

# Book Reviews

## FEATURED REVIEWS

*Ibicaba (1817–1927): Entendendo, Vivendo e Construindo Futuros*. Bruno Gabriel Witzel and Leonardo Antonio Santin Gardenal (Orgs.). Campinas, SP: Pontes, 2021. Pp. 471; \$17.50.

doi: 10.1017/S0022050723000037

The economic and business history of Brazil and of Sao Paulo state have always been traditionally chopped up into pieces. That is, you are either a historian of the colonial era, of the imperial period (1821–1890), of the republican period (usually 1890 to 1930), or of the post-1930 period, etc. Thus, it is refreshing to find a book that transcends those historiographic boundaries using a single economic unit, in this case a fazenda (i.e., a large-scale farm), to trace the history of key institutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

*Ibicaba* uses the history of a farm and its owners, the Vergueiro family, to examine the history of slavery, European immigration, labor rights, and large-scale agriculture. The chapters more interesting for economic historians are the following: In Chapter 1, Bruno Pissinato and Carlos Vian examine the history of *Ibicaba* from the point of view of its agricultural products and the challenges it faced to get labor from Europe. It highlights how the farm cultivated sugar and coffee depending on global prices and describes how it innovated by introducing agricultural tools and machinery (even the first locomotive) in the late nineteenth century. Chapter 2, by Jose Eduardo Heflinger Jr., traces the history of the efforts by the founder family, the Vergueiro family, to organize a system to promote European immigration to Brazil since the 1840s and 1850s, especially from German-speaking countries. Their efforts to build a network of agents in Europe and to structure risk-sharing contracts are fundamental for Brazilian history because they became the pillars of the European immigration subsidized program that the Sao Paulo government sponsored later in the nineteenth century. Yet, the initial efforts of the Vergueiro family met with a series of challenges due to the treatment of European workers, including a revolt, diplomatic spats, and ultimately the bankruptcy of the farm.

The transition from African slave labor to European immigrants required resilience and experimentation. In Chapter 6, Renato Leite Marcondes discusses the challenges farms in the western part of Sao Paulo faced as slavery was abolished in the 1880s, especially because most slaves were in their most productive age. Among them, Vergueiro was the largest slave holder in the municipality of Limeira, with over 400 slaves out of a population of close to 3,500. Then in Chapter 7, Andre Lanza questions a long-held belief that European immigrants who went to Sao Paulo to work in coffee farms ended up being landowners. He documents that most of the Europeans moved to urban centers and participated in commercial activities. Chapter 8, by Guilherme Grandi, analyzes the efforts of the Vergueiro family to build roads in the state of Sao Paulo (as one family member was Minister of Infrastructure in the state) and looks at how those efforts reduced transportation costs from the port of Santos to the interior. The rest of the book documents the biggest migrations from Europe to Sao Paulo and includes interviews with former farm laborers discussing in detail their experiences.

The book is a great tool to study the process of European migration to Sao Paulo. The chronology and coverage of the chapters overlap at times, and there are topics that are repeated across chapters. Still, this book promises to be a fundamental tool for the study of the history of modern Sao Paulo that can be used both by undergraduate and graduate students. Unfortunately, there is no English edition yet.

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