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Miguel Ángel Quintero López





FEEDING THE FARMER, OR TAKING FOOD AWAY FROM THE FARMER? THE EXPANSION OF THE AGRICULTURAL FRONTIER IN COLOMBIA*

¿ALIMENTAR AL CAMPESINO, O QUITARLE LA COMIDA AL CAMPESINO? LA EXPANSIÓN DE LA FRONTERA AGRÍCOLA EN COLOMBIA

Miguel Ángel Quintero López**

Abstract

This paper analyses the expansion of the agricultural frontier in Colombia using the theories of Marx and Ricardo to understand which of them is closer to the Colombian process. This essay begins with a theoretical framework that defines the theories of both authors. Then, the most important moments of the expansion of the agricultural frontier are presented: the colonization of Antioquia and the expansion of the agricultural frontier between 1936 and 1972. A justification and representation of these

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processes are built from historical works on the topic. Finally, a balance of the overall process and missing areas of investigation are presented.

Keywords: agricultural frontier expansion, antioquean colonization, Colombia, economic history, economic theory, land ownership; JEL: N96, Q15, R52.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la expansión de la frontera agrícola en Colombia utilizando las teorías de Marx y Ricardo para comprender a cuál de ellas está más cerca del proceso colombiano. El ensayo comienza con un marco teórico que define los postulados de ambos autores. Luego, se presentan los momentos más importantes de la expansión de la frontera agrícola: la colonización antioqueña y la expansión de la frontera agrícola entre 1936 y 1972. Se construye una justificación y representación de estos procesos a partir de algunos trabajos históricos sobre el tema. Finalmente, se presenta un resumen del proceso general y las áreas potenciales de futuras investigaciones.

Palabras clave: expansión de la frontera agrícola, colonización antioqueña, Colombia, historia económica, teoría económica, tenencia de la tierra; JEL: N96, Q15, R52.

INTRODUCTION

Colombia has had a complex history regarding its lands. From being its main riches, to causing multiple conflicts, land has undoubtedly been of vital importance to the country. Nevertheless, it has not always been like that. Most of the country was unpopulated before the XIX century, when Antioquia's population colonized a considerable part of it. Afterwards, in the XX century, the rest of the land was inhabited. The state regulated land appropriation during the most important periods: in 1936 and 1961. The last reform fell in 1972, paving the way to a process with different characteristics. Thus, expansion is considered between these dates. And, since both the Antioquean colonization

and the one in the XX century were of tremendous importance, this essay analyses them both. Thus, the question is if the expansion of the agricultural frontier in Colombia could be understood as a measure to meet food demand and increase productivity, or rather as a result of displacement because of the primitive accumulation of a capitalist class.

To answer the question, this essay analyses both processes of the expansion of the agricultural frontier with the theory of Ricardo, who writes about land rent and agricultural production in England at his time, and Marx, who does so for Europe at his time while adding the analysis of property and its history.

The essay is structured beginning with a theoretical frame defining both Ricardo's and Marx's theories. Then, the Antioquean colonization (Colonización Antioqueña) is examined, both historically and theoretically. Finally, the same is done for the expansion of the agricultural frontier between the years 1936 and 1972. The Antioquean colonization in the XIX century is object of investigation of this essay since it was the first big process of land appropriation and expansion of the agricultural frontier, and since it contrasts with that of the rest of the country. For the process in the XX century, the years 1936 to 1972 are chosen since they comprise some of the most important laws on agriculture and rural property, but also because it was the most important period for the expansion of the agricultural frontier.

THEORETICAL FRAME

In order to proceed with the analysis, it is necessary to expound Ricardo's theory. To begin with, it is important to note that Ricardo never historicized the appropriation of land, and that he explored the ownership of land just from his interest in understanding how rent is defined socially. From this point of view, this essay deduces how Ricardo thinks society starts cultivating new lands and its effects, in order to consider them in Colombia.

Firstly, rent is "that portion of the produce of the earth, which is paid to the landlord for the use of the original and indestructible powers of the soil" (Ricardo, 2001, p. 39). Thus, rent is different from produces or capitals applied in the land.

Ricardo proceeds to state that “if it [the land] were unlimited in quantity, and uniform in quality, no charge would be made for its use, unless where it possessed peculiar advantages of situation” (Ibid, p. 41). Thus, rent only exists because land is limited, different (in quality) and differently situated.

Ricardo starts by explaining the situation of lands in the origins of a given society. “On the first settling of a country, in which there is an abundance of rich and fertile land (...) there will be no rent; for no one would pay for the use of land, when there was an abundant quantity not yet appropriated” (Ricardo, 2001, p. 40). Nevertheless, “because land is not unlimited in quantity and uniform in quality, and because in the progress of the population, land of an inferior quality, or less advantageously situated, is called into cultivation, that rent is ever paid for the use of it” (Ibid, p. 41). Here one can deduce the reason, then, for expanding the agricultural frontier: either because lands are of better quality or better situation, or because population grows and must produce food to sustain itself.

Coming back to rent, it is stated that it exists because different lands have different qualities. Thus, “When (...) land of the second degree of fertility is taken into cultivation, rent immediately commences on that of the first quality, and the amount of that rent will depend on the difference in the quality of these two portions of land” (Ricardo, 2001, p. 41). Why emphasize on rent? Because it is the most important indicator that new lands have been appropriated, along with indicators of the reasons aforementioned, such as population growth or occupation of better lands. Basically, it is possible to affirm that the process can be considered Ricardian when there is expansion of plantations because of population growth, or because production is moved to lands of better quality, be it in fertility, situation, access, or resources available.

In opposition to Ricardo, Marx historicized and explored in depth the process by which lands are appropriated. He called this the process of primitive accumulation. It is important to keep in mind that this process cannot be separated from Marx’s bigger process of capitalist development. In this essay, it will be limited to the primitive accumulation process, though the capitalistic elements, such as capitalists or landlords, will be analysed, in order to be in accord with Marx’s theory.

Firstly, “The so-called primitive accumulation isn’t more than the *historical process of dissociation between the producer and the means of production*” (Marx [1], 2008, p. 447). Thus, it is also a process of concentration of means of production. In this context, “all transformations that serve as support to the incipient capitalist class are important” (Ibid [2], p. 448), since the class is characterized by the exclusive owning of the means previously mentioned.

Marx stated that land was the first means of production. Thus, “the base of this process is the expropriation that deprives the rural producer, the farmer, of his or her land” (Marx [3], 2008, p. 448). This essay analyses the agricultural frontier in Colombia as the base of the process of deprivation of means of production from the producer. Of course, focus will be given to the first means of production: land.

In his theory, Marx describes how the accumulation occurred in England, since he considers it to be the ‘most pure’ process. Although no comparison will be made, the description has some elements that can support the analysis. Firstly, “The houses of farmers and residences of workers were violently razed or surrendered to later become a ruin” (Marx [4], 2008, p. 449). Then, “These elements consecrated the new era [capitalists and landlords who made surplus], *pillaging public domain terrains* in gigantic dimensions” (Ibid [5], p. 449). Public domains were not the same in England, where they were common lands for free peasants, as in Colombia, where they were lands owned by the state. Nevertheless, it could be a relevant step. Afterwards, “*Law itself becomes device of this pillage of people’s goods*” (Ibid [6], p. 451). Finally, “The last great process of expropriation of farmers is the so-called *clearing of states (...)* (which really consisted in sweeping aside men)” (Ibid [8], p. 452).

Marx mentions that this process had three effects, namely “capitalist agriculture was paved the way, capital was invested in the land and a proletariat, free and deprived of their means of production, emerged” (Marx [9], 2008, p. 453). As Marx was referring to the English case, it cannot be expected to happen in the exact same way in Colombia. Nevertheless, these will be taken as indicators of the process of primitive accumulation. Summarizing, it is possible to speak of primitive accumulation when

there is separation of producer and means of production, especially of land, at a time when most producers have their own means.

Given this, it is important to emphasize that the processes studied are *expansions* of the agricultural frontier. Despite the fact that land tenancy and use in Colombia has been shaped by many other factors, and at many other times, only *expansions* of the agricultural frontiers, in the precise sense of the term, are the matter of the essay. The agricultural frontier is understood as the frontier which separates cultivated and populated from non-cultivated and, most of the time, non-populated lands.

To analyse the expansions from a theoretical perspective, they are considered in the aspects regarded relevant by both authors, along with the individual aspects of each theory. These aspects are lands, their characteristics and use, population (separating classes if necessary), demand (food, or other products) and markets (internal and external). Although the Antioquean colonization was given throughout the XIX century, only these specific aspects will be regarded, considering them through the whole century. For the expansion of the agricultural frontier in the XX century (simply called expansion of the agricultural frontier), 1936 and 1972 were crucial dates for agrarian reforms. In 1972, context and land appropriation changed, reason for which the essay is limited to this date. The term “proletarian” is taken in the sense of the classical works of Marx: a series of people who have nothing to sell other than their workforce in order to survive. In this text, it is merely a consequence and indicator of a process of primitive accumulation.

ANTIOQUEAN COLONIZATION

Antioquia was always an exception in the country. Besides cultural and economic differences, it was a region separated by peculiar geographic characteristics. Nevertheless, its geographical position favoured the mining and manufacturing industries, which later joined the export market.

In colonial times, “Colombia was characterized by an initial distribution of lands and other economic resources according to criteria of race (...) the exceptions were

Antioquia and Santander” (Kalmanovitz [4], 2010, p. 218). Thus, Antioquia had a system that did not support concentration of lands in the privileged races. That way, “no big farms nor large amounts of farmers with wages and without land were formed (...) consequently, society was more egalitarian” (Tirado [1], 1979, p. 215). Although it has been criticized that concentration in Antioquia has turned the region unproductive (Córdoba et al, 2017), it refers to more recent times and does not affect the colonization.

In 1851, Antioquia abolished slavery, giving way to freer work relations (Brew, 2000). It was “In [these] lands colonized by medium and small farmers from Antioquia (...) [that] freer work relationships prevailed since colonial times” (Kalmanovitz [3], 2010, p. 217). Thus, it was pioneer in establishing modern forms of labour and market.

In regard to the lands, it is important to note that “American lands were classified with another roman juridical fiction: *res nullius* (...) that means the good has no owner and can be gained through conquest or occupation” (Palacios [4], 2011, p. 27). Since the state did not have control over most of the territory, it was taken as *res nullius*. Thus, given their attractiveness as lands to be won, “Wastelands (...) forced Antioquean migration to the south” (Martínez [1], 2009, p. 7).

A second factor that paved the way to the process was that “agricultural land close to Rionegro was divided in plots that got smaller each time (...) [and] were decreasing their fertility, generating an excessive lack of food this way” (Martínez [3], 2009, p. 9). There are two parallel processes here. First, land was beginning to get scarce. Second, the quality of land was declining. Thus, colonization was a measure in search for more and better lands.

Besides these two factors, population increased, which also led to the fact that “migration [was considered] as the only way to survive for poor smallholder families” (Brew [2], 2000, p. 16). Thus, colonization was a measure for these poor families in search for more food, given their new members.

These families that were growing in size experienced a change where “The free ‘mazamorrero’ [an independent miner] replaced the slave” (Brew [1], 2000, p. 20). Given this, “The most important consequence was the expansion of buying capacity” (Tirado, 1979, p. 215), integrating the new workers into the market.

Simultaneously, at the time of colonization, the country was beginning to plant coffee. Coffee is a product that can be grown without the need for much capital or storage, that implies only low transportation costs, and does not require big investments or extensions to be profitable. Thus, “As the new product [coffee] reaches the small property, income is also distributed more widely, incorporating the farmer into the market” (Sevilla [2], nd, p. 199). In this way, small amounts of capitals were formed, to be later invested in the industry (Sevilla, nd).

But this was not the only class involved in the process. “The new commercial landlords class (...) invested capital in the land with the explicit purpose of exploiting it for their long-term interests” (Brew[3], 2000, p. 141). Thus, a landlords’ class was eager to industrialize the fields, and formed part of the process of colonization.

The state also played a role. While targeting the aforementioned landlords’ class, “through the incentive of colonization, (...) [the state] would create a market of lands” (Martínez [4], 2009, p. 15). Thus, appropriation by the landlords did not happen through conquest of *res nullius*, as by the farmers. It happened through this market, where buying capacity determined distribution.

Nevertheless, this was not the only method for acquiring them. Pacts with the state, and several tricks, by misinterpreting the law, were also in the landlords’ repertoire. Some landlords created enterprises that focused on a business based on these lands. Two were particularly famous:

The enterprise [Burila], just as that of Gonzáles Salazar, begin to show a persistent interest in neighboring lands, starting a harsh battle to get them (...) and turning themselves owner of 120000 ha, acquiring more than half of the current territory of Quindío. (Martínez [8], 2009, p. 19)

Quindío, Armenia and Caldas were one of the provinces created by the colonization, as well as the north of Cauca and Tolima. Enterprises accumulated lands without perfect competition, since only two enterprises took more than half of one of the provinces.

However, historic records show that “These lands began to be occupied only until civil wars originated (...) [or] in search for new opportunities in exporting agricultural

products” (Martínez [2], 2009, p. 7). Of course, violence would have driven people out of their lands towards new ones. While violence drove out mainly peasants, big companies were formed once colonization had begun and became a lucrative business.

On the other hand, exporting incentives were strong at the time. “European industrial development growingly demanded raw materials (...) [and] also a growing demand for eatable products (...) intensified its commerce with those who could provide raw materials” (Sevilla [1], nd, p. 196). One of these countries was Colombia, whose agriculture adapted to exporting needs. Thus, the new lands that were occupied in order to export its harvest formed part of the colonization but did not precisely serve to satisfy the country’s own food demand.

As mentioned, lands were scarce, worsening in quality and population was growing. These are all factors crucial to the process described by Ricardo: in order to avoid famine, more lands must be cultivated. Besides, both a population growth, which translates into need for more land, and search for better lands could be observed. Besides, coffee helped accumulate small amounts of capitals and redistribute earnings, allocating profits to the same cultivators, who got no rent, as Ricardo stated in his theory. These are all arguments to support the assertion that the process follows Ricardo’s description. Besides, landlords invested capital in lands, suggesting that lands were appropriated for reasons of productivity.

On the other hand, there are processes that cannot be explained by Ricardo’s theory. Firstly, landlords appropriated lands through the market, paving the way to an elitist system of appropriation in which the state cooperated with enterprises. These enterprises concentrated lands severely and did not necessarily meet food demands. In addition, exporting incentives induced people to colonize, and they did not satisfy food demand but rather external demands. These arguments seem to support the theory that the process is a primitive accumulation. Although satisfaction of external demand is not mentioned explicitly in the theory, it can be considered as a capitalist production in which the earth is the mean of production, thus being acquired by capitalist landlords.

Nevertheless, it is also true that farmers acquired freedom during the process. Although it resembles what Marx describes, many of them were not separated from their lands. Instead, the lands integrated them into the market; but not as proletarians, but as owners of their own land, which they themselves cultivated. Thus, it is not a process of separation of producer and means of production.

In addition, it is true that violence drove people out of their lands, but it is not confirmed that violence was exerted by enterprises or capitalists to gain land. They used violence through the law, and appropriated large areas of land in search for riches, but they did not wipe out small property and neither did they separate all producers from their means of production. Thus, it is possible to speak of two parallel processes, one where small farmers were driven out by violent situations, in need of food and better lands, being a process just as Ricardo describes it. Simultaneously, capitalists made a business out of the colonization, using violent methods to appropriate and concentrate land. It is like a process of primitive accumulation, except that it did not create a proletariat separate from means of production, and that it was made by an *already existing* capitalist class, not by an emerging one.

EXPANSION OF THE AGRICULTURAL FRONTIER

Expansion of the agricultural frontier in the XX century, contrary to that in the XIX century, was regulated by the law. Three laws were passed to ensure a reform for the rural parts of Colombia. The first of these laws was the “Law 200 from 1936 (...) [that] was meant to establish an order of territorial property which enabled the state to gain back control over an ample proportion of illegally appropriated lands” (Fajardo [1], 2014, p. 33). The second one was the “Law 135 from 1961, through which the agrarian social reform was established, [which was] formally rejected by landlords and agrarian businessmen” (Fajardo [2], 2014, p. 34).

The third one created the conflict that brought Law 135/1961 to an end in 1972. “The open conflict between the rent-paying, precarious farmers and the owners got

out of control after Law 1 of 1968 (...) that ordered to assign the property of occupied lands to small tenants” (Reyes [5], 2016, p. 32). After that law was eliminated, a new form of colonization was established, along with new actors and new motives. Thus, the process after 1972 exceeds the limits of this essay.

To begin, it is of utter importance to define the context. It has been said that Antioquia and Santander were the exceptions. Exceptions to what? Mainly, a labour model: “In the remaining regions (...) a system rose (...) under relationships with greater or lesser degrees of serfdom and with no property rights” (Kalmanovitz [5], 2010, p. 218). As a consequence of the labor model, one of ownership of estate, where farmers had no property, arose. It was the second characteristic; making the process much like a serfdom system.

In the previous century, “the central state or sovereign states (...) gave land in great quantities to soldiers, politicians and lenders of the government or to simple influential personalities in the local political scene (...) [and] increased inequality relating to the access to the fundamental resource at the time” (Kalmanovitz [1], 2010, p. 216). After that, in 1926, “A sentence of the Supreme Court of Justice (...) questioned legal ownership of a vast amount of lands (...) turning them into *res nullius*” (Palacios [5], 2011, p. 32). Thus, large areas of land were available to conquer through sweat and toil.

30 years later, in 1954, the repercussions of past incidents were still remarkable:

Out of 800 000 rural owners, more than half only had plots with an average size of less than 2 ha and occupied no more than 3,5% of the occupied land at the time, less than 60% of the active rural population, around 1 200 000 farmers had no land; at the same time, no more than 25 000 owners, which amounts to 3% of the farmers, monopolized 55% of usable lands “not cultivated to a great extent or used extensively only with livestock or for cultivations applying medieval systems.” (Fajardo [3], 2014, p. 42)

Land concentration was very high, with a dense monopoly of lands. As a result, the amount of 1 200 000 farmers who had no lands was even larger than the number of actual owners, which was only 800 000. Inequality was evident from the 40’s and

thereafter, and positioned the country as “one with the highest index of land concentration in the world” (Reyes [3], 2016, p. 18).

As mentioned before, this was the norm particular provinces deviated from. Antioquia, Santander and the departments involved in the Antioquean colonization have been said to be an exception. Along with them, Cundinamarca and Tolima are the other exceptions. As Palacios [6] said, “Data from four cadastres in Cundinamarca (...) prove without doubt the importance of small property” (2011, p. 38). Although it cannot be affirmed that they belonged to small producers, they were not part of the concentrated 55%.

At the time, “the contemporaries directed their attention to the corridor between cold, cundiboyacense (central) lands, and hot and tempered lands that led down to the Magdalena river” (Palacios [7], 2011, p. 34). They focused their attention especially on this zone because it is the corridor that connects Bogotá to the Magdalena river, and by that, to global commerce. These lands were certainly the best available, and thus, the most competitive ones. At the time, “Monopoly of the best lands and the absence of the state are the two characteristics of this political formula of large property” (Reyes [2], 2016, p. 17). Therefore, although there were small properties, they were concentrated in the best hands. It follows then that Tolima and Cundinamarca were not part of the 3,5% owned by small farmers – that requires more data that censuses from the government do not provide. Historical evidence, focusing on the fight for the best lands, indicates that while they were not big estates, they belonged to the most powerful people. That is, those with the most money benefited the most from partitioning the land according to social classes. So, if they were small properties, it is valid to affirm that they belonged to the most powerful people. Nevertheless, that does not mean that the ownership of lands was concentrated; that would require to check the data which is not found in the governmental censuses of the time.

Regarding their use, these lands were not precisely dedicated to satisfy food demand: “farms’ landlords in Cundinamarca and Tolima reduced food offer to devote themselves to the cultivation of coffee” (Albán [3], 2011, p. 336), as they were also influenced by the external commerce and its demand for coffee. Just as in the process

before, coffee caused the agricultural sector to industrialize, along with “high wages [that] attracted farmers and laborers from traditional coffee plantations” (Albán [1], 2011, p. 334). In this way workers freed themselves from any serfdom relationships. Hence, it can be imagined that these lands, although their ownership was not concentrated, belonged mostly to a class that payed salaries to have coffee grown.

This argument is supported by a process of migration: farmers migrated to the cities, but in 1929, “Due to the crisis, workforce that had migrated to the cities to join the workers’ ranks had to return to agricultural activity” (Albán [4], 2011, p. 336). Thus, they returned as landless farmers that joined a free workforce payed with wages. Free from serfdom, but also without means of production.

Hence, reference was not the cultivation of the proper land, but rather the salary for working in a big estate. Thus, “Wage differentiation and labour market organization at the time (...) were essential to the formation of the proletariat in the country” (Albán [2], 2011, pp. 334 - 335).

Despite the importance of coffee for transformation of work relationships, it is important to note that coffee was just planted on tempered lands, and for that reason it cannot be considered as a national process. While in Cundinamarca and Tolima coffee contributed to this process, other parts of the country did not experience the same. As mentioned, these two regions were exceptions. However, even though in these two provinces coffee was the prevalent product, it coexisted with many others. Hence, for the rest of the country, it is right to say that “farmers’ income from the plots or country estates (...) was bigger than their income from wages” (Palacios [1], 2011, p. 24). Thus, “[In] work relationships, (...) the lack of farmers’ freedom was evident (...) wages existed but they were dwindling forms” (Kalmanovitz [2], 2010, p. 217). That way, although there was lack of freedom, it did not imply property of production means. Rather, it meant a serfdom system.

For these peasants, reality was different then. It was a reality where “the farmer has been reduced to colonizing new territories without governmental support, under the assumption that the country had an unlimited, open frontier to conquer, without

the need to distribute the land which was subordinated to the regime of rent monopoly” (Reyes [1], 2016, p. 17). But, how could they be forced if laws and agrarian reforms tried to protect them?

The answer lies not in the content of the law, but in its application. Although they tried to protect small producers, “Owners’ mentality, which was dominated by the interpretation of the civil code, (...) has positioned itself more to the landlords’ and greedy capitalism’s side” (Palacios [3], 2011, p. 26). Just as enterprises in Antioquia in the XIX century, the owners of new estates

(...) continued to apply judgements about property, expanding borders and using other tricks, besides direct pressure, to augment their extensive appropriation of lands at the expense of the farming class. That obliged farmers to expand colonization fronts to the wooded and mountainous periphery with lands each time more unproductive and distant from the market (Reyes [6], 2016, p. 33)

Thus, manipulating the law and using a wide range of tricks, “landlords could exclude the state when they proposed new local game rules” (Palacios [2], 2011, p. 24). Practices differed greatly from what was proposed on paper.

Perhaps the most used mechanism was to promise lands that could be conquered through work and occupation, to then deny property rights. Hence, “The Colombian leadership protected the land rents of the regional elites and stimulated colonization of the agricultural frontier, without conferring property rights on the settlers (...) while property was concentrating behind the colonizing wave” (Reyes [4], 2016, p. 22). Of course, once land had been cultivated landlords could appropriate it through the methods mentioned before, and colonizers would have to search for new lands, expanding the agricultural frontier. As stated before, a monopoly of the best lands and absence of the state characterize the process (Reyes, 2016).

Besides concentration, landlords had another impact on lands’ usage, since “There is a growing capital endowment that coincides with a decline in the productivity of all factors between 1950 and 1970 (...) use of land decreases throughout the whole period”

(Kalmanovitz[6], 2010, p. 224). Thus, they enhanced productivity by increasing capital invested in the land. But it is not possible to speak of a growing demand, since with the augmentation of productivity, the use of other factors, namely land and work, falls. Therefore, since there was an increase in capital, it is not necessarily an expansion of offer or production.

In summary, the situation in Cundinamarca and Tolima, as with the Antioquean colonization, was different from the rest of the country. Property of lands was not that concentrated, and these lands were especially important for commerce between Bogotá, the capital, and its surroundings, with the rest of the country and the ports to export internationally. Nevertheless, for that same reason they were the most competitive lands, and a proletariat was established to cultivate these lands, especially for coffee. This proletariat, a huge number of farmers able to work and without means of production, was attracted by a high income from wages and because of the migration the 1929 crisis evoked in cities.

This process was not one of heavy concentration of land property, but it was one of a fierce competition for lands. The lands were appropriated by elites, being proved by the fact that a proletariat was established and that in the country only 800 000 farmers had land, while there existed 1 200 000 agricultural workers that had no property. These are arguments to state that lands were appropriated by an elite, as Marx suggests. Nevertheless, although violence accompanied the process, they were not mainly appropriated with it, as he describes, but rather by attractiveness of wages and migration.

This argument is supported by the fact that lands were dedicated to the cultivation of coffee in order to export it afterwards. Coffee is not a product that generates a demand as urgent as food would create. One must live on food, but not on coffee. As seen before, coffee was demanded by an external market, creating a business for it. Thus, these lands were means of production for coffee as a business, without satisfying an internal market demand. And these lands were appropriated by a very powerful class.

Regarding the rest of the country, land property was heavily concentrated. The system of serfdom and monopoly of lands prevailed, forcing small colonizers to expand the frontier. Unlike the Antioquean colonization, this process seems to have been carried out by small producers which were then expropriated by great landlords,

through violence or manipulation of the law. Every time they expanded, they did so on growingly unproductive lands.

It can be stated that the process was one of land concentration where the small worker was expropriated from means of production by great tenants, resembling the process in Marx's theory. This is supported by the role of the state and law as supporter of the great tenant class, since Marx claims that the state is a mere instrument created to defend the bourgeois' interests.

Another argument is given to support Marx's process: between 1950 and 1970 capitalists invested more capital in the land overall. Additionally, this increase was followed by a decrease of usage of the other factors. Thus, if there had been a demand for food, their usage would not have decreased. Therefore, if there was no demand for food to expand the market, lands were appropriated either for business, or to concentrate property. Besides that, investing capital in the land and capitalist agriculture were two characteristics of the process Marx describes, along with the creation of a proletariat.

The proletariat seems to have a counterargument since serfdom prevailed. Nevertheless, it would be necessary to study the process after 1972 to see if wages were established or if serfdom was the prevalent system. Even though the latter leads to increased land concentration, it does not create a proletariat, making the system more like a feudal than a capitalist one. Nevertheless, Antioquia, Santander and their colonies, along with Cundinamarca and Tolima, did have a free proletariat, although they had means of production in the respective regions.

Consequently, it can be said that between 1936 and 1972 the country was characterized by a process of primitive accumulation. In contrast, the process in Antioquia during the XIX century can be best described as an expansion because of an increasing demand.

FINAL REMARKS

In a nutshell, it is possible to speak of two separate processes. One in Antioquia and its colonies, and the other one in the rest of the country, with particularities in Cundinamarca and Tolima, the central regions.

In Antioquia, two parallel processes can be observed. One of expansion by a search for better lands, given the need for food. It was driven by small producers who owned and cultivated their land, growing food and, later, when they were connected to the market and could meet their needs by exchange, cultivating coffee. Since violence increased and lands' fertility worsened, it was an incentive to search for new lands. The process coincides greatly with that proposed in Ricardo's theory.

On the other hand, big enterprises from Antioquia and Caldas saw a business opportunity in colonizing lands. Consequently, they were formed, and they started to seize lands in violent ways or through manipulation of laws. That paved the way to a high index of land concentration in the later colonies, such as Quindío. Also, expansion made by the enterprises was not targeted at satisfying food demand, but rather at a capitalistic, profitable agriculture based on international demand. That way, it can be said that it is a process of primitive accumulation with the exception that it was caused by a bourgeoisie class that already existed and already had capitals; thus, not an emerging capitalist class.

Antioquia records two parallel processes. On the one hand, capitalists did not concentrate all lands (and therefore means of production) and on the other hand, there was a growing demand for food. Although capitalists took the opportunity to concentrate land for themselves, they did that only up to a certain degree. Hence, it is appropriate to say that it was an expansion of the market fuelled by demand.

In the rest of the country, lands were heavily concentrated through a process of expropriation. Although violence was exerted, the main method to seize lands was bending the law. Lands were appropriated for business, or merely to increase one's property of terrains. Additionally, there was a competition for the best lands, where politically or economically powerful elites got the best ones. Given this, it is possible to speak of a primitive accumulation process, in which capital was invested in the land and capitalist agriculture was paved the way.

By comparing it to the English process, it is possible to see that law was also used as a pretext to put farmers at a disadvantage – although in a more indirect and discrete way. Still, a big difference was that men were not driven out from the farms.

Rather, a serfdom system required them to stay and work. Thus, between 1936 and 1972, there was no proletariat established in the country.

Nevertheless, the central region (Cundinamarca and Tolima) was different from the rest of the country. Indeed, a proletariat was established here because of the high wages the cultivation of coffee offered, and because many unemployed workers migrated from the cities due to the crisis, having to sell their own work capacity to landlords.

Besides, the central region differs in land structure. Indeed, it was composed by small properties. Although they were not owned by small producers, as evidenced by the labour market with wages, they could be less concentrated than the rest of the country. Nevertheless, investigating this assumption requires data that is not available in official reports.

For the whole country, it is more appropriate to speak of a primitive accumulation of capital. Capital was invested in the land, capitalistic agriculture was paved the way, property was concentrated, law was a tool for the bourgeoisie to seize lands and, farmers were separated from their means of production.

Of course, there are two particularities. Firstly, a proletariat was not formed, except in the coffee regions. Secondly, Antioquia, Santander and the regions populated by the Antioquean colonization, had a process of accumulation – not necessarily primitive – that was overshadowed by an expansion of the market by demand. Hence, they constitute the exception to the norm.

To further expand this research, it is of utmost importance to look at numbers of land concentration. If this kind of information cannot be found, it is necessary to extensively investigate written sources, which exceeded the scope of this essay.

Furthermore, this essay only analyses the *expansion* of the agricultural frontier. That has two implications. Firstly, it is necessary to see the situation of Antioquia after the frontier was expanded, addressing the critic of Córdoba et al. (2017), in which Antioquia's land concentration decreased its productivity. Indeed, Antioquia is analysed in the XIX century, while the rest of the country is considered in the XX century. It is worth to see Antioquia's situation for the same dates. Since that was not precisely an *expansion* of the frontier, it also exceeded the limit of this essay.

Finally, this work only revises the situation until 1972. Since then, as stated, new processes of lands' tenancy and usage appeared, with new actors, situations and incentives. They have shaped the country greatly, and not for good, since it has positioned itself as one of the countries with the highest land concentration indexes in the world (Reyes, 2016). Although revision of the situation after that date also exceeded the scope of this work, it is crucial to be able to fully understand one of the most critical and important topics for Colombia, although one of the most ignored: land.

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Appendix 1

Many citations used in this work are originally written in spanish. They have been numbered in brackets ([1]) following the citation and the original citations in spanish are presented in the table below. All translations are my own.

Number of Citation / Número de Cita	Original citation / Cita original
1 [1]	Los altos salarios atrajeron a los campesinos y a los peones de las haciendas tradicionales y cafeteras
[2]	La diferenciación salarial y la organización del mercado laboral en esa época (...) fueron esenciales para la formación del proletariado en el país
[3]	los arrendatarios de las haciendas de Cundinamarca y Tolima reducían la oferta de alimentos, para dedicarse al cultivo del café
[4]	Debido a la crisis, la fuerza laboral que había migrado a las ciudades para integrarse a las filas obreras tuvo que retornar a la actividad agraria
2 [1]	el mazamorrero libre [un trabajador independiente de las minas] reemplazó al esclavo.
[2]	hubo un aumento de la población que, junto con la pésima fertilidad de la tierra en Antioquia, hizo que “la migración se [considerara] como el único medio de supervivencia para las familias de minifundistas pobres
[3]	la nueva clase de comerciantes terratenientes (...) invirtieron capitales en la tierra con el propósito definido de explotarla en beneficio de sus intereses a largo plazo
3 [1]	En el caso Antioqueño, la agricultura y el campo no solamente se han visto afectados por el contexto económico-político que anteriormente se desarrolló, sino también por la concentración de las tierras y de propiedades en las zonas rurales, que ha hecho que éstas pierdan en gran medida productividad
4 [1]	la ley 200 de 1936 (...) pretendió establecer un ordenamiento de la propiedad territorial que posibilitara al Estado recuperar el control de una amplia proporción de baldíos ilegalmente apropiados
[2]	la ley 135 de 1961, mediante la cual se estableció la Reforma Social Agraria, formalmente rechazada por los grandes terratenientes y empresarios agrícolas
[3]	de 800 000 propietarios rurales, más de la mitad solo poseían parcelas con una superficie promedio inferior a 2 hectáreas y ocupaban no más del 3,5% de la superficie ocupada en ese momento, menos del 60% de la población rural activa, cerca de 1 200 000 campesinos carecían de tierra; al mismo tiempo, no más de 25 000 propietarios, el 3% de ellos, monopolizaban el 55% de las tierras utilizables “no trabajadas en su gran proporción o utilizadas solo extensivamente con ganadería o mediante cultivos con aplicación de sistemas medievales”

- 5 [1] en el siglo XIX el Estado central o los estados soberanos (...) otorgaron tierras en grandes cantidades a militares, políticos y prestamistas del Gobierno o a simples personajes influyentes en la vida política regional (...) profundizaron la desigualdad en el acceso al recurso fundamental de la época
- [2] [En] las relaciones laborales (...) era evidente la falta de libertad del campesinado (...) existían salarios pero eran formas atrofiadas
- [3] en las tierras colonizadas por campesinos medianos y pequeños de Antioquia (...) predominaban relaciones de trabajo más libres desde la Colonia
- [4] Colombia se caracterizó por una distribución inicial de las tierras y otros recursos económicos realizada de acuerdo con criterios de casta (...) la excepción se dio en Antioquia y Santander
- [5] En el resto de las regiones (...) surgió un sistema (...) bajo relaciones con mayores o menores grados de servidumbre y sin derechos de propiedad
- [6] hay una creciente dotación de capital que coincide con una disminución de la productividad de todos los factores entre 1950 y 1970 (...) el uso de la tierra cae durante todo el periodo
- 6 [1] las tierras baldías (...) precipitaron la migración antioqueña al sur
- [2] estos terrenos comenzaron a ocuparse sólo hasta que se originaron las guerras civiles (...) [o] en busca de nuevas oportunidades en la agricultura de exportación
- [3] la tierra agrícola en las proximidades de Rionegro estaba dividida en parcelas cada vez más pequeñas (...) [y] venían menguando su fertilidad, generando de esta manera una excesiva escasez de alimentos
- [4] por medio del incentivo de la colonización, ella daría pie a un mercado de tierras por iniciativa del gobierno federal al querer dar paso al camino del Quindío para, con ello, comunicar el oriente con el occidente (...) la colonización espontánea (...) surge por el atractivo (...) [de] un gran edén de caucho, oro, cerdos y paz (...) la tercera forma de colonización es la empresarial
- [5] La empresa [Burila], tal como en la compañía González Salazar, empieza a mostrar una insistente simpatía por los predios vecinos, originando consigo una dura batalla por conseguirlos (...) y (...) se hace acreedora, por ende, de 120 000 hectáreas, llevándose consigo más de la mitad del actual territorio quindiano
- [6] La llamada *acumulación* originaria no es, pues, más que el *proceso histórico de disociación entre el productor y los medios de producción*
- 7 [1] En la historia de la *acumulación* originaria hacen época todas las transformaciones que sirven de punto de apoyo a la naciente clase capitalista
- [2] Sirve de base a todo este proceso la *expropiación que priva de su tierra al productor rural, al campesino*
- [3] Las casas de los campesinos y las viviendas de los obreros fueron violentamente arrasadas o entregadas a la ruina
- [4]

- [5] estos elementos consagraron la nueva era [capitalistas y terratenientes elaboradores de plusvalía], entregándose en una escala gigantesca al saqueo de los terrenos de dominio público
- [6] la propia ley se convierte en vehículo de esta depredación de los bienes del pueblo
- [7] había de comprenderlo el [siglo] XIX, la identidad que media entre la riqueza nacional y la pobreza del pueblo
- [8] el último gran proceso de expropiación de los agricultores es el llamado *Clearing of states* (...) (que en realidad consistía en barrer de ellas a los hombres)
- [9] con estos métodos se abrió paso a la agricultura capitalista, se incorporó el capital a la tierra y se crearon los contingentes de proletarios libres y privados de medios de vida
- 8 [1] los ingresos campesinos de las parcelas o estancias en las haciendas (...) eran mayores que sus ingresos en salarios
- [2] los terratenientes pudieron excluir al Estado cuando propusieron nuevas reglas de juego locales
- [3] la mentalidad propietaria dominada por la interpretación del código civil (...) se ha puesto más del lado de los terratenientes y del capitalismo rapaz
- [4] las tierras americanas se clasificaron con otra ficción jurídica romana: *res nullius* (...) que significa que el bien no tiene dueño y puede ganarse mediante la conquista u ocupación
- [5] una sentencia de la Corte Suprema de Justicia en abril de 1926 (...) puso en entredicho la titularidad jurídica de enormes porciones de tierra (...) convirtiéndolas en *res nullius*
- [6] los datos de cuatro catastros cundinamarqueses (...) prueban fehacientemente la importancia de la pequeña propiedad
- [7] los contemporáneos prestaron atención al acorredor entre las tierras frías cundiboyacenses y las tierras cálidas y templadas que caían al río Magdalena
- 9 [1] El campesino ha sido reducido a colonizar nuevos territorios sin apoyo estatal, bajo el supuesto de que el país tiene una frontera abierta ilimitada para conquistar, sin necesidad de repartir la tierra sometida al régimen de monopolio rentístico
- [2] Monopolio de las mejores tierras y la ausencia del estado son las dos características de esta fórmula política de la gran propiedad
- [3] Desde los años cuarenta y cincuenta Colombia es uno de los países con mayor concentración de tierra en el mundo
- [4] La dirigencia colombiana protegió las rentas de la tierra de las élites regionales y estimuló la colonización de la frontera agraria, sin conferir derechos de propiedad a los colonos (...) mientras la propiedad se iba concentrando detrás de la ola colonizadora
- [5] El conflicto abierto entre el campesinado arrendatario y precarista, y los propietarios estalló luego de la Ley 1 de 1968 (...) que ordenó asignar la propiedad de las tierras ocupadas a los pequeños arrendatarios y aparceros

- [6] los dueños de los nuevos latifundios “siguieron usando juicios de pertenencia, ampliando linderos y utilizando otras argucias, además de la presión directa, para aumentar su apropiación extensiva de tierras a costa del campesinado. Eso forzó a los campesinos a expandir los frentes de colonización hacia la periferia selvática y montañosa sobre tierras cada vez más improductivas distantes del mercado
- 11 [1] el desarrollo industrial europeo exigía cada vez una mayor cantidad de materias primas (...) [y] también una creciente demanda de productos comestibles (...)intensificaron entonces su comercio con aquéllos que podían suministrar productos primarios
- [2] Con la extensión del nuevo producto [café] a la pequeña propiedad, la distribución del ingreso se extiende también, incorporando al campesino al mercado
- 12 [1] no se formaron grandes haciendas ni grandes masas de campesinos asalariados y sin tierra (...) y en consecuencia la sociedad fue más igualitaria
- [2] la consecuencia más importante fue el aumento de la capacidad adquisitiva

