

# An Expanding Mercantile Circuit in the South Atlantic in the Late Colonial Period (1796-1821)<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This text discusses the development of the mercantile links between port cities on the coast of the Center and South of Portuguese America and the provinces of the River Plate estuary in the period from 1796 to 1821. To achieve this, data were gathered about the records kept of ships entering and leaving the port of Montevideo, about the exportation and importation charts produced by the Board of Trade at Rio de Janeiro and the official correspondence written by the Governor of the São Paulo captaincy. Various types of foodstuffs were exchanged in this mercantile circuit. The liberalization of the Atlantic economy in this period strengthened the trade links that had existed between Portuguese America and the provinces of the River Plate region since the seventeenth century.

## Keywords

Trade; trade network; River Plate; colonial merchandise; Iberian Atlantic

## Resumo

Este texto discute o processo de desenvolvimento da ligação mercantil entre cidades portuárias na costa centro-sul da América portuguesa e as províncias do Rio da Prata no período de 1796 a 1821. Para chegar a esta conclusão foram levantados dados nos livros de registro de embarcações do porto de Montevideú, mapas de importação e exportação produzidos pela Mesa de Comércio do Rio de Janeiro e correspondência oficial pelo governador da capitania de São Paulo. Vários tipos de produtos foram trocados neste circuito. A liberalização da economia do atlântico português neste período fortaleceu uma ligação mercantil que já existia desde o século XVII entre a América portuguesa e as províncias do Rio da Prata.

## Palavras-chave

Comércio; rede de comércio; Rio da Prata; mercadorias coloniais; atlântico ibérico

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the CNPq for the financial support and to some great historians and friends such as Maximiliano Meinz, Carlos Gabriel, Alex Borucki, Fabrício Prado and Fabio Khun for materials and suggestions provided during the development of this research. Marcos Luft helped me with precious information about documents in the Archivo General de La Nación. This text was presented in the *4th Annual Seminar Rio de la Plata* at the William & Mary College in March 2013 and it was improved by critical remarks. I am very grateful to the employers of Archivo General de La Nación, in Montevideú. This text was translated to the English with financial resources of the Project "Writings about the New Worlds: four digital collections of books produced in the 13-18 centuries" coordinated by Jean Marcel Carvalho França.

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From an economic standpoint, the establishment of the Royal Court in Rio de Janeiro in 1808, an episode that had marked the end of the metropolis's process of interiorization initiated under the regency of Dom João VI and the ministry of Dom Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho (Oliveira 1908; Dias 1986: 160-186), led to the formalization of a pre-existing network of business relationships between Luso-Brazilian merchants operating on the coast of the São Paulo captaincy and in the far south of Portuguese America and in the River Plate estuary, particularly in the cities of Montevideo and Buenos Aires.

In other words, this political episode involving the royal family's migration to Rio de Janeiro, which can be seen as the Portuguese Empire's last effort to reaffirm its existence by controlling the area that had the highest political, economic and social potential, created the conditions for formalizing pre-existing economic relations on the Central-South coast of the Americas, and forged commercial links between the São Paulo coast and the River Plate estuary.

The emergence of this intra-continental coastal market, which now included São Paulo as a point of mercantile interest on an already existing trade route in the large territorial area from the south of Portuguese America to the River Plate region, may be attributed to two other economic and political processes. The first relates to the projection of Montevideo as a regional economic center and the capital of the Banda Oriental from 1776 onwards, when the Viceroyalty of the River Plate Estuary was founded.

As Fabrício Prado has shown, the Spanish conquest of the Colônia do Sacramento led many Portuguese merchants established there to transfer their businesses to the city of Montevideo, not just because of its favorable geographic conditions but also because of the less stringent monitoring of Portuguese businesses by local authorities in comparison with Buenos Aires. In 1778, the port of Montevideo was declared a free trade port within the Spanish Empire, and subsequent regulation made it the only authorized port for the trafficking of African slaves. This helped turn Montevideo into the hub of an economic system in River Plate, where it attained a status, authority and jurisdiction that had hitherto been enjoyed by Buenos Aires (Prado 2009).

Portuguese trade had been favored by the mercantile networks trading with the Spanish Empire ever since the seventeenth century, and this was one of the reasons behind the founding of the Colônia do Sacramento in 1680. Access to Spanish silver, slaves and other commodities of the Portuguese colonial economy marked a relationship of

mercantile cooperation between the two Iberian Empires in South America. This relationship did not disappear with the loss of the Colônia do Sacramento in 1777, transferring instead to Montevideo the new regional center of the River Plate region and the heart of an intracontinental mercantile system (Prado 2009).

The second aspect to be considered as influencing the formation of a coastal trans-imperial market in Southern America is the development of an internal market and connections in Rio Grande, in the far south of Brazil, closely linked to Rio de Janeiro's economic area (Fragoso 1998: 142; Osório 2007: 187-8).

As Rio Grande became more oriented towards meeting the demand for food in Rio de Janeiro, supplying jerked beef, wheat, and other commodities that were vital to its export trade at that time, such as leather for the packaging of goods, the coastal village of Santos gradually turned to the ports of Montevideo and Buenos Aires to satisfy its demand for such goods. On the other hand, this same Rio Grande-Rio de Janeiro mercantile network may have forced the Rio Grande region, at certain times, to satisfy its internal demand for food in the nearest regional markets, such as that of Santos.

The coast of the São Paulo captaincy worked in some respects like a “complex of ports.” Indeed the region did not have the same range of village ports as the River Plate estuary, but there was almost a similar level of economic integration between the ports and their hinterland that afforded this region a mercantile circuit with an important role in both the near and the more remote markets.

One of the features of this economic region was the existence of a main port with the capacity for both trans-Atlantic and coastal navigation—Santos—connected to other ports, such as Ubatuba and São Sebastião in the north, and Iguape, Cananéia and Paranaguá in the south (Prado 1972, 117). Furthermore, these village ports were also agrarian units that enjoyed trade links with the mountain villages above them, while they similarly shaped an economic region with an important internal market and led to the extra production of raw materials to export beyond their own regional market (Jumar 2012, 124, 126, 127-29). Consequently, the captaincy of São Paulo, and especially its coast, consolidated its role as a supplier of the south's trans-imperial market. This had ramifications for the River Plate region.

One can therefore conclude that three factors led São Paulo's port system to consolidate its role as a complimentary supplier to the River Plate area and its mercantile relations in the region: the strengthening of Montevideo as a political and economic center in the Banda Oriental from 1778 onwards, the opening of Brazilian ports to trade with

friendly nations in 1808 and a major economic link connecting Rio Grande to Rio de Janeiro.

The trans-imperial trade in the late colonial period thus had more multiple trade ramifications and polarized centers than Rio de Janeiro. The historiography about this period has been so concerned with criticizing the theoretical and methodological model that has restricted Brazil's mercantile relations to the exportation of agricultural goods to Portugal that some authors have in fact created a new model, although in some respects it continues to follow the same logic: the production of livestock for the internal market whose main destination was Rio de Janeiro.

In the mid-1980s, some North American researchers wrote about an urban trade network in southern-central Brazil where Rio de Janeiro had the status of an "important *entrepôt* city" and was the "most important consumption center" of this region (Brown 1986, 61). An extending hinterland was responsible for providing this port with a large variety of foodstuffs.

Because of the importance of this market in the importation of European and colonial raw materials, other researchers concluded that Rio de Janeiro had become the center of smuggling in the region (Pijning 1996). But only in 1998 was a new model developed for the interpretation of late colonial Brazil that established Rio de Janeiro as the heart of the Portuguese Empire (Fragoso 1998). After this, historiography advanced our knowledge about the internal market in Brazil, even going further back in the chronology of its research. But Rio de Janeiro was seen as the key to the colonial market and some followers defined it as the "crossroads of the south Atlantic system" (Sampaio 2003, 139).

This type of approach overlooked the fact that new players were able to enter into the game of trans-imperial trade networks at this time, as was the case with the coastal ports of the São Paulo captaincy. This article, therefore, does not disagree with the idea that Rio de Janeiro was one of the most important, wealthy and central parts of the economic system of the Portuguese Empire in the late colonial period. But it is important to highlight that every system needs to have lateral ramifications in order to guarantee its existence. The human organism is the best metaphor for this statement. If there are no lateral circuits, then the organism collapses.

The village port of Santos was one of the lateral circuits of foodstuffs in the extended southern region of Portuguese America and the River Plate estuary. Sugar was the primary product exported from São Paulo to Rio Grande, Montevideo and Buenos Aires. Traditionally, this product was conceived as being the commodity responsible for

integrating the captaincy's economy into the Atlantic mercantile circuits (Petroni 1968). In reality, however, it was responsible for strengthening São Paulo's intracontinental trade. One of the by-products of sugar, spirits, may have played a part in the slave traffic operated by the port of Montevideo. In the end, it is fruitful to consider the hypothesis that the economy of the São Paulo captaincy and its port system may have played an important role in the Portuguese Cisplatine project of the late colonial period.

### **The southern coastal villages of Portuguese America: weak monitoring and contraband**

Some of the literature on trade in Portuguese America has shown how specialized São Paulo's coastal and mountain villages were in the distribution of colonial goods along the entire coast of Portuguese America. These goods included sugar, rice, tobacco, coffee, spirits, cheese and tobacco from Minas Gerais, and sweets, among others (Moura 2008; Moura 2009; Moura 2010; Moura 2012; Valentin 2003; Garrido 2012).

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, traditional colonial export commodities, such as sugar, had been losing ground due to the international demand for other consumer products, such as rice, coffee, tobacco and spirits (Valentin 1993: 25). Meanwhile, Brazil's own demographic expansion, particularly in the Center-South region, created a growing internal demand for these day-to-day consumer commodities (Marcílio 2000: 70-71).

As São Paulo's ports had significant potential for supplying these products, which were produced in the region's own coastal and mountain villages, they became the focus of interest for English and Spanish smugglers, who desired access to goods that could be redistributed in markets with a higher consumer demand, such as the large hinterland of Buenos Aires and Montevideo, including the whole of the region from Peru to the River Plate estuary, Guairá (present-day Paraguay) and Chile (Gelman 1996; Stéfannon 1996; Prado 2009). In general, conflict zones, with their concentrations of military personnel, can be considered a good consumer market from a business perspective, although there has yet to be any research done into this theme within Brazilian historiography.

Conscious of this question, Dom Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, the Minister of the Overseas Territories and the Navy since 1796, developed a more defensive and more tightly controlled policy towards the São Paulo coast. Pressure from the Secretary of State

was already building on the government of Antonio Manoel de Melo Castro e Mendonça to fight the “pretext for emergency dockings” (*arribadas*).

This argument must have been fairly insistent, since the same governor, while in office, recalled that he saw no need to be reminded that appropriate action was already being taken. In fact one of the main concerns of the royal authorities was with the weak system for the inspection of the small ports, which also encouraged the falsification of goods. As was written by the same Governor Castro e Mendonça, “the lack of the inspection which he had so often called for at the port of Santos had resulted in the falsification of sugar.”<sup>3</sup>

Barely had he taken office than the governor Franco e Horta (1802-1811) felt that it was incumbent on him to order “all commanders of the coastal villagers to stop contraband from entering”. This order came as the English ship *Pegazo* prowled the coast near São Sebastião, and with the circle of vigilance closing in, the British vessel was forced to return to the River Plate estuary for negotiations.

It was not the Empire’s policy to control ports that lay on the periphery. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the port of Santos—the only one with the capacity for Atlantic navigation on Brazil’s southern coast—lacked adequate facilities at its Customs House, in addition to the fact that part of the building was occupied by tenants.<sup>4</sup>

In a way, the tendency of the Empire was towards a greater fiscal and military bureaucratization of the three main overseas ports of Bahia, Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro. In 1804, the absence of a governor at the port of Santos spurred São Paulo’s governor to put forth a name, arguing that “it had become indispensable to have a governor with intelligence and action who could deal with the frequent cases occurring there and in the other ports of the captaincy where there were forced dockings of foreign ships.”<sup>5</sup>

The governor believed that the *capitães-mor*—the militia commanders chosen by the council from a list of three candidates—would not be efficient in fighting these forced dockings, as they were “men of no expertise, many without birth or education; surrounded

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<sup>3</sup> Ofício do governador Antonio Manuel de Melo Castro e Mendonça ao secretário de Estado D. Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, 16 de outubro de 1802. Documentos Interessantes para a História e Costumes de São Paulo. São Paulo, Divisão de Arquivo do Estado, v. 93, 1980, pp. 118-19.

<sup>4</sup> Representação do governador Antonio José da Franca e Horta Exmo. Snr. D. Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, 3 de julho de 1803. Documentos Interessantes para a História e Costumes de São Paulo. Ofícios do General Horta aos vice-reis e ministros (1802-1808). São Paulo, AESP/Editora UNESP, v. 94, 1990, pp. 191-92.

<sup>5</sup> Representação do governador Antonio José da Franca e Horta ao Secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar Visconde de Anadia, 30 de junho de 1804. Documentos Interessantes para a História e Costumes de São Paulo. Ofícios do General Horta aos vice-reis e ministros (1802-1808). São Paulo, AESP/Editora UNESP, v. 94, 1990, p. 130.

by relatives and connected by interests, they easily persuade themselves of their own illusions,” such as “an American ship entering São Sebastião.” The governor also believed that governorships should be created in the villages of São Sebastião and Paranaguá, due to the “continuous arrival of foreign ships in these ports.”<sup>6</sup>

Requests such as these from the governor Franca e Horta might relate to the interests of the potentates residing in these coastal villages, who took advantage of the Empire’s new state of affairs to dispute the access to the new public positions. Moreover the ports of the São Paulo region were, in fact, a favorable place for smuggling disguised as a cry for help.

As Moutokias demonstrates (Moutokias 1988: 771-801), both legal and illegal trade functioned, in reality, as an interlinked system and they should, therefore, not be treated separately. On the other hand, the metropolitan authorities themselves were permissive towards contraband and turned a blind eye to an activity that ensured the very survival of the Empire’s regions and interests. In the River Plate estuary, according to Fabrício Prado, the principles based on Natural Law doctrine and *Derecho de Gentes* served as the basis for the Iberian Empires’ administrative structures and for decision-making in America. Natural Law canons provided the merchants and authorities with the arguments to legitimize the emergency docking of foreign vessels and to afford trade with foreign nations the status of a semi-legal operation. What could have been contraband, therefore, ended up becoming a form of legal commerce, under the supposed obligation of saving ships from danger (Prado, 2009).

Aside from being important commercial centers for the sale of colonial products, the coastal villages of the captaincy were also producers. In the case of São Paulo’s coastal villages, these villages became the breadbasket providing fresh colonial commodities, and thus making them even more attractive to smugglers. Since goods that were kept in the precarious storehouses of these villages would routinely age or deteriorate, they were sold at very cheap prices. In fact, after traveling the coast from Santos to São Sebastião, the governor Franca e Horta observed that these villages were “fertile terrain for excellent production, being located near an open channel with ready landing points, which are constantly sought by ships.”

Obligated by Imperial duties to rationalize control of the captaincy’s ports, the governor undertook his journey along the coast with the aim of fighting smuggling. From this voyage, he established “appropriate anchorage for ships in which competent guards

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<sup>6</sup> Idem.

would have to board quickly” and established the “formality of their shipments, allowing entry and exit through the listing of the cargo.”

He also left “registers for [the recording of] their respective earnings, their rights regulated by the customs practices of the village of Santos.” Furthermore, the governor “ordered visits to ships dispatched in ballast.” Through this, he attempted to fight the contraband “that was so continuously practiced by those ports, as he had been so informed, and the opportunity showed him.”<sup>7</sup>

In other words, those ships that had supposedly been dispatched in ballast should have also been monitored, since a lot of colonial goods could have been exported without due payment of taxes, according to this argument.

This welcoming of foreign ships that were supposedly in danger of being shipwrecked made São Paulo’s coastal villages a place for the supply of colonial goods to foreign ships heading to the River Plate estuary. Even the captaincy of São Paulo had a demand for colonial products that had to be supplied, especially leather, and contraband was one way of accessing such increasingly sought after commodities.

After the arrival of the royal family in Brazil in 1808, the supply market in the Central-South region saw a growth in demand. As a result, when the ports were opened in 1808, the southern coast of the Portuguese Empire had already been enjoying an active trade with the different domains of the Spanish Empire in the River Plate region. In other words, an Iberian mercantile circuit in the south Atlantic was already in existence and became even more solidified by virtue of the new demand problems that were created by the establishment of the Court in Rio de Janeiro.

### **Intracolonial mercantile reconfigurations: the formalization of a São Paulo-River Plate Circuit**

Table 1 shows that a significant mercantile connection linked the River Plate region to Santos, in terms of both imports and exports.

|                     | 1808 | 1810 | 1811 | 1812 | 1815 | 1816 | 1817 | 1819 | 1820 | 1821 | Total |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| <b>Porto Alegre</b> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 01   | 01    |
| <b>Rio Grande</b>   |      |      | 01   |      |      | 01   |      |      |      |      | 02    |
| <b>Montevideo</b>   | 04   | 01   | 12   | 09   | 01   |      | 01   | 04   | 01   | 05   | 38    |
| <b>Buenos Aires</b> | 02   |      | 01   |      | 02   | 03   |      |      | 01   | 01   | 10    |
| <b>Santa Elena</b>  |      | 02   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 02    |

<sup>7</sup> Representação do governador Antonio José da Franca e Horta Exmo. Snr. D. Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, 3 de julho de 1803. Documentos Interessantes para a História e Costumes de São Paulo. São Paulo. Oficinas do General Horta aos vice-reis e ministros (1802-1808). AESP/EditoraUNESP, v. 94, 1990, p. 191-2. (citation translated from Portuguese into English)

|                                              |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| (municipality of the province of Entre Ríos) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

**Table 1:** Ports of origin of ships entering Santos. Source: Mapas de importação e exportação do porto de Santos entre 1810-1821. Fundo Real Junta de Comércio, cx. 448, pacote 1, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro; Libro Maestro de entradas de buques, 1805-1818, libro 95, Archivo General de La Nación, Montevideo.

However, within this circuit, exports of colonial commodities from Santos exceeded imports. While a total of 48 ships entered Santos, 65 departed for the River Plate region, as seen in Table 2.

|                     | 1805 | 1806 | 1808 | 1810 | 1811 | 1812 | 1815 | 1816 | 1817 | 1818 | 1819 | 1820 | 1821 | Total |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| <b>Rio Grande</b>   |      |      | 24   | 10   | 17   | 10   | 11   | 11   | 9    | 1    | 6    | 5    | 11   | 115   |
| <b>Porto Alegre</b> |      |      |      | 1    |      | 5    | 3    | 1    |      | 1    | 2    | 1    | 01   | 15    |
| <b>Montevideo</b>   | 04   | 02   |      | 1    | 11   | 6    |      |      | 2    | 1    | 2    | 5    | 03   | 31    |
| <b>Buenos Aires</b> |      |      |      | 6    | 2    | 2    | 10   | 6    |      | 1    |      | 5    | 02   | 34    |

**Table 2:** Ports of destination for ships departing from Santos. Source: Mapas de importação e exportação do porto de Santos entre 1810-1821. Fundo Real Junta de Comércio, cx. 448, pacote 1, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

In other words, the coastal village of Santos can be considered to have been a supply market for the River Plate region, especially Montevideo. As Fabrício Prado (Prado 2009) has shown, the port of Montevideo became the main hub for Atlantic trade in the River Plate region, supplying not only the Banda Oriental, but also Buenos Aires.

Table 2 shows that in the first two decades of the nineteenth century the port of Santos was an integral part of this economic system. According to the above data, the mercantile networks that linked the River Plate region to Rio de Janeiro (Prado 2009) appear to have become more complex in the early nineteenth century, eventually including the captaincy of São Paulo and its main port, Santos.

According to Table 1, the number of ships originating from the River Plate region that entered the port of Santos far exceeded those from Rio Grande—that is, from the same region of Portuguese America. According to Helen Osório, even though the Rio Grande market was in an area that had been occupied later, it was rapidly integrated into the inter-colonial mercantile circuits as a supplier of food commodities, especially the Rio de Janeiro market (Osório 2007: 125).

In this sense, the figures in Table 1 suggest that, from São Paulo's coast to the far south of the continent, a marked feature of the regional mercantile circuit was its link with the ports of the River Plate estuary. As such, the two Iberian empires were joined together in commercial terms along Brazil's southern coast well into the 1820s.<sup>8</sup> As a result, these trans-imperial networks of trade reveal continuities between the old colonial networks and the trade patterns of the new emerging polities.

According to the historiography mentioned above, Rio Grande became a special supplier of food commodities to Rio de Janeiro in the late eighteenth century. As a result, at certain periods, the Rio Grande economy became dependent on imports of these same commodities from other villages on the coast of Portuguese America.

As one can observe in Table 2, Rio Grande received 115 of the ships from Santos, a number that far exceeded the 65 vessels from the same origin whose destination was Buenos Aires and Montevideo together.

In 1808, for example, Santos sent more ships to Rio Grande than to Rio de Janeiro, with a total of 24 as opposed to 13.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the data from the tables lead to the conclusion that, at certain periods, Rio Grande was to some extent dependent on colonial commodities commercialized by the captaincy of São Paulo.

Since Rio Grande specialized in the supply of provisions to Rio de Janeiro—the main market of the Center-South region—it felt compelled to meet by itself the demand for food from the southern coast, which, in this case, was Santos, a controversial supplier of colonial commodities on the coast of São Paulo. At this port, goods poured in from coastal and mountain villages from the North and South, with sugar, rice, tobacco and spirits being just some of examples that have been identified by historiography.

Inspired by the work of Juan Carlos Garavaglia, Helen Osório (Osório 2007: 160-165) has shown that there were ranches in the Rio Grande region that produced wheat, manioc, beans, corn, and cotton. However, this production couldn't have been sufficient. Producers from Rio Grande focused their efforts on producing commodities that could be sold more directly to Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, and Pernambuco—such as jerked beef and wheat—and others that could be indirectly exported to Lisbon, as was the case with leather, whose volumes of sales were greater than those of jerked beef (Osório, 2007: 195).

On the map showing exports from Santos to Rio Grande, one can see that the range of products sent from this port in 1816 was quite varied and mostly related to day-to-

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<sup>8</sup> Although Buenos Aires became independent in 1816, Montevideo continued to be part of the Luso-Brazilian commercial orbit as the Cisplatine Province until at least 1822.

<sup>9</sup> *Mapa das embarcações que entraram e saíram neste porto de Santos no ano de 1808*. Doc. 1.14.2.

day consumption. The main product was sugar. However, from a commercial standpoint, it cannot be considered in isolation as the sole product that launched the captaincy into the mercantile agro-export circuit. The sugar produced in São Paulo for export to the far south had the dimension of a consumer commodity in the colonial internal market.

Governors, particularly Dom Luis de Souza Botelho Mourão and Antonio Manuel de Mello Castro e Mendonça, expressed interest in linking the economy of São Paulo to Atlantic mercantile circuits, as can be observed in their letters sent to the Portuguese Overseas Council. Certainly, the Crown policy was oriented towards this.

The political and administrative transformations that the Portuguese Empire had undergone since the first half of the eighteenth century, with the new configuration of Brazil's Center-South region and the establishment of the Royal Court in Rio de Janeiro in 1808, may have provided another direction for this project. As the sugar from São Paulo was inferior in quality to that which was produced in Rio de Janeiro, its price may have been more accessible to domestic buyers.

One should also consider Alexandre Valentim's argument that a decline in international demand and in the product price may have led commodity traders to focus their sales on a consumer market and a demand for colonial commodities in the far south. In other words, São Paulo's sugar helped to consolidate its tradition of joining together the intracolony market (Lapa 1991: 69). Table 3 below shows, in two moments (white and brown sugar), the quantity of sugar sold to Rio Grande.

| Year         | Quantity/arrob <sup>10</sup> | Type     | Value/arroba | Total value        |
|--------------|------------------------------|----------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1814         | 3,778                        | B        | 2\$400       | 9:067\$400         |
| 1815         | 2,101                        | B        | 2\$550       | 5:378\$560         |
| 1816         | 7,068                        | B        | 2\$400       | 16:963\$000        |
| 1817         | 4,386                        | B        | 2\$200       | 9:649\$000         |
| 1818         | 2,815                        | B        | 2\$300       | 6:474\$000         |
| 1819         | 8,644                        | B        | 2\$200       | 19:016\$800        |
| 1820         | 4,803                        | B        | 2\$100       | 10:086\$300        |
| 1821         | 2,700                        | B        | 2\$100       | 5:670\$000         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>36,295</b>                | <b>B</b> |              | <b>82:305\$060</b> |

**Table 3:** Quantity of white sugar (B) exported from Santos to Rio Grande. Source: Mapas de importação e exportação do porto de Santos entre 1810-1821. Fundo Real Junta de Comércio, cx. 448, pacote 1, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

| Year | Quantity/arrob <sup>10</sup> | Type | Value/arroba | Total value |
|------|------------------------------|------|--------------|-------------|
|------|------------------------------|------|--------------|-------------|

<sup>10</sup> An arroba was a Portuguese unit of measurement—equivalent to 15 kilograms—used mainly for sugar, wheat and butter,

|              |              |          |        |                    |
|--------------|--------------|----------|--------|--------------------|
| 1814         | 1,151        | M        | 2\$000 | 2:302\$000         |
| 1815         | 1,378        | M        | 2\$000 | 2:756\$000         |
| 1816         | 203          | M        | 1\$800 | 365\$400           |
| 1817         | 1,334        | M        | 1\$700 | 2:267\$800         |
| 1819         | 2,046        | M        | 1\$000 | 3:273\$600         |
| 1820         | 2,565        | M        | 1\$500 | 3:847\$500         |
| 1821         | 1,152        | M        | 1\$500 | 1:728\$000         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>9,829</b> | <b>M</b> |        | <b>16:540\$300</b> |

**Table 4:** Quantity of brown sugar (M) exported from the port of Santos to Rio Grande. Source: Mapas de importação e exportação do porto de Santos entre 1810-1821. Fundo Real Junta de Comércio, cx. 448, pacote 1, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

The decline in quantity and average price paid per *arroba* of exported sugar confirms the tendency towards fewer exports of this commodity during this period, due to a diversification of demand for other consumer commodities, such as tobacco, spirits, rice and coffee. Nonetheless, in the period documented by charts of exports from Santos, sugar is the main commodity being purchased by Rio Grande. It was, therefore, a commodity with a high, though falling, demand.

Nonetheless, sugar from the São Paulo region strengthened the captaincy's position in the mercantile circuit of the River Plate region, as can be seen in the table below:

| Buenos Aires | Quantity       | Type     | Value/arroba | Total value         | Quantity     | Type     | Value/arroba | Total value        |
|--------------|----------------|----------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|----------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1813         | 7,970          | B        | 1\$300       | 10:361\$000         | 400          | M        | \$900        | 360\$000           |
| 1814         | 19,884         | B        | 2\$400       | 47:721\$600         | 2.908        | M        | 2\$000       | 5:816\$000         |
| 1815         | 33,788         | B        | 2\$560       | 86:499\$840         | 2.342        | M        | 2\$000       | 4:684\$000         |
| 1816         | 14,454         | B        | 2\$400       | 34:689\$600         |              |          |              |                    |
| 1818         | 5,967          | B        | 2\$300       | 13:701\$000         |              |          |              |                    |
| 1820         | 27,813         | B        | 2\$100       | 58:407\$300         | 2.860        | M        | 1\$500       | 4:290\$000         |
| 1821         | 8,006          | B        | 2\$300       | 16:812\$600         |              |          |              |                    |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>117,882</b> | <b>B</b> |              | <b>268:192\$940</b> | <b>8.510</b> | <b>M</b> |              | <b>15:150\$000</b> |

**Table 5:** Quantity of white (B) and brown (M) sugar sold to Buenos Aires. Source: Mapas de importação e exportação do porto de Santos entre 1810-1821. Fundo Real Junta de Comércio, cx. 448, pacote 1, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

| Montevideo   | Quantity/arrobas | Type     | Value/arroba | Total value        | Quantity/arrobas | Type     | Value/arroba | Total value        |
|--------------|------------------|----------|--------------|--------------------|------------------|----------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1811         | 7,668            | B/M      |              | 11:496\$000        |                  |          |              |                    |
| 1813         | 8,703            | B        | 1\$300       | 11:313\$900        | 1,476            | M        | \$900        | 1:328\$400         |
| 1814         | 5,429            | B        | 2\$400       | 13:029\$600        | 128              | M        | 2\$000       | 256\$000           |
| 1817         | 800              | B        | 2\$200       | 1:760\$000         | 782              | M        | 1\$700       | 1:329\$000         |
| 1819         | 2,927            | B        | 2\$200       | 6:439\$400         | 1811             | M        | 1\$600       | 2:847\$600         |
| 1820         | 11,862           | B        | 2\$100       | 24:910\$200        | 950              | M        | 1\$500       | 1:425\$000         |
| 1821         | 8,645            | B        | 2\$100       | 18:154\$500        | 3,871            | M        | 1\$500       | 5:806\$500         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>46,034</b>    | <b>B</b> |              | <b>87:103\$600</b> | <b>9,018</b>     | <b>M</b> |              | <b>12:992\$500</b> |

**Table 6:** Quantity of white (B) and brown (M) sugar sold to Montevideo. Source: Mapas de importação e exportação do porto de Santos entre 1810-1821. Fundo Real Junta de Comércio, cx. 448, pacote 1, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

In Montevideo's port registers, there are various entries for sugar originating directly from Santos and transported in Spanish ships. These entries date from 1806 onwards. As the mercantile elite of Santos was one of trader-representatives and not ship owners in charge of supplying the ships, intracontinental trade in sugar was partly in the hands of Spanish traders. In other words, from a political perspective, Portugal and Spain were rivals in the southern part of the continent, but, from an economic perspective, a relationship of common interests and cooperation existed.<sup>11</sup>

This sugar was consigned to the established traders in Montevideo's market or to the owners of the Spanish ships, who themselves sold goods in the region. An example of this is: "a Brigantine of Spanish nationality named La Encarnación, the property of Dom Mateo Magalhães (?), 150 tons. Departed from Santos on the coast of Brazil, headed for this port and carrying 739 sacks of sugar consigned to the owner of the ship."<sup>12</sup>

An analysis of the above data makes it possible to conclude that a commodity that was traditionally understood to be the reason behind São Paulo's integration into Atlantic mercantile circuits did in fact connect its economy more to other areas on the continent itself and to regions that were under the control of other dominions and regimes, such as Buenos Aires. In reality, the mercantile circuit for São Paulo's sugar connected the captaincy more to Buenos Aires than to the Portuguese dominion of Rio Grande.

Therefore, the late colonial period in the history of the São Paulo captaincy and of sugar production in the region cannot be understood as an affirmation of the power and pre-eminence of a Portugal that aimed to extract surpluses from the peripheries of Portuguese America, stimulating the captaincy to produce food for the agricultural export market (Alden 1999).

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<sup>11</sup> Registro 11, pág. 107, 30/01/1806; Registro 33, pág. 129, 3 de abril de 1806; Registro 10—21/05/1808, p. 198; Registro 70—29/06/1809, p. 255; Registro 105—29/10/1809, p. 271; Registro 111—1 de novembro de 1809, p. 274; Registro 111—1 de novembro de 1809, p. 274; Registro 40, 13 de fevereiro de 1810, p. 207; Registro 163, 8 de outubro de 1811, p. 462; Registro 176, 11/11/1811, p. 468; Registro 9, 19/01/1812, p. 476; Registro 19, 26 de fevereiro de 1812, p. 480; Registro 24, 4 de março de 1812, p. 481; Registro 29, 26/03/1812, p. 483; Registro 83, 12/10/1812; Registro 103, 28/12/1812, p. 509; Registro 2, 14/03/1815, folha 552. Libro Maestro de entradas de buques, 1805-1818, libro 95, Archivo General de La Nación, Montevideo. For more indications of this movement, see also the books *Capitania de Puerto-Salidas para Ultramar, 1805-1821*, libro n. 96, Archivo General de la Nación e *Capitania del Puerto, Entrada de buques, 1818-1824* - libro 99, Archivo General de la Nación.

<sup>12</sup> Libro Maestro de entradas de buques, 1805-1818, libro 95. Archivo General de La Nación. Registro 108—30/10/1809, p. 272.

The processes were much more complex and diversified, resulting in a situation similar to the one that Juan Carlos Garavaglia showed with the ranches of Buenos Aires, which did not limit themselves to simply raising livestock. Similarly, the situation of the ports on the southern periphery, especially Santos, the only one that enjoyed navigational access from the Atlantic, may have led some historiographers to condense these processes into merely one: that of an exporter of sugar to the global market in the direction of Lisbon or via Rio de Janeiro.

### Breadbasket of the far south and of the River Plate region

Aside from sugar, a wide range of consumer commodities, including perishables, turned the village of Santos, to some extent, into the breadbasket of the far south and of the River Plate region. Rio Grande was the largest purchaser of spirits from São Paulo, with a total of 261 casks, followed by the River Plate region, which consumed 218 casks.

|                              | 1810 | 1811 | 1812 | 1813 | 1814 | 1815 | 1816 | 1817 | 1818 | 1819 | 1820 | 1821 | Total |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| <b>Rio Grande</b>            | 38   |      |      |      | 14   | 52   | 100  | 12   | 9    | 2    | 15   | 19   | 261   |
| <b>Montevideo</b>            | 17   | 5    |      | 31   | 15   |      |      | 4    |      | 10   | 20   |      | 71    |
| <b>Buenos Aires</b>          | 12   |      |      | 75   | 23   | 26   | 5    |      | 6    |      |      |      | 147   |
| <b>Total number of casks</b> | 100  | 87   | 10   | 106  | 276  | 96   | 127  | 17.5 | 147  | 221  | 226  | 46   |       |

**Table 7:** Destination ports for spirits exported from the port of Santos. Source: Mapas de importação e exportação do porto de Santos entre 1810-1821. Fundo Real Junta de Comércio, cx. 448, pacote 1, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

As historiography has shown, this was a commodity involved in the African slave trade, and Rio Grande was a purchaser of slaves from Rio de Janeiro (Osório 2007, 220; Florentino 1997: 138; Moura 2012; Borucki 2011). As demonstrated by Fabrício Prado, the political and economic projection of Montevideo in the Viceroyalty of River Plate turned it into the sole port for the arrival of slaves.

According to some data, the period between 1801 and 1825 was fruitful for the region in terms of slave traffic, in comparison with the previous period. From 1776 to 1800, 6,702 slaves arrived in the region, while the number jumped to 21,521 between 1801 and 1825.<sup>13</sup> On the southern part of the Brazilian coast, in contrast, the area that included Rio Grande received 499,566 slaves in the same period. Since Rio Grande was an importer

<sup>13</sup> The trans-Atlantic slave trade database: <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces>, accessed on March 18, 2015.

of slaves, spirits may have been one of the commodities that it demanded. One must, however, consider the possibility that this commodity was heavily supplied to military troops, although this theory still needs to be investigated.

Nevertheless, Montevideo's customs records reveal that the port of Santos was also a supplier of slaves to the River Plate region, enlarging a mercantile network that had hitherto linked the region to Rio de Janeiro, as Fabrício Prado's research demonstrates. In 1806, for example, a ship originating from Santos, carrying 21 slaves and heading towards Rio Grande, arrived at the port of Montevideo. The canons of natural law and people's rights were invoked; that is, it was claimed that its crew was at risk of death from a storm. The slaves were consigned to the ship's owner, who sold them in the city of Montevideo.<sup>14</sup>

The village of Santos cannot be characterized as a commercial market in the broader sense, as such cities as Rio de Janeiro or Salvador were. However, at certain times, it was able to complement the demand for slaves on the southern coast of the Americas, supplying African slaves in small quantities. Traders on Spanish brigantines flowed into the port of Santos, carrying slaves on consignment. One such example was the owner of the *N. S. Begonia*, who shipped 10 slaves.<sup>15</sup> Other ships headed to the port of Buenos Aires, carrying slaves and other goods such as spirits, which played a part in the trafficking. In October 1810, the Spanish brigantine *Maravilha* carried, on consignment, 4 slaves and barrels of spirits.<sup>16</sup>

The Spanish schooner *N. S. de Natividad* carried a large load of 64 slaves, all of them consigned to a trader in Montevideo named Dom Domingos Vasquez,<sup>17</sup> while the Spanish brigantine *Sexta Estrela* left Santos with 70 "rough" slaves.<sup>18</sup> The fact that these slaves were "rough" is interesting, as it signifies that they had come directly from Africa. According to research by Maria Theresa Schorer Petrone, Antonio da Silva Prado, a São Paulo trader, was a slave trafficker in the city of Caitité, Bahia.

In the only canister of customs documents from Santos that exists in the State of São Paulo Archives, there is a record of the arrival of slaves originating from Mozambique and destined for this trader. One must consider, therefore, that trafficking in slaves in the River Plate region in the first two decades of the nineteenth century involved the port of Santos, which also imported them directly from Africa. While it certainly did not have the

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<sup>14</sup> Libro Maestro de entradas de buques, 1805-1818, libro 95. Registro 38 pp. 30-31. 24 de abril de 1805. Archivo General de La Nación.

<sup>15</sup> Registro 33, p. 129, 3 de abril de 1806, Libro Maestro de entradas de buques, 1805-1818, libro 95.

<sup>16</sup> Registro 155, 6 de outubro de 1810, p. 266. Libro Maestro de entradas de buques, 1805-1818, libro 95.

<sup>17</sup> Registro 4, 11/01/1811, p. 303. Libro Maestro de entradas de buques, 1805-1818, libro 95

<sup>18</sup> Registro 184, 20/12/1811, Libro Maestro de entradas de buques, 1805-1818, libro 95

same volume of imports as other cities, such as Rio de Janeiro or Salvador, there was movement in the sense that it contributed to a more precise conceptualization of the mercantile port system that existed on the southern coast of Brazil.

Other commercialized commodities can be seen in the table below:

|             | <b>Rio Grande</b>                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Buenos Aires</b>                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Montevideo</b>                                                                                                          |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1811</b> |                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                | Various provisions, spirits, tobacco, cotton, various commodities                                                          |
| <b>1813</b> |                                                                                                                                                                      | Rice, sugar cane spirits, coffee, tobacco, cloth, various woods, wine                                                                                                          | Rice, edibles, tobacco, cloth, leather, wood                                                                               |
| <b>1814</b> | Rice, cotton cloth, sweet oil, wine, vinegar, sugar cane spirits, coffee, dozens of laths, troughs, large hat box                                                    | Rice, cotton cloth, coffee, lime, spirits, sweets, transoms, troughs, beams, pequea (sic) logs, oars, manioc starch, cotton thread                                             | Rice, yokes, spirits, honey, cotton cloth, tobacco, beans, pork lard, cheese, mate tea, beams, boxes of quince pasta       |
| <b>1815</b> | Spirits, vinegar, fish oil, tobacco grown in the hills, yoke, cotton cloth, manioc flour, coffee, cheese, lard, rice, sweets, boxes of quince paste, beams, firewood | Rice, spirits, tobacco grown in the hills, cotton cloth, coffee, cheese, pork bellies, beams, quince paste, manioc starch, lime, assorted English porcelain, troughs, firewood |                                                                                                                            |
| <b>1816</b> | Pork bellies, tobacco, coffee, cotton yarn, cheese, boxes of quince paste, cotton cloth, lime, laths                                                                 | Cotton cloth, cheese, planks, troughs, tobacco, pork bellies, coffee, rice                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                            |
| <b>1817</b> | Pork bellies, tobacco from Minas, coffee, rice, manioc flour, wine from Lisbon, sugar cane spirits, cotton cloth, quince paste, beams, laths, troughs, firewood      |                                                                                                                                                                                | Tobacco from Minas, coffee, pork bellies, lard, pork, wine from Lisbon, sugar cane spirits, rice, beans, cheese from Minas |
| <b>1818</b> | Pork bellies, tobacco from Minas, rice, manioc flour, lime, cotton cloth, sugar cane spirits, beams, laths, coffee                                                   | Rice, cotton thread, sugar cane spirits, tobacco from Minas, boxes of quince paste, planks, firewood                                                                           |                                                                                                                            |
|             | <b>Rio Grande</b>                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Buenos Aires</b>                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Montevideo</b>                                                                                                          |
| <b>1819</b> | Pork bellies, pork, tobacco from Minas, local spirits, manioc flour, beans, laths, troughs, mangrove bark                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                | Pork bellies, pork, coffee, tobacco from Minas, Rice, sugar cane spirits                                                   |
| <b>1820</b> | Pork bellies, lard, coffee, tobacco from Minas, rice, cotton cloth, casks of sugarcane spirits, troughs, mangrove bark                                               | Coffee, tobacco from Minas, rice                                                                                                                                               | Pork bellies, pork, lard, coffee, tobacco from Minas, rice, sugar cane spirits, mate tea, manioc flour, corn               |
| <b>1821</b> | Pork bellies, sugar cane spirits, tobacco from Minas, cotton, rice, troughs, firewood                                                                                | Tobacco from Minas, Pork bellies                                                                                                                                               | Pork bellies, coffee                                                                                                       |

**Table 8:** Commodities exported by the port of Santos to ports in the River Plate region and the far south of Portuguese America. Source: Mapas de importação e exportação do porto de Santos entre 1810-1821. Fundo Real Junta de Comércio, cx. 448, pacote 1, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

Data from the above table makes it possible to conclude the following: Although Rio Grande had a diversified production of food, it may not have produced sufficient goods at certain times to supply its own market. To what extent was this insufficient production caused by the concentration of its production on commodities sold to Rio de Janeiro, such as wheat and jerked beef, and to Lisbon, such as leather?

In this case, the migration of the royal family to Brazil and the establishment of Rio de Janeiro as the seat of the new Imperial Court affected trade on the southern coast in the sense that it favored trade with the port of Santos, which supplied food to Rio Grande. In turn, the latter port tended to focus its efforts on producing more lucrative commodities for sale in other markets.

On the other hand, while Rio de Janeiro may have been a major supplier of food to Rio Grande, the village of Santos also fulfilled this role. From 1808 to 1821, 115 ships originating from Santos entered the port of Rio Grande, as can be seen in Table 2. Helen Osório notes that Rio de Janeiro supplied sugar, rice, manioc flour, and salt to Rio Grande (Osório 2007: 219).

Products from Santos were more diversified, as can be seen in the table above. Salt for jerked beef did not come from the captaincy of São Paulo. Other products that were consumed daily, such as cheese, pork bellies, coffee, and quince paste, were among the products supplied by the port of Rio Grande.

Another interesting conclusion, which is deserving of further research, relates to the existence of a trade route originating from Minas Gerais, explicitly linked to tobacco, which flowed into Santos and was destined for Rio Grande. Caio Prado Jr. has already drawn attention to the existence of a cheese and sweet industry in Minas Gerais—another commodity that appears in the above table, although its origin is not specified. In this sense, Alcir Lenharo was a pioneer in developing research in this area, but his conclusions connected production in this region only to the Royal Court (Lenharo 1993).

Perhaps it is time for this theme to be revisited by historiographers in order to better understand this link between agricultural production in Minas Gerais and the continent's southern coast via the Santos-Rio Grande mercantile circuit. The provinces of the River Plate region were also consumers of these same products. Historiography still has not been able to answer questions about how the cheese, sweet or tobacco industry functioned, how its production and distribution system worked, or even who the agents who ran them were.

Products for construction, such as laths, lime and planks, were also supplied to Rio Grande through the port of Santos.

While, according to Table 1, Santos received more ships from the River Plate region than from Rio Grande, a reversal occurred in this intracolony circuit—that is, Rio Grande purchased a great deal from Santos, but, as a region of internal supply, it provided little to Santos, obliging this port and the captaincy of São Paulo to purchase more from provinces in the River Plate region.

To compensate for the reduced trade with Rio Grande, which sold more to Rio de Janeiro, as well as more specific products, Santos may have strengthened its links with the River Plate region. Therefore, the tendency for São Paulo to strengthen its trade with the River Plate ports, as shown by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (Holanda 1995: 417), may have occurred because Rio Grande was more closely linked to Rio de Janeiro. This mercantile relationship favored the consolidation of a São Paulo-River Plate circuit in the South Atlantic.

When it was not possible to buy several essential products in Rio Grande, such as leather and jerked beef, for shipment to Rio de Janeiro, Santos turned its attention towards the River Plate estuary. On the 1810 chart of imports from Santos, imported goods appear with the designation that they came from “Montevideo, Buenos Aires and other ports.”

These goods originating from the provinces of the River Plate region were: 300 *arrobas* of dry meat, 600 *arrobas* of wheat flour—a commodity exported in large quantities from Rio Grande to Rio de Janeiro—2,215 bushels of salt, 40 *arrobas* of butter, wine, olive oil, vinegar, beer, liqueurs, cloth, hardware, and offal.

The table below completes this information with more precise data for each port in South America:

## Commodities imported by Santos:

|                     | 1814                                                                     | 1815                                                                                                    | 1816                                                           | 1817 | 1818                                                                             | 1819 | 1820                          | 1821                                                                              |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Rio Grande</b>   |                                                                          | Hair-on hides, tallow, jerked beef, wheat flour, wheat grain, <i>guampa</i> (a cup made of cattle horn) | Wheat                                                          |      |                                                                                  |      | Hair-on hides, cattle remains |                                                                                   |
| <b>Buenos Aires</b> | Hair-on hides, wheat flour, nuts, raisins, tallow candles, quinine (sic) | Hair-on hides, raisins, figs, nuts                                                                      | Hair-on hides, tallow, raisins, blankets, cattle remains, nuts |      | Hair-on hides, jerked beef, raisins, figs, nuts, planks, salt and cattle remains |      |                               | Hair-on hides, jerked beef, raisins, figs, nuts, candles, salt and cattle remains |
| <b>Montevideo</b>   | Casks of wine, taffeta, silk twill                                       |                                                                                                         |                                                                | Salt | Salt                                                                             | Salt |                               | Salt                                                                              |

**Table 9:** Commodities imported by Santos from ports in the River Plate region and the far south of Portuguese America. Source: Mapas de importação e exportação do porto de Santos entre 1810-1821. Fundo Real Junta de Comércio, cx. 448, pacote 1, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

In other words, it seems that, at certain times, the captaincy of São Paulo ended up establishing a mercantile circuit in the River Plate region. Rio Grande had close connections to the market of Rio de Janeiro, which caused the São Paulo economy to turn towards the River Plate trade circuits, particularly between 1807 and 1816.

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Received for publication: 23 October 2014

Accepted in revised form: 6 April 2015

Recebido para publicação: 23 de Outubro de 2014

Aceite após revisão: 6 de Abril de 2015