
In this very brief work, Corcino Medeiros dos Santos presents a significant amount of valuable demographic, social, and economic information on the processes by which the territory of Rio Grande do Sul became a part of the Luso-Brazilian ecumene. In the three chapters devoted to colonization, cattle-raising, and production and commerce, he examines those topics in minute detail, with a heavy reliance on statistics. Under the heading of colonization, he in turn looks at the first Portuguese settlement at Colônia do Sacramento and in Santa Catarina that prepared the way for the move into Rio Grande do Sul; the Azorean colonization; the growth of the population; and the development of the landholding pattern. Under cattle-raising, the author looks at the beginnings, the state initiative, the obstacles to expansion of the herds, and the growth of an economy based largely on cattle. Under the final heading, he studies the meager growth of agriculture, the development of trade with other parts of Brazil and with the Rio de la Plata, and the role of the Royal Fazenda.

The work contains 33 tables. Two successive tables detailing imports and exports for 1802 occupy 24 pages, and more than one-half of the space in the third chapter is devoted to tables and graphs. The two longer ones in particular might better have been placed in the 30-page documentary appendix with which the work concludes. The author has made use of considerable archival material in Brazil, Portugal, and Spain, and shows familiarity with a broad range of primary and secondary sources written in Portuguese or translated into Portuguese. However, he has limited himself to such sources, foregoing the insights that might have been garnered from works such as Dauril Alden’s Royal Government in Colonial Brazil or those of Brazil’s Platine rivals. Within that limitation, the work is a most useful concise assembling of the information previously scattered through many sources supplemented by much new detail from archival sources to buttress the author’s conclusions. The Amerindian is possibly the one element in the formation of Rio Grande do Sul whose contribution is understated, reflecting, in part at least, a reliance on gaúcho sources such as Moysés Vellinho’s Capitania d’El-Rei, aspectos polêmicos da formação riograndense. The work will be compulsory reading for anyone working with the various topics on which it impinges on the regional, national, and international levels.

San Luis de Talimali Archaeological and Historical Site

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