Disconnects and Connects in Cuban and Bahian Tobacco

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The tobacco histories of Cuba and Bahia, in the northeast of Brazil, have each been studied primarily in their own right. During the centuries of Spanish and Portuguese tobacco monopolies during the colonial rule of Cuba and Brazil, their two histories have largely been signposted on parallel tracks. Yet exploring their histories after the loosening of Portuguese monopoly impositions in Brazil in 1808 and the end of the Spanish monopoly's Factoría in Cuba in 1817 shows that, while they were distinct in many ways, there were also connections.

The relatively peaceful independence of Brazil was achieved in 1822 (formally recognised by Portugal in 1825), alongside the more tumultuous independence struggles of the mainland Spanish territories in the Americas of the early nineteenth century. Cuba, along with Spain's other Caribbean island territories of Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico, remained a Spanish colony. After protracted struggle and occupation by newly independent Haiti – previously Saint Domingue, the French western part of Hispaniola – Dominican independence from Spain was finally achieved in the latter part of the century. Cuba and Puerto Rico remained Spanish until the end of the century, in 1898, when Puerto Rico became part of the United States, which it still is today; while Cuba, after two US occupations in 1898-1902 and 1906-9, became a heavily US-mediated republic from 1902 up until its 1959 Revolution.

Already in the late eighteenth century, however, contraband trading and wars between European imperial powers in the region had weakened Portuguese control of Brazil and Spanish control of Cuba, enabling incursions, notably of the British, who also occupied Havana in 1762-63. This paved the way for broader foreign trade and investment in the burgeoning nineteenth-century sugar and tobacco economies of both Cuba and Bahia, and in neither was slavery finally abolished until nearing the end of the century – Cuba in 1886 and Brazil in 1888.

This paper on Cuban and Bahian tobacco is one of several histories centred around the Cuban cigar that I have been documenting during two key periods: the nineteenth century, par excellence that of the hand-rolled cigar prior to the later global dominance of cigarettes; and the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, when the cigar made a comeback. Doing so has enabled me to see these histories as counterpoints within tobacco itself,[2] beyond the celebrated counterpoints fashioned for tobacco and sugar in Cuba,[3] and tobacco, sugar and cassava for the Brazilian Recôncavo region of Bahia.[4]

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[1] I am indebted to colleagues on whose work I have drawn here for Brazil and the Azores, and I thank all in the Iberian tobacco historians group and the Commodities of Empire Global Tobacco History Network who have helped shape my approach to this paper.

[2] Jean Stubbs, *Tobacco Counterpoints: Cuba and the Global Habano*, London: Amaurea Press, 2024.

[3] Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995 [1940].

[4] Bert Jude Barickman, *A Bahian Counterpoint: Sugar, Tobacco, Cassava, and Slavery in the Recôncavo, 1780-1860*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Cuba was catapulted to nineteenth-century international cigar eminence with British, French and German alongside Cuban-Spanish investment in the strong dark cigar leaf and cigar production for export. As the century advanced, the Cuban cigar – which came to be known simply as the Havana, or *Habano*, taking its name from the port-city where it was manufactured and whence it was exported – was emulated in cigar manufacturing that began to flourish across continental Europe, as in the Hanseatic German port-cities of Bremen and Hamburg, and especially in the latter part of the century in the United States, notably New York, which had a significant émigré German and Cuban tobacco presence. Cuba's leaf exports started to overtake those of cigars, especially to New York, for re-export as well as for cigar manufacturing, which soon became known as 'half-Spanish' for its Cuban leaf supply.

The impact of these developments on Brazil's prime tobacco region of Bahia was a dramatic shift over the early decades of the nineteenth century from the export of rope tobacco, or rolls, for snuff, chewing and smoking to that of tobacco leaf for cigars. The *Habano* became the preferred quality smoke among elite circles in Brazil, as in Portugal, where Lisbon's Casa Havaneza first opened its doors mid-century. The more pungent Bahian tobacco leaf competed in price if not quality with that of Cuba and was blended with other tobaccos in the cigars manufactured elsewhere. The Bahian Recôncavo also witnessed the emergence of its own hand-rolled cigar, the *charuto*, as Luso-Brazilian and then German leaf traders expanded into home manufacturing of a cheaper cigar using the Bahian leaf. While the *charuto* couldn't compete internationally, it catered to growing domestic consumption in Bahia and Brazilian cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

The early twentieth century saw both the Cuban and Bahian cigar sectors languish in comparison with the mechanised cigarette industry that went on to dominate. British-US corporate monopoly interests made incursions first in Cuba and then in Brazil. Protracted warring between the American Tobacco Company (ATC) and the British Imperial Tobacco Company (ITC) led to the 1901 creation of the international cartel British American Tobacco Company (BAT). Cuba and Puerto Rico, under US tutelage, fell under ATC domain, while, alongside ITC in British dominions, BAT expanded elsewhere in the world, including Brazil.

It was ATC that thereby gained an early foothold in Cuba, buying up companies and creating new subsidiaries, promoting above all lighter Virginia-type tobacco in the manufacture of cigarettes. After ATC was broken up in the United States under the 1911 anti-monopoly Sherman Act, the subsidiary companies continued in Cuba up until the agrarian reforms and nationalisation of industry of the 1959 Revolution ended all foreign business in Cuba, and in retaliation the United States placed what is now an over 60-year-old trade embargo on Cuba.

Only in the 1990s, when Cuba was plunged into crisis with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, by then its major trading bloc, and when the United States exerted leverage on third countries to extraterritorialise its embargo, would Cuba actively embark on courting non-US foreign capital investment, to expand primarily international tourism but also overseas markets for its cigars. Habanos S.A. was set up in 1994 as Cuba's cigar export company and entered into a succession of deals, which included the Spanish parastatal Tabacalera and subsequently Altadis, created by the 1999 merger of Tabacalera and the French parastatal SEITA. Altadis later sold its shares in Habanos to Imperial Brands, an ITC legacy company, which in turn sold to the Hong Kong investment conglomerate that is its present-day foreign shareholder.

As an international cartel, BAT was spared the US fate that befell ATC, and, after acquiring the Luso-Brazilian company Souza Cruz, went on to secure a lasting and particularly strong foothold in southern Brazil, where there was an already established Portuguese settler and migrant presence from Brazil's northeast, alongside Germans, Italians and Japanese, among others. From then on, southern Brazil became a leading cigarette tobacco-exporting and domestic-manufacturing country, centred round the southern states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. Bahian tobacco was left lagging far behind.

Cuba, however, kept its cigar cachet, which enabled it to benefit – somewhat paradoxically – from what was a US-engineered 1990s cigar revival, helped in no small measure by the launch of the glossy New York *Cigar Aficionado* for cigar connoisseurs. Cubans who had left Cuba after the Revolution for the United States had been encouraged to start up again in areas of the Dominican Republic and Central America identified as having the soils and climate particularly suitable for a type of tobacco to replace Cuban tobacco on the US market. By the 1990s, with tax and other incentives for cultivation and manufacture, they were already making cigars – some under brand names identical to those that continued to be made in Cuba – geared especially to the US market, where the Cuban cigars were forbidden fruit, and where many are euphemistically marketed today as 'New World' cigars.

Bahia also benefitted from this. A relatively small Cuban-Bahian cigar venture had launched in 1978, but it was the export of Bahian tobacco leaf that again predominated, in part destined, along with leaf from other countries, to compete with Cuba in the blends of cigars made in the Dominican Republic and Central America. At the same time, in the late 1990s Souza Cuz/BAT Brazil embarked on a joint venture in Cuba for domestic cigarette production.

What follows first provides the broader context for developments in Cuba and Bahia through tobacco's successive periods of globalisation: the British and Iberian imperial period of tobacco's first globalisation; the second much broader globalisation starting in the late eighteenth-century, which encapsulates the nineteenth-century golden age of the cigar, with widening circuits of people and knowledge, and the technology leading to cigarette mechanisation and dominance; and the third globalisation since the mid-twentieth century, which, despite the health concerns and tobacco bans introduced in the West, witnessed an unprecedented expansion in cigarettes and also the cigar revival of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

It then charts in more detail the seemingly disconnected histories of Cuba and Bahia on both a macro and micro level, highlighting connections locally and globally. Much has been written about the German connection in the case of Bahian tobacco in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but relatively little in the Cuban case. The emphasis here is on the nineteenth-century wider international tobacco-broker role played by the port-cities of Bremen and Hamburg, rather than Germany per se, involving British, Dutch, French and other interests; the significant German migration to the United States and New York, where Germans and Cubans played a foundational role in launching the US cigar industry; and subsequent British and US involvement in the aftermath of World War I on German interests in early twentieth-century Cuba and Brazil.

An often-overlooked aspect of tobacco history is the type of tobacco grown and how it is processed and consumed, and here the differences are highlighted in not only Cuban and Bahian tobacco but also the connected histories of the Iberian middle-Atlantic territories of Spain's Canary

Islands and the Portuguese Azores. There is a clear link between the tobacco history of the Canaries and migration to and from Cuba, while the migration has not yet been studied in this context in the case of the Azores. In each, however, circuits of trade and knowledge played a key role – between Cuba and the Canaries, and between Bahia and the Azores. Moreover, the Canaries and the Azores had a continuing shared history of struggle under the shadow of the Spanish and Portuguese metropolitan monopolies and parastatals, and also British and American corporations. By the 1990s, little was left of either of their own tobacco histories, though the Canaries had a role to play in the new epicentres of the Americas, where I subsequently map the re-emergence of the *Habano*, the Cuban-Bahian *charuto*, and other New World cigars.

The paper ends by signalling how contemporary marketing and branding have fashioned a whole smoking culture that helps explain the cigar's resilience today; reiterating the importance of studying circuits of people and knowledge in commodity history; and calling for further study in the field of comparative labour history, which is barely touched on here.

Tobacco's globalisation

In the first period of tobacco's globalisation, which took off in the seventeenth century, the Western imperial tobacco trade shaped the Atlantic world along three main axes.[5] The Chesapeake-Britain-France axis (Virginia tobacco) was dominant in terms of the volume of trade and lower price. Britain and France did not establish monopoly regimes per se but rather tariff trade systems. The second axis was that of Brazil-Portugal-Spain-Italy, with two secondary axes – Bahia-Africa, which was fundamental in the slave trade, and Bahia-India – and with the Fábrica de Lisboa playing a central role and the middle-Atlantic archipelagos of Madeira and the Azores under the Portuguese monopoly. This was mainly in the form of rope tobacco or rolls that on the European market was processed for smoking or as snuff.

The third axis was that of Spain's Empire in the Americas, which was a tobacco monopoly to regulate all colonial trade when the Havana-Cadiz-Seville axis was established, the financial backbone of which was New Spain, with a secondary Cuba-Canaries-Seville axis. In the eighteenth century, Spanish imperial policy was to create tobacco monopolies in its colonies in the Americas, establishing them in regions that were designated to be tobacco-producing – principally Cuba and New Spain – and others that were to be tobacco-consuming, where tobacco sales would be the source of revenue for Spain, including leaf originating in Havana, which in Spain was processed in the Real Fábrica de Sevilla, though tobacco was also sourced from Virginia and Brazil.

This third axis functioned more completely as an imperial monopoly, with *factorías* or *estancos* established in Spain's American colonies, an additional axis connecting the Pacific archipelago of the Philippines with New Spain, and a particularly important Cuba-Canaries-Seville connection, closely tied to raising revenue for Spain's military defence needs. With the exception of the Philippines and the Canaries, the colonial tobacco monopolies culminated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including Cuba, whose tobacco Spain had privileged up until then.

[5] Santiago de Luxán Meléndez et al., 'Tobacco in the Iberian Empires', in Jonathan Curry-Machado, Jean Stubbs, William Gervase Clarence-Smith, and Jelmer Vos (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Commodity History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2024, pp.145-66.

The Portuguese monopoly, by contrast, was limited to continental Portugal and its two middle-Atlantic territories, Madeira and the Azores, contracting out in a franchise framework and privileging tobacco from Bahia. From the mid-seventeenth century, Bahian merchants increasingly by-passed Lisbon to trade tobacco directly with India and especially Africa in return for slaves. In effect, the Portuguese operated through trade agreements between the monopoly and other partners, opening up the trade between Bahia and the international market. The Spanish, however, opted for direct administration, albeit leaving open the trade with Brazil and Virginia, whose tobacco supplied a major part of the Spanish metropolitan market.

The legacies of this from the late eighteenth century up until the mid-twentieth century ushered in a second globalisation of tobacco beyond the Atlantic in Asia, Africa and Europe.[6] Spanning new regions and introducing new local and global actors, this was shaped in its early phase by a 'free trade' ethos, in which the hand-rolled cigar made with dark tobacco, whose epitome was the luxury *Habano*, was paralleled in Brazil on a much smaller scale and not such fine quality by the Bahian *charuto*. The later phase saw the rise of new corporate monopolies and international cartels, and the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the dramatic shift to mass machine-made cigarettes made with lighter Virginia-type tobacco leaf, in which southern Brazil became a leader.

In the early nineteenth-century, the United States predominated in the tobacco trade, partly because its major competitors were few – Brazil and Cuba in the Western Hemisphere and notably the Netherlands and German states in Western Europe – and partly because the colonial system had ensured global segmentation. With the breakup of the colonial system and the opening of new regions to the international market, especially Brazil, Cuba and the Dutch East Indies, the US dominance in the early part of nineteenth century was much reduced, and China, India, Indonesia, and Brazil became the twentieth-century world's major tobacco players. This was largely, though by no means exclusively, centered round cigarette leaf and cigarette production, much of which was tied up in multinational conglomerates that had absorbed local companies.

The post-1960s third tobacco globalisation, notwithstanding the health concerns and tobacco bans in the West, produced unprecedented new global expansions, in China, India, Indonesia and Brazil in particular. This was again mainly centered around tobacco grown for cigarettes and mechanised cigarette manufacture and consumption, backed by mass marketing campaigns and large international conglomerates. And yet the last decade of the twentieth century and early twenty-first centuries also witnessed the notably US-spearheaded cigar revival, promoting the hand-rolled premium New World cigar, in outright competition with Cuba's own revival.

A post-revolution Cuban émigré presence, which had helped revitalise an ephemeral Canaries cigar sector, also in turn helped revitalise the Bahia tobacco sector, producing and exporting some cigars. Brazil today exports to over 100 countries, its single largest buyer being China, which is also the world's largest producer of tobacco. Brazil's production of dark sun-cured and air-cured tobacco for cigars and dark cigarette tobacco is also relatively high, only exceeded by Cuba and the Philippines.[7]

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[6] Alexander van Wickeren, Jean Stubbs & William Gervase Clarence-Smith, 'Introduction: Tobacco's Second Globalisation', in Alexander van Wickeren, Jean Stubbs & William Gervase Clarence-Smith (eds), *Tobacco in Global Perspective, 1780-1960: Trade, Knowledge and Labour*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024, pp.1-18.
[7] https://thebrazilbusiness.com/article/tobacco-industry-in-brazil. Consulted on 15 October 24.

Bahian cigar leaf, however, mainly found its way into the blends of Cuba's rival cigars. At the same time, the Brazilian tobacco economy having become overwhelmingly that of the cigarette in the south, the major player Souza Cruz/BAT entered into the cigarette joint venture in post-1990s Cuba.

Cuban openings

Cuba's coveted *Habano* took off in the nineteenth century, but its history began earlier. The Spanish monopoly's first Factoría in Cuba, established in 1717, was a major source of tobacco and revenue for Spain. The reconfiguration of European colonial powers throughout the eighteenth century created a greater and greater need for defenses, Spain increased its mechanisms of control and extraction of tobacco revenue to underwrite loans taken on by the crown, and after the 1762 British occupation of Havana the second Factoría of 1763 was bolstered with increased financing in the form of the *situado* from New Spain.

The Factoría grappled, however, with contraband and was beset with internal problems, such that its supplies of tobacco to Spain declined over its latter decades.[8] This further undermined the Factoría's legitimacy, and attacks on the tobacco monopoly at the end of the century coincided with the expansion of sugar in Cuba in the void left by France after the revolution in Saint-Domingue. The Factoría at best had never been able to control contraband and became so mismanaged as to be selling off stocks to individual manufacturers operating illegally, and it befell powerful Cuban sugar interests to promote its final downfall.[9]

After the Napoleonic Wars cigars soon grew in popularity and fast became de rigueur among elites on the overseas markets opening up with the technological and industrial transformation of Europe, North America and further afield. Freed from the Spanish monopoly, Cuban tobacco was developed with British, French, German and later US, as well as Spanish, capital to produce a quality leaf and quality hand-rolled cigars.[10]

The Vuelta Abajo region of western Pinar del Río proved to combine rich soils and climatic conditions suitable for cultivating a fragrant tobacco leaf, which produced a particularly fine shade-grown cigar wrapper and went well with darker sun-grown filler tobacco from other areas such as Vuelta Arriba, spanning central Las Villas and later Ciego de Avila. Each was harvested differently – the tobacco leaf for wrapper was picked individually and the leaves were sown together with needle and thread before being strung out on long poles, while stems of the tobacco for filler were cut into pieces holding a number of leaves, which were then hung over poles, and each was air-dried naturally over time in the barns. The tobacco was grown primarily by small-farming *vegueros*, many of them originally from the Canaries, but also, in Pinar del Río especially, on plantations with African slave

[8] Montserrat Gárate Ojanguren, *Cuba: Tabaco y hacienda imperial, 1717– 1817. Un siglo de gestión del estanco: Funcionarios, ilustrados y militares*, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria & San Sebastián: Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria/Real Sociedad Bascongada de Amigos del País, 2019.
[9] Vicent Sanz Rozalén, 'Arango y el mundo del tabaco. Estanco, reforma y abolición', in M. D. González Ripoll & I. Alvarez (eds), *Francisco Arango y la invención de la Cuba azucarera*, Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2009, pp.277-88.
[10] Jean Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery: A Case Study in Cuban Labour History, 1860-1958*, London: Amaurea Press, 2023 [1985].

labour.[11] A *Habano* was also called a *puro* in the Spanish-speaking world, celebrated for using purely Cuban leaf from Cuba and being rolled in Cuba as opposed to cigars made elsewhere with blends of different tobaccos, though the more lowly Bahian *charuto* was in this respect similar.

While the cigar and cigar leaf became the driving force behind Cuba's subsequent tobacco development, it was the cigarette that was the predominant local smoke in Cuba and cause for early innovation. By the mid-1860s, there were sizeable cigarette factories supplying the royal houses of Europe, and possibly the world's first cigarette machine was developed by José Susini y Rio Seco, himself French-Corsican. Demonstrated at the 1867 Paris Trade Exhibition, it was heralded as the symbol of industrial progress on the island. By the end of the century, the Susini factory, then called La Legitimidad and owned by Prudencio (Marqués de) Rabell, had been largely superseded by expanding new factories like La Corona, using first an improved Cuban-Spanish machine and then an imported American Bonsack.

Hand-rolled cigar manufacturing for export grew to eclipse the cigarette as Cuba's nineteenth-century industry par excellence. By the time the Havana *segar* first hit the London market in the 1820s, Havana was reputed to have some 400 rolling shops. Subject to yearly fluctuations, exports rose from just over 140 million cigars in 1840 to nearly 360 million by 1855, with growing demand especially in Britain, Denmark, France, and Germany, more so than in Spain.

The earliest cigar-rolling shop of significance recorded was Hija de Cabañas y Carvajal, founded by Francisco Cabañas in 1810, though he had been making cigars earlier. He was the first to hit the London market, where, by the 1820s, quality hand-rolled Havanas had a solid reputation. Jaime Partagás (1827) and Ambrosio de Larrañaga (1834) consolidated their Havana shops, and Havanas quickly rose in price on the London market. Germans also early invested in manufacturing – Herman Dietrich Upmann opened La Madama factory in 1844, and in the 1860s Gustav Bock opened his Aguila de Oro factory. During this period the German Jewish Rothschilds, who were operating across Europe and providing loans to Spain underwritten by Cuban cigars, also had agents on the ground in Havana securing the cigars.[12] In the increasingly cosmopolitan and cultured city of Havana, moreover, Spanish and French lithography, which made its early mark in musical scores, was soon employed in producing the sumptuous marketing labels and cigar bands for which Cuba has remained famous to this day.[13]

By the end of the century, giants producing both cigars and cigarettes were Cabañas y Carvajal, Henry Clay and Bock, La Corona, Gener, Murías, and Partagás (then in the hands of the Bances family, one of the largest banking houses of the time, with considerable tobacco businesses), and their Havana factories were palaces of great architectural splendour. At the same time, from the 1830s on, there were recurring problems of imitation Havana cigar brands made elsewhere with Cuban imported leaf, and, by the mid-century – despite having gained a reputation for manufacturing the finest-quality and most-sought-after cigars in the world – the export market began to recede,

[11] Enrique López Mesa, *Tabaco, mito y esclavos: apuntes cubanos de historia agraria*, Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2015; William A. Morgan, 'The Internal Economy of Cuban Tobacco Slavery' *Slavery & Abolition* 37:2 (2016), pp.284-306; and *Cuban Tobacco in the Age of Second Slavery*, University of Georgia Press, forthcoming 2026.
[12] Ana María Calavera Vayá, 'La Casa Rothschild, Madrid y La Habana: operaciones financieras y tabaco', *Arbor - Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura* 577-578 (1991), pp.181-96.
[13] Zoila Lapique Becali, *La memoria en las piedras*, Havana: Editorial Boloña, 2002; and 'La litografía en el siglo XIX', *Catauro* 7 (2005), p.12.

oscillating for most of the latter part of the century between 100 and 200 million cigars a year. Germany and France, which had been Cuba's major markets but developed their own manufacturing, between 1859 and 1870 cut their cigar imports by two thirds and a half, respectively. Only Britain continued systematically to import rather than manufacture luxury cigars, though London's Jewish workshops produced increasing quantities of cheap cigars.

These trends were somewhat obscured by the fast-growing US market, which by the 1870s was Cuba largest single importer and by the 1880s was handling virtually all Havana cigar exports, often for re-export, through New York. Over the years 1855-1890, there was a 30 percent increase in leaf exports to Germany, other European countries and the United States, and the value of exports was also inverted: in 1859 the value of cigar exports was twice that of leaf and in 1890 leaf twice that of cigar, and the amount of Cuban leaf imported to the US was such that 'half-Spanish' was true of the US cigar industry as a whole. When US imports began to fall in the 1890s, Havana might have boasted palatial cigar factories, but Cuba's total cigar exports were around half their 1850s level. Cuban manufacturers found themselves in a position of political dependence on Spain, whose interests lay in protecting its own manufacturing, and economic dependence on the United States, whose industry was on the same protectionist path.

The extent to which tariffs, especially US tariffs, could hit Cuban tobacco cannot be over-estimated, with factories springing up in the United States to take advantage of this to import the leaf from Cuba and agents for foreign firms setting up stemming shops in Cuba to reduce the dutiable weight of the exported leaf. This trend was accelerated during and in the aftermath of Cuba's first war of independence from Spain (1968-1878), producing an unprecedented concentration of manufacture in Havana factories as smaller concerns were unable to hold out. It also coincided with the start of the European mass emigration to the Americas, notably the United States, and especially New York. There, German cigar manufacturing grew exponentially, precisely during the 1870s, in the tenements of downtown Manhattan, using Cuban leaf and employing German and Cuban cigar makers,[14] prelude to the more familiar turn-of-the-century history of emigré Cuban cigar manufacturing in Florida and part of a far wider Cuban cigar history off as well as on the island.

The 1890 US McKinley Tariff-Law and the independence war of 1895-1898, which culminated with US intervention, the defeat of Spain, and the devastation of tobacco in war-ravaged Vuelta Abajo, paved the way for US occupation and ATC to establish itself in Cuba, creating two subsidiaries: Cuban Land and Leaf, and Havana Tobacco. The former was geared to guaranteeing US leaf exports, while the latter gradually transferred its cigar manufacturing to the US mainland, notably in the 1930s to New Jersey. This was not before militancy and unrest in Cuba, with unprecedented strikes in the cigar sector through the 1920s, and opposition to cigar mechanisation that won overwhelming national support and a ban on the introduction of cigar machines. Cigar manufacturers held out, even as mechanised cigarette production dominated for the local market and much of the leaf grown was for export to the United States by large US corporations.

Incursions here into micro history can serve to illustrate the wider German-British-US connections coming into play in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Trade links between Bremen and Hamburg and Cuba are recorded dating back to the sixteenth century, and the earliest

[14] Lisandro Pérez, *Sugar, Cigars & Revolution: The Making of Cuban New York*, New York: New York University Press, 2018

German cigar factory was Schlottmann in Hamburg, dating back to 1788, producing cigars with leaf from Cuba. Like the British and other Europeans, the Germans were not a significant presence in Cuba numerically, but after the Haitian Revolution and with the growing numbers of African slaves in Cuba, their presence was encouraged as part of an attempt to whiten Cuba's population, and they invested in tobacco, as well as sugar, coffee and other sectors. In tobacco, Upmann and Bock are cases in point.[15]

Upmann was a watchmaker and trader, born in Bielefeld and resident in Bremen, who arrived in Cuba in 1839. He worked as an apprentice rolling cigars and would send bundles of ten back to friends and clients. These were originally unidentified, but then bore a gold band 'Cortesía de Hermann D. Upmann'. In 1844, he set up the factory and took out a loan with the British finance company Drake and Co. in Cuba (also established in New York) and set up a distribution company in Bremen and New York, selling cigars there, and to Britain, France, Denmark and a lesser extent Spain. In 1852, he and Friedrich Wilhelm Gudewill founded the shipping company Gudewill & Upmann, based in Bremen, covering the Havana-New York-Bremen route.

In 1918, the Upmanns were placed under house arrest in Havana, and in London their overseas assets in Speyer & Co. requisitioned as belonging to the enemy. The losses incurred and the situation in Cuba in the early 1920s led to the company's insolvency. and the then Upmann owner, Hermann Albert, great nephew of Hermann Dietrich, sold to British Joseph Frankau in 1922, and died three years later. Frankau was at the time owned by Braden and Stark – Otto Braden was naturalised British of German origin, and James Stark, an established European cigar trader – and in 1924 Frankau leased the brand to the Solaún Bros, who sold in 1930 to D. Freeman.

In 1935, Alonso Menéndez García, an Asturian who had been in tobacco in Cuba earlier in the century and then in Florida, with José Manuel González founded Menéndez, García y Cía., and they bought the Segundo López factory, and the Particulares, Byron and Montecristo brands. In 1936, they sold Particulares to Cifuentes y Cía, which then owned Partagás, and bought H. Upmann, turning the company around and making Montecristo especially a big international success. On the British market, it was distributed by John Hunter, Morris and Elkan, Ltd., whose later merger with J. Frankau and Co. Ltd. created Hunters & Frankau, Ltd., with exclusivity on the distribution of Montecristo and H. Upmann. Hunters & Frankau is today in a joint venture with Habanos, S.A. and has UK exclusivity on the wholesale import of Cuban cigars in the UK.

Bock, for his part, invested in 26 Cuban cigar brands of repute, which he later sold to Henry Clay in London, and the Henry Clay and Bock Company Ltd. was set up with British capital by Julián Alvarez, with the brand Henry Clay, and Bock, with El Aguila de Oro. Known as the first tobacco trust, it acquired five factories, 66 cigar brands, 23 cigarette brands and cut tobacco. A second trust followed, the Havana Cigar and Tobacco Company, again with British capital, comprising four major factories, including La Corona, and 18 brands of cigar, three of cigarettes and cut tobacco, as well as La Rosa de Santiago, with 12 brands of cigars and four of cigarettes. In 1899 the Havana Commercial Company had 12 factories, 149 cigar brands and many more of cigarettes. These were the forerunners to the ATC takeover, with Bock as president. When Bock penned his pamphleteer *La verdad sobre*

[15] Raúl Martell Álvarez, *Fumando en La Habana. Los Upmann: una familia alemana-cubana*, Havana: Editorial de Ediciones Cubanas, 2016; *Gustav Bock y los trusts tabacaleros en Cuba*, Havana: Editorial de Ediciones Cubanas, 2017; and *H. Upmann: un habano de + de siglo y medio*, Havana: Editorial José Martí, 2018.

la industria del tabaco habano, in which he argued that the success of Cuban tobacco lay with the trust he had helped found, manufacturers who held out, known as the 'independents', replied vehemently to the contrary.

Bock resigned in 1909 and died a year later, but German-US connections of a different kind continued well into the twentieth century, with leaf dealing and exporting companies, especially for US markets, which are well illustrated in the case of Cuban-born Lisandro Pérez.[16] Having established a successful business buying leaf tobacco in the Vuelta Arriba tobacco area of central Cuba, which expanded considerably in the early twentieth century with Canaries immigrant farm labour, Pérez entered into partnership with Havana-based leaf exporter Rogelio Echeverría to found Echeverría y Pérez.

Pérez had business connections with Isaac Bernheim, born in New York to German Jewish immigrants, whose House of Bernheim had become one of the earliest and most successful firms importing leaf and manufacturing cigars, and a leader in what became known as 'Clear Havana' leaf. Bernheim spent time in Cuba with Pérez learning the business on the ground, and, in the 1920s, when the General Cigar Company, a major US leaf buyer, decided to operate directly in Cuban leaf for its cigars manufactured with Pennsylvania filler and Connecticut wrapper, Bernheim is said to have put in a word about Pérez. Bernheim was close to Fred Hirschhorn, also the son of German Jewish immigrants in the tobacco trade and president of General Cigar, which bought out Echeverría y Pérez and named Pérez president of the newly created General Cigar Co. of Cuba, Ltd., the older Echeverría having opted for retirement. By the late 1930s, the company had 15 sorting and stemming tobacco houses across central Cuba, in addition to its central exporting warehouse in Havana.

Cuba's post-1959 agrarian reforms and nationalisation of the industry saw General Cigar leave Cuba and go on to become a key player in cigars made outside Cuba. In the immediate aftermath in Cuba, tobacco in particular suffered in the late 1960s as a result of state prioritisation of sugar in a trade deal with the Soviet Union in exchange for oil. It wasn't until the 1970s that a tobacco recuperation programme was launched, and not until the 1990s that cigars really came back into their own. The demise of the Soviet bloc in 1991, the extraterritoriality of the US embargo in the form of the Torricelli and 1996 Helms- Burton Acts, and US pressure on the European Union to introduce a stringent Economic Position on Cuba all took their toll. At the same time, the 1990s US cigar revival was in train, and, in the context of a Cuban structural adjustment strategy courting non-US trade and investment, especially to develop tourism, the cigar was also singled out as a key, if niche, player. Seen as an important part of Cuban heritage, one that had a special terroir, it was heavily marketed along with Cuba's rum, music, and culture.

Bahian shifts

As the success of Cuban tobacco became a model to be emulated elsewhere, with Cuban cigar leaf and cigars the standard by which to judge quality tobacco, and flows of knowledge and in many cases

[16] Lisandro Pérez, *The House on G Street: A Cuban Family Saga*, New York: New York University Press, 2023, Chapter 8.

seed, growers, manufacturers and workers enabling attempts to reproduce this elsewhere, Brazil's tobacco region of Bahia was no exception, though with some significant caveats.

A big difference in the case of Bahia was the tobacco grown, the way in which it was harvested and cured, the markets for which it was produced, and how it was consumed. The soil and climate of the Recôncavo had early allowed for three successive harvests a year, the first of which produced a strong tobacco suitable for smoking, chewing, and snuffing, which was destined for the European market and re-export through Lisbon, and some of which also went to West Africa, to be smuggled to Europe. Harvests of lesser quality tobacco, as well as being consumed in Brazil, went to other destinations such as Asia and especially Africa in return for slaves.

The production cycle was shorter and curing was rudimentary, only days. The tobacco plant was harvested whole, then twisted into long cords, hung in barns and re-twisted, and the moisture collected mixed with a cocktail of anis, basil, pork fat, and molasses to preserve the tobacco as well as give taste and aroma before being shipped as rope tobacco, *fuma de corda*, often sold in rolls. Tobacco from central Recôncavo, around Cruz das Almas and São Gonçalo, was called *fumo da matta*, considered to be of superior quality, and around Feira de Santana it was referred to as *fumo da caatinga*. The *fumo do sertão* was inferior tobacco, produced by poor growers on dry land, and the Sertão produced *fuma de corda* until the early twentieth century.

Tobacco was a highly lucrative trade in the late Portuguese colonial period, producing revenue for the Portuguese crown and enriching Brazilian *fazendeiros*.[17] It was also a period of great transformation, economic consolidation and political rupture, with British, American, French, and Dutch informal and uncontrollable contraband trade. As the Portuguese monopoly and colonial rule, the slave trade, and tobacco traded for slaves came to an end, and Brazilian ports were opened to other foreign nations, the nature of the sector changed.

This was not initially the case as Portugal continued to import much Brazilian tobacco, though imports from elsewhere grew gradually, with the United States supplying as much as Brazil by the 1860s, while Portuguese re-exports of Brazilian tobacco dwindled, with the expansion of free trade. In Brazil, the continuing Luso-Portuguese presence, and also a growth in tobacco for slaves up until the 1850s, meant that until the 1820s Bahia continued to produce practically only rope tobacco. By the 1850s, however, there had been a marked shift to tobacco leaf, *fuma em folha*, for the expanding international demand for cigars, accounting for 80 percent of production and export, and right up until 1913 Bahian leaf accounted for 90 percent of Brazil's total tobacco exports.

The British, who had been an early dominant foreign presence in Brazil, showed little interest in Bahian tobacco.[18] Instead, Bahia became increasingly dominated by trade with the Hanseatic cities

[17] Gustavo Acioli Lopes, *A fênix e o Atlântico: a Capitania de Pernambuco e a economia-mundo europeia (1654-1760)*, São Paulo: Alameda, 2018; Catherine Lugar, 'The Portuguese Tobacco Trade and Tobacco Growers of Bahia in the Late Colonial Period', in Dauril Alden & Warren Dean (eds), *Essays Concerning the Socioeconomic History of Brazil and Portuguese India*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1977, pp.26-70; Jean-Baptiste Nardi, *A historia do fumo brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro: Abifumo, 1985; and *O fumo brasileiro no periodo colonial: Lavoura, comercio, administraçao*, Sao Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1996; and Ana Paula de Albuquerque Silva, 'Produção fumageira: fazendas e lavradores no Recôncavo da Baía 1774-1830', MA thesis, Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2015.
[18] Dauril Alden, 'Late colonial Brazil, 1750-1808', in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *Colonial Brazil*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp.284-343.

of Bremen and Hamburg.[19] Highlighted as the German connection in Bahian tobacco,[20] this should also, however, be seen as presenting a more complex international picture.

Hanseatic merchants had long-standing prior links with Spain and Portugal, and by the mid-eighteenth century they were actively trading with South America, in close association with Spanish and Portuguese merchants.[21] In the Spanish case, this was consolidated by the opening of Hanseatic consulates in Spain and facilitated when Spain declared war on England and allowed ships of neutral countries to load and unload in Spanish harbours. Napoleon's continental blockade and occupation of northern Europe disrupted this, but within a few years the South American trade opened up to an unparalleled degree. Private traders were the first to take advantage of the new opportunities and as early as 1820 Hamburg established a consul in Bahia, the first of others to come, and trade treaties followed.

The independence of Brazil from Portugal in 1822 under Emperor Pedro I, who had a few years previously, as Crown Prince of Portugal, married the Habsburg Archduchess Leopoldine, is heralded as having facilitated steps to secure German settlements in Brazil to meet the need for free labour and cement closer relations with Germans than other Europeans. It was not until after independence that German merchants settled, and, after an 1827 commercial treaty, able to take full advantage of Britain's Navigation Acts and prohibition of imports of non-colonial produce. By mid-century, the instability following the abdication of Pedro I in 1831 had given way to greater prosperity, and from the 1860s and 1870s it was British capital that prevailed in Brazil, but Bahia was an exception.

The greatest part of the Bahian tobacco trade, however, was centered in Bremen and Hamburg, which developed as major entrepôt port-cities, unhindered by discriminatory import levies, with almost half of Bremen's tobacco imports estimated as being resold to foreign buyers, in what was the Hanoverian period of British history. Bremen and Hamburg operated in effect as free ports where German merchants enjoyed commercial and diplomatic independence, working in close cooperation with other foreign merchants by way of credits, joint ventures and shipping arrangements. In many ways, they developed more as Atlantic, South American, and quasi-British ports than as part of the German states, importing tobacco from various parts of the world for the blends created in not only the cigar factories that sprang up in the Germany states, but also France, the Netherlands, and Spain, as well as other countries in Eastern Europe and beyond.

Bahia became the most important Ibero-American tobacco exporter to Bremen and Hamburg as the segmented nature of the tobacco trade, with different kinds of tobacco for different purposes

[19] Paulo Henrique de Almeida, 'A manufatura du fumo na Bahia', MA thesis, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 1983; and 'Quatro séculos de cultivo e manufactura na Bahia: história de um outro Recôncavo', *Nexos Ecónomicos* 2:4 (2002), pp.25-36; Luciano Guerra Santos Mota, 'As manufaturas de fumo do Recôncavo Baiano', *Revista Labor & Engenho* 5:4 (2011), p.119-33; and 'As manufaturas de fumo do Recôncavo Baiano: vestigios de patrimonio industrial', PhD diss., Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2014; and Jean-Baptiste Nardi, *Análise da cadeia produtiva do tabaco da Bahia*, Arcadia, 2013.

[20] Michiel Baud & Kees Koonings, 'Germans in Tobacco in Bahia (Brazil), 1870-1940', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas* 37 (2000), pp.149-75.

[21] Ian L. D. Forbes, 'German Commercial Relations with South America, 1890-1914', PhD diss, University of Adelaide, 1975; and 'German Informal Imperialism in South America before 1914', *The Economic History Review* 31:3 (1978), pp.384-98: and C. Moller, 'Anglo-German Commercial and Financial Rivalry in Brazil, 1900-1929', PhD diss, City of London Polytechnic, 1988.

and different markets, meant brokers could use this to their advantage as intermediaries for cigars acquiring specific tastes by blending different tobaccos. Bahian tobacco, it appears, at first enjoyed little popularity in the Germany states, said to be too pungent and black,[22] but in the absence of German colonies and with growing consumer acceptance of the strong Bahian tobacco, German capital started financing the sector.

The export of tobacco from Bahia rose exponentially to Europe after the 1840s. German merchants early financed mainly subsistence farmers, one third of whom by 1835 were free and who, as the century wore on, increasingly included former slaves. Also, as the century wore on, Bremen and Hamburg became the largest cigar manufacturers in Central Europe, with Bahia as a major leaf supplier, backed by German commercial and manufacturing capital.

After the 1860s, when the Dutch East Indies developed as a producer of cigar tobacco, Java leaf was seen as the closest to Bahian leaf, and fluctuations in the two were closely linked. Cigar factories, however, continued to want other tobaccos in their blends, and Bahia, along with Colombia and the Dominican Republic, supplied them with cheap, strong, dark tobacco. It was not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that Bahia was eclipsed by leaf from Sumatra and Java in the Dutch East Indies, Turkey, the Dominican Republic and the United States.

The quality of the Bahian leaf in comparison with Cuba, however, was much decried in Brazil. As Burlamaqui wrote in his 1865 *Manual da cultura, colheita e preparação do tabaco*: "In the comparison we are about to make, we shall enter into the most minute details regarding Cuba – because the circumstances of that island differ little from those of Brazil… and because, moreover, its tobacco is the most esteemed in the world."[23] He harboured hopes that in Bahia:

> They may attain a grand scale of tobacco cultivation if they associate themselves with emigrants fully skilled in the handling of this plant – selecting the most suitable land and combining this with the manufacture of cigars – whereby both parties will achieve the richest remuneration, not to mention the great benefit that such an industry and cultivation will bring to society and to the State.[24]

Likewise, the Brazilian minister to Venezuela, Ecuador and other neighbouring territories stated in an official report attached by Burlamaqui:

> It is only by attending to the great difference in price between Havana cigars and those of Germany and North America that this truth is fully understood, and that one can explain how in Cuba many who began as poor vegueros are now seen as opulent capitalists…[25]

Having visited Vuelta Abajo, the minister asserted:

> In summary, from what we have said, it is clear that although the tobacco industry requires very little investment of capital in machinery, etc., it demands more than any other the constant presence and unceasing care of the farmer – hence the Cuban *vegueros* say that

[22] Forbes (1975), p.148.
[23] Federico Leopoldo Cezar Burlamaqui, *Manual da cultura, colheita e preparação do tabaco*, Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Industria Nacional de Cothim & Campos, 1865, p.51.
[24] Burlamaqui (1865), p.55.
[25] Burlamaqui (1865), 1 Apendice, p.97.

those who most tend the tobacco are the ones who cultivate it best. The same may be said with regard to curing.[26]

After the end of slavery in the late 1880s, thousands of former slaves swelled the ranks of subsistence farmers given credit to grow tobacco as a supplementary crop.[27] German importers gave advances to Bahian tobacco companies who took charge of buying the tobacco, and much tobacco was sold in advance or by private contract.

Cigar manufacturing had by then grown primarily for the internal market in towns like Cachoeira, São Felix, Maragogipe and Nazaré, though this was small in comparison with the volume and value of leaf exports. Early factories included those in the 1840s and 1850s set up by naturalised Portuguese, such as Francisco José Cardozo, who founded the Juventude factory in 1842 in Cachoeira, and José Furtado de Simas, who founded Fragrancia in 1851 in São Felix. Others that followed were Viera de Melo, Martins Fernandes e Ca, Guimarães e Coutinho, Pacheco e Ca, Epiphanie José de Sousa, Cerqueira e Ca, Manoel Correia Machado, Candido Pimentel Filho, Leite e Alves. Manuel Costa Ferreira transferred his Utilidade cigar establishment in Recife to São Felix, and on his death in 1883 it passed to his son and Manuel Costa Penna as Costa Ferreira & Penna.

Small to start off with, many of these companies employed few workers and had families working for them from home. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, some had grown considerably in size, and were joined by German traders moving into manufacturing. In 1873, Gerhard Dannemann, who had recently arrived in Bahia to work for leaf exporter Lüder G. Meyer, bought the Hammacher factory from Gustav Schnorbusch and with his brother Reinhardt founded Dannemann & Companhia in São Felix. August Suerdieck, who arrived in Bahia in 1888 and was an employee of F.H. Ottens in Cruz das Almas, in 1892 started trading on his own, buying his first export warehouse from Ottens, and in 1899 had a warehouse built in Maragogipe. His first cigar 'factory' had 5 workers, in 1907 it moved to new premises with 13 workers, and by 1913 had some 200 workers.

Tobacco was Bahia's principal export in terms of state finances and retained regional importance well into the twentieth century. In the early century British and US companies tried to capture part of the market, but the German foothold was firm. São Felix continued to be the main cigar town of Brazil, though cigar exports were never more than around ten percent of the value of leaf exports, the cigars being destined mainly for other Brazilian markets, such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Belem and Recife, and cheap cigars were produced in many small concerns with family labour.

When Brazil joined the Allied Forces in World War I, Bahia was cut off from the German market, and the trade changed yet again. Belgium, Germany, France and the Netherlands became the four largest buyers in the 1920s. The Dutch Curaçao Trading Company started buying large quantities, and Dutch merchants representing the Compañía Dominicana de Tabacos, Spanish Tabacalera, and the French Compagnie Générale des Tabacs also began buying regularly, overshadowing the remaining German importers.

[26] Burlamaqui (1865), 1 Apendice p.l10.
[27] Michiel Baud & Kees Koonings, 'A Lavoura dos Pobres: Tobacco Farming and the Development of Commercial Agriculture in Bahia, 1870-1930', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 31:2 (1999), pp.287-329.

In the post-war restructuring of the international tobacco market, with cigarettes taking the place of cigars, increasing competition came from tobacco in the southern states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina, with new regional markets such as Argentina. In the south, where earlier German immigrants had farmed land, producing for local and regional rather than export markets, German commercial and industrial companies had also consolidated in a range of sectors, and prominent local and regional Germans became more 'Brazilianised'.

In competition with sugar, cacao and coffee, Bahian tobacco was left behind but was still exporting 80 percent of Brazil's leaf during the early part of the twentieth century. Two major changes again then took place. The first was in the quality of the leaf with the introduction of improved techniques by large trading and manufacturing companies on extensive plantations of especially shade wrapper tobacco, with farms in Cruz das Almas, São Felipe, Santo Antonio de Jesus and Nazaré among the most important. Across Brazil, there were five zones according to the leaf grown: Mata Fina, Mata Sul, Mata Norte, Sertão, and Feira. The first was the leaf used in cigars, but it was the second, the cigarette leaf of southern Brazil, that was by far the most dominant, with the introduction of Virginia tobacco, fertilizers and pesticides.

World War I created the window for BAT to buy Companhia Souza Cruz, a cigarette factory that also produced some cigars, and create the subsidiary Brasileira de Fumo em Folha in 1914, undercutting older Bahian firms. By the early 1920s, the company was established in Rio Grande do Sul and built factories in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, giving it practically a monopoly on national cigarette production. This bifurcated Brazilian tobacco, with two clear leaders: Suerdieck in cigars in the north-east and Souza Cruz in cigarettes in the south. The history of the south is beyond the scope of this paper but suffice it to contrast a large multinational like BAT/Souza Cruz with the predominance of small-scale growing and with Bahia, where almost all large and middle growers eventually disappeared, as also most manufacturers, and the sector was rocked by unrest.

Bahian leaf was still grown mainly for export and for cigar blending, especially for consumers of stronger tobacco in France, Germany, Italy and Spain. In the early 1950s, Dannemann and Costa & Penna closed; Leite E. Alves survived two more decades; Suerdieck continued with new foreign investment, exporting principally to Germany, though also the Netherlands, France, Denmark, Italy and the United States, where it benefitted from the embargo on Cuban cigars. Dannemann also later re-opened, such that Suerdieck and Dannemann are the two that stand out in the present-day.

The late 1970s also saw the launch of the Cuban-Bahian venture Menéndez & Amerino, to whose history I return later, not before crossing the Atlantic to Spain's Canary Islands and the Portuguese Azores.

The Canaries and the Azores in the frame

The middle-Atlantic island archipelagos that early became Portuguese and Spanish possessions were geostrategically positioned on shipping routes to the Americas that were vital to maritime expansion. Islanders sailed on the ships and formed part of the migration to the Americas, and foreign merchants were to be found on the islands. In the seventeenth and eighteen centuries, when tobacco was a major Spanish Cuban and Portuguese Brazilian export, their respective monopolies forbade production in the metropole and the islands. The legal point of entry for tobacco from Cuba into mainland Spain

was through Cadiz, and from Brazil into mainland Portugal through Lisbon. Enforcing this, however, was by no means easy. Shipping docked in the middle-Atlantic islands and there was much contraband, especially by the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when other trade was operating through island ports in British and French boats.

After the loosening of Portuguese monopoly restrictions in Brazil, Brazil's independence, and the danger of losing guaranteed supplies of Bahian tobacco, Portugal authorised the first tobacco-growing trials in Madeira and the Azores in 1824. A few years later, in the wake of the end of the Spanish tobacco monopoly in Cuba and in an attempt to mitigate the level of contraband tobacco from the United States and Brazil, Spain followed suit and authorised trials in the Canary Islands in 1827. The islands then had in common not only their early tobacco experimentation but also subsequent expansion, caught between the ethos of free trade and state monopoly control. From the mid-nineteenth century, they were also, moreover, increasingly part of Britain's 'informal' empire and often at loggerheads with the central Portuguese and Spanish state. Their histories were, nonetheless, shaped differently in terms of the tobacco they grew and processed. In the case of the Canaries, the marked influence was Cuba, and in the case of Madeira and the Azores it was Bahia, and in each tobacco ultimately waned as Cuba and Bahia made their present-day comeback.

Canaries tobacco history had become intricately bound up with that of Cuba long before the cigar's nineteenth-century 'coming of age', through Spanish state control as well as island contraband. At the heart of the late eighteenth-century trade, tobacco was transported from Havana to the Canaries where it was overseen and financially controlled by an administrator, and this facilitated a penchant on the islands for the *Habano*. It was the early nineteenth century, however, that marked a landmark change, as Spain sought to make good its lost monopoly position in Cuba by promoting tobacco in its other few remaining colonies, especially the Philippines and to a lesser extent Puerto Rico, where the Manila and Porto Rico cigars, respectively, competed with the *Habano*, as well as experimenting with tobacco-growing in the Canaries.

Canaries tobacco history has been well studied,[28] and a backdrop to this was the extent of Canaries migration to and from Cuba.[29] The nineteenth-century Canaries population was small in comparison to that of the Spanish peninsula, and yet accounted for over 40 percent of total Spanish immigration to Cuba by the mid-century, and their number more than doubled over the next two decades. They were part of Spain's push to counter the growing black African slave presence with white settlers, whose treatment and conditions have been likened in Canaries historiography to white slavery.[30] Emigration peaked again in the 1880s – linked to the displacement of much of the traditional peasant economy in the Canaries in the wake of Spain giving the islands free-port status

[28] Andrés Arnaldos Martínez & Jorge Arnaldos de Armas, *La industria tabaquera canaria (1852-1922)*, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Gobierno de Canarias, Cámaras de Canarias, y Asociación Canaria de Industriales Tabaqueros, 2003; and Santiago de Luxán Meléndez, *La opción agrícola e industrial del tabaco en Canarias: una perspectiva institucional: Los origenes 1827-1936*, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Sociedad Canaria de Fomento Económico, SA, Consejería de Economía y Hacienda del Gobierno de Canarias, 2006.

[29] Jean Stubbs, 'Cuba-Canaries Havana Cigar Connections: A Hemispheric, Transatlantic and Global History', in Santiago de Luxán et al. (eds), *Grandes vicios, grandes ingresos: el monopolio del tabaco en los imperios ibéricos, Siglos XVII-XX*, Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2019, pp.253-92.

[30] Manuel de Paz Sánchez, *La esclavitud blanca: una contribución a la historia del inmigrante canario en América en el siglo XIX*, La Laguna: Centro de la Cultura Popular Canaria, 1992.

in 1852 and the economic expansion and end of slavery in Cuba – and during the early twentieth-century Cuban republic, when its expanding central tobacco region became a prime destination.

Over time, Canary Islanders came to be known in Cuba as the islanders, *isleños*, and swallows, *golondrinos*, to-ing and fro-ing in seasonal migration, working the harvests in both Cuba and the Canaries. It was not until after the 1930s that the emigration trend slowed, and after the 1960s and especially the 1980s that it reversed. By then conditions in the Canaries were proving more attractive, and by the 1990s the Canaries, which had once been a frontier to the Americas, served instead as an entry point into the richer countries of continental Europe.

Canaries tobacco history can be seen in tandem with this. After the early experimentation, tobacco was only later developed, after the free-port system was introduced, in part to counter a continuing intractable problem of tobacco contraband. Seeds were taken from *vegas* in Cuba, growers with expertise were brought in, a training school was set up, and tobacco manuals were published. These included one received from the Real Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País in Havana, published in 1862 by the Real Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de La Palma, and it was the island of La Palma where tobacco came to be most cultivated.

Tobacco expansion was projected later to take the place of the failing cochineal trade, but was undercut by the trilogy of bananas, tomatoes, and potatoes backed by Britain as of the 1890s. After the introduction of the Canaries free-port model, the British trading relationship strengthened, and there was a growing predominance of British, alongside German, French, and Belgian, and later US interests. British interests started to decline after World War I and deepened with the 1930s economic depression and build-up to World War II, with the Spanish Civil War and subsequent imposition of Spanish peninsular interests.

Continued opposition from the legacy Spanish state monopoly, the Compañía Arrendataria de Tabacos (CAT), to allowing either leaf or manufactured products from the islands into the peninsula, also played a large part. Heavy controls fuelled complaints that limited state buying was highly unfavourable for the islands, especially when Spain introduced even tighter price and fiscal controls after losing Cuba and Puerto Rico. In 1914 cigar manufacturers called for free zones in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Santa Cruz de la Palma, and Arrecife to compete with the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. In 1921 CAT modified its contract with the Canary Islands, whereby prices paid for cigars were more favourable in comparison with those paid to Cuba. Only a small part of the leaf used in cigar production was domestic, however, as most was imported, mainly from the Philippines, Cuba and the United States.

From the 1920s to the 1950s, tobacco benefitted from agreements signed for Canaries tobacco on the peninsula. However CAT and, after 1945, its successor parastatal Tabacalera S.A. remained ambivalent toward the Canaries. The 1950s saw the beginnings of mechanisation in the tobacco sector, and in 1956, a number of cigarette manufacturers joined forces to form the Centro Industrial de Tabaqueros Asociados, Limitada (CITA). Fiscal legislation from the 1960s to the early 1980s privileged concentration of production in Tenerife, with investment from major tobacco multinationals Philip Morris, BAT, R.J. Reynolds, Gallaher and Reetsmma, with cigarettes overshadowing cigars.

The 1960s new arrivants from Cuba had led to an increase in small tobacco growers and cigar rollers – *vegueros* and *chinchaleros* as in Cuba – especially in La Palma. However, the late 1960s saw blue mould blights, such that throughout the 1970s tobacco was imported from Africa, Asia and the Americas; and subsequent projects to revitalise tobacco, including quotas for veteran growers and a small 1990s tobacco recuperation plan, were to little avail. By the turn of the century, amidst a handful of surviving *chinchales*, only Tabacos Vargas had been able to carve out a sizeable niche in Santa Cruz de La Palma. Still in operation, it can be visited today, as also the small Museo del Puro Palmero in Breña Alta, once one of the island's tobacco areas.

Two examples of micro history serve to illustrate the Cuba-Canary Islands connection over the years, those of Luis Felipe Gómez Wangüemert and Manuel Lesmes.[31] Having migrated to Cuba in the 1880s, Wangüemert returned to establish his *Flor de Palma* and *Africana* factories in Santa Cruz de La Palma, before returning again to Cuba from 1914 to his death in 1942. In 1906, he founded two journals, *Germinal* and *El Tabaco,* which were short lived yet important in their time, extolling quality growing and manufacture and lamented the lack thereof in the Canaries. In 1908, after the Cámara Agrícola was set up in Santa Cruz de La Palma, he pushed for an agronomy station on La Palma. Juan Martín Lesmes was born in Cabaiguán, Cuba, in 1890 and went to the Canaries in 1930. There he produced *La Fuma* and *La Verdad* cigars, and in 1940 launched *Peñamil*, subsequently *Lorenzo Penamil, S.A.,* in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, which was later bought by CAT and eventually became part of CITA, counting on the expertise of, among others, two brothers, Fernando and Luis Wangüemert.

Recent studies on the Azores chart a parallel expansion and decline of tobacco to that of the Canaries.[32] Although the early tobacco trials in 1824 and again in 1835 appear not to have yielded great fruit, the Sociedade Promotora da Agricultura Micaelense, founded in 1843, argued for tobacco cultivation as an alternative to other agricultural products and an engine for industry, especially on the islands of São Miguel and Terceira. The Sociedade and its journal *Agricultor Micaelense*

[31] Manuel de Paz Sánchez, *Wangüemert y Cuba*, 2 vols, La Laguna: Centro de la Cultura Popular Canaria, 2011-12; and Anelio Rodríguez Concepción, *La tradición insular del tabaco*, Santa Cruz de La Palma: Consejería de Agricultura, Ganadería, Pesca y Alimentación, 2000.

[32] Leandro Ávila, 'A indústria do tabaco na Ilha Terceira: entre a concorrência e a exiguidade do Mercado', *Boletim do Instituto Histórico da Ilha Terceira* 74 (2016), pp.55-78; Santiago de Luxán Meléndez & Margarida Vaz do Rego Machado, 'El tabaco en los archipelagos ibéricos del Atlántico Medio (siglos XVII-XIX): Una visión comparada', in Santiago de Luxán et al. (eds), *Grandes vicios, grandes ingresos: el monopolio del tabaco en los imperios ibéricos*, Siglos XVII-XX, Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2019, pp.153-78; Margarida Vaz do Rego Machado, 'O contrato do Tabaco nos finais do Antigo regime e início de Liberalismo. Sua importância na economia açoriana', in Santiago de Luxán (ed.), *Política y hacienda del tabaco en los Imperios Ibérico (siglos XVII-XIX),* Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2014, pp.155-76; 'Contestações ao contrato geral do tabaco português pelos açorianos (2a metade do século XIX)', in Santiago de Luxán et al. (eds), *Los monopolios ibéricos del tabaco* (ss XVI-XIX), Special Issue of *Millars* XLIX:2 (2020), pp.101-18; and 'The General Contract of Tobacco and the Azorean Economy (17th and 18th Centuries)', in Nunziatella Asessandrini & João Teles e Cunha (eds), *Crossing Borders: The Social and Economic Impact of the Portuguese Maritime Empire in the early Modern Age*, Special Issue of *Rivista dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea* 9:II (2021), pp.231-48; Susana Serpa Silva, 'O contrabando nos mares e ilhas dos Açores no Segundo quartel do século XIX', in Avelino Freitas Meneses (ed.), *Portos escalas e Ilhéus no relacionamento entre Ocidente e Oriente. Atas do Congresso Internacional comemorativo do regresso de Vasco da Gama a Portugal,* Ponta Delgada: Edição da Câmara Municipal de Ponta Delgada e da Universidade dos Açores, 2021, pp.1-583; and 'Notas sobre a produção e o consumo de tabaco, nas ilhas dos açores, presentes na literatura de viagens (século XIX)', in Santiago de Luxán (ed.). *La transición del monopolio al libre mercado del tabaco en Cuba, Canarias y Filipinas y otros espacios americanos. Experiencias comparadas*, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Servicio de Publicaciones del Cabildo de Gran Canaria, 2024, pp.365-99.

employed a 'free trade' discourse against the Portuguese tobacco monopoly and called for free access for Azorean tobacco to the Portuguese mainland and colonies. In the early 1850s the Junta Geral do Distrito de Ponta Delgada, on São Miguel, advanced the argument and tobacco projects began to take shape, securing successive governors' support in the 1860s.

It was not until after the Portuguese tobacco monopoly was abolished in 1864, however, that the Azores and Madeira were finally allowed to cultivate and process tobacco. Even then, to make up for the lost revenue from the monopoly, new duties were placed on imports of leaf and manufactures, and tobacco factories had to pay a licence fee, which helps account for the proliferation of small firms in continental Portugal, especially after the later phylloxera crisis in the northern Portuguese wine industry.

Tobacco did not grow so well on Madeira, such that factories processing local leaf recorded in the 1880s in Funchal were only small, but a boom did ensue in the Azores, especially on the island of São Miguel, also on Terceira and for a time Faial. An industrial survey of 1881 listed 27 tobacco factories in the Azores. Of these, 21 were on São Miguel and six on Terceira, the last on Faial having closed the previous year. The largest was the Fábrica de Tabaco Micaelense, originally established in 1866 in Ponta Delgada by José Bensaude, of Moroccan Jewish family origin. By the 1880s, the Micaelense was producing snuff, cut tobacco, chewing tobacco, and cigarettes and cheap cigars with some imports of more expensive foreign leaf for blending, and in 1893 acquired two small local factories in Madeira, which was a significant buyer of Azorean tobacco. By the early twentieth century, tobacco products were the second most valuable export of São Miguel, and the Micaelense was the third largest tobacco factory in Portuguese territory, producing primarily cigarettes. On Terceira, a new factory also appeared in 1923, the Fábrica Âncora.

A continuing bone of contention for the Azores was not having free access to the metropolitan Portuguese market. This was briefly granted in 1885, and then in 1887 subjected to the same high rate of import duties as foreign manufactures. When in 1888 a new Portuguese Régie was set up, along French lines, and the government appropriated 26 existing mainland factories, those in the Azores and Madeira were left in private hands. An 1888 law also stipulated that Portugal purchase five percent of its tobacco from the Azores, Madeira, and the colonies, but no such provision was included in the later tobacco contract of 1891, and the Azores market for tobacco remained limited.

By the 1930s, there was acute overproduction and local complaints were again about Azorean tobacco products being prohibitively taxed on entry into mainland Portugal. Some late twentieth-century improvements were made in tobacco, which included the introduction of seeds, knowledge about growing and blights, and curing from Spain and Europe. São Miguel tobacco continued to prevail, but the special regime for the Atlantic Islands was still a source of controversy, with the archipelago's tobacco products entering mainland Portugal paying up to 90 percent of total import duties on foreign items. This was felt to be especially unjust for cigars and cigarillos, given that metropolitan factories had ceased manufacture. Moreover, protective duties on foreign tobacco products entering the Azores had been set at only about a tenth of those in continental Portugal.

Several aspects in the case of Azorean tobacco are important to note here. First and foremost, the model was not Cuban but Bahian. As argued in a memoire published in Terceira in 1834, tobacco could bring prosperity:

> If union with Brazil had diverted the tobacco plantations and removed them from these islands, then – with tobacco being cultivated in the Azores – the Contractors themselves would benefit; for even if the auction price were to fall somewhat, they would be able to purchase it much more cheaply. Moreover, the large-scale trade in this commodity would attract foreigners.[33]

Given the earlier dominance of Bahia in the Portuguese tobacco trade, and above all the amount of contraband tobacco finding its way from Bahia, this is not surprising. What is less clear, and remains a topic for future research, is the role migration might have played in this, as it so clearly did in the Canaries. Little is known about the migration of Azoreans to Bahia, though Costa Ferreira, the Bahian manufacturer of *charutos*, was reputedly Portuguese Azorean, and over 2,000 Azoreans, especially women and children, were reported working in the Bahian industry in the 1860s. The way tobacco was grown and processed, however, as presented in what is now the Museo do Tabaco Da Maia, in the old Maia factory on São Miguel, leaves little doubt this was Bahian-style.

Migration more broadly may well also be an underplayed factor in the development of Azorean tobacco, and micro history can again come to our aid in this. Today's largest private corporation in the Azores, and one of the top 100 largest companies in Portugal, is the Bensaude Group. Their history as told on their company website dates back to 1820,[34] with an early focus on shipping oranges to Britain and textiles from Britain to the Azores.

Abraham Bensaude left his hometown of Rabat in Morocco in 1807 and in 1819 settled in São Miguel. There he is attributed with founding the island's first Jewish community, to which the synogogue and its archive in Ponta Delgada stand testimony today. He was joined by his brother Elias and cousin Solomon, and the three of them, all it is stated bearing British passports, established the Bensaude company. Under the latter's son, the company became one of Portugal's most important enterprises, having by the mid-nineteenth century a network of branches which spanned Gibaltrar, Hamburg, London and Lisbon. It was Abraham's son José Bensaude who played the key role in the tobacco industry, founding the Micaelense in 1866, and subsequently, in 1875, the Banco Totta & Açores, later integrated into the Santander Global group.

When the Bensaudes bought the two small local factories in Madeira in 1893, they were not only significant suppliers of tobacco to Madeira but also selling tobacco to Cape Verde and other Portuguese African colonies. They appear to have been the only Azorean manufacturer doing so, having in 1880 set up their own steamer company, the Empresa Nacional de Navegação, plying African colonial routes. In 1927, when the Companhia Tabaqueira de Portugal was set up and built its technically advanced factory in Lisbon, the Bensaude family also owned shares. Later, in the 1930s, when there was fierce competition for a shrinking market in the Azores between factories in São Miguel, Terceira and Madeira, it was the Empresa Madeirense de Tabacos, part of the Bensaude group, that bought up the Fábrica Âncora in Terceira. Today the Bensaude Group lists 34 companies divided into five business areas, with over 3,000 employees in the Azores and mainland Portugal, but the pillars of their business empire are in tourism and shipping, not tobacco.

[33] Quoted in Silva (2024), p.375.
[34] https://www.grupobensaude.pt/en/ Consulted on 24 April 2025.

Tobacco is no longer grown on São Miguel except didactically at the Museu do Tabaco, and only two factories remain in Ponta Delgada producing cigars and cigarettes. One is the Micaelense, on Rua José Bensaude, mainly machine manufacturing cigarettes for export for Philip Morris, but also with a small section producing cigars, with tobacco imported from Java, Indonesia. The Fábrica Estrela de Tabaco is the other, hand rolling cigars with blends of filler leaf from Cuba, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Indonesia, inside a Dominican binder and Connecticut wrapper. These two factories and the tobacco museum in the Azores, like CITA, Tabacos Vargas and the tobacco museum in the Canaries, remain as vestiges of the islands' erstwhile cigar history, whose epicenter is firmly back in the Americas.

Cuba's *Habano*, a Cuban-Bahian *charuto*, and New World cigars

When Habanos S.A. was set up in 1994 to handle overseas marketing ventures, it embarked on an ambitious strategy of non-US overseas cigar deals to give exclusive rights over the import and distribution of Havana cigars in return for advance payment. Credit-for-tobacco joint-venture deals, with hard currency incentives that were crucial for Cuba, were struck between Cubatabaco, the Cuban state tobacco enterprise, and its Spanish counterpart Tabacalera, which by then included the Canaries-based CITA.

It was a risky and rocky path. In 1993, Tabacalera and Cuba were locked in tense meetings to discuss the future of Montecristo and a host of other Havana cigar brands. In 1991 Tabacalera bought the world rights – excluding Cuba, the United States and the Dominican Republic – for trademarks that had been acquired from manufacturers who left Cuba by Cuban Cigar Brands, a partnership formed by Consolidated Cigar and Spain's Internacional Cifuentes, Cifuentes having bought Montecristo in pre-revolutionary Cuba. This created problems for Cuba in third countries, not least France, where SEITA, along with Tabacalera, was a prime market, and a series of international court cases were soon dubbed the Montecristo War. Tabacalera had the brands but not the cigars. Cuba made the cigars but couldn't sell them because Tabacalera had the brands.

It was a no-win situation until the parties finally entered into agreement. In 1994, CITA revitalised links with Cuba, initially through Tabacalera's credit-for-tobacco deal, and in 2001 established COTAIS, Compañía de Tabacos Isleños S.A., for a modernised factory in Havana making Punch and Hoyo de Monterrey cigarettes, and also pre-financing tobacco growers in Cuba, in central Ciego de Avila, many of *isleño* descent, through the UNETA-CITA Caribe Consortium.

When the 1990s cigar bubble burst, the luxury market for *Habanos* held in Europe and Asian economies such as China. In 1999 Tabacalera and SEITA formed Altadis, which bought 50 percent shares in a joint venture with Habanos, and Altadis also created Altadis USA, which included under its rubric Consolidated Cigar, by then the major competitor for General Cigar, thereby managing both island and offshore brands. Altadis later sold its shares in Habanos to Imperial, pitching Havana cigars in competition with global cigar giant Swedish Match, itself a product of various mergers, which included General Cigar. In 2009 Swedish Match had ten production plants, the main ones in the United States, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Belgium, and Indonesia, and others in Brazil, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, the Philippines, and Sweden. Imperial then sold its shares in Altadis to the Hong Kong conglomerate of today.

Well before this, émigré Cubans were active in their new host areas, ranging from land ceded by President Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua in 1963 to the free-trade zones that mushroomed in the Dominican Republic, and across the Atlantic in the Canaries, where, in 1964, émigré Cubans Benjamín and Felix Menéndez set up Insular Tabacalera S.A., INTASA. They were the sons of Alonso Menéndez, who had bought H. Upmann and created the Montecristo brand in 1930s Cuba and moved to Miami to work for Philip Morris. The brothers started manufacturing cigarette brands such as Partagás and Gener, which had been famous in Cuba, and launched Montecruz – a Montecristo lookalike – along with Don Miguel, Don Diego, Don Marcos and Flamenco cigar brands.

By the time they sold INTASA to Consolidated Cigar/Gulf & Western in 1974, the company was supplying a third of the US market. Benjamín Menéndez then relocated to oversee production of Consolidated's Macanudo cigars in Jamaica, and, after the death of Alonso and a brief sojourn with his brother in Bahia, relocated again, along with the production of Macanudos, to Consolidated in the Dominican Republic. There he oversaw Central American and Caribbean operations and the business of premium cigars – not quite the luxury *Habano* – for the US market.

In 1978, Felix Menéndez went into business in Bahia with Mário Amerino da Silva Portugal, who was well established in the tobacco sector, having in 1948 started working for his father's tobacco company Amerino Portugal Comércio e Indústria, S.A.[35] Together they launched Menéndez & Amerino in São Gonçalo dos Campos. The company produced El Patio cigars, one of the Alonso Menéndez line, using *Mata Fina* leaf, and then, in the late 1980s, with *Mata Norte* leaf, launched Dona Flor. The choice of brand name was born of the friendship between Mário Portugal and Jorge Amado, whose novel *Dona Flor e seus dois maridos* was first published in 1966 and later adapted for theatre, cinema and television. The Dona Flor cigar, launched two decades after publication of the book, was seen as a fitting sequel for the Montecristo, taken from the famous nineteenth-century novel *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas, seeking to emulate the traditional Cuban cigar at a cheaper price.

A late 1990s report analysing strategies for exporting Bahian cigars made recommendations as to how better to promote them abroad, especially in the United States.[36] The big four international cigar conglomerates were at the time identified as Swisher International, General Cigar, Consolidated Cigar, and Havatampa/Phillies Cigar Corp., making cigars in the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, the United States, the Netherlands and Brazil. The main distributors for Bahia were Dannemann (then part of the Swiss Burger group), Menéndez & Amerino, Chaba-Charutos da Bahia and Le Cigar, the last three of which had government financial support to open offices in New York.

The report recognised that "Cuba é o país que tem a tradiçao de possuir o melhor fumo de charuto do mundo", but, with Cuba's absence from the US market, it saw a missed opportunity for the Bahian cigar. As acknowledged by the Asociación Brasileira da Industria do Fumo and its journal *Industria Brasileira de Fumo*, this could be a growth factor for the otherwise poor area of Bahia. The report's recommendation was to position Bahian tobacco on the international market by selling its distinctive orange brown or dark almost black colour and the colours of the Brazilian flag as its 'origin image', as Brazilian terroir.

[35] https://gestoesinspiradoras.ufba.br/. Consulted on 5 November 2024.
[36] https://ifbae.s3.eu-west-3.amazonaws.com/file/congres/2003_trab25.pdf Consulted on 5 November 2024.

Recent glimpses into the use of Brazilian terroir, not only for Bahian but, perhaps more surprisingly, Amazonian tobacco, in the blends of New World cigars can readily be found in the online *Cigar Aficionado*. In December 2022, it was reported that General Cigar was about to launch the CAO Amazon Basin Extra Añejo cigar. In an Ecuador Sumatra wrapper and Nicaraguan binder, with filler from Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Brazil, it was the Brazilian Bragança filler leaf that was claimed to truly define the cigar. A promotional feature highlighted the care with which the tobacco was planted in the Amazon soil and harvested, the leaves packed tightly in *carottes* (similar to *andullo*) for six months of fermentation, and the *carottes* then canoed downriver, "like something out of a Joseph Conrad novel", eventually making their way to the Estelí factory in Nicaragua, where most CAO cigars were produced and aged in a room lined with Spanish cedar.[37]

General Cigar was again featured going "back to the jungle" in January 2024 with a Limited Edition CAO Amazon Basin, blending Brazilian Bragança with Colombian and Dominican filler, in a Nicaraguan binder and Ecuador Sumatra wrapper. The cigar was not affixed with a paper cigar band, but instead had a miniature rope of tobacco entwined around the upper portion, giving it a rustic appearance; and, in a further play on the theme of rusticity, the cigars came in roughly hewn wooden boxes resembling packing crates.[38] General Cigar was also marketing a Dominican Macanudo with a blend of filler from Brazil and Nicaragua, along with a Dominican Piloto Cubano and Cubita Cuban-seed varietal, inside a Mexican San Andrés binder and a shade-grown Bahian wrapper, in brightly coloured boxes intended to evoke Brazil's national flag.[39]

Other features celebrated a similar mix of tobacco that went into the many blends, their provenance, and their accessible price. A new line of the Días de Gloria Brazil, made in Nicaragua with Nicaraguan leaf in a dark Brazilian *Mata Fina* wrapper, claimed to honour Cuban cigars of the pre-Castro era. Altadis showcased a new cigar in its Trinidad Espíritu Series featuring Nicaraguan and Brazilian tobacco, with a Mexican San Andrés wrapper chosen to honour the Mexican Día de Los Muertos. Two new Nicaraguan-rolled Mustang cigars – a Short Toro wrapped in a lighter Ecuador Sumatra wrapper leaf and a Rothschild in a darker Ecuador Sumatra, whose inner tobaccos were a Nicaraguan filler and whose binders were from Nicaragua and Brazil – retailed for a budget-friendly price of under six US dollars. The Bolivar Gran Republica cigar, made in Honduras with a blend of filler from Colombia, Brazil and Nicaragua, in a Brazilian Arapiraca binder and an Ecuadoran Habano wrapper, was featured as having two of its origin countries – Ecuador and Colombia – led to independence by Simón Bolivar. What might be truly liberating, it was pointed out, was the price, as all the cigars retailed for less than ten US dollars each.[40]

A Limited Edition Dominican Cohiba was developed in partnership with Weller Bourbon using filler from Nicaragua and Brazil, a Nicaraguan wrapper, and a Connecticut broadleaf binder.[41]

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[37] https://www.cigaraficionado.com/article/a-cao-amazon-basin-with-some-extra-age. Consulted on 6 November 2024.
[38] https://www.cigaraficionado.com/article/cao-amazon-basin-returns-for-2023. Consulted on 6 November 2024.
[39] https://www.cigaraficionado.com/article/macanudo-inspirado-brazilian-shade-is-back. Consulted on 6 November 2024.
[40] https://www.cigaraficionado.com/article/dias-de-gloria-by-a-j-fernandez-goes-brazil; https://www.cigaraficionado.com/article/trinidad-espiritu-no-3-goes-to-mexico; https://www.cigaraficionado.com/article/stallone-mustang-saddles-up-for-pca; https://www.cigaraficionado.com/article/bolivar-gran-republica-from-honduras-on-its-way-in-june. Consulted on 6 November 2024.
[41] https://www.cigaraficionado.com/article/weller-by-cohiba-gets-new-expression-for-2024. Consulted on 6 November 2024.

The binder had been aged in Weller Bourbon barrels, sent from Weller's Buffalo distillery to General Cigar Dominicana, where the cigars were rolled, and marketed as a cigar to be paired with Weller Bourbon. The Cohiba has been a particularly controversial case of identical branding, since it could not be disputed as a pre-revolutionary brand. In Cuba, it was first made in the 1960s in response to CIA attempts on the life of the Cuban leader, President Fidel Castro, initially rolled only for him by specially trained wives of his security guard. Later patented and gifted to visiting dignitaries, Cuba did not make it commercially available until after Castro gave up smoking in 1982. Cuba has been in litigation in international court cases over the legality of General Cigar's Cohiba since 1997, and only recently, in May 2025, was a ruling in Cuba's favour.[42]

On branding, circuits, and labour

It is hard to predict where all this is leading. I little anticipated the journey on which I was about to embark, taking me into rival investment, marketing and branding on a global scale when in the 1990s I was drawn back into researching the Havana cigar by *Cigar Aficionado*. One of many cigar publications that have since proliferated, it has remained to the forefront in fostering a whole anti-anti-smoking culture, also sponsoring events like the Las Vegas Big Smoke, billed as "the ultimate gathering for cigar lovers across the globe".[43]

Around the world today there are many other cigar events,[44] but particularly relevant here are three that take place every year: the PCA trade show and convention of the Premium Cigar Association in the United States, which in its present form dates back to 2019 but started life in 1933 as the Retail Tobacco Dealers of America, RTDA, and whose venues have been Las Vegas and most recently New Orleans; the Procigar Festival, which dates back to 1992, the year PROCIGAR was formed as the Dominican Cigar Manufacturers Association, and whose main venue is in Santiago de los Caballeros, 'the cigar capital' of the Dominican Republic; and the *Habano* Festival, which came later onto the scene in 1999, and is held in Havana, Cuba.

The history behind PCA can be seen to symbolise US tobacco resilience and more specifically the US cigar revival. Having started out to help tobacco stores navigate the changing landscape of tobacco legislation, the RTDA in 2007 rebranded itself as the International Premium Cigar and Pipe Retailers Association, IPCPR, in recognition of the evolution of the industry and an increasing emphasis on premium cigars and pipes; and in 2019 IPCPR in turn rebranded itself again as PCA, advocating solely for the premium cigar market.

The 2025 PCA show served as a launch pad for several new product releases, which included a Limited Edition Romeo y Julieta, Cohiba, Trinidad Espiritu and Gran Habano, and the special Perdomo Legacy and Para José Seijas, the latter two blended specially to honour names famous from Cuba's prerevolutionary days. The presence of new generations of Cuban cigar families of old was also celebrated, for, in the words of the event's senior director: "Every cigar shared, every story

[42] https://www.cigaraficionado.com/article/cohiba-vs-cohiba-another-win-for-cuba?lid=7y8h34i16keh. Consulted on 8 May 2025.
[43] https://www.lasvegasbigsmoke.com/
[44] https://londoncigarsmoker.com/cigar-events-festivals-trips-herfs/; https://cigarassociationcanada.org/the-ultimate-guide-to-cigar-festivals-around-the-world-in-2025/; https://purosaborcigarfest.com, https://premiumcigars.org/pca-goes-to-nicaragua-a-look-back-at-puro-sabor-2025/; https://amigosdepartagas.it/en/. Consulted on 6 March 2025.

exchanged, and every partnership forged is an investment in our collective future".[45] One of the venues listed as a place to network, relax, and smoke cigars was the New Orleans Cuban Creations Cigar Bar, a partner in the PCA Alliance, which reaches out to the drinks and hospitality industry; and, in a nod to the German connection, to be paired with German beer, was a new Quesada Oktoberfest, which in its original form in 2011 had been made with all Dominican tobacco and now has a Mexican San Andrés wrapper with Dominican binder and filler.

The Procigar Festival is backed by cigar manufacturers of what are described as world-renowned brands, "committed to the highest standard of quality and consistency which had contributed to numerous blends showcasing unique nuances of styles of flavour and aroma, refining old world craftsmanship with new meaning". It does nonetheless acknowledge: "Many of the members are, of course, not Dominican in origin, such as General Cigar, Quesada Cigars, Tabacalera Arturo Fuente".[46] The 2025 Festival recognised Master Blenders and culminated in a gala dinner and auction of Limited Edition cigars, which raised funds to help low-income families and elders in the Dominican Republic.

The 2025 *Habano* Festival opened themed in red to launch a Romeo y Julieta Amantes and its closing gala launched a new Cohiba Behike 58,[47] auctioned in Parisian-made designer humidors that set the bidding collectors back millions of US dollars, the proceeds of which were donated to the Cuban Public Health System. The total sales revenue generated by Habanos in 2024 was celebrated as over 800 million US dollars, a significant growth over 2023, and attributed to the unique brand origin of the *Habano* and the passion of everyone involved in its making. Habanos now has joint ventures and a distributor Casa del Habano franchise network all across the world, and the markets that most contributed to the growth in sales revenue were China, Spain, Switzerland, the UK and Germany. Europe was the market leader, accounting for over half of sales value, followed by Asia Pacific with almost a quarter, while the Americas accounted for little over ten percent, as also Africa and the Middle East together.

Marketing and branding has played a clear role in all three, but it is the Havana cigar that has most been able to exude an aura of quality and authenticity, a whole culture evoking the tobacco leaf grown in Cuba by experienced growers and the crafting of a luxury hand-rolled cigar, which imbues the *Habano* with the terroir so coveted by its rivals today. It began in the nineteenth century with French lithography for the richly embossed box labels and cigar bands, and it fired small family firms to fight back against ATC in the 1900s. In the 1920s worker opposition to cigar mechanisation became the fight of a nation. The fight was won, in the form of a ban on mechanisation of cigar rolling, and it wasn't until the 1950s that only a small part of the industry was allowed to mechanise.

The *Habano* didn't go unchallenged after the 1959 Revolution, but the challenges have been much more marked since the 1990s, with costly international court cases, heightened parallel branding, and foreign investment that has upended tenets of the revolution's agrarian reforms, with a return to small farmer as opposed to collective or state organisation of agriculture, as well as fostering a greater appreciation of the craft in cigar manufacture.

[45] https://premiumcigars.org/the-premium-cigar-association-closes-out-a-successful-pca25-trade-show-reveals-dates-for-2026-2029-trade-shows/. Consulted on 25 April 2025.
[46] https://procigar.org. Consulted on 6 March 2025.
[47] https://www.habanos.com/en/habano-festival/ Consulted on 6 March 2025.

Exploring this in the context of comparative history, as in this paper, helps explain defining moments in the history of the *Habano* and its competitor cigars, linked to circuits of people and knowledge in commodity production; the trans-Atlantic Iberian tobacco system that developed; and the broader global political and economic trans-imperial and post-imperial connections permeating both free trade and the long shadow of monopolies, international cartels, parastatals and global corporate conglomerates.

The nineteenth-century German trajectory of Bahian tobacco has its parallel in that of Colombia and the Dominican Republic,[48] supplying dark cigar leaf for Bremen and Hamburg at a time when tobacco imports were a state monopoly in Russia, France, Austria and Italy, and when in Britain and the United States duties even on what was considered poorer quality tobacco, such as that from Brazil and Colombia, were high. The century before it had been the Dutch in Dominican, Puerto Rican and Venezuelan tobacco,[49] but in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries the German-US connection was again strong. In 2024, Fritz Bossert, a 67-year-old veteran of the tobacco trade, died, after a life working in tobacco and travelling the cigar world, in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Paraguay, the Philippines and the United States. Born in Mannheim, Germany, he was raised by a farmer, started working for a small German tobacco company, and in 1996 moved to the United States to work for General Cigar. He then joined the conglomerate Universal Leaf and its subsidiary Lancaster Leaf, selling tobacco from Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa, South and Central America as well as central Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Virginia and Connecticut.[50] Connections such as those his life symbolises are only just beginning to be explored in any great depth.

What is barely touched on here is the labour history, which was ironically my main interest at the very outset of my work on Cuban tobacco, and within labour history the intersectionality of class, race, gender and nation. It is still not fully explained, for example, why in Cuba men should, up until the revolution, have established their place in history as the factory cigar rollers, as they also did in the Canaries, while elsewhere rollers were women. In Bahia many were also black and, as amply documented in recent unpublished dissertations and theses,[51] had to fight over conditions and for their rights, as they also did in the Azores.

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[48] Santiago Colmenares Guerra, *Cosechar para el mundo, pastar para la region: una historia de globalización en los Montes de María (1850-1914)*, Bogota: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2023.

[49] Montserrat Gárate Ojanguren, 'Dos modelos contrapuestos de estanco tabaquero: Cuba y Venezuela. Cambios sectoriales en un mundo globalizado', in Santiago de Luxán (ed.), *La transición del monopolio al libre mercado del tabaco en Cuba, Canarias y Filipinas y otros espacios americanos. Experiencias comparadas*, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Servicio de Publicaciones del Cabildo de Gran Canaria, 2024, pp.283-324; Jean Stubbs, 'Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban Tobacco in the Long Shadow of Monopoly (1717-1930)', in Santiago de Luxán (ed.), *La transición del monopolio al libre mercado del tabaco en Cuba, Canarias y Filipinas y otros espacios americanos. Experiencias comparadas*, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Servicio de Publicaciones del Cabildo de Gran Canaria, 2024, pp.325-64.

[50] https://www.cigaraficionado.com/article/tobacco-veteran-fritz-bossert-dies-at-age-67. Consulted 23 May 2024.

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This is not to say that women were absent in Cuba, far from it, whether in farming households, home and small-shop rolling, or leaf stemming, and many also fought hard for their rights.[52] After the Revolution, women did become rollers, and there are women, many of them black, who have now risen through the ranks of trade, agriculture, and industry, fiercely proud of their cigar culture in what beyond their sector are extremely challenging times for Cuba. They, along with others working in tobacco, merit further comparative study, locally and globally, in a narrative that has been one of shifting cores and peripheries.

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