

## COFFEE PLANTATION ITEMS IN THE BRAZILIAN PATTERN OF TERRENE OCCUPANCE

BY

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### ABSTRACT

The coffee region of São Paulo occupies about one per cent of the area of Brazil. Its form reflects the advance of a frontier. Coffee growing began on the coastal lowlands, then leapt a mountain barrier into the Parahyba Valley, and a second barrier into the plateau region of rolling uplands. There coffee spread northward and westward, along railway lines as they advanced, expanding in favorable areas of fertile land. Toward the north it has practically reached the limit of good land; toward the west it is still advancing.

Details of the pattern of terrene occupance in this region are illustrated by reconnaissance studies of plantations at the old threshold of the plateau region in the Campinas district and on the new frontier in the Marília district.

The Fazenda Chapadão in the Campinas district is eighty years old. The property has an area of about four thousand acres and occupies approximately the basin of a small stream. Six hundred acres are occupied by coffee, on ridge tops and upper slopes around the head waters of the stream. Lower slopes and bottom lands, generally less well drained and more subject to frost than the ridges, afford space for supply crops, pasture, wood, and the central buildings of the plantation.

The coffee is grown without shade in the Brazilian manner, suitable under conditions of expanding settlement on virgin land. Now that Chapadão is an old plantation some shade might be beneficial, as suggested by the dead tops of many old coffee plants.

The whole crop is harvested at one time by stripping the plants, a Brazilian practice responsible in large part for low cost of production and low value of product. The quality of Chapadão coffee is slightly above the average by reason of a well equipped cleaning plant using the wet method, which improves average quality by sorting out unripe berries.

In competition with new lands on the coffee frontier, Chapadão is handicapped by old plants, soil depletion and insect pests. Diversification of crops is under consideration. The chief supply crops grown by the laborers in their allotted fields are corn, beans, and bananas, none of them suitable for export. However, the district has advantages for commercial production of other fruits and experimentation is under way. Oranges have been shipped to Argentina for an early season market and to Europe for an off-season market, but it is unlikely that fruit will supersede coffee in this older part of the region.

Marília on the frontier is at the end of one of the railways advancing to the west. Fazenda Miranda, a few miles northwest of the town, is in the midst of virgin forest. The original property had an area of 150,000 acres, but most of this was subdivided for sale and only about one thousand acres reserved for the owner's plantation. The owner is a non-resident and the plantation is operated by a manager, as is Chapadão.

The form of the plantation is like that of Chapadão, occupying the basin of a small stream. Two hundred fifty acres are occupied by coffee, on ridge tops and upper slopes. Part of the lower land is in pasture, but none in separate fields of supply crops, the laborers as yet growing their supplies between rows of coffee.

Each year a tract of forest gives way to coffee. The trees are felled at the beginning of the drier season and left to dry. Then at the end of the season the brush is burned and coffee seeds are planted.

Some of the plantations of the district are different in certain ways. The Fazenda Pollan has an area of only one hundred twenty-five acres, and the owner is an Italian immigrant who lives and works on the plantation. Like others, the property occupies the head of a small drainage basin, in which are eighty acres of coffee on the surrounding ridge land. With the young coffee there is interplanting of supply crops and of some temporary money crops, particularly tobacco and rice.

In the town of Marilia, founded as the center of a coffee district, the leading establishments at the start are rice cleaning plants and lumber mills. These aspects of the frontier are temporary and plans have assumed that the frontier itself is temporary. The organization of the coffee industry has been developed on advancement into new land. The area thus far occupied is only five per cent of the state of São Paulo, and there is much more land available for this crop, which has such narrowly specific requirements that few regions of the world can produce it. But little land is required to satisfy the world market; consumption appears to limit the industry. Perhaps the era of expansion is at an end.