where the sugar mills were located, slave labor, according to the cocoa narrative, played no part in the exploration of the forest. The *grapiúna desbravador* in contrast (to the coffee barons of Rio de Janeiro in Rio Paraíba do Sul valley) did not use slave labor in the exploration of the land. Indeed, Adonias Filho argues, some *desbravadores* were themselves of African origin, even before abolition. In 1844, the first “opening” of the forest in the area that was to become the town of Tabocas (present-day Itabuna) was made by the Afro-Brazilian Manuel Constantino with Severino do Amor Divino. The indigenous people were also to be found alongside the *desbravador*, clearing forest with and for him and then living side by side once the forest was opened and a settlement founded.

The *desbravador*, who would later evolve into the *coronel*, was the pioneer who cleared the forest with his own labor, going into the forest with his machete in one hand and a bag of cocoa beans in the other. As Adonias Filho says:

> “The *desbravador*, before becoming *de facto*, the *coronel*, penetrated and explored the land with his own labor. He worked, he didn’t simply order others to work, or, when he did order others, he too joined them. We can say with complete confidence that, by taking from Nature the virgin land, with the sweat of his brow, he replaced the forest with one more agreeable, that is, with the forests of cocoa trees.” (Adonias Filho; 1978: 43)

Arriving after 1822, the *desbravador* is explicitly Brazilian. He may happen to be descended from an African slave, an Indian, a European colonist or a mixture, but he is first and foremost a Brazilian. He is also a man, the cocoa myth is an exclusively male one in which women play effectively no part. As female workers, wives and prostitutes, rather than *coronéis*, pioneers, politicians or writers, they are invisible from this heroic history. Adonias Filho encapsulates the wider political and ideological implications of this nationalist claim, contrasting the Brazilian (and Bahian) pioneer with his colonial predecessors. “Precisely where the Portuguese colonizer had not succeeded, even with the help of the Governors General, over three centuries in responding to the challenge of the forest, the *desbravador* managed it in less than a century” (Adonias Filho; 1978).
The conquest of the forest and the forging of the cocoa economy was therefore both a very Bahian and a very Brazilian victory. The cocoa pioneer, future coronel and motor of regional development and civilization is not only a heroic figure, but specifically a Bahian and a republican, forging a region as an individual free of state interference or the burdens of history. Indeed, these two extracts express the principal ideologies of the cocoa crop. The importance placed on the “força do braço” (“strength of his arm”) and the “suor do rosto” (“sweat of his brow”), in contrast to the failures of the colonial “master”, is the discourse of a new ideology. In the Colonial and Imperial periods, manual labor was considered the most demeaning of activities, while the ownership of sugar mills conferred the highest status. The emphasis placed on the role of manual labor in the birth of the cocoa civilization is part of a post-colonial, republican and capitalist discourse: the cocoa culture, primarily a Bahian and secondarily a Brazilian one is, above all, a progressive one. As Prado Junior (1942) argues, it was this capitalist spirit that the republic endorsed. “In the area of economics, we observe the blossoming of a spirit which, if not new, had nevertheless kept itself in the shadows and in the background: the longing for enrichment, for material prosperity. This, during the monarchy, had never been viewed as a legitimate and fully recognized ideal. The new regime would consecrate it.”

The persuasiveness of the birth of cocoa as a republican democratic monoculture depends on its association with the development of republican capitalism. The table below makes explicit the historical contiguities which are left unstated in the cocoa narrative. The nineteenth century cocoa dates are subject to slight variation between commentators. In Adonias Filho's scheme the dates of the second and third cycle are 1820 and 1895, whereas for Bondar (1938) the significant dates are 1822 and 1890. Students of the period, regardless of their differing approaches, commonly adopt 1890 as the starting point of their study of the cocoa economy.

The historians, such as Adonias Filho, who would argue that the coronel is the basis of this unique civilization must establish fundamental differences between the republican coronel, direct descendant of the desbravador, and the colonial senhor de engenho. The sugar mill and its senhor become touchstones and any suggestion of an overlap between engenho and fazenda, between senhor and coronel, anathema. Unlike the sugar plantation, Adonias Filho argues, the cocoa plantation is not a feudal village as it is not slave-based. The splendor of the “casa grande”, contrasts with the poverty of the cocoa fazenda.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starting Date</th>
<th>Macro-history</th>
<th>Cocoa Myth-history</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1746</td>
<td>Colonial Brazil. In Bahia, sugar-export economy. Early coffee plantings in southern Brazil.</td>
<td>Arrival of cocoa in Bahia. False start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1822</td>
<td>Independence declared.</td>
<td>Arrival of the German immigrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888-90</td>
<td>Slavery abolished (1888). Republic established (1889)</td>
<td>Cocoa boom “starts” (1890).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>Vargas comes to power.</td>
<td>ICB established to direct the development of the cocoa region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Work on Brasilia begins under Kubitschek. New capital inaugurated in 1960.</td>
<td>CEPLAC established as credit agency. In early 1960s expands activities, directing regional development for over 20 years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cocoa *coronel* is city-based, a municipal agent who has no interest in constructing a self-contained and self-sustaining unit in the manner of the *senhor* of the sugar *Recôncavo* or the coffee barons of São Paulo. Indeed, it was the *coronéis* who carved many of the cocoa region’s towns and cities - for example Itabuna - out of the forest. Because of his humble origins, the *coronel* maintained the habits and trappings of his roots, with the result that the cities he constructed never lost their rural atmosphere. This is in sharp contrast to the *senhor do engenho*, the cattle-rancher or coffee planter, who did not have to build an economy with the labor of his own hands. Having created the agricultural foundations of the region, the cocoa *coronel* created the urban base for a regional civilization, again with his own labor:

“In the first instance [sugar and cattle] we see the authoritarian and despotic tradition, more or less atavistic, a natural consequence of an aristocratic and slave based background. In the second [cocoa] the humble origins of the man whose achievements are realized with great effort and through his own work.” (Adonias Filho; 1978: 68).

The *coronel* having himself once been “a worker of humble origin” (Adonias Filho; 1978: 67), differed little from the laborer in his habits and diet. His family was founded on principles of democracy and anti-slavery. From these social foundations and the racial harmony brought about by miscegenation a democratic political spirit developed, manifesting itself in the public administration of the *coronéis* and of their sons who
assumed power in the 1930s. This is the generation whose legitimacy rests on its “pioneer” past, but which is comfortably removed from the more dangerous aspects of that past. As Pang (1979: 128) puts it,

“Thus, Astor and Mario (sons of Antonio Pessoa), Gileno Amado (sons-in-law of Misael Tavares), and Ramiro and Epaminondas (sons of Ramiro Ildefonson Araujo de Castro) came to represent cacao interests in municipal, state, and federal politics. Only thirty years removed from violence, banditry, and crime, these second-generation politicians of Ilhéus and Itabuna exhibited refinement in manner, urbanity in outlook, and conservatism in philosophy. Europe, Rio and São Paulo replaced Salvador as the sources of pleasure, education, and retirement.

The best intendentes of Ilhéus at the beginning of the twentieth century, Adonias Filho argues, were the most influential coronéis, Ernesto de Sã Bittencourt Cámara, Domingos Adami, Misael Tavares, Antonio Pessoa and Eustáquio Bastos. With one foot on the fazenda and one in the city, the coronel knew the needs of the rural environment, particularly the importance of transport. The improvements in transportation in the region, developments essential for progress and urbanization, came only when the coronel became the prime factor in public administration. The civilization founded by the first generation of coronéis was rural and democratic, or to use contemporary terminology, an example of bottom-up development, established through what may be called the “peasant path” to capitalism. (Ruf; 1993).

Adonias Filho diverges from the received narrative in one significant respect, arguing that the coronel was essentially non-violent, preferring to resolve land disputes through judicial rather than violent means. He cites the development of the judiciary, the number of sons of coronéis who studied law in Salvador and the fact that in 1900 the Court of Justice in Ilhéus was the busiest in Bahia after the one of the capital, Salvador. Most histories (Campos 1936, Wright 1976) and much literature of the region stress the violence with which the region was synonymous until the 1930s. Certainly the violence of a pioneer frontier has given the early years of the cocoa boom a legendary aura, propagated in part by a literature to which inhabitants of the cocoa region are very attached. Despite Adonias Filho’s contentions, the use and abuse of legal procedure was undoubtedly a characteristic of the cocoa boom and was important in the process of land concentration. Historical research (particularly that of Wright (1976) and Mahony (1996)) shows that the picture of violent clashes and feuding presented in Amado’s Terras do
Sem Fim probably bears more resemblance to occurrences of the period than the narrative of a disputatious but legally-minded élite proposed by Adonias Filho.

The teleological drive of Adonias Filho’s narrative is concluded with the formation of a regional perspective, previously lacking, by the actions first of the ICB and subsequently of CEPLAC. Individual producers and distinct producer groups gained a common aim as municipals came to constitute a region through CEPLAC’s reaffirmation of a unique cocoa civilization. The great emblem of the achievements of this civilization, he claims, was the building of the new port of Ilhéus for the purpose of the export of cocoa.

Such a view still has considerable resonance. In interviews with producers during the periods of my visits in Bahia, it was clear that the construction of the port not only testified to the apogee of planter and exporter influence, but was still felt to be an enduring testament to the regional importance of cocoa and its producers. The practical contribution and emblematic significance of Ilhéus’ deep-water port within the dominant cocoa narrative is echoed not only by planters, but also in the academic literature. Knight (1972: 269), for example, has drawn the port as an example of “CEPLAC’s most outstanding achievement in infrastructure investment”. Alternative positions have, however, been adopted to this model of development, by, for example Ridings (1973: 350), who sees resources overconcentrated in promoting the vertical integration of a monoculture, in what is essentially an expression of the priorities of an export economy dominated by a narrow and unrepresentative planter élite.

As justification of the agrarian structure is essential to the legitimization of economic and social arrangements, Adonias Filho concludes his history with some remarks on agrarian structures, emphasizing the democratic distribution of land in the cocoa region, marked by the “domination of medium and small properties”. Stating that the vast majority of cocoa farms occupy an area of under 100 hectares, Adonias Filho (1978: 107-8) concludes: “The distribution of land in a region practically devoid of idle land, flagrantly denies the latifiúndio and affirms through its social use the democratic distribution of property”. As Mahony (1996: 21) discovered, the consensus accepting this particular aspect of the cocoa narrative is broad - critical examinations of the historical record are not necessarily welcome and may meet with a range of reactions from recognition to disbelief and hostility.

These are the broad lines of the cocoa narrative as expressed by Adonias Filho. His history is organic and teleological. The natural growth of the cocoa economy from
untamed forest to a modern agribusiness is self-sufficient and progressive, driven by endogenous factors, the principal factor being the desbravador-coronel. The myth states that the seed of a new civilization was implanted in a forest untouched by a senescent and infertile colonial world. From the forest, a new and independent civilization is born, replacing the wild Nature of virgin forest with the man-made, productive forest of cocoa trees. While blood surrounds the process of land concentration, the birth itself is clean, untainted by the distortions and deformations of the civilization it replaces. There are obvious resonances between the Bahian pioneer narrative and other such narratives, particularly the myth of the American pioneers of the West.

The narrative is not untrue in the sense that it is a lie; rather it is based on a selective choice of those elements of the past which legitimize and a rejection of those elements that might contradict present arrangements. It also clearly demonstrates the political importance of History. The “natural” evolution of the region determines and justifies current arrangements. Ownership of such a version clearly also seeks to preclude change. The narrative — which when it was formulated by Pessoa was a means of attacking the tenacious privilege of the old aristocracy — has become a strategy in defense of the privilege and pre-eminence of the present élite. And as important myths are extremely adaptable, so this myth is, at the end of the century, being adapted and reinvigorated because of perceived threats to the cocoa élite. Regional financial crisis, which has seen the collapse of plantations and been accompanied by the rise of the landless movement, has generated a crisis of legitimacy. In this context, an explicatory and legitimizing narrative plays an important and explicit role in stating the identity of the local cocoa élite and its right to pre-eminence.

The Narrative and the Record: Early Planter Families before 1889

Many of the arguments advanced by Adonias Filho echo in the academic literature. Mahony (1996), Wright (1976) and to a certain extent Garcez (1975, 1977) provide critical examinations of the formation of the cocoa economy and cocoa-determined social institutions during the boom period. Zehntner (1914), Bondar (1938), Caldeira (1954) and Seligsohn (1971) provide variations on the dominant narrative. Campos (1936), aiming to provide a chronicle rather than a history of the region, while confused and sometimes contradictory contains much basic information of which subsequent histories have made selective use. Pereira Filho (1959), while in many respects producing a eulogy of the great and the good from cocoa history and their contemporary descendants, was also the
first to deny the myth that cocoa had been established by those whose only capital was their own labor.

The most complete critical examination of cocoa histories, based on post-mortem estate inventories in the Bahian public archive, the land register, judges’ correspondence and Ilhéus parish registers, is that of Mahony (1996). Critical examination of the dominant cocoa narrative has largely been absent from histories of the region. Wright (1976) goes some way to examining the relationship between the historical record and the cocoa narrative, but Mahony (1996) provides the first thorough critical examination of the pioneer narrative. There remains a considerable amount of work to be done by historians on the history of cocoa and planter families in southern Bahia in the nineteenth century and earlier.

Perhaps the two key dates in the history of the Bahian cocoa narrative are 1822 and 1890, the dates of Independence and Republic, of the arrival of the European immigrants and the monoculture boom. The second chapter in the growth of the Bahian cocoa economy, following the abortive attempt of 1746, is held to start in 1822 with the arrival of the European families who were to constitute the core of the cocoa aristocracy. The dominant cocoa narrative holds that the initial “opening” of the forest and the motor of the cocoa boom was based on a pioneering spirit and a democratic ownership of land. While, it is argued, the cocoa economy was effectively born with the pioneer front in 1890, those who showed the possibilities of cocoa were the industrious German immigrants of 1822”.

Many of the planter families who were to control the terms of the cocoa boom arrived in the region from Europe in 1822 and 1823. The German and Swiss families of Berbert, Steiger, Ninck, Kruschewsky, Schaun and Hohlenwerger came to Bahia in two groups from Rotterdam in around 1822 and 1823 (Campos; 1936, Seligsohn; 1971). 28 families, 161 individuals in total had been contracted in 1818 by two farmers, Sankracker and Weyll, the “solitários do Rio Almada” according to Caldeira (1954), to plant coffee on the Almada river near Ilhéus, where Weyll had obtained the sesmaria. Difficulties of health, climate and equipment depleted the colonist numbers and led to the failure of the project. Those colonists who survived returned to Ilhéus, where according to Seligsohn (1971), the population and Intêndencia of the town helped the colonists to settle at the Banco da Vitoria on the Rio Cachoeira between Ilhéus and Tabocas (present-day Itabuna).
Until the arrival of the colonists, cocoa had all but disappeared from the region’s agriculture. Travelling in the region on the eve of the arrival of the European immigrants, Caldeira noted that despite a happy start and its evident suitability to the climate, cocoa had not flourished. Rather, deforestation for the planting of food crops and sugar cane characterized southern Bahian agriculture (Caldeira; 1954). It was the colonists who, while also planting subsistence crops, re-introduced the cocoa tree. From this moment on, the Colonia de São Jorge, located on the Cachoeira river inland from Ilhéus, started to prosper as the center for the expansion of cocoa plantings and the subsequent development of the Ilhéus-Itabuna cocoa axis. Before cocoa became a significant feature of the region’s agriculture, this section of the region’s élite was firmly established in the region.

They were not, however, the only European immigrants established in the region early in the century. Several planter families who were later significant in the expansion of cocoa were already present in the region at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Some had moved to the region during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from the Northeast searching for fertile and unclaimed land. Some were descendants of those who, like the Spanish colonists of Central America, came prospecting but stayed on to farm. The family of Pedro Cerqueira de Lima was colonial in origin, well known to important planters and financiers from the region’s earlier sugar booms. The Lavigne family claims to be descended from highly skilled craftsmen who came to Brazil with Taunay and the French Artistic Mission in Brazilian 1816 (Campos; 1936).
Part III - Labor relations in the Cocoa Economy

Slave and Free Labor in the Early Cocoa Economy

These established families, whose main economic crops were sugar and timber, but also and increasingly cocoa, relied on a mixture of family, free and slave labor. The cocoa narrative, whether in Adonias Filho’s positivist formulation or in Amado’s darker vision (while not the only literary or historical expressions of the cocoa narrative, nor representing all that these writers wrote on the subject, Adonias Filho and Amado are the two most recognized and renowned “cocoa” writers and their works the most coherent and eloquent formulations of the pioneer myth) holds that the cocoa economy, born after Abolition, was free of slave labor. In fact, all the important cocoa families, Berbert, Cardoso, Gloria, Hohenwerger, Steiger, Abreu, Castro, Sá and Del Rei were slave owners who also employed free labor. It was common for the two groups to work alongside each other on the range of crops cultivated on the early plantations:

“While not all Ilhéus slaves worked in cacao, large numbers if not most of them did. Certainly, they were not excluded from working in cacao. Some were owned by planters whose only crop was cacao, while others belonged to planters who had cacao and a number of other crops, while still others belonged to people who rented them out for all kinds of labor... There was no total division between free and slave labor crops in Ilhéus in the nineteenth century.” (Mahony; 1996: 338).

While Mahony has undertaken the most thorough comparison of record and myth, Pereira Filho had, in 1959, rejected the cocoa pioneer myth and highlighted the link between the established (slave-based) sugar economy and the new cocoa crop:

“Bondar...was wrong when he stated that it [cocoa] is the product of the obscure worker “whose only capital was the force of his labor, which made him triumphant”. On the contrary, the cocoa crop was born alongside the sugar mills, an economy explored at this time on the Almada, Castelo Novo and Provisão plantations belonging to the Cerqueira Lima, the Del Rei and the Adamis, traditional families, who dominated the countryside with their properties." (Pereira Filho; 1959: 17-18).

In contrast to Adonias Filho’s emphasis on black and whites engaged in common cause, in reality, life for slaves on the mixed plantations of Adonias Filho’s “democratic” cocoa region was much the same as for slaves throughout Brazil. Until the abolition of the slave
trade in 1850, slave owners preferred to purchase new slaves rather than invest in the reproduction of those they already owned (Mahony; 1996: 339). While life remained hard, conditions are generally held to have improved after 1850, although some planters may have been successful for a few years in obtaining slaves illegally. By the time that the cocoa crop was held to be economically significant, slavery had been abolished and farms relied on the nominally free descendants of slaves. Partly for this reason, the role of slave labor in the birth of the cocoa economy is entirely absent from the cocoa narrative. Wright (1976), accepting 1890 as the date of the birth of the economy, nevertheless considers that slave labor in the immediate pre-boom period was minimal. He estimates the proportion of slave labor working on the fazendas of the southern coastal region to have been around 10% in 1830. If this is an underestimate, it also masks the role of slaves in the transition from sugar to cocoa over the course of the century. As Mahony (1996) says, “The slaves were certainly instrumental in the changeover from timber and sugar production to cacao production.”

The recorded history of the expansion of cocoa plantings to 1890 and of the boom to 1930 is principally that of the established families and their subsequent move into finance and export, or of their subordination by the entry of cosmopolitan finance and export houses. While the core of the future cocoa élite was European in origin, most migrants to the cocoa region were mulatto or black. In 1872, almost three-quarters of people from other Brazilian states living in Ilhéus were black or mulatto (Mahony; 1997: 62). In terms of population, the region was, therefore, predominantly black and mulatto, a large proportion of whom were migrants. This segment of the population was made up of smallholders and, as smallholders lost their land, by workers. One of the difficulties encountered in writing the history of the majority of the population of the region — these smallholders and laborers who, independently or as waged labor, were responsible for much of the planting — has been their invisibility in the historical record. These groups often left no estates and little documentation and are thus known largely through what can be inferred from migration and planting data or their occasional appearance in the records of established planter families. The absence of their mundane histories of struggle, survival and disappearance is matched only by the erasure of the Imperial and Colonial past of élite planters.

The individual histories that can be salvaged suggest that those Afro-Brazilians who prospered temporarily owed their survival to the successful cultivation of the paternalist
bonds that had developed between favored slaves and their former owners (Mahony; 1996: 73). Success for this group was rare and usually short-lived - those who appear as (relatively) prosperous small farmers at the end of the century have disappeared from the record by the early twentieth century (ibid.: 74). By 1890 when the migrant influx started, the pattern of development of the region was already set:

“There were...a number of well-established and fairly well-established cacao plantations, whose owners were on their way to becoming wealthy. And there were many, many poor people cultivating some cacao on the frontier. But very few of them would prosper from the cacao economy. Instead, they would have their hopes raised and dashed, when they found their lands stolen by people with more resources” (Mahony; 1996: 306).

Late migrants from the sertão of the Northeast, from the interior of Bahia, and particularly those from Sergipe, gravitated to the town of Tabocas (the future city of Itabuna) which offered a point of entry for those who could not hope to establish themselves with the old planter aristocracy of Ilhéus. The migratory flow increased from 1890 as the sugar economy of the Northeast declined and attention turned to the growing wealth of the south of Bahia. In contrast to the sugar engenho, minimal capital was required to establish a plot of cacao trees beneath the forest canopy, and many migrants were able to cut smallholdings out of the forest. The migrant had only to thin the forest to establish his cocoa stands and to clear and burn a plot of land for food crops. Once cleared he would survive on resources from the forest and crops he had planted (such as bean and cassava), and would then send for his family to join him. If they survived the first five years, in which food was scarce and illness likely, the valuable yellow pods would start ear on the cocoa tree These would provide him with a cash income, and in theory the means either to expand his holdings or to pay off debts incurred at the local plantation store. And it was often when the cocoa tree started to produce that the smallholder’s groves attracted the attention of neighboring planters.

**Labor and Migration: the Afro-Brazilian Majority**

By the middle of the century, Ilhéus, and the surrounding area, was still of minor economic significance in the life of the state. It still produced no major crop and had no major industry. Although the presence of cocoa grew over the course of the century, in the life of the state the sugar, tobacco and coffee regions around the Recôncavo were of far
greater significance than southern coastal area. A small group of planter families held the majority of land with poor local or immigrant smallholders accounting for the majority of farmers but very much the minority of land. Farming was mixed, including subsistence crops such as manioc, beans and rice in addition coconut, piassava, coffee and cocoa. Any surplus production of staples and meat was devoted to supplying the state capital, Salvador. Although many planters were making the transition to cocoa, it did not yet predominate and its cultivation for export was not a significant factor in the region’s economy.

The population of southern Bahia was small. The population of Ilhéus in 1818 was 2,400. By 1872 it had only grown to 5,682. 72% of the population was black or mulatto. Of the total free population 65% was black or mulatto (Mahony; 1997: 61). In essence, not only was the majority of the population of the cocoa region black, but the majority (although by no means all) of this black population was free. While the transition from the polyculture of sugar, coffee and timber to cocoa did utilize slave labor census statistics for Ilhéus show that by 1881, of a total population of 10,000, less than 10% were slaves (Mahony; 1997: 61). By 1890 slavery had been abolished. Abolition may have played its part in making the first cocoa boom possible, by temporarily reducing the cost of labor in two ways: first it reduced the cost of existing labor in the region and second, the influx of freed labor from the declining sugar-producing areas of the Northeast kept the price of labor low. In Bahia, where the majority of Afro-Brazilians had been free since the middle of the century, accelerated growth after 1890 was predicated on the availability of cheap free labor. At the end of the nineteenth century, when prime cocoa land (in other words, forest) was freely available, the key factor in tiring the cocoa boom was the availability of cheap labor. As Ruf’s work (1993) has demonstrated, the availability of low cost labor is the precondition of a cocoa boom when land (the other critical factor in a cocoa boom) is plentiful. Labor costs can be kept down either by the use of family labor, or through the variety of methods adopted by planters. This influx of labor was probably the single most important factor in the Bahian cocoa boom. For most of the century, the scarcity of labor had proved the mayor handicap to the expansion of agriculture and the region’s economy. Just as the Captaincy had failed to develop the region, so government-sponsored migration efforts in the first half of the nineteenth century met with little success. At the end of the century, Luis Viana, State Governor commented of the period, “the migrations subsidized by the government with the object of colonizing the southern Comarcas constituted a series of failures and losses”.

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Over the course of the century, there were a number of migrations to the region from the Northeast, driven principally by climatic and economic factors. For the cocoa economy, this Afro-Brazilian migration was critical. In addition to the local slave and free labor population, much of the region’s population came from the slave-based, export-oriented regions of the north which, exposed to market fluctuations and foreign competition, were in long-term decline. Refugees from these regions moved either to the gold and diamond regions of Minas Gerais, to the coffee-growing areas of the south or, to the slowly developing region of southern Bahia. The migratory movement south from the Northeast and the Recôncavo started as early as the 1830s. The Sabinada Rebellion in Bahia between 1837 and 1838, prompted by a number of regional factors and economic reversals was followed by drought in the Northeast. This led to episodes of migration south to the rivers and forests of the cocoa region and the opportunities it represented. The major Northeast drought of 1877-79 was responsible for a large movement of labor. As it preceded a sharp rise in forest clearing and cocoa planting, it is reasonable to assume that some of the migrants found their way to Bahia to work on plantations or to carve their own plot out of the forest. Other episodes of southerly migration were probably driven by the economic crisis of the Northeast in 1846, the cholera epidemic of 1855 in Ceará, the acute sugar crisis of 1873 and, probably most importantly, the abolition of slavery in 1888.

While these population fluctuations brought to the region many of those who were early established as smallholders and laborers, their impact on the growth of the region was insignificant for most of the century. The population of the municipal of Ilhéus did grow over the course of the nineteenth century, but his growth was small compared to that experienced by the state as a whole. The net result was that, compared to the state as a whole, the southern coastal areas experienced a relative population decline over the course of the century. In the half-century between 1818 and 1872, the population grew from 2,400 to 5,682 (Mahony; 1997:61). By 1881 this had almost doubled to 10,000, only to drop to 7,097 in 1890. It was only in the population influx and scramble for land after 1890, as slave labor was released from the sugar-producing regions of the Recôncavo and Northeast, that the population exploded, increasing more than tenfold to 105,259 in 1920.

While data from the 1890 census may be unreliable (local officials regularly reported new arrivals in the region) the lack of growth for most of the nineteenth century may be
explained by the continuing scarcity on the farms of the region of the cocoa tree. The chart below shows that the growth of cocoa production remained pedestrian until 1875. Sugar cultivation, subsistence agriculture and extractionist activities, principally timber extraction (despite being forbidden by law in 1850) were the mainstays of the south of Bahia and remained so well into the second half of the century.

Labor Relations

Following the practices of the established core families, the new planter-merchants used credit and intermarriage to develop the networks of political and personal influence that were the key to effective oligarchies. Thus, the rise of new elements within the élite strata
during the period of the Old Republic, operating increasingly through large export firms, came to represent a new pattern of domination. While in exceptional circumstances the smallholder could attempt — and even succeed, for a time - to turn the conflicts of local factions to their advantage (Mahony; 1977: 71) the composition of élite groups was of little concern for most laborers. Living and working conditions for the early cocoa laborers were extremely poor. The workforce was maintained and controlled by debtpeonage, planter solidarity and, where necessary, violence. Laborers living and working on isolated farms with minimal communication with urban centers or even other plantations, bought both their food and their tools from the plantation store. Had it been intended as such, this would have been a profitable business in its own right. It was probably this experience that led most successful planters to expand into the wholesale and retail sectors. On the Auricidía plantation, in Amado’s *Terras do Sem Fim*, a laborer explains to a new arrival from Ceará what awaits him:

Bright and early tomorrow… the clerk down at the store is going to send for you to make up your kit for the week. You haven’t any tools to work with, so you’ll have to buy some. You’ll have to buy a scythe and an ax, a knife, and a pickax; and all that’s going to set you back something like a hundred mil-réis. Then you’re going to have to buy flour, beef, rum, coffee, for the whole week. You’re going to have to lay out another ten mil-réis for food. At the end of the week you’ll have fifteen coming to you in wages...that’ll leave a balance of five mil-réis, but you won’t get it; you’ll have to leave it there on what you owe for the tools. You’ll be a whole year paying off that hundred mil-réis without seeing so much as penny of your wages.”

(Amado; 1988: 84)

The planter did not expect to receive payment of debts accrued at the plantation store. As the worker could not leave until the debt was paid off, his labor was assured at minimal cost to the planter. This method of ensuring low cost labor was common to most planters. They would not employ a blacklisted worker — one who had fled a plantation without paying is otherwise incurred the displeasure of his *dono* — and planter solidarity ensured that wages were standardized. Where slave labor — and its varying costs — had been central to the profitability and subsequent decline of the sugar industry, the cocoa economy after 1888 was characterized by a different form of labor contract, namely debt peonage. While family labor was sufficient to establish and maintain a smallholding, expansion required additional labor (usually non-family labor) and therefore, capital.
Alongside the expropriation of smallholders and the concentration of land, debt peonage made the rapid expansion of a monoculture possible. It was one of the prime mechanisms for ensuring a supply of cheap labor in the years of the boom. It also contributed almost coincidentally to the enduring poverty of the majority of the region's population.

Complementing the labor that migrated largely (but not exclusively) from the Northeast post-1888 smallholders came to constitute a significant portion of the labor force, particularly but certainly not exclusively, the contratista labor force. The Contratista, or contract worker, was employed for a fixed term to perform a single task, which was usually to plant new fields of cocoa. It was the contratista, whose mode of cultivation was essentially that of the smallholder, who carried out much of the planting that established the large plantation. The planter would designate a suitable forest tract and make a small advance on final payment with which the contratista could buy tools and food. The contract worker would then clear the forest, planting subsistence crops and cocoa. Living off the forest and his crops, he would tend the developing cocoa until the first year of production, usually the fifth year, at which time the land would revert to the planter-owner. Like the smallholder who sold or mortgaged his property, he sold production, not land, as neither he nor the smallholder had title to the land. The contract worker would then, in theory, receive the outstanding payment for the fields planted.

It was, of course, not uncommon for the contratista to receive less than the amount originally agreed, or not to receive the balance at all. For the planter, the system was a cost-effective method of increasing the area under cultivation; which, rather than the increase of productivity, was and remained the principal means of increasing production. For the worker, the advantages of this “free labor” over “slave labor” were unclear. With little or no security of income, the contratista, unlike the slave, had no provision of food, clothing or tools. Invariably illiterate, he was not able to vote, under the provisions of Barbosa’s constitution. As an old laborer, in Amado’s Terras do Sem Fim, says, "I was a lad in the days of slavery...My father was a slave, my mother also. But it wasn’t any worse than it is today. Things don’t change; it’s all talk...There’s no difference" (Amado; 1988: 85).

Unsurprisingly, labor organization in the years of the cocoa boom was non-existent. The position of laborer was particularly fragile. Although invariably the descendant of a slave - if indeed he had not been a slave himself - the “free” laborer was notably less rebellious than the Bahian slave, who was renowned for his proneness to revolt. The extent to which
the marginality of the worker's existence militated against integration into a community or the creation of a network of local relationships is open question. It is clear that where wealthy white cocoa planters, usually born in Ilhéus, had relied on group co-operation to expand their holdings and forge a plantation society, most Afro-Brazilian laborers and smallholders had come from countless parts of Brazil's vast Northeast. Social and ethnic capital were therefore minimal. Inevitably perhaps, given the history of labor relations in the Northeast (from where most workers came and whose agrarian and social structures the growing cocoa economy, with some modifications, adopted) workers and smallholders relied on, or at least attempted to cultivate, vertical relations rather than local social, ethnic or kin networks.

The failure of cocoa workers to develop horizontal organization may both have contributed to and been compounded by the strength of paternalistic labor relations. Brazilian historians such as Freyre (1933) and Manuel de Oliveira Lima (1971) have argued that the Brazilian version of slavery was less harsh than that practiced by the Spanish, French, English, Dutch or Americans. Oliveira Lima (1971), comparing the evolution of Brazil with that of Spanish and English-speaking Latin America, argued that, in the Brazilian model, the slave was seen as an extension of the master’s family. This paternalistic bond, he argued, ameliorated the cruelty of the institution. This interpretation has been criticized for glossing over the realities of slavery in Brazil and serving as a justification for the endurance of patterns of dominance. As the cocoa economy grew from the decaying slave-based sugar economy, so it maintained features of the paternalistic labor relations associated with that economy. In particular, the dependencies created by debt peonage, the dominant mechanism of fixing labor in the boom period, fostered the endurance of paternalistic behavior. Nor were relations between workers and planters the only ones to be defined by the slave-labor tradition. The hierarchical legacy often determined race relations with little regard to the nuances of status. Mahony (1997: 73) charting the short-lived success of one Afro-Brazilian smallholder family, the Pitombos, in cultivating relations with members of the largely white planter élite, concludes that such relations did not differ greatly from those of the slave past, and effectively re-enacted the hierarchical social system of slavery: “Social connections, like those that connected the Pitombos to local élites did not change that, because those relationships grew out of the paternalist bonds developed between favored former slaves and their former owners. Amado’s “proletarian” novel (as he called it) Cacau, remembers the lives of early cocoa workers. While debt peonage is a constant of labor relations in the novel, the caring
aspects of patron paternalism are largely absent from his depiction of plantation life. As in *Terras do Sem Fim*, it is only the favored *jagunço* who enjoys the benefits of paternal favor.

In Oliveira Lima’s view, paternalism may afford the worker protection by conferring patron responsibilities on the planter. Such responsibilities then extend not only to the worker, but to his family and even to future generations. These bonds therefore have a moral force, which provides the worker with stronger guarantees than a purely capitalist labor contract. Against this optimistic assessment, however, and against the background of over a century of under-development, it is apparent that the impact of the paternal model on the development of the worker group over time has been negative. It may, for example, have contributed to the persistence of illiteracy among the majority of the non-white population. Literacy has been almost entirely absent from the cocoa labor force. Workers and owners, regardless of public laments over the dire state of the schooling in the region, have seen little need for education, particularly of male children. If their family was well-established on the plantation, these children could expect to be employed on the same property, on another farm belonging to the same owner or on a nearby property. To a child who has been breaking cocoa pods since the age of ten and whose aspirations do not extend beyond a secure tenure on the plantation, the importance of being able to read and write is far from obvious. Parents themselves, accustomed to the paternalistic relations of the cocoa farm, saw little need for education. Those schools which did appear on the larger plantations generally sprang from the same paternal instinct that characterized the *engenho* settlement. Their presence was certainly not the result of demand from workers themselves. And while no record of the effectiveness of these schools exists, the low level of literacy in the cocoa municipals generally and among the cocoa worker population in particular, suggests that they did little or nothing to raise the most basic education standards. A particular feature of paternalism in the cocoa economy appears then to have been not simply the removal of education in terms of educational opportunities from the cocoa labor force, but the neutralization of any demand for education by those who had most to gain from it.
Part IV – Cocoa Expansion

Until the end of the nineteenth century, most of Brazil’s cocoa exports still came from Pará. Nevertheless, the total volume was small and cocoa was the least significant of the products of a region which relied principally on sugar, minerals, hides and timber. It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that Bahia took over from Pará as the principal production center. Plantings in Bahia were increasing due to the growth of external demand and the incidence of Witches’ Broom disease in Pará and, most importantly, the rise in the price of rubber. Both rubber and cocoa were not cultivated but extracted from the forests of Pará, such that the increase in the price of rubber led to an increase in rubber tapping and a decrease in cocoa collection. With limited labor available, resources were directed to whichever forest product yielded the best return. Rubber’s contribution to Brazilian exports expanded from 0.4% in 1840 to 15% in 1890 and 39% in 1910 (Garcez; 1975). This growth was accompanied by the decline of cocoa exports from Pará and the shift of the cocoa production center to Bahia.

Nevertheless, over the course of the century, the development of a cocoa export economy was far from rapid and enthusiasm for the crop would not appear to have been universal. The Jesuit Tavares reports the attempts of one established planter to interest his compatriots in cocoa:

“A senhor de engenho started the cultivation of this crop with enthusiasm despite his contemporaries, conducting experiments to show that in case production was greater than demand, candles and soap could be made with the surplus. It was only after much time that it proved possible to persuade them to pay attention to an object that they regarded with contempt. But finally, due to the perseverance of more learned men, they accepted it and cocoa thus came to figure in the province’s exports.” (quoted in Bondar; 1938)

In the early years of expansion, cocoa was grown on the coast and along rivers, principally the Pardo near Canavieiras, the Jequitinonha near Belmonte, the Almada near Ilhéus, the Rio de Contas in present-day Itacaré and also in riverine areas of Valença and Camamú. Coastal land with sandy, acidic and aluminum-toxic soils was not well suited to cocoa cultivation, but started in these areas as they were occupied by the engenhos and farms of the early planters. Owning sugar land in these areas of easy transport, it was natural that this was where the reintroduction of cocoa should begin. Only towards the
end of the century as this land was occupied did planters move to the less accessible but more fertile soils inland. While cocoa exports from the region reached 26.8 tons or 1,787 *arrobas* in 1825, Pará remained Brazil's primary production center until the end of the century. By 1866 there were 200 well – or fairly well – established farmers and 320 poor people (a significant proportion of whom were Afro-Brazilians) cultivating cocoa and in Ilhéus (Mahony; 1997: 62).

The initial expansion of cocoa plantings went largely unnoticed by the conservative élite of Bahia, who were still attached to the declining sugar economy. Although sugar was in crisis, hit by disease, low prices and the abolition of the slavery, its relative decline in this period was slower than in the first half of the century. Sugar exports rose by 33% in the second half of the nineteenth century (Ridings; 1973: 151). This, coupled with the loyalty of the established planter élite to the sugar crop, diverted resources that might otherwise have been attracted to cocoa. Wright reports that well into the 1890s, the developing south of the state is rarely mentioned in the deliberations of the powerful Salvador Associação Commercial da Bahia (a body made up of planters and merchants connected to the sugar industry).

The performance of sugar was poor compared to other exports, but was sufficient to divert attention away from the growth of cocoa”. The cocoa boom after 1890 was to depend not only on the capital of the established planters and the labor influx, but also on sugar capital. This came from metropolitan planter-financiers, who, looking for a better investment than sugar, turned their attention to cocoa.

**The Early Cocoa “Region”**

The developing cocoa region was effectively devoid of transport or infrastructure well into the twentieth century. Government presence, whether state or national, was minimal. In the nineteenth as throughout the twentieth, those who could afford to do so, sent their children out of the region to be educated, either to Salvador or to Recife or hired private tutors. The families who started in the strongest position were the old families of Ilhéus, Belmonte and Canavieiras. There were those who were descendants of millowners, established before 1822, such as the Sá, Lima, Lavigne and Bastos families. There were the less established farmers whose importance grew over the course of the century. This group included locals such as Tavares, Araujo Castro and Silva but also the German immigrants of 1822, the Berbert, Ninck, Hohlenwerger and Kruschewsky families. These
groups were joined at the end of the century by new arrivals with capital, such as Barreto, Mangabeira and Kaufmann, who accelerated their assimilation into the cocoa élite by marrying into established families such as Lima and Lavigne. By the second decade of the twentieth century, these three groups constituted the core of the 20 or so families, around 70 individuals in total, who dominated cocoa production (Mahony; 1996: 434). While they had started from different levels and entered the cocoa market at different times, none of them, contrary to the pioneer myth, had started from nothing.

These families controlled local politics and what little credit was available. They occupied much of the coastal and riverine land where soil may not have been optimal for cocoa, but where transportation was easy. Although much of the best cocoa land later proved to be slightly inland away from the main rivers, control of the river banks ensured control over the cocoa market by the old families. Almost all cocoa, particularly that coming from the interior had to travel by river at some stage. Improvements in communication, therefore, were not necessarily in the interests of the old planter families. This dominance may have contributed to the tardy development of transport and infrastructure in the region.

The Move Inland: from Sugar to Cocoa

Primary occupation by both migrants and established families took the form either of the arbitrary and illegal occupation of state land, or of the occupation of properties with poorly defined borders whose land title derived from the *sesmaria* system. If the first plantings were made near towns and along rivers, consolidating the position of the established families, the second phase of plantings, that of the “pioneer front” moved from the rivers into the forest, expelling the remaining indigenous people and seizing their land. Campos (1936) gives some idea of the atmosphere on the pioneer front as a new economy was forged:

“Ilhéus at this time was dizzy with development. In the interior, one had the impression of a country recently discovered, colonized by groups of intrepid immigrants. The occupation of land occurred, as it still does today, in a tumultuous manner, seized in the main from the Indian. Trains of mules going up and down the paths, the forest was a fervor of human activity...Along the jungle path could be seen the wreckages of sugar *engenhos*, of sawmills, of a dead epoch. Old properties, old processes of those who did not know the value or feared the
Why some owners of sugar mills successfully transferred into cocoa and others clung to the dying sugar sector is unclear. It may, as Campos suggests, be due to a lack of imagination, or to the dedication (most firmly established among the planter élite of the Recôncavo) of a class to a crop on which its wealth and status was maintained. It may also have been due to the poor quality of coastal land for cocoa cultivation, where many engenhos were situated. The disappearance of the sugar mills, of their chapels, grand houses and slave quarters, as planters changed crop or went bankrupt, effectively removed all visible symbols of the crop which had established the social structures of the region and was the precursor (if not the precondition) of subsequent cocoa riches.

Whatever the explanation for the failure of some established planters to make the transition, a sufficient number did and thereby assured their prosperity in the coming cocoa boom. As Mahony (1996: 294) says, “By the 1880s, there were some very large cacao plantations in Ilhéus and they were located on what had been sugar and timber estates”. Some of these estates “were as large as 2000 hectares with roots in royal land grants, and produced sugar, timber and cacao. Their owners were people with some of the most impressive surnames in Bahia and the workforce on these estates was enslaved” (Mahony; 1996: 16-17). These European and Brazilian families with varying amounts of capital but, most importantly, captive labor forces, were those able to increase their plantings in the 1870s and 1880s at a time of chronic labor shortage, because they were the only ones with large numbers of slaves. (Mahony; 1996: 294). They were therefore well-established and well-placed to exploit the rapidly changing labor and capital conditions at the end of the century.

Mechanisms of Land Concentration

The presence of large plantations prior to 1890, land surplus and the failure of government intervention in the form of land law, all contributed to the failure of the cocoa economy to develop on a smallholder model. The effective absence of land law and the null value placed on land as a capital asset determined the manner in which land was acquired. The first land law, the Lei das Terras of 1850, aimed to regulate the ownership of land and promote the occupation of unproductive state lands. The law established a register of properties in the Comarca of Ilhéus as it did throughout Bahia. However,
Garcez (1977), analyzing 255 entries in the land register between 1857 and 1859 found that the most basic information, such as the origin of ownership, size of property, or exact location were absent. In cases where the same area of land was claimed by two or more applicants, no effort was made to resolve the dispute.

Until 1889, unfarmed land (which constituted the vast majority of the territory of the south of Bahia) belonged to the Imperial Government. The government made little attempt to impede the occupation of unfarmed land, partly due to the difficulties of inspection and regulation. The “ouvidores”, the government representatives in the Comarcas of Ilhéus and Porto Seguro, had the task of regulating the timber industry and promoting colonization through the development of crops such as coffee and cocoa, rather than to attempt to regulate the agrarian structure. The majority of lands in the region that did not belong to the government derived from the original sesmarias whose owners, in the main, neither cultivated nor lived on them. For the government, such land and the extensive unfarmed areas owned by the state presented the opportunity to promote the settlement of the region. For both established families and newcomers such conditions offered excellent opportunities for the acquisition and expansion of holdings. The government’s intention was to sell state lands off in parcels, having established mechanisms to prevent the excessive concentration of land. However, the government was also well aware of the difficulties of implementing an orderly settling of the land and legalization of existing possession. The absence of any state control or inspection meant that despite these good intentions the dynamic of land acquisition and concentration developed in a manner directly in disagreement with government wishes. With the influx of labor from 1890, the tendency for arbitrary and illegal occupation and appropriation of land was accelerated.

The migrant scramble for land, the history commemorated and lionized in the cocoa narrative, took place not in terra nullius, but in the context of established large estates. After the initial explosion of cocoa plantings and properties, two processes developed in parallel, one of expansion and the other of concentration. In the first one, smallholders and planters brought new areas of forest under cultivation. In the other, land ownership was concentrated as the established planters and newcomers with capital acquired the land of migrant smallholders and unsuccessful planters. The lack of regulation and inspection of land acquisition, which had made rapid settlement possible for many migrants, now became a decisive factor in the absorption of the smallholding into increasingly extensive plantations. As most members of the élite planter groups, whether
established or newcomers, were white and a large portion of smallholders were almost certainly black or mulatto, this process of differentiation was also one of racial differentiation”.

While violence between old and new planter groups became a common and widely reported manifestation of friction over land ownership, the decisive conflict, that between large and small producers, was less spectacular and rarely reported. Small producers were invariably illiterate, without land title and enjoyed poor access to information and capital. In such circumstances, their subordination was always likely to be rapid. The land law, which was intended to aid the smallholder, did nothing to halt this process and, as will be seen, may even have contributed to it. The inventiveness employed to relieve the smallholder of his land was boundless, but three principal methods can be established: the use and abuse of mortgage credit; the use and abuse of the law; and violent and arbitrary seizure.

Recorded incidents of the violent expropriation of smallholdings are rare. This is not surprising in view of the ownership of the local newspapers by the cocoa elite. One case did make the front page of A Tarde da Bahia in Salvador on 18 June 1919 — but did not, of course, appear in any of the Ilhéus or Itabuna papers, financed as they were by cocoa money. The story described the fate of a group of smallholders carrying out new plantings who were run off the land by criminals hired by local planters. The leader of the group had his hands repeatedly slashed with a machete to urge him and his companions not to return to the forest to make further plantings. This story only appeared in the distant state capital as the victims managed to make contact there, but the legends and literature of the region hold that such occurrences were common.

Less dramatically, Garcez (1977) recounts two methods used to appropriate land from a less powerful neighbor. In the first, the fazendeiro asks his neighbor to accompany him to the land office to sign a document as a witness. The unsuspecting and illiterate farmer unwittingly signs a contract for the sale of his own land. He is then later intimidated into selling his property. Having already officially “sold” his land he has no legal recourse and is lucky if he comes away with a pittance in compensation. In another instance, the fazendeiro, having tried every legal means to acquire his neighbor’s valuable land, offers to buy it for huge sum, which his neighbor enthusiastically accepts. On leaving the land office the seller is jumped by the fazendeiro’s “jagunços” (thugs, literally hired guns), losing his land, money and almost his life.
As the violence in such instances was invariably one-sided and the contest short, such tales occupy less space in the folklore of the region than violent clashes between evenly matched rivals. While the incident that sparks the feud between the Badaró and Horácio da Silva in Amado’s *Terras do Sem Fim* is the failed attempt by the former to assassinate a neighboring small farmer who refuses to sell his valuable land, the novel’s principal interest is in the ensuing feud, rather than the more mundane business of smallholder marginalization and expropriation.

Where land was not simply seized and held by superior force, the advantages built into the 1897 state land law, together with political ownership of land offices and government officials, made the *caxixe*, (a legal maneuver used to appropriate land from the legitimate holder or rival). In many cases, however, a skilled use of the existing law was often sufficient to disenfranchise a less powerful opponent. The 1897 land law made it possible for those squatting on public lands – *terras devolutas* (which constituted the majority of the land of the municipal of Ilhéus) – to obtain legal title. The legitimization of ownership required evidence of the applicant’s occupation and improvement of the property, and a surveyor’s report. The Ministry of Agriculture, through the local land office, then granted title after the payment of a small fee and tax. The local exceptionalism that was innate to *coronelismo* again ensured the advance of the established families. Application approval for planters and exporters was generally automatic. In all cases, it was the local land official who ruled on the probity of the witnesses who were required to testify to the farmer’s occupation and improvement of the land. In many instances the land official would be a relative, friend or ally of the planter or exporter. For the less well connected and the smallholder – who were often but not always synonymous - application approval could be delayed for years or even decades.

Ownership of surveying and surveyors was important in the legitimate acquisition of *terras devolutas*. The 1897 law applied price differentials and set size limitations on the land that could be purchased based on a number of factors, including the fitness of the land for agriculture. Prices paid for the land were largely nominal. Established planters and planter-exporters were adept at exploiting, and where necessary circumventing, the provisions of the law. Garcez (1977) reports that it is common in applications of the period 1899 to 1930 to find a surveyor concluding that land which is already planted and producing cocoa is fit only for pasture. This not only reduced the price to be paid per unit
of land, but also increased the total amount purchasable from 100 hectares (for land suitable for crops) to 500 hectares (for pasture).

While the intention of the law was to establish a class of small and medium sized properties, the interaction of established local power, the provisions of the law and the state’s inability to enforce the law’s spirit sanctioned the concentration of land. This undermined the viability of the majority of illiterate and politically impotent smallholders and complicated the acquisition of land by newcomers. Those who were most effective in exploiting the land law were planter-exporters; those who had come before the boom or who, backed by investment capital, were able to expand rapidly around the turn of the century.

These factors ensured that a sustainable smallholder economy did not come to dominate, as it later did, for example, in the production centers of West Africa. Under conditions of land surplus, with vast areas of forest available and smallholders whose productive land could be expropriated with relative ease, the most appropriate form of land-holding appeared to be the large estate (which guaranteed output through volume, rather than productivity) and the most appropriate production system, the monoculture. The land law, as one if not the most important factor, thereby contributed to solving the problem of labor shortage, which had retarded the growth of the Comarcas. As a factor in the process of land concentration, it facilitated the creation a pool of landless laborers.

One of the most common mechanisms of land concentration was mortgage credit. Where it may have started as an accidental but welcome means of accumulating land, planters and merchants rapidly discovered that credit practices were an effective means of acquiring productive cocoa property. Mortgage credit affected principally small farmers of migrant origin but also, if to a lesser extent, those established planters who failed to make the transition from the exposed position of producer to the lucrative position of planter-financier or planter-exporter.

Official credit was almost entirely absent from the region well into the twentieth century. In 1905 the Banco de Crédito Hipotecário e Agrícola was established in the region, not with the intention of providing regular agriculture credit, but of providing assistance in moments of crisis. While interest rates were lower than on the private market, the bank required proof of land ownership, which not all planters and almost no small producers could provide. Hence most of the credit that financed the expansion of cocoa plantings
came from successful planters who moved into finance and export, and, increasingly after 1890, from individuals and firms from outside the region.

Established planters were not the only people to be engaged in credit activities. In the early economy, the marketing chain was long, giving middlemen an important role in the early cocoa economy that has received relatively little attention. Often Portuguese or Syrian immigrants, they were important players in the extended cocoa chain. As properties were agglutinated, the ownership base reduced and transport improved, this chain was shortened. At a time when production, processing and exporting were dislocated and dispersed, the middlemen performed a significant role in the chain. Inevitably, they were accused by planters of appropriating wealth by exploiting the isolation and poor access to information of the farmer. There is undoubtedly some truth in this, evidenced not least by the number of buyers who acquired cocoa properties and so moved into production. This, however, masks the fact that there was a considerable flux of successful producers who themselves became middlemen, just as others became buyers and exporters.

Interest on private credit in the early economy was high and often assured against the future harvest. An increasing number of farmers found their harvest partially or completely sold to their creditor before a single pod had been opened. “Compra do cacau na flor”, the advance purchase of flowering cocoa based on the previous year’s production (with inevitably unfavorable terms for the producer) became increasingly common. The inability to meet loan repayments, or the failure of the harvest to meet expectations led to many small producers losing their land. The requirement of land title for official credit made smallholders legally squatters, dependent on informal and ad-hoe arrangements with planters and middlemen. From the 1890s onwards, foreclosures against smallholders, usually for small sums incurred at the local plantation store, saw small properties swallowed by increasingly extensive estates. Mahony (1996: 69) recounts a typical example of the expropriation of a small farmer, an Afro-Brazilian woman, at the beginning of the twentieth century. After four years of attempting to pay off a loan taken from Misael Tavares guaranteed against her property and probably incurred at his plantation store, she lost all that she had. The court and Tavares’ family connections helped him to acquire her land, crops and buildings at a 20% discount.

Well before the advent of metropolitan and international finance in the years of the Old Republic, access to and ownership of credit and the networks of influence it supported
was as central to the success or failure of the early planter families as it was to the survival or disappearance of the smallholder. Until the growth of interest in the cocoa economy among import-export merchants of Salvador, credit was a local, if not a family affair. Post-mortem inspection of planter estates illuminates the role of credit in the early economy. When, in the early 1890s, Carlos Hohlenwerger, head of one of the old conservative families was killed in a struggle with the newcomer (who had strong links with metropolitan finance) Gentil de Castro, he left an estate that testified to the political importance of credit from the earliest stages of cocoa expansion.

Hohlenwerger left a plantation with 6000 cocoa trees scattered in dispersed plantings made by his laborers. Although still engaged in sugar production, cocoa was the most valuable part of his estate and was sufficient to make him a major figure in cocoa production, the estate was valued at eleven contos de réis. He was also a creditor, his laborers being among his debtors. The debts they had incurred were for staples purchased at the plantation store and he probably would not have expected repayment. Debt peonage helped to ensure the labor supply and to keep wage costs down.

The return on Hohlenwerger’s investments was low. Zehntner (1914) reports that at a slightly later period, returns were around 8.75% per year, exclusive of rent and amortisation of capital. Wright (1976) reports that returns from tropical agriculture in the period were routinely expected to be above 20%. It may therefore appear surprising that such low returns formed the basis for Hohlenwerger’s prestige and influence. This suggests that the expansion of plantings by the established planter families was undertaken in this period as a group affair, the principal advantages of this being that land, labor and credit costs were minimized by the collective approach. This approach of protecting and promoting group interests paid dividends. For established planters, the concentration of wealth rather than simply its accumulation was essential in restricting access to the élite stratum. Preeminence was not assured by profitability or efficiency, but by restricting competition.

This aspect of the early economy was again evidenced in farm accounts. Zehntner (1914) provides a breakdown of farm production costs, in which only 55.5% of total costs are accounted for planting, cultivation, harvest and preparation of cocoa. Of the rest, half went on freight charges, insurance, taxes and commissions and half on administration. Questioning how the extra-agricultural costs could be so high, Wright concludes that a large portion of production costs were composed essentially of payments to sustain an
unbalanced social structure. Control over credit, infrastructure, public posts and the inflated costs of economic and social participation gave the established planters a group advantage. The position of planters such as Hohlenwerger or Adami rested then less on the profitability of the farm, than on their access to or control of sources of capital and influence.

If Hohlenwerger fitted the pattern of the traditional families, Luiz Adami was an example of a group within the established planter families who had begun to develop more profitable enterprises, loaning money at variable but high rates of interest to family and friends. The estates of Luiz Adami became among the largest recorded in the 1880s and 1890s. Such success was due to the expansion of planter activities into finance and export, as it rapidly became apparent that those who dedicated themselves solely to farming were unlikely to survive. In the context of an export-oriented crop, profits were increasingly concentrated in the financial and export sectors, often at the cost of the production sector.

While Luiz Adami, coming from within the old planter families, may have successfully adapted credit practices, it was those who came from outside the core of traditional planters who proved most important in the growth and concentration of the cocoa economy. Acrision Januário Cardozo, a newcomer to the region ran a line of credit rather like Adami, but in the main his debtors were outside the community of European immigrant planters. Unlike Adami, whose funds were generated and loaned within the region, Cardozo obtained a large amount of his finance from the credit houses and import-export firms of Salvador. This coincidence of interests generated a new planter-business axis, which in many respects reproduced the arrangements that had characterized the relations among the sugar elite of the Recôncavo. These firms, which were able to use funds released by the abandonment of sugar production, had a flexibility that no local or regional financier could offer.

It was from this group that the most significant figure in the history of the cocoa economy emerged. Antonio Pessoa da Costa e Silva was lawyer to Cardozo, as well as Misael Tavares, another of the second wave planters who at the beginning of the century was well on his way to becoming the region’s largest planter and lender. Pessoa was to become the head of the anti-Adami faction, mayor of Ilhéus for nearly twenty years, the dominant factor in Ilhéus politics for most of the life of the Old Republic and the father of the cocoa pioneer narrative. It was the metropolitan connections of the new planter
groups headed by Pessoa that made possible their ascendancy over the traditional planter families represented by the Adami clan. While limited capital had been available in the pre-boom economy, it was not essential to the pioneer phase. As obstacles to entry into the cocoa market grew, however, capital became essential. It also became essential to the expansion and consolidation of holdings.

This capital could come from external credit, whether regional, national or international. Local credit was increasingly insufficient to finance the flurry of activity in the forests of the southern Comarcas. So, where planters could not get all the credit they required from the Adami clan, they turned in increasing numbers to Cardozo (and later to Pessoa and his bank) with his access to foreign capital in London, Amsterdam or New York via the import-export firms of Salvador.
Part V - Élite histories and planters’ behavior

The political rhetoric of the cocoa élite was and remains primarily anti-colonialist and regionalist and only secondarily (and when necessary) nationalist. Regionalism had developed under the centralizing influence of the Monarchy and expanded during the life of the Old Republic. Politicians and local élites promoted a regionalism that would allow rapid economic growth as the pre-condition to national integration. With a weak central government, the power of local planters throughout Brazil (particularly in the coffee region of the south) flourished in the Bahian cocoa in the form of coronelismo. The major planters of the boom period were all coronéis, adopting honorary commissions in state reserve units as a democratic and republican substitute for the titles of nobility handed out in previous colonial and monarchical periods.

The relationship between local oligarchies and state and federal authorities in the Old Republic was a complex one, in which calls for intervention or independence fluctuated according to the political waves, the common or divergent political perspectives of metropolitan and local holders of power. For over a hundred years, from the end of the nineteenth century until the late 1980s, cocoa, through a variety of heavy taxes imposed on the export of the bean, was an essential contributor to state finances. Planters complained that such taxes bled them dry, but they also gave them considerable political leverage. The next figure shows the growing importance of earnings from cocoa exports in the state’s finances. Despite this, the state regularly refused to provide troops to pacify the frequent outbreaks of violence, or to invest in the infrastructure of the region. In large part this was attributable to the political attitude of metropolitan and local élites. Between 1894 and 1912, Pessoa was on a number of occasions elected as intendente of Ilhéus and his followers gained seats on municipal councils. They did not take office, however, as the traditional elite led by Adami used its connections in Bahian state government to overturn elections and impose its own candidates (Mahony; 1996: 485-6). This only changed in 1912 when Seabra took control of the state government.
At the local level, attitudes to the metropolis were influenced by the character of the incumbent oligarchy. In the state capital, attitudes were to a considerable degree dictated by the Salvador Commercial Association, whose interest in the cocoa region was, at best, conditional. The extent to which this most powerful group of businessmen in the state, controlled the cocoa economy is debatable. Wright, believing that the development of a planter-exporter axis was the key feature of the boom economy, argues that in the 1930s the association effectively ran the cocoa economy of southern Bahia. However, even during the 1890s, when cocoa was well established and the migrant influx was at its greatest, the interests of this group of businessmen-planters remained in sugar.

State politicians imposed an export tax of 17% on cocoa, but felt little need to reinvest this in the region. This “leaching” of resources to the state capital - and through it to the rest of the nation, the United States and Europe - remains a source of resentment even today among elements of the local planter élite. The failure of the state to invest in the region from which it drew so much wealth, combined in the later years of the boom with the flight of capital, constitute one of the most common laments, both popular and academic, of the region. While a measure of this imbalance was certainly due to the attitudes of the metropolitan business-planter élite - for whom the boom of the southern Comarcas was directed by a band of “parvenus” – local élites played no small part in exploiting and maintaining this relationship. To some degree they used the lack of a transport and communication infrastructure to protect their social and economic status. And as members of the planter class were increasingly oriented not only to the regional
capital Ilhéus, but increasingly to the investment opportunities (and in no small measure to the high-life) of Salvador and Rio, so more capital was drawn out of the region. The effect of this secondary leaching was that the demand for state investment remained fragmented, limited to sporadic calls for direct (and usually emergency) state intervention, whether financial or military. Such intervention was invariably limited to basic municipal improvements or to demands for action made by the opposition party intended to undermine the control of the incumbent coronel.

The cocoa export tax was itself in part an expression and consequence of the impotence of central government. Given the limited reach of the state bureaucracy, any taxation system requiring developed administrative machinery was out of the question. The only tax which could practicably be levied and collected was an onerous export tax. This burden, consistently condemned by planter-exporters, was arguably a result of the very “regionalist” development and coronelismo of which the oligarchic élites were the pillars.

It was only between the beginning of the twentieth century and the First World War, as import-export firms such as Stevenson, Brandão and Wildberger turned their attention to cocoa, that the Salvador Commercial Association took an interest in the crop and a regional business-planter axis with both strong local and metropolitan links emerged. The Wildberger export house (the major export house of the boom period) had been established by the Swiss Jetzler brothers as early as 1829 (Coe and Coe; 1996: 152). Before moving into cocoa, the export house had built its wealth in the sugar business. The firm, in common with all those who turned their attention to cocoa at the end of the century, was a member of the association. Just as, at the local level, credit had served as a mean for planter-finance to acquire land from those who were wholly restricted to production, so metropolitan and international credit redefined the composition of the cocoa élite. In Amado’s version of the cocoa narrative, this period saw the subordination of local producers to the representatives of metropolitan and international capital. São Jorge dos Ilhéus (1987) details the use of price and credit control by the exporter-finance of the Associação Commercial of Ilhéus to displace power from the planter to the exporter.

In truth, it had become impossible to separate successful planters from financiers. By the early years of the century it had become unthinkable for a significant figure in cocoa finance or export not to own a cocoa farm, if not several. The change that had taken place was in the origin of the planter-merchants. In the early period, they were local established
planters, such as the Adami family. These conservative families were then displaced (losing their pre-eminence, but not their wealth) by a second wave of planter-financiers, such as Cardozo, Pessoa and Tavares. The third wave consisted of those export and commercial houses that moved into production from finance, largely through mortgage credit. The co-existence, shifting fortunes and, not least, intermarriage of these groups formed the character of the cocoa élite of the early twentieth century. A narrow planter-exporter/planter-merchant élite had emerged which was marked by its heterogeneity rather than its unity and, with only occasional exceptions, was more prone to infighting than to action in a common cause.

Inter-élite Conflict and the Emergence of the Cocoa Narrative

Mahony (1996) situates the emergence of the dominant cocoa narrative in the struggle between the second wave of arrivistes and the established planter families. In this struggle, the former emphasized their humble origins and their rise through the efforts of their own labor. They contrasted this with the pre-eminence based on inherited wealth of the established élite. The original architect of the narrative was Pessoa. While Pessoa, Tavares and other members of the new élite, such as João Calasans Amorim, were themselves not poor in origin, they stressed the modesty of their background compared to the inherited wealth of the old conservative élite. At the time this narrative was an element in the attack on the established local aristocracy. And when national élites were keen to promote white European immigration as essential to the “bleaching” (and by implication to the progress and modernization) of Brazil, the narrative was, in its own way, in line with the national ideology (Mahony; 1996: 490-493). As Mahony points out, Pessoa was formulating this narrative at the same time as the Republic’s march to Progress was engaged in a battle against the “backwardness” of rural Brazilian society. At Canudos in 1897, the federal army, at the fourth attempt, finally destroyed the rebellion in the north of Bahia in which thousands of poor rural people from the Northeast had gathered under the Messianic leadership of Antônio Conselheiro. The community collapsed under the attack of over 8.000 troops armed with cannon, rifles and bayonets. All its defenders were killed. The Canudos rebellion was described in Da Cunha’s classic book Os Sertões.

Over the course of the century, as the new élite’s dominance was expressed politically and socially, the narrative was institutionalized. It came to be confused with the history of the region and to constitute its dominant legitimizing narrative.
Conflict in the region took place both between élites and non-élites and within élite factions. Such conflict was not a new feature of the region and was certainly not limited to the battlefield of ideology or myth-making. Already in 1847, a dispute between the Sá family and Antônio de Aguiar e Silva, a former police officer and judge, had resulted in the latter fleeing for his live and remaining exiled from the region for 10 years.

It was, however, the conflict between rival factions of the élite strata, between the old conservative families and “outsiders”, the newer élite, consisting of those who moved in with capital and those rare few of humble origin who struck cocoa gold, that made the region infamous. In 1918 confrontation between these two groups erupted into outright war in Sequeiro do Espinho (in the present-day municipal of Itajuípe) as the Pessoaista newcomers and the long-established planter families headed by the Mangabeiras and Lavignes fought for supremacy. The old families, already weakened and outflanked by the alliances of the Pessoaistas with export firms desperately tried to draw the attention of the state authorities to the war in the region and their need for metropolitan support (Campos; 1936: 218). The new élite, who controlled the police of Itabuna and Ilhéus, played down the scale of the conflict, claiming that the matter could be dealt with locally and that reports of violence and growing anarchy were “opposition intrigues”.

Having successfully kept the Pessoaistas out of power for nearly 20 years, the initial and significant reversal in fortunes was signaled in 1912 with the change of state government. Seabra’s government in Salvador undermined the old conservative families and raised considerable obstacles to state intervention in favor of the old élite. Nevertheless, as the murders, burning of plantations, offices and the sacking of towns continued, state troops were sent to intervene in January 1919. On arrival, they promptly joined the Pessoaistas. This triggered a further increase in violence, as the conservative élite, in the person of Basílio de Oliveira, went on the offensive (Campos; 1936: 222). As a result, the state governor sent a second and larger contingent under the direction of Major Salvador Borges de Barros, which, if it did not put an end to the violence, at least succeeded in reducing it. Only after further state intervention and a three-year military presence, was the war of Sequeiro do Espinho finally ended. These events, which served to cement the cocoa zone’s reputation for lawlessness, also provided the stuff of literature and myth-making. The battle for the Sequeiro Grande between the old Badaró planter family and the new forces headed by the former tropeiro (donkey-driver), Colonel Horácio in
Amnado’s *Terras do Sem Fim* (while based on no single incident) echoes in many respects that of the Sequeiro do Espinho.

This particular episode of the Conservative-Liberal conflict is representative in two aspects. It contains the hidden history of the smallholder, who bore the brunt of the conflict, but who appears in literature and myth as a fleeting presence in the march of progress. Studies of the land register for this period carried out by Garcez (1977), Wright and Mahony (1996) demonstrate that it saw the widespread disappearance of the smallholder. While smallholders had probably never accounted for the majority of production or of land held, even during the post-Abolition influx, the Sequeiro do Espinho episode capped a period that had seen the definitive suppression of the smallholder and the emergence of the plantation as the archetype of Bahian cocoa production. Even those rare Afro-Brazilian smallholders traced by Mahony (1996), who demonstrated some social mobility in the early boom period, had disappeared by 1920. Opinions differ as to the nature of this disappearance. For Garcez (1977) it was the consequence of a natural process of evolution. For Tosta Filho, first head of the ICB, it was a period in which a measure of order was brought to the previously chaotic development of the region. For Wright, however, the evidence of the land record confirms that the second decade of the century saw a major effort to drive out the smallholder.

Whatever a particular writer's perspective on this process, there is no doubt that it saw an acceleration of the trend of land concentration. Taking as a basis data provided in Garcez (1977: 182-183) on requests for purchase and legitimization of *terras devolutas* on the Ilhéus-Itabuna axis between 1899 and 1930, it is apparent that the greatest number of requests occurs in the 1915 to 1920 period. In the years 1910 to 1914 there were an average of 100,4 requests per year and in the period 1921 to 1925 there were an average of 109. In the years between 1915 and 1920, which take in the war of Sequeiro do Espinho, the yearly average is 180,7. The names of traditional families such as Lavigne and Kruschewsky as well as the export houses of Wildberger and Stevenson feature prominently in the lists of requests. Similarly, the average number of purchases and sales of properties per year during the period 1915 to 1920, at 811,8 is well above that of the previous (average 545,8) and subsequent (average 650,6) five-year periods. In the harvest year of 1920-21, the process was accelerated by poor prices and adverse weather, which saw the number of loans secured against land on the Ilhéus-Itabuna axis.
rise to 250 (Garcez; 1977: 184). This was the highest recorded in the period from 1890 to 1930.

A degree of caution is necessary in interpreting this information. As much of the flux of ownership in the years 1890 to 1930 probably went unrecorded, data drawn from the land record should be treated as indicative rather than definitive. But by 1920, with the Sequeiro do Espinho episode resolved, the failure of the 1897 land act to create a community of small producers was evident. The 1920 census showed that in Ilhéus there were 4,850 registered properties, but only 3,747 owners. Mahony (1997: 66) estimates that the census overestimated the number of individual properties by at least one third. In other words, land was already being concentrated, either in the form of the *conjunto* or in a pattern of multiple holding. For those dispossessed smallholders, many of them Afro-Brazilians, who had migrated to the region with hopes of forging cocoa riches, the reality of land loss that led to bonded labor for men and often to prostitution for women, was hard.

It was not, of course, simply the actions of planters that marginalized the smallholder. Disease took its toll as did the Republic’s laws of inheritance. On the death of one party, half of his or her property was set aside for the survivor and the rest divided between the couple’s children. The dispersion which the law attempted to impose, meant for the smallholder the fragmentation of land into units whose viability was doubtful. Yet overall, it would be inaccurate to see the history of the smallholder as one of interminable decline and subordination. Of the farmers identified in the 1920 survey, many were certainly smallholders. Those with poor land and transport links were more likely to escape the attentions of expanding plantations. Those who disappeared were generally those with good land or good access to transport and communications. Although subordinated socially and economically to the plantation, a smallholder tradition survived, resilient and at times dynamic, despite the institutional and cultural bias operating against it.

The Sequeiro do Espinho episode was representative not only of the marginalization of the smallholders, but also of the ascendance of the new élite. As producers of an export crop grown in monoculture conditions, cocoa planters were dependent on the control of credit, of commercial information and of access to marketing and shipping. While the old families initially had privileged access to these areas, exporters and newcomers such as Pessoa found ways to tap into these networks and eventually outflank them. As a group of exporters and planter-exporters emerged, so those whose attention was focused on
production increasingly saw their interests as being opposed to those of this class. Until
1908, the Adami regime, with the support of the Swiss Keller and Wildberger export
houses, had controlled the region, limiting themselves to a modest program of municipal
improvements rather than the program of rural infrastructure improvement, credit
provision and producer organization that the region needed. The resultant stagnation was
due to the equation of factional interests with those of the region as a whole in a manner
that came to be symptomatic of regional politics.

Major infrastructure improvement during the Adami reign was limited to the construction
of the Ilhéus-Itabuna railroad, started in 1904, and whose aim was to provide better
access to the port, principally for those established planters whose properties were sited
on the Ilhéus-Itabuna axis. Much cocoa still arrived in Ilhéus by barge, travelling down the
Cachoeira from Banco da Vitoria. With control over waterways and river junctions, the
Adamistas were little interested in roads. By 1903 when the younger members of the
Adami regime had perceived the necessity for substantive change, opposition forces had
already established networks of influence with the large number of disenchanted
producers and exporters necessary to oust the established conservative families. Despite
denying Pessoa power in 1904, Adami had lost his important alliance with the Wildberger
group and with the Tavares and Berbert families, who joined the Pessoaistas. The
Sequeiro do Espinho episode accelerated the loss of hegemony. While in the aftermath,
old and new élites were to some extent reconciled, realizing that there was more united
than divided them, the rhetorical-ideological battle had been won by Pessoa - it was his
history of the birth of the region that became the basis of subsequent histories, both
popular and scholarly.

Patterns of Planter Behavior: Genesis and Development

Despite the changing fortunes of individual planters and changes in patterns of
domination, cocoa élites proved themselves to be flexible and adaptable in maintaining
their position. In the era of the coronel they had shown themselves adept at exploiting
land laws, the weaknesses of the federal and state governments, and in controlling
laborers and smallholders. And so, with the increasing capitalization of the economy, they
rapidly adopted strategies to deal with the vagaries of an export crop so dependent on
market and climate conditions over which they had little control. It has been argued that
funds generated in the region were re-invested during the early boom period (around
1890 to 1910) through credit for cocoa plantings and in the retail and wholesale trade
Certainly, the rapid growth in demand, the availability of cheap and fertile land, and the absence of alternative investment opportunities may all have encouraged internal investment. The migrant influx and the rapid increase in the need for goods and credit led to the expansion of the planter into retailing, commerce and finance. A look at any local paper from the early years of the century provides ample evidence of the expansion of the major planter families into the retail trade. The plantation store and its extension in town proved their value, both in establishing the debt and dependency that secured labor and in generating large profits for the planter. With growing experience of the fluctuations of international markets, however, and particularly with the crisis of 1929, planters increasingly invested cocoa-generated income outside the cocoa economy, region, state and country. Income invested externally provided higher returns and was not exposed to the fluctuations of weather and commodity markets. The preferred sector for investment was property, which offered better guarantees of capital growth. This transfer of resources was accompanied and promoted by increasing owner absenteeism, as planters moved from their farms, first to regional centers such as Ilhéus and Itabuna and then to Salvador, Rio or São Paulo. Planters ceased being professional farmers and became owners of agricultural property whose principal occupation was in the professions, business or purely in rent-seeking. As they moved to the city but retained their rural base, they increasingly represented the power and interests of the city. In this manner one of the characteristics of the region developed: the rural élite became an urban élite, while maintaining its dominion over the rural environment. The urbanization of the élite was inevitably followed by the urbanization of the rural environment. By the late 1990s this has progressed so far that it makes little sense in much of the cocoa region to talk of a rural-urban divide.

One consequence of the strategies adopted to cope with the exposure of export-dependent agriculture was the decapitalization of the region. For some time, this probably occurred in tandem with the flow of reinvestment and new investment. Over time, however, capital flight came to be associated with the planter-exporter class and particularly with the older conservative families, whose roots lay in the Imperial and Colonial periods. Although persistent decapitalization by élites is a characteristic shared by other tropical monocultures grown under plantation conditions, the relationship is not wholly deterministic, as the investment of coffee money in industry in the São Paulo region demonstrates. In this region, capital generated in the coffee economy was reinvested in the development of the industrial sector. When the coffee economy moved
into decline, industrial and commercial activities were already well established (Ridings; 1973: 311). The failure to generate industrial or commercial alternatives in the manner of the coffee fazendeiros and the failure of planters to “innovate”, is lamented by inhabitants of the cocoa region.

The absenteeism and capital flight that marked the growth of the plantation was accompanied by the formation of a small administrator class. It may be misleading to call this group a class, however, as it consisted of two distinct groups. One, the administrator-manager, generally a technician or agronomist, was literate and white and was either a member of or oriented towards the planter class. The other, the administrator-worker, usually a particularly competent or experienced worker, was, as a rule, illiterate and black or mulatto. The former tended to predominate on large private or corporate plantations, the latter on smaller or medium-sized private plantations. As the distance between them and their properties grew, owners increasingly complained of stealing by and/or incompetence of plantation administrators. Given the extent of their holdings and the volume produced, however, there was a wide margin for theft, administrative irregularities and poor production techniques. Whenever possible, production was increased by bringing new areas, whether within the farm’s forest reserve or adjacent unclaimed forest, under cultivation, so exploiting the “forest rent” (Ruf; 1993).

Given the null value placed on land, extensive rather than intensive cultivation was a rational decision for planters. Profitability for planters of the boom period depended on their ability to externalize costs, essentially to produce “forest rent” as quickly as possible. The ecological costs of the monoculture boom were thereby displaced (Ruf; 1994: 49). The plantation owner could afford to be careless. But carelessness nevertheless had a price. The quality of Bahian cocoa had always been low, but the extent system also caused agricultural productivity to decline and decline further than the majority of Brazilian agriculture in the decades until the formation of CEPLAC in 1957 (Ruf; 1960). Disaggregated, such decline would show municipal variation, with older cocoa areas such as Canavieiras, Belmonte and the Ilhéus-Itabuna axis showing a sharper decline and other newer areas showing an increase in productivity. Although estimates of relative production costs (which vary over time and according to production system) should be treated with caution, data from 1923 showed that Bahian cocoa was already uncompetitive on the world market. Market prices of cocoa for export were around 16% lower in the British-run cocoa properties of the Gold Coast then in Bahia (Wright; 1976).
More recent data demonstrates that both variable and fixed production costs for Bahian cocoa are the highest of any major producing country (Ruf; 1993: 58).

The persistent decapitalization of the region and the failure to establish an industrial base left those who remained in and relied on the region increasingly exposed to fluctuations in the natural and man-made environments. This inevitably served as a further incentive to capital flight. As a rational response to market conditions, planters allowed the farms to “float” (Johns; 1996) during periods of depressed prices, reducing inputs and labor, relying on the cabruca agro-forestry system to maintain farm viability until prices picked up. Having established consumption patterns, planters (and particularly the offspring of the planters of the early boom period) maintained these patterns during periods of depressed prices and reduced production, so accentuating the tendency to consumption over saving. Garcez (1975) arguing that most of the spending of these groups went on consumer goods produced outside the region and abroad claims that such goods could have been produced locally, without prejudice to the cocoa economy. However, this tendency to monopolize resources and restrict the growth of a domestic subsistence economy may be characteristic of monoculture economies. Plantation monocultures demonstrate a tendency towards a high degree of vertical integration and towards the absorption of available local capital and labor. This reduces the opportunity for ancillary support activities, limiting the multiplier-effect that might provide the basis of a sustainable, diversified economy. The concentration of wealth on the one hand and the poverty of the majority of the population on the other impede the growth of broad-based local demand. With available resources committed to the monoculture, the planter turns to external sources to provide consumer goods. The monoculture thus plays a significant part in determining regional spending patterns. A small number of wealthy planters, demonstrating patterns of high consumption, purchase goods produced outside the region, and invest in sectors more secure than agriculture also located outside the region. In the case of the Bahian cocoa economy, at least, the plantation monoculture became associated with regional decapitalization. While Garcez (1977) maintains that cocoa showed signs of self-sustaining development in the early years, the overall picture would appear to concord with Greenhill’s conclusion (1996: 102): “As a monoculture, cocoa was, it seems, unable to create or consolidate a regional economy”. Prado Junior (1942: 249) writing after the boom phase was more obviously unimpressed by the wealth and development generated by the cocoa boom. “The opportunity that seemed at one time to present itself for cocoa to become a source of great wealth on the scale of coffee or
rubber, was not realized. And if it did not experience a disaster equal to that suffered by the latter neither did it go beyond an obscure mediocrity. And Bahia, the region that had promised so much, followed it in its fate."
Part VI - Aspects of State Intervention

The ICB

By the end of the 1920s the cocoa economy was heading for one of its periodic crises. Planters already experiencing a squeeze on profits and hit by the effects of the 1929 Crash became convinced of the need for federal intervention in the economy. The strategies they employed and their success in eliciting government response can be argued to have defined their behavior in all subsequent crises. Drawing on nationalist rhetoric at a time when nationalist sentiment was an increasingly potent force, the established and wealthy élites sought to present themselves as victims of external forces.

"They presented the cacao planters as a group of men who had worked and struggled to make good despite enormous social and economic handicaps, but who, like São Paulo’s coffee planters, were failing victim to the machinations of foreigners and their traitorous allies. It was a way of presenting the wealthy as victims of the economic crisis in which Brazil's middle classes and poor people found themselves. It helped the cacao planters to convince the federal government to intervene on their behalf. (Mahony; 1996: 500-501).

Where in the present age these forces - disease, weather, the London and New York exchanges or the big chocolate companies — are a fragmented collection of enemies of the region, at the end of the 1920s they were clearly the enemies of the nation.

The Instituto do Cacau da Bahia (ICB) was launched by the government of Getúlio Vargas in 1931 in response to this planter pressure and in order to halt the decline of cocoa triggered by the Crash of 1929. The arrival of federal funds and their power to make or break producers brought an end, superficially at least, to coronelismo. The party-political and personal invective of the print media as portrayed in Amado’s Terras do Sem Fim and São Jorge dos Ilhéus was severely restricted as planters became more reticent about declaring their personal loyalties. However, while factional politics had to cope with a new factor, the conflicting interests of the heterogeneous planter-exporter groups persisted, provoking the premature departure of the ICB’s first director and the eventual failure of the ICB itself. As the paternalism and clientelism of coronelismo had answered a need
during the transition from Empire to Republic (Pang; 1979), so they again proved their flexibility and durability in adapting to a mollifying state presence.

Under its first director, Tosta Filho, the ICB attempted to modernize Bahian cocoa by imposing change from above rather than working through established élite groups. However, local élites were strongly regionalist and, while happy to invoke nationalist rhetoric when seeking intervention, they also demonstrated a sensibility that, in some respects, was profoundly anti-nationalist. The cocoa planters of southern Bahia as much as the coffee barons of São Paulo objected to what they argued was the financing of other less successful regions and states through a heavy export tax. Given the entrenched interest of local élites, the ICB, ambitious in its attempt to manage the cocoa economy centrally, overcome factional interests and impose norms on the wealth of local oligarchies, was certain to create opposition.

Agriculture credit was again the key to control. Tosta Filho was critical of previous lending policy, arguing that the majority of loans were made without proper checks and supervision, with the result that much credit was used improperly. But while he claimed that ICB credit facilities were extended to both large and small producers, the majority of available credit went to well-established and politically powerful planters. As one of the conditions of credit was clear proof of land title, the exclusion of smallholders continued. It was, however, large producers who criticized the ICB’s credit policies, alleging that through mortgage credit it intended either to redistribute land, so bringing in land reform by the back door, or to become a major land owner itself. Tosta Filho, apparently aware of the failure of the ICB to address the needs of the small producer, argued that such producers would be aided by the cooperative scheme, which was one of the institute’s founding ideals.

A significant intervention in the marketing of cocoa took the form of the ICB’s export activities. Through its export policies and by taking an increasing share of the export sector, the ICB hoped to regain much of the value-added appropriated by the export-houses and to pass this on to the producer. This project was linked to, but not dependent on, the cooperative program. Exporters, unsurprisingly, were opposed to the intrusion of the state into their domain. As the interests of exporters and major landholders were effectively indistinguishable, this program met with considerable opposition from the élite as a whole. Again, without in fact doing so, the ICB was perceived to be attacking vested interests and attempting to redistribute wealth.
For a number of years, the ICB was the principal cocoa exporter in the region and invested some of the funds generated in infrastructure improvements. This represented the beginnings of a regional development program, but was insufficient in scale and duration to constitute a real attempt to address the structural deficiencies of the region. Whilst failing to address the critical issues of unequal access to land and credit, it was at the same time perceived as attacking the interests of the dominant elite. After a dynamic start, and an attempt to identify and address the region's needs, the ICB became increasingly irrelevant. The precedent for intervention had however been set, and in 1957 the ICB was effectively supplanted by CEPLAC.

As if to emphasize the failure of the ICB to address the fundamental problems of the cocoa economy and the persistence of these problems up to the present day, Tosta Filho in a 1934 inspection of ICB mortgage properties, echoed the findings of Zehntner (1914) twenty years earlier. The ICB committee report for 1934 noted two characteristics of the cocoa region that were of concern. The first was the lack of interest on the part of large producers in any crop other than cocoa, despite the very real opportunities for planting cereals, fruits and root crops on land not suited to cocoa. The second cause of concern was the high degree of absenteeism among farm owners, who, the committee felt, demonstrated a total lack of interest in the conservation and improvement of their patrimony. In terms of the cocoa narrative, the ICB was important in that it officially legitimized and institutionalized the pioneer narrative. Its reports and statistics on production and consumption took as their starting point the year 1890 (Mahony; 1996: 503). The agency was silent on production before that date, so implying that Bahian cocoa really only began in 1890, immediately after Abolition and the birth of the Republic. Unlike the colonial, slave-based sugar crop, this said, Bahian cocoa was the crop of free labor and the Republic.

CEPLAC

CEPLAC, the second act of government intervention, was founded in 1957 a year after Kubitschek took office and against the background of the ICB paralysis and crisis in the cocoa economy. It was originally a financial exercise, whose aim was solely to reschedule producer debt, rather than to modernize the cocoa sector. Of the loan agreements made before 1962, 73% were to refinance producer debt, rather than for the improvement of the cocoa producing stock (Cazorla; 1995: 78). Planters’ debt strategies and institutional orientation toward the plantation meant that the principal beneficiaries of this intervention
were again large producers. 50.5% of the finance available for debt rescheduling went to large producers, those producing over 45 tons or 3000 arrobas (Gasparetto; 1993). Until 1983 the organization itself was financed by a foreign exchange contribution quota equivalent to 10% of the FOB price of cocoa beans (ICCO; 1989: 62). As with earlier export taxes, producers considered this high, and it was a continual source of (at best) unease and often vehement complaint until its final withdrawal in 1989. Nevertheless, the tax was used to expand the scope of CEPLAC’s operations, for in 1962 the government had decided that CEPLAC should not only address the region’s financial problems, but plan its economic development. The agency rapidly came to be considered unique in the range and scale of its operations, a semi-autonomous arm of government over which planters felt a strong sense of ownership. With the income from the quota (which until 1989 went not to the government but directly to CEPLAC) the agency established CEPEC, a research center, in addition to a department for credit and extension and a short-lived department for cooperativism. The three columns of agricultural planning and development, research, extension and credit were thus in place and managed by a single agency. The agency’s finest hour came in 1976, with the implementation of the PROCACAU program. This program of production expansion chimed with the interests of the agency, financed as it was by an export tax. The principal motivation for the program, however, was the rising price of cocoa on the international markets, which started in the early 1970s and reached a peak of nearly USD 4.000 per tonne in 1976/77. The moment was also opportune for the federal government which was looking for sources of foreign exchange in order to address the deficit problems brought about by the policy of import-substitution industrialization.

The PROCACAU program, which ran from 1976 to 1985, aimed to increase production through new plantings and replanting. The initial targets were for 300.000 hectares of new plantings (190.000 hectares of it outside Bahia) and 150.000 of replanting. When the program was halted in 1985 (the initial targets having undergone two revisions in 1981 and 1982) 257.000 hectares (66% of the initial target) had been planted and 41.600 hectares replanted (28% of the initial target). Much of this new planting was in areas with soils and/or climate zones not suited to the crop (ICCO; 1989: 51). Indeed, thirty years before the implementation of the program, Urquhart (1954: 25) had seen the limited potential for expanding the area under cultivation within Bahia: “There are no large areas of land suitable for cocoa-growing outside the existing cocoa zone of Bahia. There is still some suitable land within the zone which has not been planted, but it is impossible to
estimate its extent." The poor results obtained for replanting as against new plantings, unsurprising in view of the forest rent obtained by bringing new forest tracts under cultivation, testified to the destruction of forest that accompanied the program.

Through its extension services and monopoly of agricultural credit, the agency also sought to ensure the adoption of the clear-cut system, rather than the traditional *cabruca* system for the cultivation of the new crop. Despite the agency recording near complete uptake of the clear-cut system, planters, often with the tacit approval of local extension staff, were relatively effective in circumventing the requirements that accompanied CEPLAC credit (Johns 1996). A large number relied on savings to finance production expansion, thinning forest areas and planting cocoa on the *cabruca* system. Nevertheless, while the price of cocoa was the principal fuel to deforestation, the program contributed to the disappearance of large areas of forest and the marginalization of smallholders (Gasparotto; 1993). To the extent that it raised both total yield and productivity, the program was successful. Between 1960 and 1985 the agency was successful not only in increasing the area under cultivation and thus the total yield, but also increased productivity from around 15 *arrobas* / ha to 49 *arrobas* / ha (Nascimento; 1994: 128), although even at the height of the program of modernization, productivity never reached that achieved by smallholders in West Africa or, more recently, in Indonesia.

![Competitive position between Cocoa producing countries in 1985](image)
While enjoying relative success in its program of modernization, the agency was particularly successful in embedding itself in the region. Like the ICB, it was exposed to the tensions of conflicting interests and often faced opposition from élite planter groups who objected to the export levy in particular. Nevertheless, links between local planters and the agency were strong, with many planters and members of planter families working for the agency. Cocoa networks developed so that many producers had relatives working for the agency and it became exceptional for members of the white coastal classes not to be well acquainted with someone in the agency’s employ. The local importance of the agency for some groups became such that it could be said with justification that the region’s fragile middle-classes largely depended on it for their survival (Gasparetto; 1993).

This last golden age drew to a close in the 1980s. The harvest year 1981/2 saw the peak utilization of the major components of CEPLAC’s technological package on which its program of modernization had depended (Johns; 1996). This decade also saw the removal of the export tax, which had ensured its wealth and political leverage, the appearance of Witches' Broom disease, irregular rainfall patterns and historically low cocoa prices. With the word “crisis” first appearing in the Department of Extension’s 1988 annual review (Johns; 1996), the decline of the agency accompanied that of the cocoa economy. With the removal of the tax, CEPLAC cutback over 1,000 staff, sold real estate and, with a 1% tax on growers’ sales revenue, established a fund specifically to combat crop disease (Ruf; 1993). The end of the Green Revolution and the technological approach, which CEPLAC had seen as its primary mission, the decay of its political power base and the collapse in the contribution of cocoa to state revenue, left it without a clear mandate or obvious purpose. From the motor of regional development in the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s and 1990s saw the agency threatened with closure. Searching for new justifications for its existence, the agency has started to market its services in the areas of sustainable development, diversification and environmental conservation. With the collapse of cocoa and CEPLAC’s institutional crisis, criticism of both the agency’s present and past behavior has grown, not only among those who might be expected to be critics of its policies, but also those who have traditionally supported it Nascimento (1994: 133) hold CEPLAC (and before it the ICB) responsible for the fact that a culture of cooperativism failed to develop in the region. This assessment of CEPLAC’s failure to generate internal cohesion has been supplemented by criticisms of its failure to open the region up to the exterior, particularly of its failure to seek external investments for
development. Others (for example SEI (1997: 69), believe, probably correctly, that the agency’s failure lay in its “mission creep” namely that it tried to do too much in too many areas, attempting to act as a form of autonomous government.

While planter and popular confidence in the agency has now collapsed, the first decades of its operations were surrounded by great optimism and a belief that it represented “Progress” for the region. For Adonias Filho, the essentially rural and democratic CEPLAC inherited and propagated the cultural traits of a unique “cocoa” model of regional civilization, promoting economic development and focusing regional identity. Even less impassioned observers such as Knight (1972), acquainted with the shortcomings of the agency, were nevertheless impressed by its achievements, particularly the most visible expression of renewal and modernization, the Ilhéus deep-water port.

Conclusions

For most of the last century, the population of southern Bahia has depended on cocoa. Indeed, for a large portion of that time, cocoa money was essential to the state as a whole. Half a century later, as the petrochemical industry of Camaçari reduced the state’s dependence on the cocoa crop, cocoa was still a major contributor to Bahian state finances and the principal source of agricultural revenue. In the harvest year 1979, cocoa and its derivatives generated a little under US$ 1 billion in export nominal value, more than the 70% of the total Bahian exports. While this was a great value to the state, it was essential to the municipalities of the cocoa belt, which were almost entirely dependent on cocoa income for jobs, the provision of services and the preservation of social structures.

Bahian cocoa, if the implications of the “strong” version of the cocoa narrative are pursued to their conclusion, was the first republican and capitalist monoculture. After an aborted start in the colonial period (a start correctly discounted by all historians of the region), cocoa was reborn, it is claimed, with the arrival of the core German and Swiss immigrants in 1822. This was also the year of the declaration of Independence, the birth of Brazil as a nation. If Bahian cocoa was born with the nation, its elevation to the status of monoculture and key agent in the development of a regional civilization is held to have come in 1890, when for the first time Bahia superseded Pará as the nation’s principal producer. 1890 was also, coincidentally the first full year of life of the Brazilian Republic and the second full year after the abolition of slavery. This pattern is repeated with subsequent contiguities in 1930/31 and, less strongly in 1957. These contiguities in
themselves determine nothing. However, the coincidence of dates, repeated in accounts of the history, economy and society of the region, can be read as symptomatic. This coincidence underlines that the contextual significance of cocoa is bound up with a complex of historical factors and cocoa “stories”, which may be characterized as regionalist, capitalist, republican and anti-colonialist. In both written and oral histories, repeated references to and explicit differentiation from the colonial sugar economy and its socio-political resonances (an economy in which Brazil for a considerable period had been the world’s largest producer and Bahia the single largest producing state) are the clearest examples of this connection. Only Pereira Filho (1959) has attempted to understand the boom of the cocoa economy in terms of its relationship to macro-political and wider historical developments. Pereira Filho understands this connection in terms of the timing of the boom, arguing that the new order implanted by the republic created a more settled business climate, making rapid capitalist expansion possible. The present work understands the relationship in less explicitly causal terms. Four factors, related to the wider political and economic climate although not wholly dependent on the Republic can be seen to be responsible for the timing of the boom. These are the steady growth in world demand as chocolate was “democratized”, the decrease in the supply of cocoa from Pará as cocoa was ousted by rubber, the final decline of the sugar industry and the abolition of slavery. These factors, particularly the latter two, are closely related to the birth of the Republic. But the contention of this study is that the historical resonances are as significant for their subsequent legitimizing role in the cocoa narrative as they are for their causal relationship to historical events. If cocoa in Bahia has determined unique social and economic structures within the broad family resemblances of monoculture crops, these may be due to the coincidence of the birth of the new and the endurance of the old. A new, dynamic economy grew out of a declining one. Competition between established groups and newcomers wanting to join the ranks of the élite drove the rapid growth of the region and contributed to the vibrancy of its cities.

This section has sought to examine why a distinct rural middle class did not arise in the course of this development. Based on the pioneer claims of the prevalence of democratic and meritocratic capitalism within the early economy, such differentiation would be expected. It did not take place, however. The pioneer myth holds that this was the result of a natural and organic process, in which a handful of courageous pioneers carved not only their own fortunes out of the forest, but founded a regional civilization. By implication, the failure of alternative, more just social and economic relations to take hold, was if not
explicitly the result of indolence on the part of the majority then was certainly due to the strength of the few. Newcomers to the cocoa region were all equal - they started from nothing and the rapid differentiation that followed was due to individual merit. Again, by implication, the modern cocoa elite, whether directly descended from the early pioneers or having bought into the beguiling cocoa myth, is exceptional in being able to trace its roots through a democratic and meritocratic process of natural evolution. Such are the claims of the cocoa élite. And these claims are vital to the justification of that élite’s threatened pre-eminence. In reality, the middle class did not develop from the egalitarian community because that community never existed. As Mahony summarizes:

“Social and economic structures associated with Portuguese colonialism had developed between 1536 and 1822 in southern Bahia and they had profoundly affected the kind of society that would grow when cacao took hold. And, when the cacao economy began to grow, its planters were forced to work within commercial, financial and political systems that had emerged to accommodate the sugar planters of the Bahian Recôncavo and the foreign merchants with whom they traded." Mahony (1996: 18).

The basis of this myth has remained remarkably free from critical attention. In the absence of a contestation, it has developed into a significant explicatory narrative. Critically examining this narrative and its relation to the historical record may be an essential part not only of discovering an alternative history, less heroic and more mundane, but of creating both a language and a space in which alternatives to current arrangements can be voiced.
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### Appendix: Historical Series

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Production in Bahia (Kilos)</th>
<th>Production Value (mil-réis)</th>
<th>Cocoa Tax (mil-réis)</th>
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