

## Project from the Institute for Economic and Social History receives the *Digital Humanities Prize* at the XIX World Economic History Congress

The project “Labor, livelihood, and immigration in a Brazilian plantation: the archives of the Ibicaba farm (1845-1975)” was awarded the *Digital Humanities Prize*, category *Science Outreach* at the World Economic History Congress. The 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the congress was held in Paris in July 25-29, 2022; the *French Association of Economic History* chaired the sessions on Digital Humanities.

The “Ibicaba project” was conducted by Dr. Bruno Witzel de Souza at the *Institute for Economic and Social History*, University of Goettingen. It started in 2019 after being selected for the *Modern Endangered Archive Program* – a partnership between the *Arcadia Fund* and the *University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)*. Together with a team in Brazil led by Mr. Leonardo Santin Gardenal, Dr. Witzel de Souza coordinated the creation of an entirely new archive at the homonymous plantation in Brazil and the digitization of its content, making all material available in an open-access and user-friendly platform (<https://meap.library.ucla.edu/ibicaba-farm>).

More than 150 thousand high-quality images were produced for more than 200 unique ledgers, books, booklets, and historical documents that compose Ibicaba’s new archive. The high-frequency data that will be derived from this material cover almost 150 years of the farm’s administration and of laborers’ accountings. These unique data are expected to provide new insights into the long-run history of wellbeing, labor productivity, and socioeconomic inequalities for some crucial junctures of Latin American history.

Besides its potential for scientific research, another outcome of the project was the preservation of the historical documents in the Brazilian countryside. Fulfilling the goal of preserving cultural heritage in projects of Digital Humanities, the material in the new archive has already been used to foster ecological-historical tourism in the region and to foment new pedagogical tools for the teaching of local history framed into a global context.

The *French Association of Economic History* decided to award the *Digital Humanities Prize* to the “Ibicaba Project” for its massive digitalization process and for its manifold contributions, actual and potential, to scientific outreach in education, arts, and local development.

### *Ibicaba plantation*

Ibicaba was one of the most important plantations in Brazilian history, particularly in its heydays in the nineteenth century. Besides a number of technological innovations introduced in Brazilian agricultural production, that plantation is best-known for an institutional innovation, as it was the first to employ European indentured laborers – mostly Germans, Swiss, and Portuguese immigrants. This pioneering position and the various experiments made with labor arrangements since the 1840s were crucial for positioning Brazil into the circuits of the *Age of Mass Migration*. At the same time, coffee production at Ibicaba remained mostly in the hands of the largest number of enslaved Africans and African-Brazilians in the region.

Dr. Witzel de Souza highlights the relevance of these circumstances for research: “The documents digitized in the plantation are mostly from the post-abolition period, *i.e.* after 1888. Nonetheless, we have identified a number of individuals who can be categorized by their skin colors and lack of surnames as ex-slaves. This will allow us to trace, with microdata spanning for more than a century,

some of the origins of the staggering ethnolinguistic inequalities in economic wealth, income, and nutritional status that persist in Brazil to this day and constitutes one the country's most pressing challenges”.

### *Modern Endangered Archive Program*

The “Ibicaba project” is part of a larger digitalization program named *Modern Endangered Archive Program (MEAP)*, a cooperation between the *Library of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)* and the *Arcadia Fund*.

With a call for applications open for its fifth cohort until November 2022, MEAP aims at preserving and digitizing cultural heritage at-risk for a number of reasons, including environmental risk and climate change, political and social strife, and inadequate local storage.

All digitized material is available at <http://meap.library.ucla.edu>. The platform also contains ample documentation on professional digitalization, metadata creation, and archivist preservation. Its open source materials are constantly updated with the findings of each new cohort, as well as with their expertise and inputs in handling the challenges of cultural heritage preservation, from Afghanistan to Albania.