

Manoel Luís Vieira: An Entrepreneur in Rio De Janeiro During Brazil's Eighteenth Century Agricultural Renaissance

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AN ECONOMIC HISTORY of colonial Brazil, based on the archival as well as printed materials available, has yet to be written,¹ but when it appears it is safe to say that a significant chapter will concern the agricultural revival of the second half of the eighteenth century. This period saw the beginnings of the coffee, cacao, cotton, and rice industries, as well as widespread, though largely unsuccessful, attempts to promote indigo, cochineal, hemp, and other products.

One of the earliest of these new cultures to become commercially successful was the rice industry which began in the 1750's and 1760's, and flourished particularly in Maranhão, Pará, and Rio de Janeiro during the late decades of the eighteenth and first decades of the nineteenth centuries. Though the two northern captaincies eventually outstripped the early lead of Rio, the latter was Brazil's earliest commercial rice producer. During the 1760's Manoel Luis Vieira was the owner of Rio's only commercial rice mill, the first successful one in Brazil. Fragmentary as the data concerning Vieira's activities is, it throws some light on the beginnings of one of the new extractive industries, and on some of the problems faced by eighteenth-century entrepreneurs in Brazil.²

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¹ Roberto Cochrane Simonsen's *História econômica do Brasil* (2 vols., São Paulo, 1937), now in its third edition, is a valuable pioneer work based largely on printed materials. It should be regarded as suggestive, rather than definitive, as it sometimes is—particularly in Brazil. For an excellent interpretation of various aspects of the colonial economic history of Brazil see Caio Prado Júnior, *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo: colônia* (4th ed., São Paulo, 1953) which is also based on published documentation.

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I

The Brazilian agricultural renaissance of the second half of the eighteenth century could not have come at a better time for Portugal. Between the late 1750's and 1770's Portugal experienced a severe and prolonged depression caused by declining production of Brazilian gold, diamonds, and sugar. The royal treasury felt the effects of the crisis in falling revenues from the tithes, the royal fifths on mining production, and the *entradas*, or duties on slaves sent to the mining zones.³ Moreover, the curtailment of these revenues came at precisely the time when the military expenses of Portugal and her Brazilian captaincies were being vastly increased, as a result of the renewal and intensification of rivalry with Spain for mastery in southern South America.⁴

It was imperative, therefore, for Portugal to find new and compensatory sources of revenue. A sizeable increase in taxation was unfeasible, since both colonials and peninsulars were already heavily burdened.⁵ The sale of judicial and fiscal offices in Brazil was extended, but many offices went without purchasers, and the income from those sold was not extremely large.⁶ Nor did the disposal of

³ See Jorge de Macedo, *A situação económica no tempo de Pombal: alguns aspectos* (Pôrto, 1951), pp. 159-190, and *idem*, "Portugal e a economia 'pombalina.' Temas e hipóteses," *Revista de História*, No. 19 (São Paulo, Julho-Setembro, 1954), 81-100; also Antônio de Sousa Pedroso Carnaxide, *O Brasil na administração pombalina (economia e política externa)* (São Paulo, 1940), pp. 76-82. The depression was also reflected in the very substantial decline of exports from England to Portugal, 1760-1785, which cannot be explained merely by the economic nationalism of the Marquis of Pombal or by the partial success of his industrial program in Portugal. See Violet M. Shillington and A. B. Wallis Chapman, *The Commercial Relations of England and Portugal* (London, n.d.), pp. 265-278.

⁴ The period includes the peninsular and colonial war of 1762-1763 which continued to smoulder in Brazil until 1777. Colonial aspects of Luso-Spanish platine rivalry in this period are treated in detail in the writer's dissertation "The Marquis of Lavradio, Viceroy of Brazil (1769-1779), and the Climax of Luso-Spanish Platine Rivalry."

⁵ In 1732 councillor Antônio Rodrigues da Casta warned the king that "Os povos do Brasil estão gravemente tributados. . .," and that their commerce was being ruined as a result. "Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino a Sua Magestade, no anno de 1732, feita pelo conselheiro Antonio Rodrigues da Casta. . .," *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, VII (2nd ed., 1866), 498-506 (hereafter cited *RIHGB*). Subsequently, however, the 20% (*quinto*) on precious metals was restored (1750), a 4% customs duty was added for the rebuilding of Lisbon (1758), and a consumption tax was created in 1772 for the support of school teachers. In 1756 the Board of Trade in England calculated that on every £100 worth of English goods sent to Brazil, £68 was paid in taxes to the Portuguese government. Chapman and Shillington, p. 247.

⁶ In 1758 councillor Antônio de Azevedo Coutinho was ordered to go to Brazil to survey and put up for bid all judicial offices not previously sold within the captaincies-general of Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, and Minas Gerais, and

the confiscated properties of the expelled Society of Jesus yield the riches expected.⁷

One way the crown could ease its fiscal problem lay in the exploitation of hitherto neglected Brazilian resources—particularly fibers, hardwoods, dyestuffs, and cereals—which had good revenue-producing possibilities. To stimulate the search for such commodities the crown ordered colonial governors to keep a sharp eye out for promising flora and to report their findings to the Colonial Minister. They responded by sending a stream of reports, memorials, and samples of hundreds of plants and minerals brought to their attention by local enthusiasts.⁸ While most of these projects were rejected as valueless, some merited royal approval and the grant of special privileges such as monopolies, customs exemptions, and price supports. To encourage the rice industry, for example, the crown offered a ten-year customs exemption on all rice produced in Brazil and marketed in Portugal. First authorized in 1761, this privilege was extended until at least 1804 when rice was being grown in more than half a dozen captaincies.⁹

within the remaining private captaincies. Carta régia, April 20, 1758, Eduardo de Castro e Almeida, ed., *Inventário dos documentos relativos ao Brasil existentes no Arquivo de Marinha e Ultramar de Lisboa*, II (Rio de Janeiro, 1914), 180 (hereafter cited as Almeida, *Inventário*). For an example of salaried and proprietary judicial and fiscal offices and their yield in Rio de Janeiro see “Mappa geral do rendimento annual de todos os empregos e officios de justiça e fazenda d’esta cidade do Rio de Janeiro,” May 17, 1781, *RIHGB*, LI:2 (1888), 159-181.

⁷ The crown ordered the seizure of all Jesuit properties in Brazil in 1760, and sold most of them in the 1770’s for a fraction of their former value. No study of the disposition of the Jesuit holdings in Brazil after confiscation has ever been made, though there is a good deal of material on the subject scattered in several Brazilian archives—and doubtless in Portugal as well.

⁸ E.g., José César de Menezes (Governor of Pernambuco) to Martinho de Melo e Castro (Colonial Minister, 1770-1792), October 25, 1775 and [?] 1777, Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (hereafter cited IHGB), Arquivo Ultramarino (hereafter cited Arq.), 1-1-15, fols. 75-76, 110-111; Marquis of Lavradio (as Governor of Bahia) to Conde de Oeiras (future Marquis of Pombal), September 12, 1768, Almeida, *Inventário*, 202; Luís Antônio de Sousa (Governor of São Paulo) to Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado (Colonial Minister, 1762-1770), July 4, 1767, *RIHGB*, Tomo Especial, VI (1957), 4; Martim Lopes Lobo de Saldanha (Governor of São Paulo) to Martinho de Melo e Castro, November 9, 1776, *Documentos interessantes para a história e costumes de São Paulo*, XXVIII (São Paulo, 1898), 228-229. See also the correspondence between the crown and Viceroy Lavradio and Luís de Vasconcelos e Sousa in the Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro (hereafter cited BNRJ), especially codices I-2, 4, 6, I-2, 4, 7, and 4, 4, 1 to 4, 4, 11.

⁹ Alvará of January 5, 1761, Antônio Delgado da Silva, comp., *Coleção da legislação portuguesa [1750-1820]* (Lisbon, 1825-1830), I (supplement), 814-815, and renewals of May 18, 1772, August 1, 1783, and March 16, 1804, II (supp.), 304, III, 341, V, 270. (Hereafter cited as *CLP*).

When a new industry showed promise in one captaincy, governors in other parts of Brazil were urged to stimulate its production within the areas under their supervision.¹⁰ In the northern captaincies-general of Maranhão, Pará, and Pernambuco the direction of the new colonial industries became the special responsibility of exclusive, government-sponsored trading companies created in the 1750's by the Marquis of Pombal.¹¹ Elsewhere the crown relied upon the efforts of royal governors, individual planters, and merchants to spur the economic revival.

In spite of the special inducements offered, it was not easy to find merchants who were willing to handle the new commodities when they were first produced. As Viceroy Lavradio (1769-1779) pointed out, most of the merchants in his captaincy (Rio de Janeiro) who were called traders (*comerciantes*) were primarily factors for Lisbon or Pôrto merchants specializing in colonial trade, and were only secondarily traders in their own right.¹² He might have added that the peninsular merchants were themselves often intermediaries for British and other foreign commercial interests which had a large voice in the determination of the kind and volume of products sent from Brazil to Portugal.¹³

Viceroy Lavradio considered it questionable whether the merchants of Rio de Janeiro¹⁴ could materially assist in the economic diversification of his captaincy because, he stated, "they are obliged to observe strictly the orders which the merchants [in Portugal] send them, and for this reason they can not freight commodities other than

¹⁰ Martinho de Melo e Castro to Viceroy Lavradio, November 24, 1774, *RIHGB*, Tomo Especial, VII (1957), 6-7; *idem* to Martin Lopes Lobo de Saldanha, April 28, 1778, *Documentos interessantes*, XLIII (1903), 159-163.

¹¹ I.e., the Companhia do Grão Pará e Maranhão (1755-1778), and the Companhia de Pernambuco e Paraíba (1759-1778).

¹² Marquis of Lavradio, Relatório to Luís de Vasconcelos de Sousa, June 19, 1779, *RIHGB*, IV (2nd ed., 1863), 453-454.

¹³ See the excellent article by Allan Christelow, "Great Britain and the Trades from Cadiz and Lisbon to Spanish America and Brazil, 1759-1783," *HAHR*, XXVII (February, 1947), 2-29. For contemporary accounts of foreign dominance of Portugal's trade see French-born, Portuguese-naturalized cloth merchant Jacome Rattou, *Recordacoens . . . sobre occurencias do seu tempo em Portugal . . . de 1747 a . . . 1810* (London, 1813), pp. 95-96, 252; and "Etat du Portugal en 1778—réponses du consul de France a Lisbonne aux questions envoyées de Paris," Victor Magalhães Godinho, *Prix et monnaies au Portugal, 1750-1850* (Paris, 1955), pp. 336-341.

¹⁴ At the time Lavradio was writing there were about 2,000 businesses in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Of these, ninety-eight firms were listed as "casas de negociantes commissarios." "Demonstração das qualidades e quantidades de diferentes ramos de mercancia, mecanismo . . . que estabelecem as vantagens da sociedade do paiz" (1780), *RIHGB*, XLVII:1 (1884), 44-45.

those which their superiors require. . . .'¹⁵ As a consequence, he went on, the factors continued to ship the same things—principally sugar, hides, and brandy—year after year.

Similar views were registered by several of Lavradio's fellow governors¹⁶ and by a colonial merchant, Antônio José Coelho, of Rio de Janeiro. Coelho, a petitioner for a privilege to export cotton from Rio, admitted that "the merchants do not buy it [i.e., cotton] either because this kind of commerce is not customary, or because the quantity is always too small to make it worth while to ship it, or . . . because many times a fatal misfortune leaves us unaware of our most important interests."¹⁷

In reality the business decisions of the colonial merchants were influenced not only by their peninsular connections, but also by their relationship with the government. Though a leading customer of the business community, the crown was traditionally a poor payer. The exchequer of Rio, like the treasuries in the other captaincies, was seldom able to pay for the goods and services the merchants and planters furnished the crown until months or years after their bills became due.¹⁸ Moreover, the arrears which the treasury owed the military forces of the captaincy-general also extended to several years, and were largely pledged to merchants against credits they gave military personnel for food and other supplies not provided by government allowances.¹⁹

¹⁵ Relatório to Luís de Vasconcelos e Sousa, 454-455. Lavradio made the same complaints in a letter to Martinho de Melo e Castro, December 9, 1778, IHGB, Arq., 1-2-1, fols. 6-9.

¹⁶ E.g., Manuel da Cunha Menezes (Governor of Bahia) to Melo e Castro, March 10, 1779, Almeida, *Inventário*, II, 423, and Martin Lopes Lobo de Saldanha to *idem*, November 9, 1776, *Documentos interessantes*, XXVIII (1898), 228-229.

¹⁷ Coelho to Lavradio, Rio de Janeiro, July 9, 1771, CMCM, maço 31 (orig.).

¹⁸ After the fiscal reforms in Portugal and Brazil during the 1760's and 1770's, each captaincy-general was fiscally independent of the others and directly subordinate to the Royal Treasury in Lisbon. One of the reasons for this reorganization was to improve the fiscal management of Brazil, yet the debt situation continued to worsen. See e.g., Viceroy Lavradio to Conde de Oeiras, February 20, 1770, IHGB, Arq., 1-1-29, fols. 213-227, and Luís de Vasconcelos e Sousa to Martinho de Melo e Castro, June 29, 1779, BNRJ, 4, 4, 5, n. 29. The debt burden of the exchequer of Rio de Janeiro was by no means new. In 1725, for example, Governor Luis Vaia Monteiro sent an urgent request to the Conselho Ultramarino for approval of his plan to suspend work on the fortifications and aqueduct of Rio because of lack of funds and debts of 29:480-§493 rs. owed local businessmen for supplies sent to Colônia do Sacramento. Conselho Ultramarino to Monteiro, November 9, 1725, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro (hereafter cited ANRJ), Col. 60, liv. 22, fols. 21-22.

¹⁹ As the Governor of the subcaptaincy of Santa Catarina declared in analyzing the causes for the decadence of his government, "Seria muito maior o commercio desta Ilha, senão fosse a extagnação em que o tem posto a falta do dinheiro da Tropa, que hé o sangue mais puro de que elle precisa para a sua

From time to time colonial administrators made serious efforts to reduce expenditures and to pay off these long overdue obligations. As soon as a new emergency arose, however, debt retirement ceased and the arrears piled up. During the early 1770's, for example, Viceroy Lavradio made diligent efforts to scale down his captaincy's debt, and succeeded in making headway until the "cold" war with Spain for control of southern Brazil turned "hot" in the mid-seventies, with the result that Rio's debt more than doubled within a decade.²⁰ Even the sale of most of the former Jesuit properties in the captaincy failed to reduce the debt to the extent the Viceroy had hoped.²¹

The difficulty the treasury found in meeting its obligation had serious consequences for businessmen. Merchants and planters with capital tied up in unpaid government contracts were deprived of funds needed for normal operations or for expansion.²² Royal officials often found it necessary to exert considerable pressure on both groups to furnish the government with its requirements, always promising but seldom providing prompt payment.²³ Colonial profiteers who tried to raise prices to the government during the wartime emergency of the 'seventies sometimes met with strong opposition.²⁴

circulação." Noting that the pay of his troops was eighty-two months behind, he pointed out that "... a ... Tropa ... não pode pagar a os Mercadores e que estes p.r consequencia tenham adaptado o sistema de não quererem fiar coisa alguma a os Militares, para não contrahirem maiores dívidas com os seus credores. . . ." João Alberto de Miranda Ribeiro, "Da causa da sua decadencia [Santa Catarina.] e o meio de apromover," November 17, 1797, BNRJ, II-35, 30, 3 n. 10.

²⁰ See "Mappa da dívida passiva da fazenda real da capitania do Rio de Janeiro e provedores suas subalternas. . . ," *RIHGB*, LI:2 (1888), 201-203.

²¹ The principal reason why Viceroy Lavradio urged the sale of the Jesuit estates was because of "... a grandissima dívida, que a Real Fazenda deve aos Negociantes, e as pessoas particulares desta Capital, e que á falta desta se ter satisfeito, tem feito o grande atrazo, em que se achão os mesmos Negociantes. . . ." Lavradio to Pombal, July 12, 1771, BNRJ, cod. 10, 4, 8, n. 181.

²² Speaking of the debt of the captaincy to businessmen and others, Lavradio observed "... e bem vê V. Exc. que faltando ao commercio e lavoura este grande cabedal, e estando-lhe empatado, e em lugar de se lhe diminuir a dívida, ir-se esta augmentando, que se faz quazi impossivel que se possam animar estas gentes a novas estabelecimentos. . . ." Relatório to Luís de Vasconcelos, 460-461.

²³ E.g., in two letters to his *mestres de campo* ordering fish sent to Rio for the return voyage of the royal frigate to Portugal, Lavradio felt it necessary to add the following post script: "Devo dizer . . . que como a despeza que se fizer com o peixe, não he para se deixar de satisfazer, como succedia antigamente, mas sim para ser logo paga. . . ." Lavradio to Manoel Antunes Ferreira and Felis Gonçalves Santos, December 10, 1770, ANRJ, Col. 70, liv. 5, fols. 131-132.

²⁴ Learning that the inhabitants of Ilha Grande were charging more for *farinha* than local suppliers in Rio, Lavradio ordered that they be paid according to the market price in the capital. To João Antônio Salter de Mendonça,

Two lime suppliers in Rio, for example, who attempted to persuade fellow dealers to increase their charges for lime supplied for the capital's fortifications, were packed off to Angola as *degradados* "to serve as examples to others who will be restrained from committing similar excesses."²⁵ Though the government depended on planters and merchants to supply food during times of serious shortage, and contracted to pay shippers and suppliers promptly, they often experienced endless delays before obtaining payment.²⁶

Another problem which vexed colonial merchants was the remission of capital to Portugal. Until 1765 the only legal means of doing so was via the royal frigates which guarded the *frotas*.²⁷ After the abolition of the fleet system in that year, the crown permitted colonials the option of sending their money on the scheduled semi-annual frigates which carried the royal coffers or by private merchant vessels.²⁸ Judging from available data, colonials continued to prefer

June 18, 1777, CMCM, cód. 25, fol. 191. When the câmara of Laguna (Santa Catarina) protested that the quartermaster general had forced their citizens to sell provisions at an unjustifiably low price, the Viceroy upheld his supply chief. Lavradio to câmara of Laguna, March 22, 1775, *ibid.*, fols. 11-12.

²⁵ *Idem* to D. Francisco Innocencio de Souza Coutinho (Governor of Angola), September 26, 1771, CMCM, cód. 15, fol. 80.

²⁶ Nicoláo Antônio Bonarroto was one Rio merchant who got caught in the web of government red tape. In 1768 Bonarroto contracted to send a load of badly needed *farinha de guerra* to Colônia do Sacramento to alleviate a serious food shortage there. On the return of his boat to Rio the local *junta da fazenda* refused him full payment, as provided in his contract, alleging certain irregularities in the agreement. The shipper appealed to the Conselho Ultramarino which ordered the contract paid; but the newly arrived Viceroy, the Marquis of Lavradio, while agreeing that the contractor had fulfilled his part of the contract, still declined payment "sem primeiro por o referido na Presença de VM para me relevar da incoherencia de mandar fazer este pagamento, por hum ajuste que foi celebrado com falta de solemnidade." Conselho Ultramarino to Viceroy Azambuja, April 23, 1769, and Lavradio to the king, November 4, 1770, BNRJ, 10, 4, 8, nos. 114-115. Available documentation does not indicate when the contractor received his money.

²⁷ For regulations governing shipment of capital in the *frotas* see *lei* of November 21, 1759, *CLP*, I, 569-570. One of the reasons given in the *alvará de lei* of September 10, 1765, which abolished the *frotas* was that "os interessados no commercio das ditas Capitánias [Rio de Janeiro and Bahia] constrangidos a esperarém dos, tres, ou quatro annos pelos seus pagamentos, e retornos, por hum effeito necessario das ditas dilações, com prejuizos transcendentés aos seus acrédores; de sorte que não havia cabedaes, que fossem bastantes para sopportarem tão extraordinarias demoras no embolso dos ditos pagamentos." *Ibid.*, II, 221-222. According to Ratton, under the *frota* system ships could make only two voyages to Brazil in three years, while subsequently they could complete two sailings in less than a year. *Recordacoens*, p. 97.

²⁸ Edict of June 10, 1766, *CLP*, II, 251-252. The *alvará* of April 17, 1770, tightened up procedure for the handling of private remittances on merchant vessels, and provided that all such funds were to be delivered to the royal mint in Lisbon which, after verification of the manifests and the deduction of 1%

to send their capital on the royal warship, possibly because it offered greater security.²⁹ However, the sailing date of the frigates for Portugal was always problematical, because they were frequently found so unseaworthy that they were laid up for months undergoing extensive repairs.³⁰ The merchant who had heeded the Viceroy's *bando*, issued on the warship's arrival, announcing its scheduled departure date, and deposited his remittances with the ship's captain was thus often left to wait months before seeing his payments on their way to Portugal. The failure of the merchant's funds to reach their overseas destination within the anticipated time made it difficult for him to place new orders or to pay for those previously commissioned to him. At the same time, delays in the arrival of remittances from Brazil seriously disturbed the Lisbon market, and provoked anguished dispatches from the Secretaries of State to the Viceroy.³¹

Colonial businessmen who wished to go to Portugal faced additional headaches. Every person entering or leaving Brazil had to have a passport,³² but the procedure for obtaining one usually took longer

for the mint and .5% to be divided among the ship captain, pilot, and master, released the money to its recipients. *Coleção das leys, decretos, e alvaras que comprehendem o reinado del rey . . . D. Jozé o I . . . III* (Lisbon, [1775]), 463-465.

²⁹ A conclusion based on analyses of "Relacam de dinheiro que se transportou para Lisboa, e . . . Porto em Navios mercantes . . . do Rio de Janeiro, depois de 5 de Março de 1774, em que sahio para . . . Lixboa a Fragata de Guerra Nossa Senhora da Graça . . . [até 29 de Janeiro de 1776]," CMCM, maço 9; "Relação do dinheiro que se transportou para Portugal em Navios mercantes . . . depois de 31 de Janeiro 1776 que sahio a Fragata Nossa Senhora da Graça . . . [até 21 de Outubro de 1777]," *loc. cit.*; "Mappa dos cabedades q. traz a Fragata NS de Graça . . . chegada do Ryo de Janeiro . . . hoje 20 de Abril de 1776," IHGB, Lata 57, MS 1078; and "Mapa do cabedal que leva o Frag. ta de S. Mag. e S. João Bapp. ta . . . tanto dos Reaes Quintos . . . como do dinheiro de Partes," October 31, 1777, CMCM, maço 9. The first two lists indicate the ship, captain, date of departure, destination, and amount of capital aboard (usually less than 50:000\$000 rs., seldom more than 100:000\$000 rs.) The *Graça* carried 1:600:000\$000 rs. in private remittances in 1776 and the *São João Baptista* 1:804:285\$257 rs. in 1777.

³⁰ Documents in CMCM and BNRJ show that frigate sailings in the 1770's were seldom made on schedule. The *Graça*, for example, was supposed to leave for Lisbon July 10, 1775, but her hull was found to be so rotten that she could not depart until January 31, 1776. An extreme case was the *Gigante*, carrying the quintos and private capital, which arrived in Lisbon July 25, 1780, 216 days out of Rio due to emergency repairs made at Bahia. *Gazeta de Lisboa*, July 25, 1780.

³¹ Pombal to Lavradio, December 9, 1775, CMCM, c6d. 14 (49/19) (orig.); Martinho de Melo e Castro to *idem*, October 9, 1776, BNRJ, I-31, 31, 1, n. 49; *idem* to *idem*, March 23, 1777, BNRJ, I-2, 4, 7, n. 72. See also Macedo, *A situação económica*, pp. 176-177 for other contemporary observations.

³² The basic statute regulating passage from Portugal to Brazil was the law of March 20, 1720, which reinforced earlier decrees aimed at preventing the whole-

than a year, sometimes more than two.³³ For merchants who wanted to travel to the peninsula to make settlements with their creditors or partners, to obtain new financing, or to find new outlets for their products these delays were a further hardship.³⁴

Thus while the government urged colonial businessmen to take an active rôle in promoting the development of the colonial economy, it also impeded their efforts in this direction.

II

Notwithstanding the obstacles they faced, there were venturesome colonials who were willing to risk their capital and talents in the new colonial industries. One of these men was Manoel Luís Vieira. Of his background, no more is known beyond his statement that he gained his first business experience in the 1750's while working as a clerk in the commission house of João de Couto Pereira, a prominent merchant in Rio de Janeiro.³⁵ Vieira claimed that he became the mainstay of the firm, and that Couto Pereira had groomed him to become the future head of the business. Yet matters turned out differently. In 1756 Vieira was sent to Lisbon on business for a client. When he returned to Rio three years later he found Couto Pereira deceased and the doors of the business closed. An ambitious young man with a considerable sum of capital, Vieira looked about for a likely venture in which to invest. His eyes fell on a recently erected rice mill in the vicinity of Rio which was up for sale.

sale exodus of peninsulars and emigration by foreigners to the Brazilian gold placers. ANRJ, Col. 60, liv. 24, fols. 224-226. I have not encountered legislation regulating travel from Brazil to Portugal, but the regulations can be inferred from the sources in n. 33.

³³ Passport procedure can be seen in correspondence between Viceroy Lavradio and the Conselho Ultramarino in BNRJ, cód. 10, 4, 8, and ANRJ, Col. 69, livs. I and I-bis.

³⁴ Among other reasons given by merchants were: to invest their savings in peninsular enterprises; to regain their health; and to die in the land of their birth—and many of them seem to have been peninsulars.

³⁵ Except where otherwise noted, all statements concerning Vieira and his rice mill are based on Marquis of Lavradio to Martinho de Melo e Castro, July 5, 1770, and its appendices, five of which were evidently prepared by Vieira: "Idea da constituição e estado da fabrica de descascar arroz, erecta no districto desta cidade . . ."; an untitled summary of the operations of the mill, 1756-1770; "Noticia da extração do arroz descascado nesta fabrica"; "Lista dos navios em que se tem carregado os arrozes desta fabrica desde Agosto de 1768 até hoje 20 de Junho de 1770"; and an undated memorial from Vieira to Lavradio. These are followed by a supporting statement of the câmara of Rio de Janeiro, May 19, 1770. IHGB, Arq. 1-1-29, fols. 241r.-260r. A petition of Jerônimo Vieira de Abreu, November 23, 1792, supplies some corroborating and a few additional details. BNRJ, II-34, 24, 9.

This mill belonged to Antônio Marques Guimarães and Company. The first of its kind in Rio, it was built by an army engineer in 1756 on the *sítio* of "Andrahy Pequeno" in the once beautiful valley of Engenho Velho, two leagues from the viceregal capital.³⁶ Although the founders obtained an exclusive privilege to process rice produced in the captaincy for export,³⁷ their business had not prospered, allegedly because of bad management. According to Vieira, who made this statement, his predecessors were able to send only one small shipment of rice to Portugal during their three years in operation. Discouraged, they decided to sell out.

Vieira carefully examined the property, probably accompanied by his brother, Jerônimo Vieira de Abreu, an inventor and technical consultant to several viceroys.³⁸ The Guimarães factory, as it was called, consisted of a grinding mill, a storage house, twenty-four slaves, and sixteen mules. Manoel Luís calculated that with certain technical improvements and proper management the mill could be run profitably, so he offered 56,000 *cruzados* for the business and was accepted. Soon he acquired a partner, but it was not his brother, although Jerônimo may have been a silent partner at this time. Domingos Lopes Loureiro, a Lisbon merchant, joined the venture on an equal-share basis. Since he invested no capital in the enterprise, it is reasonable to assume that Loureiro was brought in because of his commercial connections in Portugal.

³⁶ There is an excellent view of this once charming locale in *Views and Customs of the City and Neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro . . . from Drawings taken by Lt. Chamberlain during . . . 1819 and 1820 . . .* (London, 1822), plate 3, showing the village of "Indrahy," today the suburb of Andaraí. Like *chacra*, Pernaguá (modern Paranaguá), Andrahy was commonly contracted in eighteenth-century Portuguese. During the nineteenth century it was written Hendrahy or Indrahy. Alfredo Moreira Pinto, *Apontamentos para o dicionário geographico do Brazil*, I (Rio de Janeiro, 1894), 668. Andrahy Grande and Andrahy Pequeno were both Jesuit properties and were sold by the crown after the Society's expulsion. A. J. Mello Moraes Filho, ed., *Revista do Arquivo do Distrito Federal*, I (Rio de Janeiro, 1894), 73n. and II (1895), 75-78. (Hereafter cited as *RADF*).

³⁷ I have not discovered the original alvará of privilege, but it can easily be inferred from its renewal which states, ". . . Sou servido prorogar *por mais dez annos* o Privilegio exclusivo, *que já foi concedido á mesma Fabrica. . .*" (italics added). Alvará of October 8, 1766, *CLP*, II, 279-281.

³⁸ See n. 35. In 1782 Vieira de Abreu was made a member of the Mesa da Inspeção of Rio as a reward for his past services to the indigo industry. Carta régia to Luís de Vasconcelos e Sousa, June 22, 1782, BNRJ, 4, 4, 3, n. 29. Three years later he wrote a very interesting manual for indigo manufacture, "Brevis-sima instrução para uso dos fabricantes de anil," BNRJ, I-3, 1, 5. According to Duarte Antônio Nunes, "Almanac historica da cidade do Rio de Janeiro," *RIHGB*, XXI (1858), 111, he was still a member of the Mesa de Inspeção in 1799.

Manoel Luís Vieira now made careful preparations to insure the success of his new business. With his brother's assistance he rebuilt the grinding apparatus, increasing the mill's capacity by twenty-five percent. To protect the freshly cleaned and polished rice from rain damage, he purchased six covered carts to carry the processed grain to market, and built an additional warehouse near the Rio waterfront for storage of overseas shipments. These improvements justified the purchase of eighteen additional slaves, sixty-four mules, and some pastures lying above the mill in the ex-Jesuit estate of Engenho Velho.

In order to win the farmers' confidence, the new mill owner appeared before the *câmara* of Rio de Janeiro to make a formal statement. In this declaration, made early in 1760, Vieira promised to pay 640 réis a sack for large-grained rice (*arroz grande*) and 900 réis for the preferred, smaller, or *pequeno*, variety.³⁹ The reason Vieira gave public notice of his guarantee was because he believed that one of the causes for his predecessors' failure had been their unwillingness to assure local farmers a definite price for their crops. In fact, he said, the farmers contended that Guimarães and Company had cheated them, so that it was essential for the new owner to state his position unequivocally to gain the farmers' confidence.

With his declaration posted about the city, Vieira opened his doors to await the results. It was not long before farmers (*lavradores*) and small traders (*traficantes*) began to bring the January crop of *arroz grande* to his mill. During his first year Vieira purchased 13,767 *alqueires* (or 30,585 *arrobas*)⁴⁰ of large-grained rice from 219 farmers and traders, and 21,488 *alqueires* (48,348 *arrobas*) of the

³⁹ Both Vieira and his brother referred to these two varieties of rice. Evidently they were Brazilian "wild" rice, known as *arroz da terra*, which was found along river banks and low, swampy areas. Whether these were the same as the wild red rice described for Maranhão and Pará is unclear. See Raymundo José de Souza Goyozo, *Compendio historico-político dos principios da lavoura do Maranhão* (Paris, 1818), p. 181, and César Augusto Marques, *Diccionario historico-geographico da provincia do Maranhão* (Maranhão, 1870), p. 28. Wild rice did not prove satisfactory for manufacture and export to the European market and was replaced by "Carolina" rice, a white rice introduced from the English colonies via Portugal. See Teodósio Constantino de Chermont, "Memoria sobre a introdução do arroz branco no estado do Gram-Pará. . .," *RIHGB*, XLVIII:1 (1885), 79-84. Vieira de Abreu claimed in his petition of 1792 that he was responsible for the introduction of Carolina rice from Maranhão to Rio de Janeiro.

⁴⁰ Vieira sometimes gave his statistics in *arrobas* (thirty-two pounds), sometimes in *alqueires*. I have indicated both measures in the text, converting according to the formula given in the alvará of October 8, 1766 (see n. 37), which states that a sack of rice produced in Rio de Janeiro consisted of "dous *alqueires da medida do Rio de Janeiro, com o pezo de quatro arrobas e meia.*"

pequeno variety, harvested in May, from 308 farmers and middle men. The following year Vieira increased his purchases to 19,948 alqueires (44,833 arrobas) of the large, and 28,477 alqueires (64,073 arrobas) of the smaller variety.

After the rice was ground, sifted, cleaned and polished, Vieira sent it to his partner in Lisbon. But it proved easier to purchase and process the rice than to market it. For reasons unknown, Vieira's first shipment (in 1761) was seized by order of the Board of Commerce (Junta do Commercio) as it reached Lisbon. A second consignment, consisting of 1,200 barrels of rice, sent in the *frota grande* of 1763 fared little better, for when the fleet reached Salvador (Bahia) the rice was requisitioned by the local governor to provision the escorting warships, leaving Vieira to wait five years before obtaining compensation. Of the first three shipments Vieira made to his partner, only one reached its destination intact.

Nor was this the only trouble Vieira faced. Early in 1762 a royal order led to his imprisonment and to the seizure of his mill and a large supply of rice for which he had not yet paid. The reason for this drastic action is not entirely clear, but was apparently connected with charges that Vieira had pocketed funds belonging to his late employer, João de Couto Pereira, whose estate remained in litigation for more than a decade.⁴¹ Whatever the cause, Manoel Luís Vieira spent the next four years and seven months in the prison of the High Court (*Relação*) of Rio de Janeiro.

Even while in prison, however, Vieira received a ten-year extension of his manufacturing privilege. He had apparently petitioned for a renewal of the license originally granted to his predecessors before it was due to expire. Why it was continued when the mill owner was in prison is a mystery. A likely explanation is that the officials in Portugal responsible for renewing the concession did so in ignorance of his confinement in Brazil.

The *alvará* of October 8, 1766, which continued the privilege provided that Vieira and his partner were to remain sole exporters of rice from the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro, but that any individual in the captaincy could use wooden mortars (*pilões*) or small mills

⁴¹ A carta régia of May 5, 1770, ordered Viceroy Lavradio to appoint *Desembargador Doutor* José Pio Ferreira Soutto of the *Relação* of Rio *juiz privativo* of the estate of Couto Pereira to settle all claims against it, since the endless delays in its settlement were causing "grave prejudice" to the estate's creditors and to Couto Pereira's brother and heir. BNRJ, cod. 10, 4, 8 (un-numbered folio). Lavradio made the appointment the same year, and Vieira was required to stand by to give testimony. Lavradio to José Pio Ferreira Soutto, August 14 and October 18, 1770, ANRJ, Col. 70, liv. 5, fols. 216r. and 107.

(*engenhocas*) to husk rice for their own use or for local sale.⁴² Exemption of Vieira's processed rice from all export and import duties was continued for another ten years, and the partners were permitted to build another mill within the district of their original concession, presumably the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro, when business justified expansion. To safeguard their interests, Vieira was to be appointed to the *Mesa da Inspeção* in Rio and his partner to the corresponding board of commerce, the *Junta do Commercio*, in Lisbon.⁴³

In spite of the extension of his privilege, Vieira's future did not appear bright when he emerged from prison in 1767. Although he recovered his factory, he found it badly run down, and most of the rice on hand when he left ruined. Since no one had operated the mill during his absence, local farmers had lost interest in rice growing. Moreover, Vieira faced clamoring creditors on both sides of the Atlantic who demanded that he settle his own accounts. Lacking funds, Vieira persuaded some of his creditors to provide him with sufficient capital to restore the mill so that he could resume production, using future profits to pay off old and new obligations.

By 1768 Vieira's mill was back in operation. That year Rio's farmers sold him 60,000 arrobas of rice (unspecified as to kind), a figure raised to nearly 100,000 the following year. His expenses for the purchase and processing of the grain totaled 8:200\$000 rs. for 1768 and increased to 13:500\$000 rs. the following year. Unfortunately the documents do not indicate the prices he received for the polished rice, so that it is impossible to calculate his profits. Including the first half of 1770, a season when excessively heavy rains damaged part of the crop, Vieira handled 233,000 arrobas of rice in the space of two and a half years. Each year he disposed of a large part of his inventory in local markets—Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do São Pedro, and Colônia do Sacramento—but he also earmarked nearly twenty-five percent for export to Lisbon, Pôrto, and the Atlantic islands of Portugal.

Yet, before 1770 was out, the luckless Vieira found himself enmeshed in further legal difficulties. Early that year certain British creditors of his partner, Domingos Lopes Loureiro, obtained an order in Lisbon embargoing a recently arrived shipload of Vieira's rice because of debts Loureiro owed them. Across the Atlantic Vieira now found local businessmen turning away from him on instructions

⁴² See n. 37. Curiously, Vieira did not cite this extension in his petition of 1770, although his brother listed the document among his supporting proofs in his petition of 1792.

⁴³ This provision seems not to have been carried out.

from their principals abroad. At the same time he was required to testify before one of the judges of the *Relação* concerning the still unsettled estate of his late employer.⁴⁴

What lay behind Vieira's new difficulties? Possibly his creditors suspected that he and Loureiro were concealing part of their profits to avoid payment of their debts, and therefore decided to press for settlement of their loans to the partners. Vieira, however, had another explanation. He claimed that the embargo was another effort by British merchants and their Portuguese colleagues to eliminate his product for competing with their own in the Lisbon and Pôrto rice markets. He alleged that they had previously tried unsuccessfully to buy his mill from the crown during his imprisonment. After he resumed operations, he charged, they forced down the price of rice in Pôrto and Lisbon to embarrass him and hinder him from disposing of his shipments. Their aim, he contended, was to bankrupt him so that they could buy his mill cheaply, close it down, and prevent the Brazilian rice industry from developing.

Plausible as Vieira's charges may appear, in view of what we know of Britain's commercial pre-eminence in Portugal during the eighteenth century,⁴⁵ Vieira's allegation that the British dominated the rice markets in Portugal seems exaggerated. While it is true that the British found Portugal a good outlet for their rice, so did Italian merchants.⁴⁶ Moreover, Vieira failed to mention the rapidly expanding rice industry in Maranhão and Pará, which, together with

⁴⁴ See n. 41. The liquidation of a business left by a deceased merchant in Portugal or Brazil was a very complicated matter, frequently taking years to settle. One of the reasons for this was the casual sort of accounts kept by merchants. The double entry system did not come into general use in Portugal and Brazil until after the opening of the *Aula do Commercio*, a government school of business founded in Lisbon in 1759, and the fiscal reforms of the 1760's. Virginia Rau, *A casa dos contos* (Coimbra, 1951), p. 399. Ratton states that he and two others administered the firm of a deceased merchant in Portugal for twenty-seven years "sem interesse algum, mas só por utilidade da Real Fazenda." *Recordações*, pp. 79-80.

⁴⁵ In addition to Chapman and Shillington and Christelow's article, see Alan K. Manchester, *British Preëminence in Brazil; its Rise and Decline* (Chapel Hill, 1933), chaps. 1-2.

⁴⁶ Carolina rice was sent to Portugal via England before 1730; after 3 Geo. II, c. 28 (1730) it could be sent directly to Portugal from the colonies. Chapman and Shillington, pp. 243-244. Their statement that this statute enabled "the colonial produce to supersede the Italian" does not seem to have been entirely true, at least for the year 1777. The "Balança geral do commercio de Portugal com as nações estrangeiras no anno de 1777," the earliest known codice in this series, shows Portugal imported 5,088.75 quintals of rice from England and 7,271.5 quintals from Venice and Genoa. BNRJ, I-6, 4, 6, *passim*. There is no notation that this was an unusual year either for Italian or English rice imports, and such notes ordinarily accompany abnormal entries in this series.

the rice exports of Rio de Janeiro were soon to make Portugal self-sufficient in rice, so that by 1781 she could dispense with all foreign imports.⁴⁷ Such considerations would, of course, have weakened Vieira's case which seems to have been prepared so as to appeal to the strong anti-British sentiment prevalent in official circles in Portugal and Brazil during the 1760's and early 'seventies.⁴⁸

Viceroy Lavradio, always alert to the economic needs of his captaincy, was favorably impressed by Vieira and his tale, and did what he could for him. He visited the rice mill, and ordered the Mesa da Inspeção to conduct its own investigation of the plant. Convinced that the mill was making a valuable contribution to the economy of Rio de Janeiro, Lavradio summoned Vieira's local creditors and urged them to continue to support the mill owner. They declined, pleading that they were under instructions from their superiors in Lisbon to have no further dealings with Vieira. That left the Viceroy no alternative but to send Vieira's petition and a supporting declaration by the câmara of Rio de Janeiro to the Colonial Minister for final disposition. Lavradio recommended Vieira's case be favorably considered since, he said, "it is very certain that assisting this man in some form will awaken many others [here] from their lethargy to the benefit of the *pátria* and the State."⁴⁹

Vieira's petition gives some indication of the thinking of an entrepreneur in eighteenth-century Brazil. In it he specified three conditions which he maintained were essential if he were to remain in business. First, the king should establish maximum and minimum price limits in peninsular rice markets to prevent dumping by foreign competitors.⁵⁰ Second, Vieira wanted his mill declared free from confiscation for debt for ten years, a provision, he hastened to point out, for which ample precedents existed in similar exemptions granted sugar planters in Bahia and gold miners in Minas Gerais. Finally, he asked the crown for a loan of 16:000\$000 rs. to be paid over a period of ten years. The loan would free him from his old creditors, and allow him sufficient time to get his mill operating on a secure basis. If these conditions were approved, he declared, he and his brother, Jerônimo, who now replaced Domingos Lopes Loureiro as

⁴⁷ The alvará of July 24, 1781, prohibited future entry of foreign-produced rice on grounds that it was no longer needed. *CLP*, III, 300-301.

⁴⁸ Due to resentment because of (1) Britain's economic dominance of Portugal and her empire and (2) England's unwillingness to support her ally in a war with Spain for control of the north bank of the Plata.

⁴⁹ See n. 35.

⁵⁰ Vieira suggested the maximum rate be set at 4\$000 rs. per quintal, and the minimum at 3\$200.

his partner, would continue to aid the agriculture, navigation, and commerce of the captaincy.

The ultimate fate of Vieira and his petition is uncertain. Late in 1770 he sought Viceroy Lavradio's permission to return to Portugal, probably to straighten out his business.⁵¹ Until at least 1779 he seems to have been unsuccessful, for in that year the Colonial Minister referred to the case as still pending.⁵² Two years earlier Vieira agreed to rent out some of his lands to the city of Rio de Janeiro for a feeding lot, a move which suggests that he had abandoned hope of resuming his business in the city.⁵³

III

While Vieira thus seems to have vanished from the scene, the rice industry of Rio de Janeiro did not disappear; on the contrary, it continued to grow in importance until at least the end of the colonial period. When Vieira was no longer available to guarantee to take the farmers' crops, Viceroy Lavradio found other men who would, though whether they took over Vieira's mill or built new ones is unclear from the evidence.⁵⁴ Rice planting became so popular in the captaincy by 1780 that a local agricultural enthusiast complained that farmers were so "preoccupied with the planting of indigo and rice . . . that . . . they do not plant the necessary manioc and vegetables, and for this reason *farinha* and beans have become very dear."⁵⁵ The previous year nearly 79,000 arrobas of rice left Rio for Portu-

⁵¹ Lavradio to José Pio Ferreira Soutto, August 14, 1770, cited n. 41.

⁵² Martinho de Melo e Castro to Luís de Vasconcelos e Sousa, January 27, 1779, BNRJ, I-4, 4, 45 (orig.). This is the only reference to the case that the crown seems to have made. I have been unable to find any acknowledgment of Viceroy Lavradio's letter in support of Vieira in published or MS sources.

⁵³ The *aforamento* (lease) between Vieira and the câmara was originally signed February 26, 1777, and was renewed by Vieira in 1781; following the fire of 1790 which destroyed most of the city's records, the agreement was re-registered by Jerônimo Vieira de Abreu in 1791. The original text and the renewals are in *RADF*, III (1896), 254-257.

⁵⁴ Lavradio to Martinho de Melo e Castro, February 25, 1774, José d'Almeida [Correa de Sá], *Vice-reinado de D. Luiz d'Almeida Portugal, 2.º Marquez de Lavradio* (São Paulo, 1942), pp. 181-186. Lavradio wrote in this letter that in 1771-1772 rice was "a carga mais importante dos Navios que saíram deste Porto." In his reply of November 24, 1774, Melo e Castro noted "with great pleasure" the arrival of rice shipments from Rio, adding that "este genero tambem é importantissimo, e deve entrar em o numero dos que V. Ex. tem promovido e procurado adiantar com tanto acerto e zelo do real serviço como em beneficio da patria em que nasce." *RIHGB*, XXI:L (1868), 325-329; original in CMCN, eód. 13 (45/36).

⁵⁵ João Hopman to Lavradio, Rio de Janeiro, May 4, 1780, CMCN, in folder marked "Diversos, 1775-1780" (orig.). At the time the letter was written, Lavradio was back in Portugal, having arrived in Lisbon August 20, 1779. *Gazeta de Lisboa*, August 21, 1779.

gal.⁵⁶ By 1796 the captaincy's annual rice exports reached more than 176,000 arrobas worth 111:431\$800 rs., and the cereal ranked fourth among Rio de Janeiro's most valuable exports, behind sugar, brandy, and hides.⁵⁷

Certainly some measure of credit for the success of the rice industry in Rio de Janeiro belongs to the unlucky entrepreneur, Manoel Luís Vieira, who helped to promote commercial rice growing in the captaincy during its earliest, and most critical years. He was but one of many individuals in Brazil who applied their industry and ingenuity in the cultivation of new crops and the perfection of ways of making them commercially profitable during the second half of the eighteenth century. Of the others, the names of only a few are known today. One was João Hopman, a Dutchman long resident in Rio de Janeiro, who was the first there to grow coffee and the first to plant mulberries and produce silk. With the support of two Viceroy's, Hopman experimented throughout the 'seventies and 'eighties with a twine called *guaxima* which he believed was superior to hemp.⁵⁸ Another was Antônio Gonçalves Pereira de Faria who spent half a lifetime trying to grow hemp in Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do São Pedro.⁵⁹ A third was Francisco José de Sampaio Peixoto who worked out a new process for the manufacture of indigo in São Paulo.⁶⁰ In Pará an army engineer, Teodósio Constantino de Chermont, constructed several different types of rice mills during the 'seventies and 'eighties based on slave and horsepower.⁶¹ When the story of Brazil's late colonial agricultural renaissance has been told in the detail that it merits, Manoel Luís Vieira and these contemporaries should be listed among those who contributed to it.

⁵⁶ "Mappa . . . das qualidades e quantidades de generos que passarão do Rio de Janeiro para o reino e ilhas desde . . . 17 de Abril até o ultimo de Dezembro . . . 1779," *RIHGB*, XLVII:1 (1884), 46-48.

⁵⁷ "Mappa dos efeitos que se transportarão desta cidade do Rio de Janeiro para os portos abaixo declarados no anno de 1796," *ibid.*, XLVI:1 (1883), 197-204 showing exports to Lisbon, Pôrto, Faial, Vianna, Pernambuco, Bahia, Angola, and Benguela. Later rice exports for Rio are given in the previously cited "Balança geral" series for broken years down to 1818. BNRJ, I-6, 4, 10 to I, 6, 4, 32. These statistics may not be a true indication of total production of the items listed, since local consumption is not figured.

⁵⁸ Hopman's activities are described in Lavradio to Martinho de Melo e Castro, January 12, 1778, IHGB, Arq., 1-2-1, fols. 1-5, and in the correspondence of Viceroy Vasconcelos in BNRJ. Hopman was rewarded for his work by appointment to the Mesa de Inspeção in 1782 by the same letter nominating Vieira de Abreu (see n. 38).

⁵⁹ For a summary of his work see Luís de Vasconcelos e Sousa to Martinho de Melo e Castro, IHGB, Arq. 1-2-2, fols. 201-245.

⁶⁰ Martim Lopes Lobo de Saldanha to *idem*, January 29, 1779, *RIHGB*, Tomo Especial, VII (1957), 148-149.

⁶¹ For Chermont's activities see his *memoria* cited n. 39.