Setting Up the Coffee Empire: The United States and Brazil in the Early 19th Century

Christian Robles-Baez

February 2022 version

“...still the great staple from the Empire of Brazil is coffee”
The New York Times, August 1, 1859

1. Introduction

In 1859, The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review explained a striking change in the Americans’ diet. A dark, bitter, and highly caffeinated beverage made from a tiny bean had appeared on America’s breakfast table. Before the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the penetrating smell of this bean native to Africa but grown in Latin America had been unknown to most people living in the U.S. However, in the mid-nineteenth century, it had become a familiar and desired scent. According to the magazine, “until 1830, the consumption of coffee in the United States was limited; its high price making it more an article of luxury than necessity. It is now considered a necessary of life by the masses (...)” 1. This change in the American diet and taste profoundly transformed the world’s economy. In fact, the international coffee market expanded twenty-fold in the nineteenth century, and before the dawn of the twentieth century coffee was the third largest market of the world in terms of value. 2

While the expansion of the coffee economy during the nineteenth century is a widely known phenomenon, historians have neither succeeded in specifically locating it in time nor in fully understanding its causes. On the one hand, there is a paucity of academic work on the history of coffee consumption in the U.S. What scholarship does exist attributes

1 “Coffee and the coffee trade” The Merchants Magazine and Commercial Review Vol. 42 1859 p.165
industrialization, technological innovation, urbanization, and increments in real wages to the increase in coffee consumption in America during the second half of the nineteenth century. Although all these factors likely triggered the expansion of coffee consumption in America, they nonetheless fail to consider several important elements: Brazil’s role in this process, the importance of the first half of the nineteenth century, and Americans’ preference for coffee over other substitute beverages, such as tea. On the other hand, classic works on Brazil’s economic history usually associate the coffee boom with the end of its monarchy, the end of slavery, the building of railroads, and the colonization of the interior lands of São Paulo, among other processes that also occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. In both cases, the early nineteenth century is a period barely linked to the boom of the world’s coffee economy.

Another flaw of the traditional literature on the coffee economy relies on the omission of the transnational links that made its expansion possible. In fact, Brazil’s traditional historiography on coffee has tended to focus more on supply than on demand and, therefore, has limited its analyses to Brazil’s national borders. This approach, although useful to understand how coffee was grown, harvested, transported, and sold, provides no opportunity to observe how supply and demand—two different historical processes at a first glance disconnected—were actually intertwined. As a result, “the researcher, like the export merchant, stands on the dock waving goodbye without examining what happens to his shipment afterward, or even wondering why there was a market for it in the first place.”

---


5 Although it is not its main period of focus, Warren Dean: Rio Claro: A Brazilian Plantation System 1820-1920 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976) is one of the few books that addresses the coffee economy in Brazil during the first half of the nineteenth century.

In contrast to this conventional perspective, in this paper I consider that to explain the coffee boom of the nineteenth century, the demand for coffee in the United States cannot be taken for granted. Political interests, for example, were critical in this process. As a matter of fact, the political affinity between the U.S. and Brazil against European ambitions in the Americas was critical for establishing a stable network of trade between the two countries. Once this network existed, coffee could arrive on a regular basis and at an accessible price to the U.S. The wide availability and affordability of coffee in the U.S. market that resulted from this circumstance played a significant role in expanding its consumption. That was how, in the face of European imperialism, the United States and Brazil sought to form their own empire, an empire of coffee.

Based on this background, in this paper I provide evidence for three major arguments. First, I argue that the period from 1822 to 1850 was when the United States and Brazil created a strong commercial relationship in which coffee was the protagonist. By 1850, it was clear that Brazil and the United States had set up the coffee empire. Second, I maintain that Brazil was a critical actor in the expansion of the coffee consumption in the United States. By examining the imports of slaves into Brazil, I present additional evidence of the importance of this time-period and of Brazil’s role in the increasing demand for coffee in the United States. In fact, between 1822 and 1850, most of the coffee consumed in America was grown by the sweat of slaves’ brows in Brazil. In line with this evidence, my final argument is that the commercial relationship between the US and Brazil during the first half of the nineteenth century was the result of the close political interests that both countries had in the international arena. Without this connection, the astonishing expansion of coffee consumption in the U.S. would have not taken place during this period.

2. The critical years 1822-1850

---

7 Certainly, many other factors affected the increase in demand for coffee in the United States. For example, the significant demographic changes given by the immigration, the colonization of new territories in the west, the creation of urban spaces, among other social transformations of this time could potentially have impacted directly or indirectly the demand for coffee.
Despite the importance of the commercial exchange between Brazil and the United States during the nineteenth century, most academic works have focused their attention on the twentieth century. Economic historian Steven Topik even argued some years ago that “there [were] no historical studies of Latin American trade negotiations or of Latin American commerce with the United States in the nineteenth century”\(^8\). Today, the trade relationship between the United States and Latin America during the 19\(^{th}\) century continues to be a largely understudied matter. Within the nineteenth century, however, there are stark differences. Economic historians have tended to assume that, compared to the second half of the nineteenth century, the first half was not a period of great transformation and economic growth in either the United States or Latin America. In consequence, the first half of the century has received even less attention.

In the case of the United States, the period after the Civil War has been assumed as the period in which heavy industry and modernity started. Different scholars have also mentioned that the abolition of slavery and the end of military disputes between the north and the south were critical elements for the U.S. to achieve a higher economic growth\(^9\). In the case of Brazil, the construction of railways, the end of slavery, the consolidation of the republic, the European immigration, and the growing economy of São Paulo have been among the more studied subjects\(^10\). As a result, the years between 1822 and 1850 have been less researched and less understood.

Another possible explanation of this unbalance is that, compared to the second half of the nineteenth century, the economic data of the first half are more fragmented, scarcer, and hardly comparable—particularly in the case of foreign trade. As it has been mentioned by other scholars, the lack of data on domestic consumption of coffee, and on its international

---

\(^8\) Topik, Steve *Gunboats and Trade: The United States and Brazil in the Age of Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) p. 5


trade, resulted from “the neglect of infrastructure for internal trade, the weakness of new states, and the underdeveloped nature of commodity markets”\textsuperscript{11}. These constraints imposed by the paucity of data might have discouraged scholars from studying this period.

Aware of this limitation, in this paper I present data gathered from a variety of sources—primary and secondary—from both Brazil and the United States related to the imports and exports of coffee. The information from only one source can be dubious, but when different and independent sources are analyzed together, the consistent tendencies become more reliable. Also, more than knowing the exactitude of the figures, I am interested in identifying general trends across the various sources. The most conspicuous trend that both American and Brazilian sources present is that the commerce between the United States and Brazil significantly grew during the first half of the nineteenth century. This trend is also consistent with the qualitative evidence that I collected from both American and Brazilian newspapers and commercial magazines, in which the flourishing trade between the two countries is often reported.

Soon after Brazil became an independent empire, it initiated a commercial exchange with the already independent United States. Coffee soon became the main product of this commercial relationship. Indeed, just as the United States became the world's largest consuming country, Brazil became the world's largest producing country. Certainly, this was not a coincidence: these processes developed in tandem. From 1822 on, the volume of trade between the United States and Brazil significantly increased, as did their domestic economies.

Chart 1 shows that from the late 1820s, Brazilian exports started to grow at a constant pace. From 1822 to 1852/53, Brazilian exports more than tripled in terms of value. Coffee exports grew even faster. In 1822, coffee exports valued 3,866,000 milreis, while in 1852/53 the figure was 33,897,000, which represents a net growth of almost 800% in three decades. Thus, since the first years of the 1830s, coffee became the main Brazilian export, and Brazil the main coffee exporter. In 1851, Brazil exported 256,000,000 pounds of coffee whereas the second largest exporter—Java—exported only 80,000,000 pounds\textsuperscript{12}. Evidently, by the mid-

\textsuperscript{11} Topik, Steven “The World Coffee Market…” p.4
\textsuperscript{12} “Coffee and Coffee Trade”. The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review Dec. 1, 1851; 25,6. p.690
nineteenth century, Brazil had transformed in the world’s largest coffee supplier by far. Chart 1 also shows that coffee represented less than 20% of Brazilian exports during the 1820s; however, during the first years of the 1830s, the value of coffee exports went up to 50% of the Brazilian exports. In the next couple of decades, coffee value oscillated between 40% and 50% of the total exports, always remaining the main item. Only after the 1870s, coffee climbs up to 50% of Brazilian exports. Although it is certain that in the second half of the nineteenth century coffee exports were greater in both relative and absolute terms than in the first half, it is also true that it was in the period 1822-1850 when coffee exports started to grow at a constant pace. This background cannot be ignored.

One aspect to consider when taking the value of exports as an indicator of economic activity is that it might not reflect an increase in production, but rather an increase in prices. We can be sure that this was not the case with the Brazilian coffee economy during the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, as Chart 2 shows, at constant prices, coffee experienced a secular decline in the period between 1821-1848. Chart 2 also shows that, from the early 1830s, the average price of coffee in the United States closely followed the price of the representative Rio 7 from Brazil—thus suggesting that from this time-period on, Brazilian coffee markedly influenced the price of coffee internationally. As Absell and Tena-Junguito point out, “it must be noted that the unparalleled growth of sugar and coffee occurred during a period in which international prices were generally declining.”

Therefore, the increasing value of the coffee exports in Brazil was not due to an increase in prices but despite a decline in prices.

Low prices were to a substantial extent the consequence of an unprecedentedly abundant supply. The volume of Brazilian exports was large enough to compensate for the lower prices. This increase in Brazil’s exports was more important for Brazil’s GDP than officially recorded and traditionally assumed. In fact, the first few decades of independence were described by foundational economic historians as being anything but dynamic. Celso Furtado, for example, considered that the Brazilian GDP per capita remained stagnant in the

---

13 Absell, Christopher David and Antonio Tena-Junguito; “Brazilian export growth and divergence in the tropics during the nineteenth century” Working papers in Economic History Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, 2015 p.19
14 Ibid., p. 3
first half of the 19th century\textsuperscript{15}. The Madison Project Database also reports zero economic growth per capita for Brazil between 1800-1850\textsuperscript{16}. Even official reports appeared to underestimate coffee exports in the GDP growth, as a recent work of Absell and Tena-Junguito shows. According to the authors, Brazil’s post-independence economy was not only much more dynamic than conventionally thought, but was also more positive during the post-independence period than at any other time in the 19th century”\textsuperscript{17}.

American sources also reflect the boom in Brazil’s coffee exports. In 1859, for instance, \textit{The Merchants Magazine} reported that no article entirely of foreign production enters more largely into general consumption than coffee, and none has increased in such ratio”\textsuperscript{18}. Chart 3 supports this account, for it shows that, between 1822-1850, the compound annual growth rate of coffee imports into the United States was greater in terms of volume than that of sugar or tea. This rate takes 1822 as the beginning value and measures the growth for each of the following years, discounting it for the number of years elapsed\textsuperscript{19}. When analyzed together with Chart 4, we can note that despite growing more than tea and sugar imports in terms of \textit{volume}, coffee imports grew less in terms of \textit{value} during most of the period. Since the imports in terms of value are the total of coffee imported multiplied for its price (Value=Price*Quantities) we can see that a low price of coffee was compensating for the large quantities. In other words, despite being imported in large quantities, the total value of imports was not particularly high because the relative price of coffee was low. Charts 3 and 4 thus indicate that coffee was abundant and relatively cheap, whereas tea was scarcer and relatively expensive.

While the abundant supply of coffee provided by Brazil during these years made coffee affordable and accessible, the tariff policy adopted by the United States was also important. As we can see in table 1, in 1812 the United States began a policy of steadily reducing the duties for coffee. It became free of duty in 1832, when it already was a basic

\textsuperscript{15} See De Paiva Abreu, Marcelo and Luiz Aranha Correa do Lago “A Economia Brasileira no Imperio, 1822-1889” Texto para discusão N° 584 Departamento de Economia, Pontificia Universidad Catolica do Rio de Janeiro, p. 4
\textsuperscript{16} See: Maddison Project Database, available on: https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/?lang=en (02/24/22)
\textsuperscript{17} Absell, Christopher David and Antonio Tena-Junguito; “Brazilian export growth...” p. 3
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Merchants Magazine}1859 p. 166 “Coffe and the Coffee Tarde”
\textsuperscript{19} The formula is CAGR=(Vfinal/Vbegin)\wedge(1-t) -1, where Vfinal is the year of interests, Vbegin is the baseline year (1822 in this case), and t is the number of years between Vfinal and Vbegin.
item in many Americans’ diets. The low-tariff and later the free-of-duty policy made coffee cheaper for Americans and contributed to an increase in its consumption. In 1852, the Department of Commerce pointed out that “the importation in the year 1831 doubled in consequence of the reduced duty.” It also stated that the consumption per head had quadrupled between 1821 and 1842. In contrast, Europe resisted the duty-free policy for coffee from the Americas, gradually making the United States the main destination for Brazil’s coffee. As we will see in more detail in section five, this tariff policy in the United States was not corresponded by a similar policy in Brazil, which maintained high tariffs on U.S. products.

When examining the imports into the U.S., we have additional evidence of the importance that the period 1822-1850 had in the international coffee economy. Chart 5 shows that U.S. imports from South America went from 3% of the total in 1821 to 9% in 1850. This significant increase was mainly driven by imports of Brazilian coffee (see Charts 6 and 7). The percentage of imports from South America achieved in 1850 was, with brief exceptions (1876-1880 and 1891-1892), roughly similar throughout the rest of the century. Since Brazil was, by far, the main trade partner of the U.S. in South America during this time, Chart 5 also supports the idea that the first three decades after Brazilian independence were critical for establishing a network of commerce between the United States and Brazil. In addition, data presented by De Paiva and Do Lago show that from 1822, when Brazil achieved its independence, to 1852-53, the U.S. was the export market that most quickly grew in importance, passing from 0 to around 32 per cent of the total.

This building of the coffee export economy came in tandem with deep social, economic, and demographic transformations in both the United States and Brazil. These changes were to some extent both a cause and consequence of the coffee economy’s development. On the one hand, the U.S. population grew from 10.6 million in 1822 to 23.5 million in 1850. In this year, around 25 percent of the population’s growth was caused by

---

21 De Paiva Abreu, Marcelo and Luiz Aranha Correa do Lago “A Economia Brasileira...” pp.23-24
international immigration\textsuperscript{23}. While growth in population was significant, economic growth was even greater, for the GDP per capita grew at an average annual of 3.23 percent in the same period\textsuperscript{24}. Brazil also experienced a decent growth in both population and income per capita. In 1822, Brazil had between 4.5 and 4.8 million people, whereas in 1850 the figure had increased to 7.5\textsuperscript{25}. Despite Brazil’s lack of precise data on economic growth, Coatsworth estimated that Brazil’s GDP per capita grew at an annual average rate of 0.36 percent between 1800 and 1860\textsuperscript{26}. Even if this figure is not negligible, it is probably underestimated.

National figures, however, hide stark regional differences. The east-south-central region of the United States—where the core of the cotton economy was located—went from having around 2 percent of the total population in 1790 to having 14 percent in 1830, and 12.8 percent in 1860. In contrast, New England went from having one quarter of the population of the country in 1790 to having only 10 percent in 1860. Brazil’s economic growth was also uneven among its regions. For instance, while the annual growth of the GDP per capita of the Northeast region is estimated in around 0 per cent in the imperial period, that figure in the coffee producing south-center is estimated between 1.5 and 2 per cent. De Paiva notes that in the 1840s, Rio de Janeiro produced a little bit less than 80 per cent of the coffee exports, while São Paulo produced 16 per cent and Minas Gerais around 6 per cent\textsuperscript{27}.

In the first part of the nineteenth century, coffee had already transformed both the rural and the urban environments of Rio de Janeiro. Coffee planters regularly established new plantations, deforesting lands and hills of the interior. As Dean says, “on the plantations of Rio de Janeiro, senescent groves were not replanted but were abandoned, and new swaths of primary forest were cleared to maintain production.”\textsuperscript{28} The city of Rio de Janeiro also changed at a fast pace. In fact, between 1821 and 1849 the city more than doubled its

\textsuperscript{25} De Paiva Abreu, Marcelo and Luiz Aranha Correa do Lago “A Economia Brasileira...” p. 2
\textsuperscript{26} Coatsworth, John “Obstacles to Economic Growth in Nineteenth-Century Mexico” The American Historical Review (1978) pp.80-100
\textsuperscript{27} De Paiva Abreu, Marcelo and Luiz Aranha Correa do Lago “A Economia Brasileira...” p. 7
\textsuperscript{28} Dean, Warren with the Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995) p. 181
population. According to the 1849 census, the city was home to 205,906 residents, which made it one of the biggest cities in South America. Rio de Janeiro was not only Brazil’s main coffee port during the first half of the nineteenth century; it also was a commercial and financial center, where coffee was quoted, classified, and negotiated, and far away the busiest slave port in the world. These profound transformations, which were clearly visible in Brazil during the first half of the century, were connected to the socioeconomic transformations that were occurring in the United States at the same time.

Seth Rockman shows that in the first half of the nineteenth century coffee was a quotidian cargo in Baltimore’s port. Gradually, Brazilian coffee became the most common type of coffee in the United States, also arriving regularly to the ports of New Orleans, New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Out of these cities, New Orleans became a particularly important port for Brazilian coffee. An article in The Daily Union, a newspaper from Washington D.C., reported that “the most remarkable feature of the coffee trade is, its rapid growth in Brazil, and the annually augmenting importation of it into the New Orleans market.” Rockman also shows that coffee was usually present in the diet of the poor urban classes of Baltimore: “their food budgets did include an occasional vegetable (2c for a head of cabbage), butter (25c per pound), milk (6 ½c per quart), as well as coffee (25c per pound), tea (1$ per pound), and sugar (10c).” Although the diet of the urban workers was notoriously limited—meat was usually absent—coffee was present because it was affordable and easy to find.

The difference between coffee and tea in terms of affordability was clear: a pound of coffee was four times cheaper than a pound of tea. Although in the 1820s and 1830s laborers were not necessarily better off than people living from charity, it was recorded that the

---

30 Ibid. p. 3
33 “Editor’s Correspondence” The Daily Union Washington D.C. September 20, 1845
34 Rockman, Seth Scraping By, p.179
inmates of the Baltimore’s almshouse received “at least one pound of bread each day and drank a molasses-sweetened beverage of coffee and rye for breakfast”35. Therefore, it is clear that in the first half of the nineteenth century coffee was already a diffused beverage, consumed not only by rich people but also by the popular classes.

Other sources account for the coffee expansion in the United States in the early nineteenth century. Chart 6 shows that the U.S. imports from Brazil significantly increased from 1820 to 1850. Although the absolute growth was still modest compared to the following decades, in relative terms the increment was considerable: imports from Brazil were around ten times greater in 1850 than in 1820. As a result, by 1850 imports into the United States from the Americas primarily came from Brazil and Cuba. While both countries produced coffee and sugar, during the first half of the nineteenth century Cuba specialized in sugar and Brazil in coffee. An 1850 article mentioned that it was “somewhat singular, that while in Brazil sugar cultivation was declining, and coffee increasing and superseding, in Cuba coffee was falling off, and sugar annually increasing. In Brazil the coffee planter had credit, but the sugar planter none. In Cuba was the reverse”.36 Therefore, in the first half of the nineteenth century, imports into the United States from Brazil mainly consisted of coffee, and Brazil became a more relevant trade-partner than neighboring Canada or Mexico.

The evidence that coffee was thriving in this period is not only quantitative. As early as 1831, O Jornal do Comercio —Brazil’s most important economic newspaper at the time— mentioned that “the imports of our coffee into the U.S. are now competing in terms of volume with those from Cuba and Saint Domingue. A traveler who visited the interior of Cuba said that in that island growers are abandoning the cultivation of coffee because, according to them, they cannot compete with Brazilians”37. In the following years, the same newspaper often confirmed the importance of the U.S. market for Brazil. In 1835, it reported that during July and August, all the coffee brought to Rio’s market was soon sold for the U.S. market38. Two years later it reported that in 1836, “Brazil exported 49,213 more sacs to the United

35 Ibid., p.204
36 “Coffee and the Coffee Trade” Littell’s Living Age (1844-1896) Nov. 9 1850; 27,338; p.254
37 O Jornal do Comercio Jun 11. 1831 ed. 239 p.1
38 O Jornal do Comercio December 29, 1835, ed. 287 p.3
States in than in 1835 and the demand for coffee in this country seems to continue increasing. The new harvest is promising in all aspects and will arrive sooner than last year”\(^{39}\).

Chart 7 confirms the traveler’s observations that the *O Jornal do Commercio* published. As we can see, from the late 1820s, Brazil started to compete with Cuba as the main coffee source of the United States. Then, during most of the 1830s, Brazilian coffee imports into the U.S. were greater than Cuba’s. Although in 1838 Cuban imports were again greater than Brazil’s, from that year on Brazil became by far the main provider of coffee for the United States. By 1844, the gap between Brazil and Cuba was quite evident: The United States imported around five times more coffee from Brazil than from Cuba. Chart 7 also shows that Brazil was the only coffee producing country that significantly increased its production during this period. In contrast, the volume of coffee produced by Cuba, Haiti and the Dutch Indies was quite similar in 1844 than in 1821. Although Colombia and Venezuela, measured together, did increase their production, they did it at a much slower pace. Given the lower growth of production in other regions of the Americas, we can see the expansion of coffee consumption in the U.S. would not have occurred in this time period without the regular and ample imports of coffee grown in center-south Brazil.

Since some part of the coffee imported into the United States was then re-exported to other countries, one might think that increments in the coffee imports did not necessarily translate into increments in coffee consumption in the United States. Chart 8 displays the total amount of coffee imported into the United States and the fraction of it that was re-exported. As we can note, the gap between the two trends tends to increase. Indeed, re-exports of coffee tend to decrease after 1832 while imports always increase. We can interpret this gap between imports and re-exports as the amount of coffee allotted to domestic consumption in the United States, which tended to increase. Chart 8, therefore, confirms that not only coffee imports into the U.S. were significantly increasing during this period but also consumption.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the American press noted the rapid way in which coffee entered into the American diet. *The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review*, for example, mentioned in 1845 that “the importation, in the year 1831 doubled; and

---

\(^{39}\) *O Jornal do comercio* January 19, 1837 ed. 015 p.3
the consumption per head, for the four years ending in 1842, averaged 6 pounds per head; having quadrupled to each inhabitant since 1821”. In fact, in 1821 the consumption per head was estimated in only 1lb. 4oz. By 1830, the proportion had increased to 3 lbs. per head and ten years after it had doubled once again. As mentioned above, affordability was critical for the expansion of the consumption of coffee. Coffee became cheap because of the abundant supply that Brazil provided after its independence and because of the free-of-duty policy of the U.S.

However, tea also benefited from a low-tariff policy. In fact, the laws that regulated tariffs on coffee used to be the same that regulated tariffs on tea. Thus, coffee and tea were not treated as different items in the U.S. tariff policy. For instance, the law that reduced the import duties from 2 to 1 cent per pound in 1831 was the same for coffee, tea, and cacao. We can even argue that since the price of one pound of coffee was significantly lower than the price of one pound of tea, the tariff proportionally taxed more heavily coffee than tea. Yet, in 1832, all duties on both coffee and tea were lifted. Therefore, it is fair to state that the difference between tea and coffee in terms of prices was driven mainly by the supply. The article in *The Merchants’ Magazine* highlighted the role of Brazilian supply in the growing consumption of coffee. It reported that “a large proportion of the increased consumption is derived from the Brazil’s”. It also identified similarities between the effects that Brazil’s large production had on the price of coffee and the effects that the U.S. southern states production had on the price of cotton.

The equal treatment that tea and coffee received in the US tariff policy shows that the relatively low price of coffee was achieved mainly because of the plentiful supply provided by Brazil. Thus, the coffee which cost sixteen cents in 1830, duty and charges included, cost only seven cents in 1845: “a reduction of nine cents, which has given the spur to the consumption” *DeBows Review* presented interesting data about the correlation between

---

40 “Commercial Statistics. Statistical View of the Coffee Trade”. *The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review (1839-1870)*; Sep 1, 1845; 13, 3; pg. 273
41 *O Jornal do comercio* August 14, 1830 Ed. 003 p.1
43 “Commercial Statistics. Statistical View of the Coffee Trade”. *The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review (1839-1870)*; Sep 1, 1845; 13, 3; pg. 273
44 “Commercial Statistics. Statistical View of the Coffee Trade”. *The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review (1839-1870)*; Sep 1, 1845; 13, 3; pg. 273
the growth of Brazilian production and the growth of the coffee consumption in the United States. According to this source, from 1820 to 1840, the Brazilian product increased 1,100 percent or 155,000,000 lbs. In the same period, the consumption in the United States increased 137,000,000 lbs., leaving an increase of only 18,000,000 lbs., of Rio coffee, besides the enhanced products of all countries, to supply “the increased consumption of England and Europe”\textsuperscript{45}.

This increase of coffee consumption in Europe was, however, quite modest. Thurber stated that in England coffee consumption was even decreasing\textsuperscript{46}. Likewise, \textit{DeBows Review} explained that “while the United States, with a population of 17,000,000 consumed in 1844 149,711,820 pounds of coffee, Great Britain, with a population of 27,000,000 consumed 31,934,000 pounds only, or less than one fourth the consumption of the United States. In 1851 the figures remained nearly the same”\textsuperscript{47}. The American press highlighted in the mid of the century that “the annual increase in the United States has been astonishing; upwards of 15 per cent per annum since 1838; while Europe has increased but 2.5.” It added that the average annual increase was about 5 per cent in all consuming countries\textsuperscript{48}. While industrialization, urbanization, and higher wages were present in both Great Britain and the US, their trends in coffee consumption diverged. Hence, these factors alone cannot explain the consolidation of coffee in the American diet.

Certainly, the tariff policy in Europe was quite different from that of the United States regarding coffee imports. In England, for instance, foreign coffee paid sixteen cents per pound duty, whereas the colonial coffee paid eight cents. \textit{Littel’s Living Age} contended in 1850 that “the increase of consumers is very great, especially in the United States, where, as it is not taxed, high cost will not affect the consumption so much as in Europe, and, therefore, a large annual increase of production is actually required to supply the wants of the world”\textsuperscript{49}.

\textsuperscript{45} Department of Commerce. 1. Commercial Navigation of the United States and Great Britain” \textit{De Bow’s Review of the Southern and Western States. Devoted to Commerce, Agriculture, Manufactures}. Aug. 1852; XIII, 2 p. 185
\textsuperscript{48} “Coffee and the Coffee Trade” \textit{Littell’s Living Age (1844-1896)} Nov. 9 1850; 27,338; p.254
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ibid}. 
Beyond these differences in the tariff policy between Europe and the U.S., the importance of Brazil was always underlined: In 1844 “nearly half of Brazil’s exports were bought by the United States”\(^5\) and in 1851 it was announced that Brazil constituted about three-fourths of the whole consumption of the United States\(^6\).

Per capita consumption in the U.S. grew from one-eighth of a pound in 1783 to nine pounds a hundred years later. Topik argues that total coffee imports during the nineteenth century grew 2,400 percent! As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century the U.S. was consuming thirteen pounds per capita and importing over 40 percent of the world’s coffee. At least half of the growth in the world’s consumption in the nineteenth century was due to increased United States purchases.\(^7\) Beyond the spectacular nature of these figures, vast evidence confirms that already by mid-nineteenth century the US was a coffee consuming country and Brazil its main provider. In 1845, the *Merchants’ Magazine* rightly predicted that “there must be a greatly increased consumption of Brazil and South American coffees in the United States.”\(^8\) Certainly, the international coffee market continued to increase in the second half of the century, but the years between 1822 and 1850 were the critical years for setting-up the United States-Brazil coffee empire.

3. **An Empire of Coffee in Place**

In 1809, after sailing nearly 5,000 miles from Rio de Janeiro's port, the US merchant ship *Marquis de Someriuclas* entered into Salem’s port, bringing the first official import of Brazilian coffee into the United States, which consisted of 1,522 bags.\(^9\) Fifty years after, the imports of Brazil into the United States had increased to the large amount of 600,000,000 lbs.\(^10\) *The New York Times* recounted then that “the consumption of coffee has rapidly increased during

---


\(^7\) Topik, Steven “The World Coffee Market” p.24

\(^8\) “Commercial Statistics. Statistical View of the Coffee Trade”. *The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review (1839-1870)* Sep 1, 1845; 13, 3; pg. 273


\(^10\) Usually, a bag of coffee contained between 60 and 70 kilos. Therefore, the equivalent to 600,000,000 lbs would be around 4 million bags.
the past twenty-five years, the greatest augmentation having been in the United States, where it has averaged 7.5 per cent per annum while in Europe it has been 2.5 per cent per annum"56. The newspaper not only was impressed by the large amount of coffee entering into the US but also by the large amount of money that Americans were willing to pay for the bean. In fact, by the mid-nineteenth century, the appreciation that Americans had for coffee had already transformed the trade of this item into a million-dollar business. In 1856, the whole sum paid by the United States for coffee was $21,514,916 of which Brazil received no less than $16,091,71457, roughly 75 percent. Coffee thus became the main source of foreign exchange for Brazil. Other economic aspects of the Brazilian economy such as the balance of payments, the exchange rate, the public and private revenue, and the level of investments, among others, largely depended on the sales of coffee to the United States.

After this first cargo shipment of coffee to the United States from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil only needed a few decades to become by far the world’s main supplier. The same New York Times article reported: “Now Brazil supplies two-thirds of the coffee of the world. Although the agricultural capacities of this province are very great and yield sugar, cotton, tobacco, and Indian corn, still the great staple from the Empire of Brazil is coffee”58. In a similar way, The Commercial Magazine expressed that “the increased import of Brazil coffee into the United States the past thirty years is very remarkable. In 1825 it was about 12.5 per cent of the whole consumption, and at the present time it is 80 per cent.”59 The article concluded “that the United States is the greatest consuming country of the world for coffee [and] that it has become a necessary and national beverage”60.

This situation would not have been possible to achieve without low coffee prices. To be a mass commodity, coffee had to be cheap. In fact, coffee’s drop in price since 1822 (see Chart 2) was closely tied to its increase in consumption. The abundant supply of Brazilian coffee made it affordable in the United States. In 1850, Littell’s Living Age recognized this situation, when it stated that “coffee has become the source of a very large trade between Brazil and the United States, and being now an article more of necessity than luxury, as it

56 “Notes from Brazil-The Coffee Trade”. The New York Times, August 1, 1859 p.2
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 The Commercial Magazine 1859 p.167
60 The Commercial Magazine 1859 p.169
formerly was”61. The downward trend in prices between 1822 and 1848 was critical in making coffee indispensable for America’s diet. Once it became a staple food, it was in a position to resist the upward trend in prices of the second half of the century.

Another way in which it is possible to see that the coffee empire was consolidated by the mid-nineteenth century is by examining the slave trade in southeastern Brazil. Coffee was a labor-intensive crop and slavery was the most available and affordable type of labor at that time. The coffee business needed a large amount of labor from the very beginning: coffee planters used slaves’ backs and arms to clear lands, to grow the coffee bushes, to pick the cherries up, to peel them, to dry the beans, to pack them, and to transport them to the maritime ports.

Table 2 shows that the Southeast region of Brazil, where the coffee growing was concentrated, was also the region where most slaves were imported in the first half of the nineteenth century. Between 1831-1840 this region imported more than 80 per cent of the total of the slaves that arrived in Brazil. Certainly, the main source of the demand for slaves was the coffee culture. These figures support De Paiva’s estimates that, in the first half of the nineteenth century, slavery in the “coffee region” accounted for more than two-thirds of the total of the slave imports into Brazil62. In contrast, the sugar region of Bahia, where initially slave imports were concentrated, drastically reduced its participation during this period.

The Atlantic slave trade significantly grew in the 1820s and 1830s and the coffee region located in southeastern Brazil was the epicenter of this boom. As a matter of fact, “during the period from 1821 to 1830, more slaves were imported into Brazil’s ports than any other destination during any decade in the recorded history of the Atlantic slave trade”63. Rio de Janeiro became by far the main slave port of the world during the first half of the nineteenth century. Frank explains that “slavery was truly ubiquitous in Brazilian life in the early nineteenth century: slaves made up nearly half of Rio’s population, and nearly all wealthholders participated in slaveholding”64.

Image 1

61 “Coffee and the Coffee Trade” Littell’s Living Age (1844-1896) Nov. 9 1850; 27,338; p.254
63 Absell, Christopher David and Antonio Tena-Junguito; “Brazilian export growth…” p. 6
64 Frank, Zephyr Dutra’s World p.41. See also Klein, Herbert The Atlantic Slave Trade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.210-211

Not only numbers link the slave and the coffee markets. Jean Baptiste Debret, a French painter who lived in Rio de Janeiro depicted many quotidian situations of the city and the province in which it is possible to note the spread of slavery. Image 1 shows a group of slaves transporting coffee, probably from a plantation to the city port, in a rural area of Rio de Janeiro. In a context in which still railroads had not yet been built in Brazil, coffee was usually transported by humans or mules. Thus, the technological limitations of the first half of the nineteenth century encouraged even more the demand for slaves. Enslaved Africans arriving to Rio de Janeiro’s port had the coffee plantations as their more likely destination. To give but one example, O Jornal do Commercio repeatedly announced that the Rio de Janeiro’s influential Vergueiro family was selling a coffee plantation with 200 slaves and that was producing around 45 tons of coffee.65

---

65 O Jornal do Commercio December 4, 1842 ed. 323 p.3. The advertisement said the production was 3,000 arrobas. The Portuguese “arroba” is aprox.15kgs.
Politicians, merchants, and coffee planters generally assumed that slaves were necessary for the coffee business. In addition to slave plantation labor, many other slaves also worked in the city as dockworkers or loading coffee in the warehouses. *O Jornal do commercio* celebrated in 1837 that “there will not be scarcity of workers because the imports of negroes continue to be significant”66. In a similar tone, *The Commercial Magazine*, for instance, argued that “the result of the large importation of slaves, 1840-1850, was an average export from 1854 to 1858, of 2,150,467 bags, or 344,000,000 pounds which is considered to be the maximum production”. By mid-nineteenth century, most of the coffee served on Americans’ tables was grown by enslaved bodies. Thus, the boom in slave imports into Brazil during the first half of the nineteenth century is another confirmation of the importance of this period in the history of the international coffee market.

Unlike Great Britain, which constantly tried to block the slave trade in the Atlantic, the United States did not object the enormous traffic of slaves coming from Africa to Brazil. On the contrary, the United States was an ally for Brazil in its quest for keeping the slave trade alive. The United States and Brazil were the two major independent slave societies in the Western world.67 This thing in common was a central element in the political alliance that they formed. Evidence for this point can be found in the diplomatic correspondence of the United States to Brazil. For instance, On May 25, 1844, Secretary of State John Calhoun wrote to Henry Wise, United States Minister to Brazil, that

It is our established policy not to interfere with the internal relations of any other country, and not to permit any other to interfere with ours. Brazil has the deepest interest in establishing the same policy, especially in reference to the important relation between the European and African races as it exists with her and in the Southern portion of our Union [...] The avowed policy of Great Britain is to destroy that relation in both countries and throughout the world. If it should be consummated, it would destroy the peace and prosperity on both and transfer the production of tobacco, rice, cotton, sugar and coffee from the United States and Brazil to her possessions beyond the Cape of Good Hope. To destroy it in either, would facilitate its destruction in the other. Hence our mutual interest in resisting her interference with the relation in either country, and hence also the importance of each country firmly opposing any attempt to on the part of Great Britain to disturb the existing relation between the two races within their respective limits, and of each discountenancing any such attempts in that of the other68.

66 *O Jornal do Commercio*, January 19, 1837 ed. 015 p.3
68 John C. Calhoun, Secretary of State of the United States, to Henry A. Wise, United States Minister to Brazil.
During the 1840s, the maintenance of the slave economy was an issue that utterly interested both the United States and Brazil. These countries saw slavery as a critical part of their agricultural economies. Both cotton and coffee relied on slaves' labor for production in the southern US and southern Brazil, respectively. Far from perceiving the British actions against the slave trade as humanitarian, the US and Brazil interpret them as a policy intended to displace the production of valuable commodities from the Americas to its own colonies in Africa and Asia. With the dynamic coffee trade between the US and Brazil, their alliance became not only political but also economic.

4. Coffee and power

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, it was not yet obvious that coffee was going to be Americans' preferred caffeinated beverage (see Chart 9). However, in the 1830s, the preference for coffee over tea started to be noticeable, even in small towns such as Camdem (SC). The Camdem commercial currier, a local newspaper that circulated between 1837 and 1838, used to inform the current prices of different basic foodstuffs, including corn, flour, sugar, salt, eggs, and butter, among others. While it always reported the price of coffee (and even of whiskey), the price of tea was never reported—thus suggesting that coffee (and whiskey) was a more important product for the local people. In line with this evidence, The Commercial Magazine accounted in 1859 that “the consumption of tea in the United States has increased but very little more than the increase of population.” By the mid-nineteenth century, American preference for coffee was evident: an average American consumed five pounds of coffee and only one of tea yearly. By the 1880s, the ratio of consumption of coffee to tea was as large as 9 to 1. To understand why the United States

---

70 The Commercial Magazine 1859 p.167
71 Rand, McNally & Co: "Imports of tea and coffee into the United States during the twenty-five fiscal years ... 1867 to 1891. Imports of sugar and molasses into the United States during the twenty-five fiscal years ... 1867 to 1891. Production of cane sugar and molasses in the U.S. ... between 1870 and 1891. Total consumption of sugar in the United States ... 1881 and 1891" Engravers, Chicago, (1897). Rumsey Collection.
leaned towards coffee in this period, we must consider the close political relationship between it and Brazil—a relationship that became increasingly economic.

When Brazil was a Portuguese colony, its commercial networks were highly restricted. The Portuguese crown, like other empires in Europe, maintained a policy of trade exclusivity between its colonies and the metropolis. These policies started to be implemented as early as the sixteenth century, when European powers were just exploring the economic possibilities of the Americas and Africa. However, it was during the eighteenth century that the mercantilist ideology was deepened and enforced\textsuperscript{72}. During this period, European empires attempted to monopolize the commerce of their colonies to achieve a surplus in the balance of payments.

It was only in 1808, when it moved to Rio de Janeiro, that the Portuguese Crown started to lift the commercial restrictions on Brazil. On January 28, prince regent João VI issued a royal letter in Bahia in which he suspended “all the laws and royal letters or other orders that so far have prohibited in Brazil the reciprocal trade or the navigation between my vassals and the foreigners”\textsuperscript{73}. Although this mandate increased the tariffs on products such as wine, liquors, and oils—so called “molhados”—and maintained the exclusivity of exports of Pau Brasil to Portugal, it finally opened Brazilian trade to foreign commerce. This first free-trade-oriented policy greatly favored commerce between Brazil and other territories such as Great Britain and the already independent United States.

\textsuperscript{72} Ricupero, Rodrigo “O Estabelecimento do Exclusivo Comercial metropolitano e a Conformação do Antigo Sistema Colonial no Brasil” História (São Paulo) v.35 2016 pp1-30 Available at: https://www.scielo.br/j/his/a/fv6Nn7yZPzpYHskJ3gcHmjs/?lang=pt

\textsuperscript{73} Coleção Leis do Brasil—1808 Página 1 Vo. 1 (Publicação Original) “Carta regia” 28 de janeiro 1808 Available at: https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/carreg_sn/antioressa1824/cartaregia-35757-28-janeiro-1808-539177-publicacaoooriginal-37144-pe.html
When Brazil became an independent country, in 1822, the commercial relationship with the United States became particularly relevant. Indeed, the United States was the market for Brazilian exports that most quickly grew. While before Brazil’s independence virtually no official trade existed between the United States and Brazil, by mid-century the United States was buying one third of the total of Brazilian exports, mostly composed of coffee. It is worth noting that the United States was the first country to recognize Brazil’s independence. It occurred on May 26, 1824, when President James Monroe received José Silvestre Rebello as Brazil’s chargé d’Affairs to the United States. The same year, on October 29, U.S. chargé d’Affairs Condy Raguet of Pennsylvania presented his credentials to Emperor Pedro I and a permanent delegation established in Rio de Janeiro. According to Manning, when Rebello presented himself before Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, he “expressed his gratitude that the government of the US has been the first to acknowledge the independence of Brazil” and “suggested a concert of American powers to sustain the general

---

74 U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Brazil “U.S. – Brazil diplomatic History” Available at: https://br.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/io/
system of American independence”. Rebello later “formally proposed that the United States should enter into an alliance with Brazil to sustain that latter’s independence in case Portugal should be assisted by other power in an attempt to restore her former sway over Brazil”.

Brazil’s independence was important for America’s geopolitical interests. During the 1820s, European imperialism was a constant concern for the United States’ government, and Latin America was the region where counterbalancing the European powers was more critical. Not only the geographical proximity to the United States made Latin America relevant but also the fact that it had been the only region that had revolted against European control. While most of Africa, Asia and Oceania were clearly under European domination, Latin American independent states served as a sort of focus of resistance, where the US could exert its political clout in an age of empires. Likewise, Brazil saw in the United States an ally to guarantee its independence and to resist the threats to its sovereignty coming from Europe.

Brazil highly appreciated the recognition of its sovereignty by the U.S. Such recognition not only created a significant ally but also served to exert pressure on the European states. In fact, Brazil urged Europe to recognize its independence as a way to “prevent the emergence of an ‘American Politics’ united against Europe”. If Europe refused to see Brazil as an independent empire, it would have to face a strong alliance between Brazil and the United States. The two major threats to Brazil’s sovereignty in the 1820s were Portugal and Great Britain. While the former had explicit intentions to reconquer what had been its biggest colony, the latter was an empire expanding at a fast pace over the world.

---

76 Despite the close political relationship between the United States and Brazil, there existed diplomatic controversies between the two countries. The highest tensions came when US Chargé d’Affairs Condy Raguet said Brazil was a barely civilized country. To see in detail this episode: Manning, William “An Early Diplomatic Controversy...” This issue was not a serious threat to the good relationship that the two countries had.
77 Manchester, Alan “The recognition of Brazilian Independence” The Hispanic American Journal 1951 Vol.31 Nº1 p.87
78 Threats of European invasions concerned Brazilian politicians persisted into the 1830s. In 1834, Representant from Bahia Cornelio França proposed to the House of Representatives of Brazil, the urgent need for approval of a treaty between the United States and Brazil in which the two countries would help and defend each other against external threats. Although França’s proposal was not put into action, it showed that, in the 1830s, Brazil’s politicians saw the United States as the best ally against European empires.
As historian Roberto Saba explains, “American influence also helped Brazil in its long effort to counter British imperialism and limit its reliance on British capital”\textsuperscript{79}.

It was in this context that the United States—represented by its Charge d’Affaires in Brazil, William Tudor—and His Majesty the Emperor of Brazil—represented by his Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Marquez of Aracaty—signed a treaty on “Amity, Commerce, and Navigation” in 1828. The first article of the treaty stipulated that “there shall be a perfect, firm and inviolable peace and friendship between the United States of America and their citizens and His Imperial Majesty, his successors and subjects, throughout their possessions and territories respectively, without distinction of persons or place\textsuperscript{80}. As indicated on its title, the treaty also contained several economic provisions. For instance, Article III specified that the two parties, “being likewise desirous of placing the commerce and navigation of their respective countries on the liberal basis of perfect equality and reciprocity, mutually agree that the citizens and subjects of each may frequent all the coasts and countries of the other, and reside and trade there in all kinds of produce, manufactures and merchandise”\textsuperscript{81}. Considering the situation experienced during the Cisplatine War (1825-1828) between Argentina\textsuperscript{82} and Brazil, in which the latter imposed a blockade on the River Plate, thus affecting the trade between the US and Buenos Aires, Article XIV provided that “it shall be lawful for the citizens and subjects of the United States of America and of the Empire of Brazil, to sail with their ships, with all manner of liberty and security, no distinction being made who are the proprietors of the merchandise laden thereon, from any port to the places of those who now are, or who hereafter shall be, at enmity with either of the contracting parties”\textsuperscript{83}. The Cisplatine War figured prominently in the vast diplomatic correspondence between the United State and Brazil in the 1820s. However, by the end of the decade the correspondence had shifted to include more and more matters on commerce, thus showing

\textsuperscript{79} Roberto Saba \textit{American Mirror} p.8
\textsuperscript{81} Istibd.
\textsuperscript{82} It is worth noting that Argentina as such was not yet formed. In fact, the country had the name of “United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata” and contained territories of present-day Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, and Chile.
\textsuperscript{83} “Treaties, Conventions, International Acts and...”
that the relationship between the United States and Brazil was becoming increasingly economic.\textsuperscript{84}

Coffee was the main economic link between the United States and Brazil. Since the early years of the 1830s, coffee was the most important product in Brazil’s international commerce and the US market its main destination. As noted in section 2, the United States actively encouraged the imports of Brazilian coffee by making it duty-free in 1832. Europe, in contrast, kept heavy taxes on Brazilian coffee and favored the exports from its colonies. When analyzing the aspects that had made coffee so popular in the United States during the 1830s, \textit{The Merchant’s Magazine and Commercial Review} put the tariff policy as the first reason: “the admission of coffee into the United States free of duty, the comparatively high price of tea, the formation of temperance societies, and the progress of that movement, may be assigned as some of the causes for the increased consumption of coffee in this country, since 1833”\textsuperscript{85}. Thus, the massive increase of coffee consumption in the United States was in large part a response to political configurations. Once coffee started gaining popularity, it created a path, a habit among Americans, that was very difficult to reverse.

Within the first half of the nineteenth century, the 1830s was the most critical decade for the expansion of the coffee consumption in the United States. As can be seen in Chart 1, from 1830 to 1840, the value of the coffee exports almost tripled despite the downward trend in prices. In the middle of the decade, \textit{O Jornal do Commercio} stated that despite the difficulties in the European markets, coffee was still actively being traded with the US. In fact, it was the robust purchases of coffee by the United States that sustained Brazil’s exports. The newspaper pointed out that the consumption in the United States was increasing so fast that there were even fears that Brazil’s supply could not keep up with.\textsuperscript{86} The American press presented similar reports\textsuperscript{87}. By the end of the 1830s, what had begun as a political alliance

\textsuperscript{84} See “Dispatches from United States ministers to Brazil, 1809-1906” Washington, National Archives and Records Service, 1947-1951
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{O Jornal do Commercio} January 7, 1835 ed.4 p. 3
\textsuperscript{87} See for example: Department of Commerce. 1. Commercial Navigation of the United States and Great Britain” \textit{De Bow’s Review of the Southern and Western States. Devoted to Commerce, Agriculture, Manufactures.} Aug. 1852; XIII, 2 p. 185.
between the two largest countries of the Americas had grown into a strong economic partnership as well.

The relatively higher price of tea in the U.S. was also, to a large extent, the result of geopolitical configurations. Before the first half of the nineteenth century, no strong political relationship existed between the United States and China—the world's largest tea producing country. In fact, the first U.S. Mission in China was established only in 1862\textsuperscript{88}. Both imports and exports from and to China were marginal during the first half of the nineteenth century\textsuperscript{89}. In contrast, Great Britain had closer and older political networks with China and India that allowed the establishment of a stable network of commerce in which tea was a critical element. Therefore, the comparatively small market for tea in the U.S. during the first half of the nineteenth century was, to some extent, the result of the lack of political links with the tea producing countries. In contrast, the political connections that Brazil managed to create with the United States during the first decades of the nineteenth century were quite strong. Those connections, first political and then economic, paved the way for the global coffee boom of the early nineteenth century.

Interestingly, the commercial relationship between Brazil and the United States during this period was quite unbalanced. In terms of value, Brazil exported much more to the United States than it imported from there. This situation did not go unnoticed. In 1852, The New York Daily Times denounced that "nothing can be more unfair or unjust, in a commercial point of view, than the state of things as they exist between the United States and Brazil". According to the newspaper, while the United States bought nearly one half of its "immense coffee crop" free of duty, "Brazil imposes a duty of thirty per cent on our flour, forty-five per cent on our furniture, one hundred and fifty per cent on carriages, and admits nothing under thirty per cent. While, therefore, the United States are putting millions into the coffers of Brazil, she keeps out nearly everything we manufacture by an excessive and illiberal tariff"\textsuperscript{90}.

\textsuperscript{88} See: Office of the Historian “Chronology of the U.S. – China Relations 1784-2000” Available at: https://history.state.gov/countries/issues/china-us-relations
\textsuperscript{89} See: Table Ee551-568. “Imports, by country of origin: 1790-2001”. In: Exports and Imports Series Ee362-611
\textsuperscript{90} Douglas A. Irwin (ed) in Historical Statistics of the United States Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://hsus.cambridge.org/HSUSWeb/toc/showTable.do?id=Ee362-611
\textsuperscript{90} “Our commercial relations with Brazil” New York Daily Times (1851-1857) August 6, 1852
Brazil thus enjoyed a significant surplus in the balance of payments with the United States, which served to finance the commercial deficit it had with Great Britain. A so unbalanced commercial relationship would not have been possible without a strong political support. The commercial unbalance was not the result of a political incapacity to pursue a more balanced relationship but the result of a political decision. In fact, *The New York Daily Times* argued in the same document that “It is a matter of profound astonishment that the United States does not seem aware of or even care for the millions she is losing every year in the unequal game of commerce, for she could bring Brazil to her bearings in twenty-four hours by putting a duty of three cents per pound on her coffee until she removed the exorbitant duty on flour and admitted it free, and modified her duties on other articles of our manufacture now excluded”.

5. **Conclusions.**

The United States and Brazil built an empire of coffee in less than three decades. By far, the United States became the largest consuming country and Brazil the largest producing country of the world. Despite the abundant quantitative and qualitative evidence showing that the three decades after Brazil’s independence were a critical period in the history of the coffee economy, as well as in the economic history of both the United States and Brazil, its significance has been largely ignored. The assumption of the traditional economic historiography that the first half of the nineteenth century was a lethargic period needs to be revisited. Even official statistics fail to portray the economic importance of Brazil’s export performance during the first half of the nineteenth century, as a recent work of Absell and Tena-Junguito shows. In contrast to the more classical views, these authors argue that, in fact, “Brazilian export growth from independence to mid-nineteenth century more than double the South American average and was comparable to that of the United States.”

---

91 According to Topik, there was a triangular trade. Brazilians sold their coffee in the U.S. and used the returns to purchase British finished goods. Americans purchased coffee with foreign exchange earned by selling temperate raw materials in Britain, as well as to the continent. See Topik, Steven “The World Coffee Market...” p. 26
92 “Our commercial relations with Brazil” *New York Daily Times (1851-1857)* August 6, 1852
93 Absell, Christopher David and Antonio Tena-Junguito; “Brazilian export growth...” p.3
In tune with this argument, the evidence presented in this paper underlines the economic importance of this period, which was mainly driven by the coffee exports from Brazil to the United States. While the factors affecting the demand for coffee in the United States were certainly multiple, in this paper I stressed the importance of Brazil’s supply in stimulating that demand. Brazil made affordable for American consumers a potentially addictive substance. Once drinking coffee became a habit for Americans, its demand had the basis to expand quickly and became more inelastic. In other words, once Americans developed the taste for coffee, they were willing to consume more and to pay a higher price for it, if necessary—as occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. Instead of two disconnected processes, I argued that the increasing supply and demand for coffee were two sides of the same coin. Indeed, political interests in the international sphere shaped the increasing production and consumption of coffee. The opposition to the European interference in the Americas as well as the defense of the slave system in their agricultural sectors were some of the political issues in which the United States and Brazil mutually supported each other. This political affinity was vital for establishing economic links between the two countries. Thus, the flourishing coffee trade between the United States and Brazil was to some extent the corroboration of an already existent political alliance between them.

The irruption of coffee in the American market in the first half of the nineteenth century had not only economic and political outcomes but also important social and cultural effects. In fact, as Topik and McDonald argue, “coffee has played an important role in the creation of American national identity”\textsuperscript{95}. Today, almost two hundred years after the beginning of the coffee boom in the US, the tiny bean continues to be a central article of the American diet and social life. Many people in the United States would struggle to imagine their daily lives without a cup of coffee. Probably, some readers had one or more cups while reading this paper. To understand the reason for this situation, we must consider historical precedents of the first part of the nineteenth century and the role of Brazil in them.

\textsuperscript{95} Topik and McDonald “Why Americans Drink...” p. 234
6. Appendix: Tables and Charts

Table 1: Duties on coffee imports into the U.S. (per pound)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Duty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>4 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td>5 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>10 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>5 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>2 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>1 cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>Put on free list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Imposed duty of 4 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>Increased to 5 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Reduced to 3 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Repealed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Total of slaves imported into Brazil by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Bahia</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Pernambuco</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1791-1800</td>
<td>12,096</td>
<td>49.92%</td>
<td>9,392</td>
<td>38.76%</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>4.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801-1810</td>
<td>157,137</td>
<td>47.16%</td>
<td>104,861</td>
<td>31.47%</td>
<td>37,323</td>
<td>11.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811-1820</td>
<td>241,866</td>
<td>50.99%</td>
<td>126,660</td>
<td>26.70%</td>
<td>83,348</td>
<td>17.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821-1830</td>
<td>370,667</td>
<td>67.52%</td>
<td>105,134</td>
<td>19.15%</td>
<td>60,012</td>
<td>10.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831-1840</td>
<td>206,088</td>
<td>81.89%</td>
<td>21,507</td>
<td>8.55%</td>
<td>21,667</td>
<td>8.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841-1850</td>
<td>219,855</td>
<td>71.72%</td>
<td>72,244</td>
<td>23.57%</td>
<td>12,146</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851-1860</td>
<td>6,490</td>
<td>69.95%</td>
<td>1,146</td>
<td>12.35%</td>
<td>1,642</td>
<td>17.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1,214,199</td>
<td>62.32%</td>
<td>440,944</td>
<td>22.63%</td>
<td>217,208</td>
<td>11.15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Amazonas</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1791-1800</td>
<td>1,672</td>
<td>6.90%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>24,230</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801-1810</td>
<td>33,898</td>
<td>10.17%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>333,219</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811-1820</td>
<td>22,510</td>
<td>4.75%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>474,384</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821-1830</td>
<td>12,720</td>
<td>2.32%</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
<td>548,985</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831-1840</td>
<td>2,413</td>
<td>0.96%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>251,675</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841-1850</td>
<td>2,319</td>
<td>0.76%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>306,564</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851-1860</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
<td>9,278</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>75,532</td>
<td>3.88%</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
<td>1,948,335</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 1

Chart 2

Constant prices of coffee imports into the U.S.

Compound annual growth rate of imported commodities into the U.S (1822-1850) in terms of volume

Source: Imports of selected commodities 1790-1989—Series Ee590-611 “Exports and Imports Series Ee362-611 Douglas A. Irwin (ed) in Historical Statistics of the United States Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://hsus.cambridge.org/HSUSWeb/toc/showTable.do?id=Ee362-611. Note values in millions of pounds. The compound annual rate of growth is calculated by the formula: CAGR=(Vfinal/Vbegin)^(1-t) -1. Own Calculations and Elaboration
Chart 5

South American imports into the U.S. as % of the total

Note: Values in current millions of dollars.

Chart 7

Imports of coffee into the United States by country of origin

Source: “Commercial Statistics. Statistical View of the Coffee Trade”. *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* (1839-1870); Sep 1, 1845; 13, 3; pg. 273
Chart 8

U.S. Coffee imports and export

Source: “Commercial Statistics. Statistical View of the Coffee Trade”. The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review (1839-1870); Sep 1, 1845; 13, 3; pg. 273
Chart 9

7. References:

Primary Sources

- “Coffee and the Coffee Trade” *Littell’s Living Age (1844-1896)* Nov. 9 1850; 27,338; p.254
- “Coffee, and the Coffee Trade” *The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review (1839-1870)* Jul. 1. 1852; 21,1, p.39
- “Commercial Statistics. Statistical View of the Coffee Trade”. *The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review (1839-1870)*; Sep 1, 1845; 13, 3; pg. 273
- “Dispatches from United States ministers to Brazil, 1809-1906” Washington, National Archives and Records Service, 1947-1951
- “Notes from Brazil-The Coffee Trade”. *The New York Times*, August 1, 1859 p.2
- “Our commercial relations with Brazil” *New York Daily Times (1851-1857)* August 6, 1852
- Coleção Leis do Brasil—1808 Página 1 Vo. 1 (Publicação Original) “Carta regia” 28 de janeiro 1808 Available at:
- Da Silva Cairu de Lisboa, José *Causa do Brasil no Juízio dos Governos e Estadistas da Europa* (Rio de Janeiro: Typografia Nacional, 1822) p.36.


O Jornal do Commercio April 16, 1828 ed. 160
O Jornal do Commercio April 16, 1828 ed. 160 p.3
O Jornal do Commercio August 14, 1830 ed. 003
O Jornal do Commercio August 19, 1834, ed
O Jornal do Commercio December 29, 1835, ed. 287
O Jornal do Commercio December 4, 1842 ed. 323
O Jornal do Commercio January 19, 1837
O Jornal do Commercio January 7, 1835 ed.4
O Jornal do Commercio Jun 11. 1831 ed. 239

Rand, McNally & Co: “Imports of tea and coffee into the United States during the twenty-five fiscal years ... 1867 to 1891. Imports of sugar and molasses into the United States during the twenty-five fiscal years ... 1867 to 1891. Production of cane sugar and molasses in the U.S. ... between 1870 and 1891. Total consumption of sugar in the United States ... 1881 and 1891“ Engravers, Chicago, (1897). Rumsey Collection.


Secondary Sources:
• Absell, Christopher David and Antonio Tena-Junguito; “Brazilian export growth and divergence in the tropics during the nineteenth century” Working papers in Economic History Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, 2015
• Beckert, Sven & Seth Rockman Slavery’s Capitalism (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016)
• Celso Furtado Formação econômica do Brasil [São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2006 [1967]]
• Coatsworth, John “Obstacles to Economic Growth in Nineteenth-Century Mexico” The American Historical Review (1978) pp.80-100
• De Paiva Abreu, Marcelo and Luiz Aranha Correa do Lago “A Economia Brasileira no Imperio, 1822-1889” Texto para discussão Nº 584 Departamento de Economia, Pontificia Universidad Catolica do Rio de Janeiro pp.153-155
• Dean, Warren, With the Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995)
• Francis B.Thurber, Coffee, From Plantation to Cup (NY: American Grocer Publication Association, 1881),
• Holloway, Thomas Immigrants on the land: Coffee and Society on São Paulo 1886-1934 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985)
https://hsus.cambridge.org/HSUSWeb/toc/showTable.do?id=Ee362-611

- https://www.scielo.br/j/his/a/fv6Nn7yZPzpYHskJ3gcHmjs/?lang=pt
- https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database
- Manchester, Alan “The recognition of Brazilian Independence” *The Hispanic American Journal* 1951 Vol.31 Nº1 p.87
- Office of the Historian “Chronology of the U.S. – China Relations 1784-2000” Available at: https://history.state.gov/countries/issues/china-us-relations
- Ricupero, Rodrigo “O Estabelecimento do Exclusivo Comercial metropolitano e a Conformação do Antigo Sistema Colonial no Brasil” *História (São Paulo)* v.35 2016 pp1-30. Available at:
- Saba, Roberto *American Mirror The Unoted States and Brazil in the Age of Emancipation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021)
• Summerhill, William: Order Against Progress: Government, Foreign Investment, And Railroads in Brazil 1854-1913. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003);
• Topik Steven; Marichal, Carlos; and Zephyr Frank (eds): From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy 1500-2000 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) p.9
• Topik Steven: “Coffee as a Social Drug” Culture Critique 2009 pp. 81-106
• Topik, Steven “The world Coffee Market in the Eighteen and Nineteenth Centuries, from Colonial to National Regimes” GEHN Conference (London: London School of Economics, 2004).
• Topik, Steven Gunboats and Trade: The United States and Brazil in the Age of Empire (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996)
• Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade-Database. Available at:
• U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Brazil "U.S. – Brazil diplomatic History" Available at: https://br.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/io/
• U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Brazil “U.S. – Brazil diplomatic History” Available at: https://br.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/io/
• United States Census Bureau: “Chapter M Balance of Payments and Foreign Trade”
  Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1957. Available at:

• Vidal Luna, Francisco and Herbet Klein: An Economic and Demographic History of
  São Paulo 1850-1950 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018);

• Vidal Luna, Francisco and Hernert Klein Slavery in Brazil (Cambridge: Cambridge
  University Press, 2010)

• Wright, Gavin Slavery and American Economic Development (Louisiana State
  University Press, 2006).

• Wright, Gavin Old South, New South (Louisiana State University Press, 1986)