A SOCIETY-NATURE RELATIONSHIP: THE COCOA CRISIS AND THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT FOR LAND IN SOUTHERN BAHIA (Brazil) IN THE 1990s[1]

Salvador D. P. Trevisan[*]

ABSTRACT -How to understand expansion of the "landless movement" in the cocoa region of the State of Bahia, Brazil? Would general social conditions be able to explain the landless movement at the regional level? Recently developed studies suggest that the cocoa crisis, the witches-broom disease (Crinipellis perniciosa) in particular, would generate a transformation of the land tenure system in the cocoa region of Bahia. In doing so, the cocoa crisis could contribute to an explanation of the social movement's expansion. In order to investigate the possible relationship between the landless movement and the cocoa crisis, data were collected from landless groups in central Bahia's cocoa region from 1980 to 1996. We conclude that a clear relationship exists between witches-broom disease, regional economic destabilization, and expansion of the landless movement in central Bahia's cocoa growing areas.

Key words: Social movement, landless, society-nature relationship.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: DETERMINANT FACTORS

Any social movement is a type of collective behavior; though, not all collective behavior is a social movement. Groups of people searching for radical or reformist social changes gather in a social movement. A

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[*] Sociologist, Ph.D., Researcher of the Cacao Research Center and Professor of the State University of Santa Cruz, Bahia, Brazil. E-mail: salvador@jacaranda.uescba.com.br.

large spectrum of social phenomena may be seen as social movements, from a group of people in the street issuing a manifesto or rioting, to an group uprising or revolution. According to its organization and objectives, a group appealing for land may also be characterized as a social movement.

In the decade of the 1990s, there was an apparent expansion of a social movement among the landless rural workers in the Southern region of Bahia, Brazil, particularly, in the traditional cacao region. This occurred simultaneously with the spread of the witches-broom disease (VB), *Crinipellis perniciosa*; a disease that leads to destruction of cacao plantations, the basis of the regional economy. The simultaneous regional increase of these two different phenomena (social and biological) raises speculations about a relationship between the two and may lead to an understanding of the landless movement in Bahia's cacao region.

To be a successful social movement, literature emphases the needs for a formal internal organization (Wood and Jackson, 1982) and a large number of members (Tilly, 1974). The formal internal organization may define the success of a movement. Organization refers to hierarchy, the levels of internal authority, and to the distinction between leadership and other members and between different leadership levels.

Smelser (Apud, Wood and Jackson, 1982) refers to six conditions that he considers necessary and sufficient to explain the formation and action of a social movement: structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of generalized beliefs, precipitating factors, mobilization of participants for action, and the ineffective operation of social control (such as army, police, religion, authorities in general). He refers to social movements as organizations arising from a larger society that experiences widespread tensions between groups, economic deprivations, the spread of radical ideologies, and the breakdown of social control.

However, enlightened by Smelser's six conditions, one cannot give a satisfactory explanation for the expansion of the landless social movement in Bahia's traditional cacao region, during the period under study. In that movement, one can discern structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of generalized beliefs, mobilization

of participants for action, but not precipitating factors and or a loss of effective social control; it is as effective as ever.

"Structural conduciveness" refers to the political institutional arrangement that allows the rise or expansion of a social movement. Democratic societies, for instance, allow social demonstrations and protests, actions that an authoritarian political structure will not permit. Current Brazilian institutional and political arrangements allow certain kind of protests and mass demonstrations, such as *"diretas já"* ("rights now") in 1984, the impeachment of president Collor in 1992, and the march of the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem-Terra* (Workers without Land Movement or MST)[2] to Brasília in April 1997. Such events are concrete cases of structural conduciveness.

"Structural strain" refers to deprivation, tension, conflict and social disparity, such as unemployment, hunger, group conflict, and threat of war. In Brazil, the social conditions leading to the landless movement, income concentration, land concentration, hunger, unemployment and under employment are typical of the condition of structural strain.

"The spread of beliefs," refers to the spread in awareness of the social problems and their possible solutions, and leads to the spread of general ideologies: democracy, capitalism, communism, socialism, fascism, and so on. It is important that they beliefs spread. In the case of the MST, a set of generalized beliefs has spread among the organization's members. They believe that unemployed is the plight of Brazilian workers They are believe it wasn't chance or lack of desire that displaced the mass of workers from the means of production, land, but the consequence of Brazil's historic power structure: power in the hands of the few. MST's leaders know that political reality can change through the collective mobilization of those who need and desire change; but that mobilization will come only through incessant work to educate the populace. During breaks in the basic instructional routine at the landless people's encampment or settlement "school," MST workers educate the group in their constitutional rights as Brazilian citizens. According to Jacobi

[2] MST is a organization, among many, that strives to improve the life of the landless rural workers and others.

(1990), it is through the process of raising citizen consciousness that the perception of need is linked to claiming actions; and both become forces for social mobilization.

"Mobilization participants for action" refers to mass organizing carried out by the movement's leadership. Organization is seen as necessary for a social movement to become a concrete reality. Regarding the MST, a superficial study is enough to recognize that it as an highly organized social movement, with an internal, well defined hierarchy working together in a participatory fashion.

Peasant social movements always include the participation of other social groups (Goldstone, 1986); the MST is not an exception. Leaders and members of the urban elite are MST participants; though, these participants are usually historically rooted in the rural sector. This outside support makes MST able to lead a social movement for structural social changes not only in the agrarian sector, but also in the society as a whole.

"Precipitating factors" are events that increase privation and social strain and diminish structural conduciveness. The "factors" are related to changes in norms and values; a change in the norms tends toward reform; a change in values tends to be structural or radical. The May 1997 burning in Brasília of the Indian chief Galdino of the Pataxó tribe is a typical precipitating factor. That action provoked national protest and speeded the government confiscation of land to satisfy Indians claims in southern Bahia. It was an event that generated changes in societal norms, a reformist change. Unfortunately, we cannot recognize an event of the same nature related to the landless movement in southern Bahia during that time period.

Though society's perception has been changed, the effectiveness of social control institutions, at either national or regional levels, has not diminished. Nevertheless, landless workers movements in southern Bahia, particularly the MST, have gone through extraordinary expansion in the 90s, especially in the traditional cacao growing region.

Therefore, Smelser's six necessary conditions are neither necessary, nor sufficient to explain the landless social movement's growth in southern Bahia's traditional cacao region. It is possible that the movements growth can be explained by Batista's (1996) psychosocial or cultural factors, the movement members' world view, or by Viola,

Scherer-Warren, and Kirschke's (1989) symbolic-expressive orientation, a generalized awareness of the problems and their solutions.

Certainly, one cannot ignore what happens at the national and international levels, but specific local conditions must be taken into consideration. Perhaps, agrarian reform in Brazil is not occurring in a basic structural and radical way, as the MST organization claims, but is occurring in an attempt to solve local conflicts. In order to test this hypothesis, it is necessary to identify and characterize the specific factors that make the creation of a movement possible at the local level.

THE STRUGGLE FOR LAND AND THE CACAO CRISIS

At the national level, expansion of the landless rural workers movement and the growth of their encampments and settlements is based on social strains. These social strains stem from the concentration of wealth and property, the large number of unemployed and under-employed from the rural sector, and the lack employment opportunities. Agrarian reform legislation has increased the expectation of government mandated property confiscation for redistribution to the landless. This legislation has help calm the unrest of the movement's members; land has acquired a new social function.

The legislation that defined the social function for land, land must be put to productive use to be retained, has also motivated some large rural land owners to make seemingly more profitable use of the land. Unproductive forests have been eliminated to create cattle pasture and thereby avoid land confiscation. This has led to environmental aggression: the removal of vast tracts of forest for marginally beneficial ends.

Therefore, a combination of social pressures, a magnified land ownership inequalities, and a failing productive system have combined to initiate a social movement. Legislation may be seen as a peaceful stimulator of the movement by defining a social function of land as a criterion for land possession. Though, legislation should not been seen as a causal effect; eventually the landless movement would have occurred, though probably in a more confrontational manner: social movements are typically on the marginal side of the law up to the moment that the movement's cause becomes hegemonic and both

legally and socially recognized.

To understand the 1990s growth of a social movement for land in southern Bahia, one must examine the breakdown of the region's economic base: the cacao system. The system's collapse made conditions viable for the regional expansion of a social movement. This paper will proceed to analyze the relationship between the landless movement and the cacao crisis in southern Bahia.

Southern Bahia's cacao farmers have suffered a dramatic reduction in capital due to declining real prices and increasing production costs. The purchase of disease control inputs[3], particularly for the control of VB, was driving the cane farmers out of business; and the regional economy was suffering. Over the century of cacao cultivation in southern Bahia, it had risen to a position of dominance in the region's economy. Cacao was the economic key, especially in an area between the Contas river, in the region's north, and the Pardo river, in the south; a strip about 50 km wide beginning at the Atlantic Cost (Figure 1). Given market trends and the technological state of cacao disease control measures, the de-capitalized, already indebted farmers found that the cacao production business had become uninteresting.

After these negative economic developments, it is possible to predict that one of the following trends would develop among cacao growers; the substitution of another, more valuable crop for cacao on the large farming operations; or the division of the large farms into small plots on which a portion of the cacao crop, along with other crops, would be cultivated in a family farm system. Should the large farming operation be unable to adapt it's production to another crop quickly, the price of land will tend to decline, farm investments will be drastically reduced, and large farms will be abandoned, divided, or sold. The share cropping system may possibly be an alternative for large farms threatened by VB, or it may be the first step in a process of change over to a family farming system.

In an earlier paper, Trevizan (1996) found signs of a land concentration process and increased socioeconomic disruption due to

[3] Information about stable trend of declining prices and increasing costs of production due to higher demand for labor and chemicals for disease control have been based on data available in the Socioeconomic Sector, at the Cacao Research Center/CEPLAC.

the presence VB in Bahia. That phenomenon was observed five years after the identification of the disease in southern Bahia, but at this time it is not certain that this trend will continue. It has been argued (Trevizan e Silva Junior, 1995) that structural changes in the land tenure system, and in regional society, would continue until a new, more stable productive structure was designed.

Despite of the fact that some cacao farmers are turning to alternative crops to replace cacao, a large portion of cacao growers facing VB are discouraged. The low price for cacao beans are driving them to abandon their productive activities and sell their farms. However, their desire to get rid the farm is thwarted by the regionally depressed market for farm land, due to property oversupply brought on by crisis[4]. Under these conditions, both farming and land sale are unattractive, and retention of unproductive land becomes a viable alternative. Unfortunately, this is a short term solution for the majority of farmers.

On one hand, farmers are more than willing to desert their land; hundreds of farms are already abandoned or semi-abandoned. On the other hand, thousands of workers have been displaced from cacao farms and are struggling to survive. Meanwhile, MST's organization grows throughout the nation. These are excellent conditions for growth of landless movement's in the first half of the 1990s in southern Bahia. The social movement, MST, may become a mechanism for land redistribution in the cacao crisis region with VB as coadjutant.

Based on the conditions discussed previously in this paper, and on personal field observations, **the hypothesis** is advanced that there was growth in the landless movement during the '90s in Bahia's traditional cacao region, and that the movement was significantly associated to the VB disease.

To correlate the spread of VB with the spread of the landless movement, and consequently, to the process of land redistribution in the cacao region, one must know if the spread of VB is associated with the formation of the landless unemployed's encampments and settlements. One musk ask, are the encampments' members from cacao farms; and have they joined the landless movement because they were

[4] We estimate that, from 1985 to 1995, there was a decrease of about 80 percent in the price of land with cacao in Bahia.

displaced from cacao farms or just dissatisfied with the job they had there ?

As **specific objectives**, encampments and settlements have been identified that were created in Bahia's traditional cacao growing region between 1980 and 1995. The encampments were erected under the direction of the *Movimento dos Sem Terra* (MST), the *Movimento de Luta Pela Terra* (MLT), and the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (CPT). Later, we will examine where the landless movement's members have come from—from cacao farms or from farms growing other crops, from urban or rural locations, from a past with historical agricultural links or not—and the reasons group members may have had for becoming involved in the movement.

CONCEPTS

Before proceeding to methodological considerations, it may be necessary to delineate the differences between **encampment** and **settlement.** Both are steps of the same process: re-structuring the land tenure system to provide social re-organization of production. An encampment precedes a settlement, and is a place from which political pressure is applied and the members social education occurs. Encampments are full with external and internal conflicts. External conflicts come from disputes between the group and the land owner and between the group and State agencies. Internal conflicts come from the difficulty in adapting to new types of behavior, from particular and collective demands, and from the unequal acceptance of the organization's ideology. With the exception of the leaders, we found that there was dissatisfaction with the idea of working, planting, and distributing collectively, despite of the general agreement that working collectively is the only alternative for the poor. One may argue that the encampment is where one lives during a phase of group learning, growth, and deprivation. The survival of the group during this period is made possible by members work, by help from State agencies for agrarian reform (INCRA), by some municipal administrations, and by the local community. An encampment can be recognized by the number of provisional huts roofed with a black plastic.

The Settlement phase is marked by the end of the conflicts that

arose out of the struggle for land. At this point, according to Caldart (1996), the group structure has been established and production, organization, and community norms have been achieved. The work to build the individual, family, and community future starts here. The group's survival rests on its production. The provisional huts have been replaced by solid housing, built with stones, brick, and cement, and roofed with ceramic tile.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Two units of investigation with different dimensions were used for this study: the group (encampment or settlement) at the macro level, and members of the group at the micro level.

The identification of regional encampments and settlements was made over the telephone in conversations with local movement leaders and leaders at the regional office in the city of Itabuna. Interviews were held with leaders of MST's organization in Itabuna and with leaders of local encampments and settlements. There were dynamic, rapid, close relationships built, generally through person to person contact or by telephone. These relationships were made with members of unaffiliated groups and members of groups belonging to the same organization.

In May 1989, VB disease was first identified in southern Bahia. We use that date as the starting point for isolating demographic changes. However, in order to increase data reliance, we decided to identify encampments and settlements that were formed between 1980 and 1996, and interview members from groups that were formed after 1989.

We interviewed a sample of 113 members from five of the six landless groups identified and formed in the 1990s. The six groups identified belong to the MST, MLT, and CPT organizations[5]. The sample design required accidental meetings with a family member registered in the landless movement. This person was interviewed in his/her encampment/settlement. In order to meet people, interviewers walked

[5] One of the six groups was subdivided into three sub-groups each united with a different organization, as shown in Table 1.

through all the huts or houses. Sometimes, movement members were interviewed at their place of work —*roça*— or as they were returning from work. The interview was held in a semi-structured way; the topics of the questions were consistent from respondent to respondent; and the respondent was left free to answer in whatever form he/she desired. In this way we were able to get more historical detail about each individual.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In November and December of 1996, we identified eleven groups (encampments/settlements) all formed between 1980 and the end of 1996. Five groups were formed prior to the year VB was recognized in southern Bahia, and six were formed after the disease's outbreak. The five groups formed prior to the VB's outbreak are all located on tracts which were the sights of old property conflicts north of the traditional cacao region. Prior to the outbreak of VB, no landless movement groups had been formed in the traditional cacao growing region[6]. In the 1990s, there was growth in the formation of groups connected with the landless movement, at the same time that the impact of VB was being felt in the cacao economy. All six groups formed in the 1990s were located in the center of the traditional cacao zone (Table 1). With few exceptions, all study-groups belong to the landless movement led by MST.

The relationship of VB to the landless movement in the central cacao region is evidenced in the data found in Tables 1 and 2.

[6] Several agrarian reform settlements were formed before that period in southern Bahia, close to the Atlantic Coast, but all were formed by isolated people venturing to conquer a piece of land. Progressing that way, many get together without being socially, politically and economically organized.

Table 1- Landless groups in the southern Bahia cacao region, formed between 1980 and 1996

Encampment / Settlement	Municipality	Year	Number of Members
VilaTancredo Neves	W. Guimarães	1985	67
Riacho do Mucungo	W. Guimarães	1985	-
Novo Horizonte	W. Guimarães	1985	150
Vila Boa Esperança	Valença	1986	70
Mariana	Camamu	1988	28
Terra a Vista	Arataca	1992	100
Conjunto Conceição (3 grupos)*	Ilhéus (Japú)	1993	100
Luanda	Itajuípe	1995	129
Nova Ipiranga	Camacan	1996	129
Oregon	Uruçuca	1996	40
Piedade/Taboquinhas*	Una	1996	60
Total			**849**

Source: Regional Office of MST in Itabuna, BA.

* Landless groups not led by the MST organization.

Table 2- Landless groups in southern Bahia's central cacao region, before and after the outbreak of witches-broom disease (VB).

Cacao Central Zone	Before VB	After VB	Total
Inside	0	6	6
Outside	5	0	5
Total	5	6	11

The data in Figure 2 shows significant macro level association between VB and the landless movement in southern Bahia's central cacao region. Fisher's test (Apud, Siegel, 1976) applied to the values in Table 2 shows that $p \leq 0{,}0022 < \alpha = 0{,}01$. If p is lower than α, at 0.01 level of significance, then a significant difference exists in landless group formation in the central cacao zone before and after VB.

At the micro level of analysis, looking at individual involvement in the landless movement, data show that 62% of the six groups' members come from cacao farms; however, there is great difference between the six groups, from 44% in Loanda to 82% in Nova Ipiranga. Of these six groups, 21% of the members come from farms engaged in other types of farming, such as growing rubber, coconut, palm oil trees, and cattle ranching. Seventeen percent of the cases come from the urban

locals, but many of them have some history linked with agricultural activities. Just 8 percent of the group members have no history related to the rural sector (Table 3).

Table 3- Last place of employment before moving into the landless movement's encampment or settlement

Encampment/ Settlement	Cacao farm	%	Other farms	%	Urban sector	%	Without rural history	%
Nova Ipiranga	14/17	82	3/17	18	00/17	00	00/17	00
Loanda	08/18	44	04/18	22	06/18	33	02/18	11
Terra à Vista	15/22	68	04/22	18	03/22	14	04/22	18
Conjunto Conceição	22/32	69	02/32	06	08/32	25	03/32	09
Piedade/ Taboquinhas	11/24	46	11/24	46	02/24	08	00/24	00
Total	**70/113**	**62**	**24/113**	**21**	**19/113**	**17**	**09/113**	**08**

Source: Research data.

This data confirms the hypothesis that there is a relationship between the landless movement's expansion and the cacao crisis. According to Memória (1960:101-3), a statistical test can be conducted using the data provided in Tables 3, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4- Origins of the landless group members in Bahia's cacao region

Frequency	Coming from Cacao farm	Coming from other crop farm	Total
Observed	70.0	43.0	113
Expected	56.5	56.5	

χ-square obtained = 13.49 > 6.64 (theoretical); significant at 0.01, with 1 d. f.

In case of an independent relationship between the cacao crisis and membership in one of the landless movements, observed data should not have a significant difference from the expected ones. The obtained χ - square shows that both variables have a strong relationship, at 0.01 level of significance and 1 degree of freedom.

Data shows that unemployment or unstable work relationships caused by the cacao crisis, by VB in particular, have stimulated rural workers to move into the landless movement. All those at the encampments who had worked on cacao farms had been dismissed or had left the job because of the unstable work environment. The problems caused by an unsettled work relationship can be grasped from reading the interviewees' words.

Adalgiso, 53, lives outside his family. He said, *"he was a rural worker in Camacan municipality. Later on, he worked as a sharecropper... The witches-broom and fire have destroyed the cacao plantation of the farm. After that, I came into the Movement."*

Lourival, 41, lives with his wife and children. He argues that farmers are not interested in making investments in their farms. He moved into the landless movement because the cacao crisis generated general lethargy: *"with the witches-broom, people were getting cool* (lazy)."

Nestor, 70, lives with his wife and grandchildren. He observed that in the current situation, agriculture does not generate employment in his region; and he said that he, *"worked on another farm in Arataca. I left the farm and enter into the Movement to get a piece of land. Farms do not support anybody nowadays."* He talks about unemployment and the dissatisfaction of having to work for someone else; a situation in which one has no control of one's own work. The old, ever present, rural workers dream for land has been strengthened by the cacao crisis.

Following the same dream, Maurino, 39, who does not live with his family, said, *"The boss asked me to leave and return after three months... I heard that people were going to move to this land ... I moved... It is much better to be on one's own place. People raise livestock as they want."* The unstable labor relationship offered by the farmer was the conditioning factor of worker's involvement in the Movement.

Similarly, Rosivaldo, 43, who lives with his wife and four children, informed us that he *"worked in Camacan. The witches-broom arrived and the boss was willing to start a new contract after three months off the job... I did not accept his proposition."*

The same unstable labor relationship is expressed by Sito, 39, living with his wife and six children: *"I did not find a job with the work booklet assigned by the employer."*

Jose Dias, 52, living with his wife, got into the Movement because

of the uncertainty of his living situation; he didn't know if he had a job from one day to the next: *"I worked on a farm in Arataca. I could only get job for one or two weeks or, at most, three months. After that I was let go."*

The same thing happened to Osvaldo, 45, who lives with his wife and two children. He said, "I *got a job on a cacao farm, but it was one day on, one day off."*

The workers viewed the cacao crisis, and VB in particular, as a force supporting the land movement on the side of the less fortunate. They believed that the land movement would start a process of land tenure de-concentration to counteract the trend toward the concentration of land tenure occurring in the cacao region. (Trevizan, 1996). Those two opposing, simultaneous processes will be better understood from the progress of facts over the next years. Probably, only one will be dominant, which depends on market alternatives, agrarian policy, and the technological conditions existing in regional agriculture.

Data from this research also suggest that, besides the cacao crisis, other factors are affecting the process of restructure in the system of land tenure. In some encampments, the percentage of workers coming from farms that do not grow cacao suggests a crisis in the primary agricultural sector as well. Beside problems in the productive sector, there are problems of a social nature. A high percentage of aged people were found living in some encampments. Generally, workers of the Movement fit into age groups as follows: 63% are 45 or older; 16% are between 35 and 45; and 21% are less than 35 years old.

The trend in the labor market is to dismiss older workers, even though they cannot be classified as "aged" people. Once an older worker is fired, he is out of the labor market forever. The struggle for a piece of land becomes paramount; it is his only chance to survive. The presence of many old farm workers in the landless movement is understandable. The Movement gives them the opportunity to obtain land without violent conflict. In this sense, the cacao crisis helped landless people. The crisis created abandoned and semi-abandoned farm land for occupancy. If a large farming unit no longer satisfied the social function of land, it could be seized under agrarian reform laws.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the relationship between the social movement for land and the cacao crisis in Bahia and the analysis of the landless movement's members discourse suggest a close relationship between the movement and the crisis, especially as the effect of VB expands. This relationship shows a connection between biological and social phenomena. The destruction of regional agriculture's productive structure generated favorable conditions for the growth of the landless movement throughout the region. Growth that occurred without violent conflicts between the landless people and the land owners. The owners lost their farms because production no longer paid enough, and the landless moved in.

If there are regional factors explaining the phenomena under study, there is also evidence that the agricultural sector, in general, is unable to create new jobs that provide minimal conditions for social well-fare. This situation can be seen in the landless movement's membership: the percentage of landless families coming from farms not growing cacao and the percentage of old workers struggling for the survival.

Finally, expansion of the landless movement at the regional level may be explained by the universal factors found in the growth of a social movement: structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of generalized beliefs, alternative solutions, member mobilization, and leadership. Yet, a case can also be made that specific and local factors, such as de-structuring of a regional productive system, have to be taken into consideration as well.

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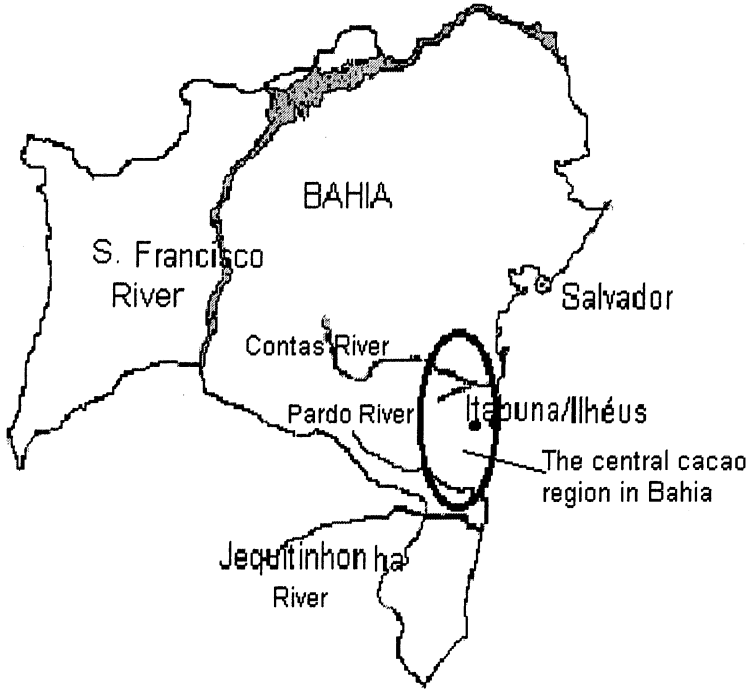

FIGURE 1. The Central Cacao Region in the State of Bahia, Brazil.