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Tenure and struggle for land in the upper part of La Bella. Pereira 1970- 1980

Tenencia y lucha por la tierra en la parte alta de La Bella. Pereira 1970- 1980

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Abstract

La Bella is a village of Pereira, in 1970 was a rural area, with subsistence crops farms, in this decade two processes took place, the peasant struggle for land and the consolidation of Law 135 of 1961 with La Hacienda Santacoloma located in La Bella, and the replacement of traditional coffee and livestock, by the long onion (*Allium fistulosum*) as a monoculture, in another nearby village, La Florida.

This article highlights the voice of some protagonist peasants to understand the struggle for land and its impact on the new form of agricultural production.

Keywords: land tenure, settler, agrarian reform, onion monoculture.

Resumen

La Bella, corregimiento de Pereira, en 1970 era un paraje rural con fincas tradicionales de pan coger. En esta década se dieron dos procesos: uno, la lucha campesina por la tierra y la consolidación de la Ley 135 de 1961 con La Hacienda Santacoloma ubicada en La Bella; y, dos, el reemplazo del café tradicional y la ganadería por el monocultivo de la cebolla larga (*Allium fistulosum*) en otra vereda cercana, La Florida.

Este artículo resalta la voz de algunos campesinos protagonistas para comprender la lucha por la tierra y su incidencia en la nueva forma de producción agrícola.

Palabras clave: tenencia de la tierra, colono, reforma agraria, monocultivo de cebolla.

Introduction

Land is an essential condition in the process of consolidating any society, whether rural or urban. Historically, the land has been the subject of dispute and confrontation between the possessors and the dispossessed, which due to its multiple implications has influenced the development of peoples in all times. Likewise, the State and the legal organization have tried to mediate these land tenure conflicts through multiple attempts at land reform.

The central question that motivated this research arose in the educational field with tenth grade students of the I. E. La Bella in the framework of historical studies of the territory. The question was: what were the circumstances that led the peasants of La Bella to change from peasant production on the traditional farm to a production for the market? It was believed that in this region the onion had been cultivated “since forever”, but when initial investigations were made with the inhabitants of different settlements, distinct versions were uncovered that made it necessary to expand the initial question to include and interpret other more structural events, like the struggle for land and its relationship with the agricultural transformation of this rural settlement.

In this sense, the questions that complemented the historical research were oriented towards the struggle of the peasants for land: what relations occurred between La Florida and La Bella in the consolidation of the territory? How did the agrarian policy of the Colombian government in the 1970s impact in the process of La Hacienda Santacoloma in the rural area

of La Bella? What role did the local political forces and peasant organizations play in the process of transformation in the territory of La Bella? What relationship did the colonist peasants have in the transformation of the agricultural production of the territory of La Bella? Was land ownership a determining factor in the transformation of the agricultural and livestock vocation of the territory of La Bella and La Florida?

For the purposes of this article, emphasis will be placed on the process of the struggle for land, which took place in La Bella during the seventies within the framework of the agrarian reform Law 135 of 1961 of Alberto Lleras in the National Front (*Frente Nacional*).¹ It was led by the peasant organization ANUC (National Association of Peasant Users), as well as by the new dynamic current in La Florida by the purchase of properties in the middle of a coffee crisis.

The testimonies of peasant protagonists were the starting point to begin comparing with other sources, such as the cadastral records of properties, family photographs, aerial photographs of the seventies and eighties by the IGAC (Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute), historical documents of the peasant movement in Risaralda published by the ANUC, the search and exploration of local press articles, in addition to the theoretical body that supports the problem for land, all of the above combined with the fieldwork in the villages.

Behind this article are peasants, men and women who believed and felt the need to tell their story, to share their memories in the struggle to seek better living conditions for themselves and their families. The group of students are the seedbed of cultural historical research at the I.E. La Bella from tenth and eleventh grades who worked with their families and neighbors of the villages of the upper part of today's Corregimiento La Bella and who for two years were my teachers and allies.

1. The hamlet of La Bella

The geographical space of this article focuses on La Bella, administratively it is one of the corregimientos of the municipality of Pereira, located in the southeast sector in the upper basin of the Consotá River. It is part of the western slope of the central mountain range, in a mountainous area that covers an area between 1750 and 2200 meters above sea level, which serves as a buffer area of the National Natural Park of the Nevados and the Sanctuary of Fauna and Flora Otún Quimbaya. The district has a territorial extension of 2506.46 hectares² that are divided into eleven villages: La Bella, Mundo Nuevo, El Chocho, La Estrella, El Rincón, Vista Hermosa, La Mina, Canceles, La Colonia, Morrón and Las Delicias. The administrative limits are comprised to the east by the corregimiento of La Florida, to the south and west the corregimiento of Tribunales Corsica and to the north the urban center of the municipality of

1 Congreso de Colombia, Ley 135 de 1961, 20 de diciembre. *Diario Oficial* N. 30691, <https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=74153>.

2 Gobernación de Risaralda (2000) citado por Alcaldía de Pereira, *Diagnóstico Socioeconómico del Corregimiento de La Bella* (Pereira: Secretaría de Planeación, 2015), 11.

Pereira.

In 1970 both villages La Bella and La Florida were part of the same administrative organization. This situation changed with the agreement 090 on October 14, 1994, through which the City Council of Pereira issued the restructuring of the city and the corresponding limits for both the corregimiento of La Florida and the corregimiento of La Bella.

The inhabitants who had been living in the village for more than sixty years, some born and raised in that land, as in the case of Leonidas Hurtado, Carlina Arce, Fabio Betancurth and Guillermo Castaño Arcila, explained that La Bella was a small hamlet with few inhabitants and about 16 owners who lived within the area. The populated center place was a meeting point, it was the "arrival of all the arrivals", as Hernán Buriticá said, it had the church, the school, the police station and the inn attended by Arcadio Muñoz, where on weekends the muleteers met to talk, stock up and play the thirty-three rounds of the machete.³ This geographical point where the hamlet of La Bella was consolidated was part of the route of the old road that connected Pereira with Salento and Filandia, when there was no main road to Armenia.

The use of this plateau was not only that of paddocks for cattle. Through interviews with the families of the villages of the upper part of La Bella, it was possible to establish, that before 1970 in this territory the traditional farms cultivated many varied products such as plantain, corn, long beans, cilantro, onion, beans, cassava, some fruits, such as lulo, banana, chachafruto, guava, oranges, lemons; and that there was also sugar cane production (cana panelera), and cabuya or agave plant.

The flat part of the territory had dedicated pasture for dairy cattle. In the case of La Florida at the beginning of the century, there were some farms that were important with regards livestock activity. The villagers remember them for the type of stables they had, which in turn were a way of demonstrating one's economic power, as in the case of the Laguneta farms of Luis Eduardo Osorio, who had dairy cattle; La Carmencita owned by Elio Fabio Castaño, who had dairy cattle that were thoroughbred; Finca Mandalay had buildings for cattle; Finca Santa Clara also had stables for cattle; Finca Amparo San Marcos, the stable of this farm was better, it was the gamonales house of the Marulanda Grillo family; Finca La Tulia with pasture for cattle, and Lisbran, Marianela, La Flora, La Floresta, Tesorito, La Suiza, Las Delicias, La Pastora which were all cattle farms. In La Bella few settlers used the flat part of the mountain to graze cattle, the cattle ranch was the property of Bernardo Santacoloma de los Ríos.⁴

The rest was mountains, the landscape was very beautiful. It is said that there was the "forest of silence", near the ravine that has the same name, with wooded vegetation that served as a barrier to the winds from the snowline that hit La Bella, which enjoyed at that time an extremely cold climate.

3 Alcibiades Monsalve en entrevista sobre la historia de La Florida con la autora.

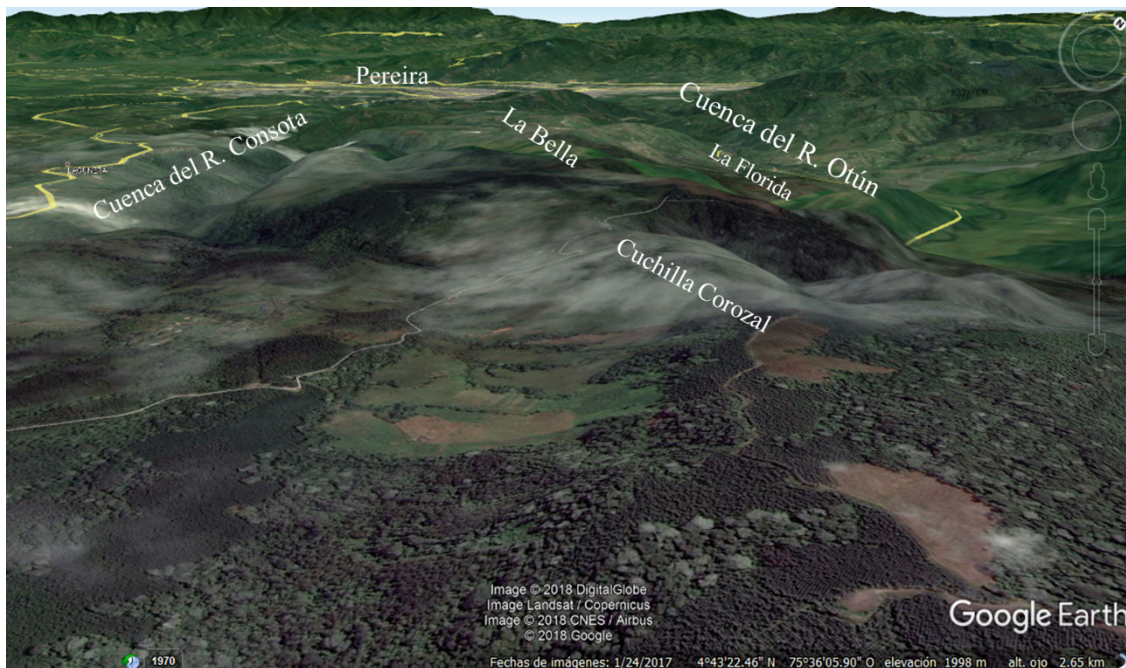
4 Alcibiades Monsalve, Miguel Loaiza, Mauricio Castaño, Guillermo Castaño en diálogo con la autora, el 8 de noviembre de 2017.

The writer Euclides Jaramillo Arango in his work *Terror*, makes a remembrance of the area of La Bella in the first half of the twentieth century:

Since I was a child, over sixty years ago I have not visited La Bella, that Pereiriana path that took its name from being like that; beautiful, and that can be seen from almost everywhere because of its plateau shape, more or less high and flat, formed so that nature does not hide it.

The road to get there, where Gonzalo Uribe and I herded the cows, was steep, narrow and beautiful. It was surrounded by all kinds of fruit plants and was permanently populated by birds and small wild quadrupeds such as squirrels, wild rabbits, armadillos, cusumbos and many others...⁵

Figure 1. Panoramic view of the location of La Bella and La Florida on the watershed of the Otún and Consotá river basins



Source: Google Earth, 2018.

2. The Estate

In the memory of the inhabitants of La Bella, those born and raised there, it is common for them to remember anecdotes of what La Hacienda was like in their neighborhood, Mr. Santacoloma, before it was what is now known as the village La Colonia.

⁵ Euclides Jaramillo, *Terror. Crónicas del viejo Pereira, que era el nuevo* (Armenia: Cosmográfica, 1984), 187- 188.

The Hacienda, as the property of Bernardo Santacoloma was called, was located within La Bella in the jurisdiction of the municipality of Pereira, with an area of 336,528 hectares formed by four lots (in the deed only three of them are referenced).⁶

The first of them called La Bella, consisted of a house for dwelling, natural and artificial pastures, banana, brush, and wild mountain, its boundaries were like this: From the door that is on the road to Salento, bordering the property of Tito Quintana; down a valley until you find a wire fence with Quintana, to the Quebrada el Silencio; from here to the boundary stone that is on the ridge, following the same direction to the San Pablo ravine bordering Evencio Ocampo; then on down bordering Alejandro Gómez and Juan de Dios Mejía until a amagamiento* bordering with Fabricio Arias; another hidden part up to a chamba* then on towards a vaga*; this down to the ravine of the house, bordering Arias himself...

Other boundaries of this first lot according to the description with Rafael and Fabriciano Ariza, from the ravine of the plateau; with Aniceto Castaneda to the ravine bridge of stone; Predio de Juan de Dios Mejia, Inés Giraldo, Laurencio Munoz and Jesus Restrepo, Los Polanco, from the rock ravine up to the road of Salento and up to the Puerta de Quintana.

The second lot was called La Batalla and was improved with grasses micay and comun; the third lot was Bellavista, about 80 hectares composed of two houses for dwelling, natural, artificial pastures. [...] This property is part of a larger extension that Bernardo Santacoloma de los Rios acquired in exchange with Lisimaco Gutiérrez Mejia, according to deed N°1,383 of September 16, 1953 of the third notary of Armenia.⁷

This document provided the research with exact data related to the origin of the property, the appraisal, its productive vocation for pastures and livestock and the planting of coffee. Another relevant aspect is the wealth of water that La Hacienda had, the name of the most important streams of the territory are the tributaries of the Consotá River as mentioned, the strategic location of the property close to the road of Salento, which was an alternate route to the main one that communicates Pereira and with the municipalities of the department of Quindío. An additional relevant fact is the extension of La Hacienda, these details of the deed lead to understand that, what was La Bella, corresponded mostly to the properties of La Hacienda and these were joined by other owners with smaller properties that were located on both sides of the main road.

Figure 2. Panoramic view of the extension of La Hacienda seen from La Bella

6 Escritura de sucesión de Bernardo Santacoloma de los Ríos. Notaría primera de Pereira, 3 de febrero de 1983 n.º 159 folios consultados 50, 55, 56.

7 This information is contained in the file of the inheritance of the Santacoloma estate made in 1977. At that time it was appraised at \$ 1,203,000 and was granted as an inheritance to the heirs Álvaro, Raúl, Bernardo, Luz Marina, Armando, Blanca Victoria, María Esperanza, Rufino, and María del Pilar Santacoloma Villegas and to Carina Villegas, wife of the deceased.



Source: Author

3. The Heirs

For this investigation it was relevant to obtain the testimony of a direct relative of Santacoloma and documentary evidence of La Hacienda to compare the version of the inhabitants of La Bella, this is how it was possible to contact one of the heirs of La Hacienda Santacoloma.⁸ The heir, as he will be named in this text, agreed to tell from his childhood memory what the hacienda was, and the conflict lived by his father Bernardo and the family with the settler peasants who tried to take possession of the property that was in his family's ownership; as well as other situations that affected the settlement of what is now known as the village of La Colonia and that marked a change for the hamlet, rural area of La Bella since the 1970s. The heir states:

The Hacienda was in use to raise cattle, it came to have about five hundred head of cattle and between twenty and thirty loose horses [says Santacoloma, who remembers the wealth of water]. Everywhere you passed there were ravines and forests that my dad took great care of. To work the farm, because it was very extensive, my father had about ten lots between five and seven hectares managed by share-cropping contracts, and the peasants built their house there.

The farm was not abandoned, we lived in it when we were young, we were twelve children. From the year 1968 a series of invasions of settlers began to appear on the farm, but there came a moment of great tension between these people and my father because of their threats, they burned houses of La Hacienda, they brought a bulldozer and they killed cattle.

This was a dangerous situation, for this reason my parents decided that it was best to move to a farm we had in La Badea in Dosquebradas. My father felt intimidated by the peasants who continued invading our property that had titles, but unfortunately he owed taxes and so practically speaking the farm was

⁸ Heredero Santacoloma, in a telephone interview with the author. *Historia de La Hacienda de Bernardo Santacoloma*. The source's anonymity is preserved at his request because he considers that the family has made an act of forgetfulness in the face of this event of the loss of his father's land.

held by the State. On several occasions my father asked for support from the army, and from the police to evict the invaders, when he had to go up to pay the workers we had to be accompanied by some police that the inspector provided him as a guard and immediately leave afterwards.

This account shows that raising livestock was a viable option and at the time a current activity, in addition to clarifying that the property was not abandoned, on the contrary, the family lived on it, or spent periods of time there. When he admits that they had to leave it to go live elsewhere, he confirms ownership of the house. Abandoning it meant for them to seek safety because of the tension that existed with the settlers. The heir continues the narrative:

This case of La Hacienda was taken on by the lawyer Héctor Palma Mendoza who was the best for these types of land processes, he managed to make a detailed description of the peasants, and he also created a census of them. The case lasted from 1975 to 1980. In 1976 my father died in an accident in Herveo Tolima in May 1976 at the age of 64, but the legal process continued,⁹ several times the lawyer Palma met with the settlers and one day we all met, they were peasants of good character, with an interest to reconcile and the intention of the lawyer was to be able to reach the best agreement, one reasonable from the economic perspective for us, the owners, and also so that the peasants could have land, what was made apparent in that meeting was that the peasants wanted to go from being workers to owners of their land and, considering it now, the family would not have opposed that claim.

They were politically advised by Gilberto Bedoya Casadiego, a politician from La Florida and a Mrs. Gabriela Zuleta, deputy, who was delegated for these matters by Senator Oscar Vélez Marulanda of the Liberal Party, who handled things with a low profile. This situation also had political tints, Santacoloma, my father, conservative and they, liberals, they organized the peasants and paid them to go and invade, they also took charge of doing the management before the municipality to open the road from La Florida to the farm. After my father died and having lost the lands, my mother, Carina Villegas, forbade us to touch anything related to the subject again, because she was clear that she preferred the safety of all of us instead of continuing the fight for the estate.

According to Santacoloma, after so many years, what the family finds most unjust about this process is that the settlers who took their land were not from La Bella. Those who were their neighbors, were the people who refused to take part in this land takeover, except for the Hurtados who did participate.

Thus ended the story of Santacoloma, who after so many years he prefers to attend to the order given by his mother: “Do not touch again anything of this issue regarding the Estate”. However, his testimony is the other part of the story that had not been told, and his contributions to obtain official notary documents were decisive to clarify part of what happened with the hacienda. A painful and unfair situation for his family, which they classify as a theft of land.

One of the complaints the family makes regarding the lands that were given is that the beneficiaries did not hesitate to sell the land, and a good number of them were not from this

⁹ In relation to the lawsuit filed by Bernardo Santacoloma de los Ríos, the process was requested from the archives of the Palace of Justice, but it was not possible to have the file in a timely manner as a source of evidence. However, for the future, this problem of La Hacienda could be an interesting case to investigate in greater depth in the line of rural history or microhistory..

region. The heir states:

The other settlers came from Ibagué, Cajamarca and Cundinamarca. I know this because the lawyer who took the case made the census of the settlers. Several of them barely received their titles before they sold the land, what they did with the estate was destroy everything they found.

Thus, the Santacoloma family left in the hands of the justice system the process that it lost to the judicial courts and that the State through the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform (INCORA) resolved in favor of the colonist peasants in the year 1980.

It is worth asking, how was the application of the agrarian policy of the Colombian government demonstrated in the 1970 in regards to the process with the hacienda Santacoloma?

4. Agricultural policy in Colombia

Any agrarian structure is based on a land tenure system that evolves with the development of society and market relations. Land tenure is thus one of the elements of the agrarian structure and is the basis on which social relations are built.¹⁰

The problem of land has been one of the most complex in Colombian legislation due to the particular interests it involves, both for those who have historically been dispossessed of their land and for those who since colonial times have held it and have expanded their domains.

Among some of the laws or reforms that the Colombian State proposed in the twentieth century to address the problem of land tenure are:

Law 74 of 1926 simplified the adjudication procedures through the actions of the Ministry of Industries, which could offer an amount of land for colonization that was no less than one hundred thousand hectares, organize them into lots that were already divided not exceeding eighty hectares, and promising the settlers that the government would provide them with credit, tools and seeds with advice from agronomists direct from the Ministry.

Law 200 of 1936 has a political prelude led by the liberal Alfonso Lopez Michelsen, an ideologist who proposed this law as a new way of drastically addressing the land problem that had been worsening after the global economic crisis of 1929, for which an agrarian reform was necessary.¹¹ In this way it was presented in the legislature of 1935 and approved in 1936. As Tovar¹² stated, it discussed several problems such as that of the vacant lots, the delimita-

10 Absalón Machado, *De la estructura agraria al sistema agroindustrial* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2002), 26.

11 Marco Palacios, *¿De quién es la tierra? Propiedad, politización y protesta campesina en la década de 1930* (Bogotá: FCE, Universidad de los Andes, 2011), 199.

12 Hermes Tovar, *El movimiento campesino en Colombia durante los siglos XIX y XX* (Bogotá: Ediciones Libres, 1975), 38.

tions between private property and state property, subdivisions, that of settlers and tenants and that of marginal colonization.

Among the principles that the government had in mind in this law, was that of the property that was assumed not only from the ostentation of the registered title but from the social function that it played. Possession consisted in the economic exploitation of the land through positive actions such as planting or sowing, occupation with cattle, construction of buildings, fences and other initiatives of equal significance.¹³

The judicial law 200 sought to modernize the rules, put in order the legislation of the moment and establish clearer rules of the game than the existing ones. But the State was not endowed with the instruments, legitimacy, resources and technical capacity to ensure adequate compliance with this law.¹⁴

Palacios concludes with respect to law 200 that, despite the belated and harmless principle that promulgated that "the land belongs to those who work it", the perception was not generated that the land belongs to the peasant who lives on it, but belongs to those who exploit it economically, be it a peasant, agricultural entrepreneur, cattle rancher or territorial speculator.¹⁵

The peasants had been told that the land law belonged to them and consequently tried to enforce it as such. In turn, the landowners, relying on the text of this, began to expel in a massive way the sharecroppers and tenants¹⁶, thus generating a problem in relation to the labor available for coffee farms or rural areas in the country as a consequence for the future.

In the 1940s the policy to modernize agriculture gained greater relevance, the land tenure model based on the large property was strengthened and foreign missions began to arrive to diagnose the situation of backwardness in agriculture. For this period, the characteristics in agricultural policy were: The parceling of haciendas, the withdrawal of Law 200 of 1936, the attempt to recover the system of leases and partnerships set up for sharecroppers with Law 100 of 1944, the continuation of the processes of colonization and titling of wastelands.

Violence, a phenomenon experienced by peasants in the fifties, generated a well known new process of displacement and redistribution of land. In this scenario, a new attempt at agrarian reform was opened with the Law 135 of 1961 on Agrarian Social Reform with the political leadership of Carlos Lleras Restrepo, belonging to the ruling sector of liberalism and with the not so new opposition of the two traditional parties that had systematically refused to any attempt of redistribution, titling or allocation of land for the peasants.

13 Palacios, *¿De quién es la tierra? ...*, 197.

14 Absalón Machado y Julián A. Vivas. *Ensayos para la historia de la política de tierras en Colombia. De la colonia a la creación del Frente Nacional* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Centro de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo [CID], 2009), 198.

15 Palacios, *¿De quién es la tierra? ...*, 207.

16 Gonzalo Sánchez, *Las ligas campesinas en Colombia* (Bogotá: Ediciones Alcarabán, 1977), 142.

As Höllinger explains, in relation to the definition of agrarian reform, this has been understood as the intervention of the State to modify the agrarian structure in order to make better use of land and achieve a more equitable distribution¹⁷. An agrarian reform does not remain in the merely technical field, but is debated in a political and institutional dilemma that can be seen from three levels:

A *macro level* that is oriented towards the political economy, to the correlation of forces between the rural elite and the legislative and executive bodies, which as has been seen in the history of the reforms have had a categorical impact on preventing a profound redistribution of land.

A *second level or meso level* corresponds to the administrative and executive level responsible for the implementation of the policy within the legal framework defined at the macro level. To this end, Article 2 of Law 135 of 1961 created the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform (INCORA). An entity with legal personality, administrative autonomy and its own patrimony, with functions in the name of the State to administer the wastelands of national property, to allocate them, to build reserves, to advance colonizations on them, to advance diligences and to dictate resolutions on the extinction of private domain, and to promote and auxiliary or to execute directly work on the recovery of lands.

The *third level or micro level* is located in the regional and local space where the Agrarian Reform takes place. It belongs to the clientele or forms of local power, in this sense the question must be raised: what role did local political forces play in the process of agrarian reform in the municipality of Pereira? In this way it was the Association of Peasant Users (ANUC) and the support of the liberal political leaders of the city of Pereira who facilitated the organization of the peasant settlers in the struggle for land with the parcels of Hacienda Santa Coloma.

5. The Association of Peasant Users (ANUC) (*La Asociación de Usuarios Campesinos (ANUC)*)

On May 2, 1967, President Carlos Lleras Restrepo promulgated Decree 755, which established a registry of users of public services and promoted their association.¹⁸ In other words, in this legislative act legal life was granted to the associations of peasant users.

From its founding in 1970, the ANUC became a national entity and the most important instrument of trade and social struggle of the peasantry in the midst of the reaction of the landowning class of the country, organized in the SAC (Society of Farmers of Colombia (*Sociedad de Agricultores de Colombia*)), FEDEGAN (Federation of Ranchers (*Federación de*

17 Frank Höllinger, «Del mercado de tierras al mercado de la reforma agraria.», en *¿El mercado de tierras en Colombia*, coord. por Absalón Machado y Ruth Suarez (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1999), 137-195.

18 Presidencia de la República, Decreto 755 de 1967, 2 de mayo de 1967, <http://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co>. (último acceso el 11 de octubre de 2018).

Ganaderos) and the National Federation of Coffee Growers FEDECAFE (*Federación Nacional de Cafeteros*), these organizations that were well positioned in the Colombian parliament to liquidate the aspirations of an agrarian reform.

Figure 3. Elías Chiquito with INCORA official, delivery of property resolutions to peasant settlers



Source: Archive by Eliberto Chiquito, December 1980.

With legal status 0163 of the Ministry of Agriculture in May 1971, the Departmental Association of Peasant Users (*ANUC*) of Risaralda was established. Its first president was the peasant leader Gilberto Bedoya Casadiego who led the land recovery on the Santacoloma family farm. These types of deliberate actions such as occupations or invasions were carried out from 1971, after the second national meeting of peasant users held in Bogota from January 7th until the 11th of the same year. Thus, between 1970 and 1975, more than 600 farms were occupied by peasants throughout the country.¹⁹

Alirio García, leader of the *ANUC* and resident of the La Colonia waterfront, spoke about the process with the property of the Hacienda de Santacoloma:²⁰

19 Asociación Nacional de usuarios Campesinos de Colombia (*ANUC*), Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura (*IICA*), Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural y Escuela Nacional de Formación Campesina (*ENFOCA*), *La organización campesina por producto, intereses y necesidades* (Santafé de Bogotá, 1999), 13-14.

20 Alirio García, dirigente de la *ANUC*, en entrevista con la autora. *Historia de la ANUC y el caso de La Hacienda de Santacoloma*.

The leaders of the movement were the Board of Directors of Pereira chaired by Gilberto Bedoya Casadiego and Enrique Garzón, the process was directed from La Florida by Gilberto Bedoya, who had a store and he supported the peasants with gifted supplies. The costs of the process was assumed by INCORA with the officials and the group of peasants contributing quotas to manage the trips of the leaders to Bogotá, the group of peasants was organized by the ANUC and created the village committee of aspirants for the land of La Colonia.

The expectations that they had regarding the land of La Hacienda, lay in obtaining the adjudication of the plot by extinction of domain by INCORA, which according to Law 135 of 1961 of the agrarian reform, allowed this legal figure to be applied to the farms that were abandoned, such as the lands of Santacoloma. The extinction process was advanced by INCORA. This process of taking over La Hacienda lasted almost nine years, during which a cooperative was organized for the peasants with the support of SENA, Liberal Senator Oscar Vélez Marulanda, INCORA and ANUC.

All the management to obtain the property was done directly with the regional INCORA, former Caldas; the manager, Dr. Hugo Marulanda, and a lawyer named Ceballos Nieto. The leaders of the movement suffered persecution from the police and army who defended the interests of the owners. The liberal party protected the group on orders from Senator Oscar Vélez Marulanda, Juan Guillermo Angel and the mayor of the time that was César Gaviria Trujillo. Gilberto Bedoya Casadiego, leader of this movement became a councilor of Pereira in the 1980s.

Alirio García's contribution shows the importance of having the opposing groups' versions and seeing their real intentions, their struggle for the land. Both used all the legal, juridical, and organizational resources they had. The struggle was long, but the state took action on the matter.

Effectively, the problem of these uncultivated lands and the rights of settlers and tenants led the peasants to move from a phase of claim to one of offensive as a logical consequence of the agrarian policy adopted by the national authorities,²¹ dating back to the years 1918-1919 with the Association of Peasant Users of Córdoba and Montería (*Asociación de Usuarios Campesinos de Córdoba y Montería*), under the direction of an Italian peasant with socialist ideas Vicente Adamo, which culminated with the occupation of land of Loma Grande and the establishment of a commune that the peasants called Baluarte Rojo.²² They resorted for the first time to the tactic of invasions.

The State recognized as legitimate occupiers, settlers whom the landlords regarded as invaders.²³ But this was not the only case in which the state gave land to settlers. For the particular case in the old Caldas, Sánchez refers to several situations of land recoveries made by the settlers in the thirties.²⁴ In December 1931, about 1,500 peasants invaded farms, as follows:

21 LeGrand, Catherine. *Colonización y protesta campesina en Colombia (1850-1950)* (Bogotá: Centro Editorial Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1988),155.

22 Sánchez, *Las ligas campesinas...*, 62.

23 *Ibid.*, 106.

24 *Ibid.*, 103.

Table 1. Peasant invasions in the 1930s

Hacienda	Owner	Location
La Argentina	Santiago Vélez	Tebaida
La Española	Antonio José Londoño	Quimbaya
Orinoco y Nápoles	Juan María Marulanda	Montenegro
El Cairo		Pijao
El Retiro		Belalcázar

Source: Sánchez, *Las ligas campesinas...*

The invasion movement consisted essentially of a spontaneous and massive assertion of legal rights. The term occupier or "invader" was used to refer to people who, calling themselves settlers, purposely settled on unused land within the boundaries of haciendas, which they knew were held as private property.²⁵

These invasions were the most frequently used methods of the struggle, although others were used, such as strikes at harvest time, refusal to make payments for rents, clandestine planting and clandestine construction of houses.

It was a question of substantiating by means of this type of action the right of possession that was almost equivalent to the right of property ownership, given the conditions of the struggle.²⁶

Returning to the circumstances surrounding the struggle for the land of La Hacienda of Snatacoloma, the testimony of Eliberto Chiquito shows how the invasion process unfolded and had similarities with the strategies used by settlers in other parts of the country.

My name is Eliberto Chiquito, son of Elías Chiquito, one of the founders of this village La Colonia. He was one of the invaders of this sector, before arriving here we lived in La Bella for a year and a half; before that, we lived in La Florida. It was around 1967 or 1968 when a group of people decided to come to this sector to knock down mountains; there were trees that one was not able to cover with your arms. Even my dad, of those trees that he felled, made with that wood the first house, that farm is called Alto Bonito, it is located at almost one end of the sidewalk. This part was further away from La Bella in the middle of the thick mountain so that no one could not locate it.

When people began to see that they were invading these lands, several groups gathered and were grabbing land from here to below until they reached close proximity with the court of La Bella, they took advantage of the best land of this large area. Weekly on Mondays groups were made to go making the road by pure pick and shovel, in the same way the aqueduct was made, carrying the materials on their shoulders, the same for energy.²⁷

25 LeGrand, *Colonización y protesta...*, pie de página n.º 4, 170.

26 Jesús Antonio Bejarano, *El régimen agrario de la economía exportadora, a la economía industrial* (La Carreta: Bogotá, 1978), 292.

27 Eliberto Chiquito, interview by Ramiro Franco and Frain Franco, members of the Semillero de Investigación Histórico Cultural de la I E La Bella. *Transición en la producción agrícola de la parte alta del Corregi-*

Although Alirio García affirmed that the peasants had not participated in any other invasion, the memories of these historical processes remain in the organizations. In this process, the level of organization and continuity achieved by the local leaders of the ANUC was decisive. From this entity was directed and managed the recovery of these lands and of another thousand estates throughout the country, obtaining the institutional support of the State through the Agrarian Fund, INCORA and the Ministry of Agriculture itself.

The version delivered by the heir of Santacoloma in an aside confirms that the estate of his father did have pending matters with the State. Hence, the property was shaped by both the peasant struggle and INCORA to concretize in this region Law 135 of 1961 through the figure of expropriation, and then parceling and making the respective delivery of land.

The titles were achieved by the Adjudication Resolution of November 28, 1980. La Hacienda of Santacoloma is what is today known as the village La Colonia, including the court of La Bella, the school of La Colonia and the communal hall. The name La Colonia became popular due to the recovery of the lands as the residents of La Bella and began to form into a settlement from 1980.

6. The allocation and sale of land

In 1978, INCORA gave title deeds to 141 occupying families of the property on an area of 300 hectares.²⁸ One of the claims of the heir Santacoloma and that demonstrates the discontent with what happened with his property was the use that was made of the titles handed over by INCORA to be later sold. Of these new owners it was possible to find the real estate registration document No. 290-88910 of a property located in La Colonia, with the following annotation:

JUVENAL URREGO acquired by allocation made to him by the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform INCORA, according to resolution n. ° 1017 dated 28-11-80, to the real estate registration number 290-0033382.

MARCO TULLIO ZAPATA BALLESTEROS acquired by award made by the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform INCORA, according to resolution No. 1107 dated 09-12-80.

ISRAEL ENRIQUE CARDOZO acquired by allocation made by the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform INCORA, according to resolution No. 1106 dated 09-12-80.

It can be deduced that as soon as the legal process was finalized at the end of 1980, INCORA proceeded to apply Article 25 of Law 135 of 1961 which states: 'On the conclusion of the

miento La Bella 1970- 1995, 10 de mayo de 2016.

28 Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos de Colombia (ANUC), «La ANUC Risaralda», *Economía Campesina*, edición n.º 003 (2015): 63.

decision declaring the domain extinguished, the Institute may allocate to such settlers the portions corresponding to them in accordance with the rules on current wastelands in force at the date of their establishment’.

On the other hand, the adjudication resolutions and the annotations found in this cadastral document also confirm Santacoloma's assertion in which he declared that "a good part of the peasants who received allocated lots on La Hacienda property, as soon as they had these titles sold them and left the place."

Regarding the sale of land, there were other peasant buyers of the first settlers, as was the case of Bernardo Morales who provided the following testimony:

My father came to work with us, he bought a farm called La Esperanza in La Colonia Alta. I also bought property from those who had already been deeded by INCORA. The farms are called El Encanto, Filo Bonito, El Danube, all are adjacent and at the time of buying them they had planted coffee, I told him "dad we should sow only onion as it is what gives the money", then he took out the coffee plantations. Those farms are still our property.²⁹

Arturo Gallego, another of the peasants interviewed, commented:

When I bought this farm INCORA had already divided it up, completed the deed process, Juan Montoya gave it to me. The farm is two and a half hectares, three and a half blocks, when we bought it in 1980. Part of it was already planted in onion, and the rest was pure stubble, there was a wooden house that I knocked down. Then I started with the onion, I got to assemble the entire farm in onion and came to produce 10,000 bunches in 1985.³⁰

The testimony of Alirio García, national leader of the ANUC, evidenced in this conflict over land how the organization was decisive for the settlers to obtain a plot of land in the Hacienda without it being abandoned, at the beginning of the seventies. The insistence of these peasants to proceed with planting, building, conveying, threatening the owners, burning machinery, overcoming the pressures of the public force, obtaining the local political support of the liberal party, their efforts in Bogotá and in the regional INCORA, among other actions, paid off by 1980, when INCORA granted the titles to 141 peasant families.

In this process in the struggle for land, neither in testimonies nor in documents, the presence of the National Federation of Coffee Growers is evident in the seizure of land from La Hacienda of Santacoloma. The systematic position of the Federation (National Federation of Coffee Growers) in a public and strategic way since the 1930, almost from its very creation, was to support the farmers and large producers of grain, both in the measures of possession of the land and in the forms of exploitation of the labor of the peasant in the categories of tenant, sharecropper, as stated Alirio Garcia leader of the ANUC in Pereira “we were for them

29 Bernardo Morales, entrevista con la autora.

30 Arturo Gallego, entrevista con la autora.

communists”³¹

On the contrary, the role of the National Federation of Coffee Growers in the rural area of Pereira was focused toward coffee farming, the institution put all their effort and budget into the policies of replacing traditional coffee plantations with monoculture coffee plantations without blemish and with large loads of agrochemicals; as well as technical assistance, loans for farmers willing to make this transformation, taking into account the recommendations of international missions.

This research advanced the investigation of whether the new forms of land ownership that were taking place in both La Bella and La Florida were a determining factor in the transformation of the agricultural and livestock vocation of the territory. This is an account of what happened, also in the seventies in relation to land tenure, agricultural production and the market.

7. From traditional agriculture to long onion monoculture (*Allium fistulosum*)

In the past, what occurred in La Florida had an impact on La Bella, not only because of its geographical proximity, but also because of the similarity that until then had existed in their traditional production processes. As mentioned, La Bella was a small hamlet of a few farms with traditional crops of grain and coffee, with some areas dedicated to pastures and mountains. The work of the family was on the farm, which provided a subsistence lifestyle. Similarly, in La Florida, coffee cultivation, beef and milk cattle ranching and timber exploitation at the top of the mountain were the main economic activities providing a livelihood for the peasants.

Within the concept of the *world-economy* it is explained that economic changes were pushed by the most enterprising.³² Among them were those who controlled the land, whatever their designation, they had much to gain if they adapted their crops to meet the new trading conditions. This particular condition of land control was a phenomenon that began to change in Florida in the seventies; that is, these characteristics of land tenure, ability to decide, investment capacity, organization of production and market opportunity that were necessary for a transformation of agricultural production in the territory and a key actor who assumed the change was José María Zapata Arias.

8. José María Zapata Arias a visionary-transformative peasant

Bernardo Morales comments:

31 Interview by Elsa Maria Villegas with Alirio Garcia, national leader of ANUC, October 10, 2018. *Historia de la Anuc y el caso de La Hacienda de Santacoloma*.

32 Immanuel Wallerstein, *El moderno sistema mundial. La segunda era de gran expansión de la economía - mundo capitalista 1730-1850*, 2ª ed., vol. III. Traducido por Jesús Albores. México: Siglo XXI, 2006, 337.

José María Zapata, son of José Zapata, the Tocayo, was a muleteer and had an inn in La Suiza near the farm of Villa Amparo, he brought in wood on mules from the Cedral. Then he bought and sold to the people out there, wood, coal, he also lent money and supplied people with everything they needed: silver, grain, meat, drink.³³

Where did the idea of growing onions in La Florida come from? Alcibiades Monsalve explains:

It was not José who initiated this crop, but rather it was Luis López who would be the pioneer of the onion in Florida, but he cultivated it in a constructed terrace that was in a rock in front of what is now El Retén, which was the Ventiadero farm of Pedro Monsalve. In addition, there was another man, Antonio Giraldo from the farm Los Pinillos, where on arrival you would find them cleaning onions and that they packed into a sack and took them to sell, they cultivated them without technique, or anything. It was José Zapata who invited Luis López to plant them on the farm where the park has his name and was his property, which was the seedbed of what would be the emporium of José Zapata.³⁴

9. Purchase of land in La Florida

One of the determining aspects that was found in the dialogue with both Alcibiades Monsalve and Bernardo Morales was the land purchase strategy used by José María Zapata to assemble the entire onion production system. Little by little he became owner of the best land in La Florida. The owners who sold did not imagine what their farms would become in a short time. Let's look at this process. Bernardo Morales narrates:

I worked with the Zapatas for 45 years. I came from the Valley to work with Don José Zapata, I remember on June 3, 1972, when I arrived in La Florida, the old man said: "No, you no longer will go to the farm in Lisbran, you will stay at the farm La Macarena." That it was the only farm he had, it was the inheritance of the father, also called José Zapata, he bought out his brothers and sisters and kept that farm, that was coffee, banana and some cattle for daily useage, I know this because other people before me who worked for the father have confirmed the same. At that time he had only a few small patches of onion, in 1972, that was where on that farm the Macarena that he began to plant onions; when the onion was 300 or 400 pesos for a bunch. He began to plant until he cultivated the entire farm La Macarena and seeing that he still did not have enough onions for all the orders he had, he began to buy more farms. At that time it was easy to buy those farms that were pure coffee and banana, the people said: Let's sell- this is no longer useful (referring to the cultivation of coffee) and people did not know what the farms were about to be used for.

That is where he started buying farms, he already had La Macarena.³⁵ He bought La Playa, today Caminito de piedra; El Mirador, whose owners were Carlos Arias and Natividad Mon-

33 Bernardo Morales, interview by Elsa María Villegas, September 28, 2018.

34 In the investigation it is not possible to clearly determine the origin of the onion that José María Zapata began to plant in La Macarena, it is said that Luis López learned about this work in Villa María Caldas.

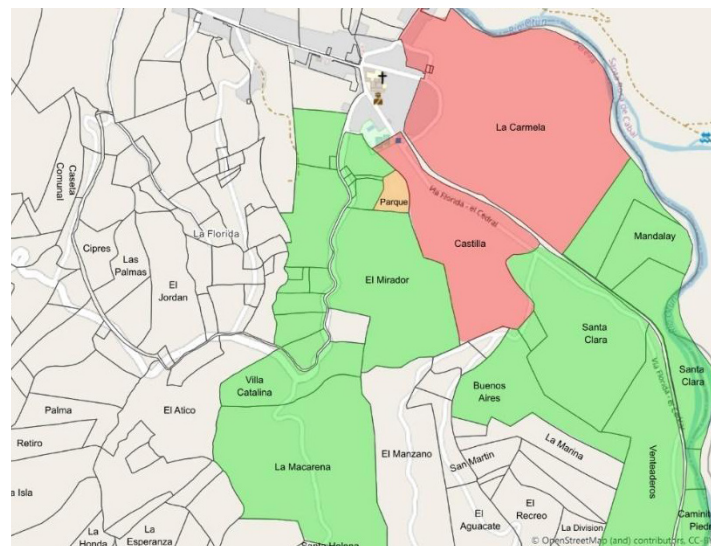
35 The information given by Bernardo Morales about the farms that José María Zapata bought was cross-checked with Alcibiades Monsalve's account during a tour of the area, which made it possible to locate most of Zapata's farms and properties.

salve, Buenos Aires; Santa Clara; Mandalay; The Paramunas; he had La Palma; Plan Bonito; La Magdalena; the last one, arriving in La Florida, Ventidaderos por el Reten.³⁶ All within the same area.

Figure 4 shows the cadastral map taken of the Metropolitan Area, it indicates in green the location of the farms in La Florida that he managed to buy to grow the long onion; and in red, the only farms that were not sold to Zapata. The figure was elaborated from the explanation of Alcibiades Monsalve:

The entire area of the plan of La Florida that covers from the Santa Helena farm, to La Florida belonged to Don José Zapata, there were only two farms that did not want to sell him and that prevented José from being the sole owner of this whole are on both sides of the road, they were La Carmela and La Castilla.

Figure 4. Cadastral plan of La Florida 1996. Properties of José María Zapata



Source: Author

This preponderant condition of land domination in La Florida generated a radical change in the traditional production of the area. Everything that was in coffee, plantain and paddocks was replaced by onion cultivation, taking into account that for this type of cultivation soils without any protection are required in order to make the most of the sunlight, and the soils must be devoid of so-called "weeds". The first years were very successful, because it was a crop that gave production every two months, additionally it only required one type of fertilizer which was chicken manure, a product that was abundant and high quality and competition simply did not exist.

³⁶ The underlining is by the author, highlighting the names of the properties purchased by José Zapata, which can be found in Figure 4.

10. Labor and production of onion

A situation that changed in La Florida with the cultivation of long onions was the type of labor relationships amongst the peasants, the new dynamic broke the family work setup that until then had been enough for the multiple activities on the traditional farm. Now more labor was needed and was contracted under different conditions. Who was who in this new production system of monoculture long onion?

The contribution of peasants to the social and economic construction of societies has been so varied that it is not possible to unify it in a single definition, rather according to their particularities the concept of peasant it is possible that it is ordered into categories. One of these categories depends on whether or not the peasant owns the land. This is explained by Vega Cantor when he highlights the concept of peasants according to land tenure in this way:

... The peasants were the ones who extended the agrarian frontier by incorporating territories until then unsuitable for agricultural and livestock work (planting cultivars, grain crops and raising a few head of cattle). One difference between the settlers and the peasants of the highlands (smallholders and small landowners) was that the former did not have legal titles to the lands on which they were located. This difference, in principle legal, had repercussions in different spheres of the settler's life, since he did not have security to remain in the territory he occupied and was pressured by a variety of factors, which finally forced most of them to move to other places.³⁷

Despite their precarious and hazardous situation, the settlers and their families were the ones who supplied food and products, such as coffee, cocoa and other crops. Thus they played a vital economic role within Colombian society.

Another categorization is made up of the landless peasants who are called tenants: they were the permanent workers of the haciendas, who provided personal service or paid a rent in work or in kind; they received a significant part of their livelihoods (housing and work). The tenant received a plot to cultivate and to have some domestic animals and the payment in kind consisted of giving a stipulated percentage of the crops to the owner of the property.

The agricultural workers were the peasants without land and without resources, employed on the haciendas in exchange for a salary. In the coffee plantations these laborers were hired by the tenants to fulfill the obligations that they had contracted, in these cases they were called laborers of obligation.

The settlers were only those individuals who cultivated the land or raised cattle on wastelands without having a written title to the exploited territory.³⁸

Sharecropping is another category related to the labor aspect, Fals Borda defines it

37 LeGrand, *Colonización y protesta...* en Renán Vega Cantor, «Las luchas agrarias en Colombia en la década de 1920», *Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural* 1, n.º 52 (2011), 22.

38 LeGrand, *Colonización y protesta...*, 40.

as a kind of partnership between owner and planter, where each one put a part of what was required to produce the land and then shared the harvest.³⁹ This system of sharecropping, according to Sánchez, was very common in the southern region of Antioquia and the department of Caldas.⁴⁰

Regarding the workforce, the testimony of one of the interviewees, Arturo Gallego, a peasant from the village of La Colonia, stands out, he commented:

I came from Ceja Antioquia in 1978 to work with José Zapata as a sharecropper at the Mandalay farm. Working as a sharecropper I was in the company, he gave us the onions, we put in the work and it went for half of the expenses, the harvest was taken out and the expenses were split, and if he lent us money we paid what we owed him.

The above testimony is confirmed by Bernardo Morales, who was administrator of the farms of José María Zapata, but who began as a sharecropper:

Don José's way of working with people was like this: in the company, the sharecropper received an area of land with the onion already planted for him to start administering. He gave him half the fertilizers and the seed, and the other half was paid for by the sharecropper. Then when the production was taken out, we split the profits and if the sharecropper had outstanding accounts with him he would pay him.

Don José, with his activities, was a generator of employment for this region, with the long onions he had up to 85 sharecroppers. When he set up the warehouses he also gave a lot of work, both to men and women, and he took into account people who were over forty years old, he did not let them be taken out of work, rather he defended his workers and ensured they had a good quality of life, that they got a house to live with their families, he said: "Having a house is not a wealth, but not having it if it is a lot of poverty." He employed between 200 and 300 people in the cultivation of the crops alone.

In these stories there is evidence of a change in the production of the traditional farm of peasant economy to farms of commercial vocation. Not only because of large-scale monoculture, but also because of having to resort to the employment of salaried labor under the structure of sharecropping. As Guhl puts it, on farms dedicated to commercial production, work is no longer limited to activities that allow the production of the family nucleus, but have employment opportunities for unskilled labor and in abundance, La Florida as a sector was an epicenter of change regarding social structures, labor arrangements and production.⁴¹

Figure 5. Panoramic view of the population center of La Bella in the 1980s.

39 Orlando Fals Borda, *Historia de la cuestión agraria en Colombia* (Bogotá: Carlos Valencia Editores, 1982), 30.

40 Sánchez, *Las ligas campesinas...*, 29.

41 Andrés Guhl, *Café y cambio del paisaje en Colombia, 1970-2005* (Medellín: Fondo Editorial Universidad EAFIT, Banco de la República), 83.

Onion crops are observed at the bottom in the village of La Colonia



Source: Social Networks. Old Photos of Pereira.

11. From the heyday of onions to the planting of guadua bamboo

Another of the relevant aspects that Bernardo Morales experienced first-hand, in addition to the heyday of onion cultivation, was the precise moment when the favorable results changed due to the alteration in the balance of the soil biota, resulting from a monoculture being cultivated over a period of ten years, this was his story:

It was in 1985 when there was a small dry period, when the onion was getting shorted, a white color. He took a few leaves and went to the ICA. The result was that the onion had onions thrips (*Thrips tabaci*), and that's when he started fumigating because the plagues had begun, the plague that tunes leaves black, the ash plague, bedbug, miner, all those pests. From this point onwards it became very expensive to produce onions and the business became difficult and so began its decline between the years 1985–1990.

This is how Don José understood that the time of onions as a good business was already ending for him, because with the plague and with so much competition in production he saw that this was no longer working for him or for those who worked as sharecroppers or administrators. The decline of the onion business began to occur by the years of 1995. Although for many farmers in these villages it remains their main crop option, as they themselves affirm every day, it is more difficult to continue cultivating this crop.

Just as José María Zapata once took out all the coffee plantations to plant the onion because he understood the opportunity that the market offered, bought almost all the farms in the La

Florida area and was the first to cultivate a novel product on a large scale, he did not hesitate when the conditions were contrary to the interests of the business to take out the onion to plant guadua bamboo, because by then the CARDER (Regional Autonomous Corporation of Risaralda) was buying land to plant forests in order to promote the protection of the Otún river basin, because the inhabitants of Pereira use these waters.

12. Conclusion

In territory shared by two rural areas, in the middle of the river catchment is La Bella, in the upper part of the mountain with influences from the Consotá River, and in the lower part, next to the banks of the Otún River, La Florida. Almost sisters, with shared stories since their settlement in the late nineteenth century, the roads, forests, families, traditional farms and constructions of old houses still maintain their history.

The 1970s was a time of transformation for both settlements that posed new challenges for this territory so special to Pereiranos. To understand what occurred it is important to go to the crucial moment for the peasants who fought for the land, to understand the shift from traditional agriculture that was relegated by the idea of producing for the family towards production for the markets of the nearby cities. The new product; the long onion, became that engine of economic, social and environmental transformation for both communities.

It can be concluded that tenure and struggle for land was definitely a determining factor in the transformation of the agricultural vocation, both for the rural area of La Bella and in La Florida. They obtained the land through the movement of settlers led by the ANUC, having as a legal basis for their claims the Law 135 of 1961 of the Agrarian Reform.

The strategies employed by them, invasions, constructions, clandestine planting and a litigation of almost a decade with the Santacoloma family, owner of the La Hacienda property, led to the declaration of the extinction of ownership to the heir family in 1980 and then INCORA proceeded to deliver property titles to 141 families of settlers, who for a decade insisted on the invasion process.

It is worth highlighting the reaction of the Santacoloma Family, who not only lost their father, but also their material wealth, but they respected the judicial decisions. To a large extent, this response helped the new owners focus on planting, building and improving their lives. This area is recognized by its inhabitants as a place where you live in tranquility.

It was possible to determine through the multiple interviews that support the investigation, that several of these families lived and worked in La Florida as sharecroppers or laborers on the farms of José María Zapata, owner of the onion crops. There they learned to plant, and after having the land as an essential element, the inhabitants of the new village, called La Colonia, also decided to cultivate the long onion intensively.

Some first-generation settlers observed the phenomenon of land market when they

began to sell the land granted by INCORA to other peasants, who with savings to invest or assuming a mortgage debt did not hesitate to convert the smallholdings of the nascent rural area of La Colonia into the new area of production of this vegetable as a large monoculture.

With the testimony of Alirio García, Bernardo Morales, Arturo Gallego and Hernán Buriticá it was confirmed that this product for the eighties already had a booming market, which discouraged any attempt to grow other products for family consumption, including coffee itself.

This is how the new residents of La Bella were influential so that the few families who lived in the hamlet also made the decision to cut down all the forest and traditional coffee plantations on their farms, to use the land to cultivate the new product, which promised important income for the family due to the good prices at the moment and thus access to new markets.

As explained, in the case of La Florida a single person, José María Zapata, was able to buy a large number of farms through the land business. He bought everything it took to set up his new business and focused on an onion monoculture. But he did not hesitate to sell those lands when this business was no longer profitable by 1985 due to the presence of pests and the competition of peasants who in the past worked for him. He planted guadua bamboo in response to a new policy for the care of the Otún river basin.

At the political level, it was demonstrated that the Colombian State did reach these areas through INCORA to execute the delivery of the plots in what was the Hacienda de Santacoloma. It had the support of the Liberal Party headed by its political leaders, Senator Oscar Vélez Marulanda; Juan Guillermo Ángel in the process of claiming the lands of the Hacienda; from the Mayor's Office of the municipality of Pereira, César Gaviria Trujillo in 1976, with the construction and maintenance works on access roads, electrification, construction of schools and the village aqueducts. The National Federation of Coffee Growers participated in several of these projects as a contracted partner of the municipality. Also important was the active presence of the peasant movement through the ANUC to sustain and lead the land claim, as well as the participation of one of the leaders of the peasant movement, Gilberto Bedoya Casadiego, as councilor of the municipality of Pereira in the eighties.

In this agricultural transformation that occurred both in La Bella and in La Florida, the participation of any political force interested in this process was not evident, it was rather a decision of each owner to assume the challenges represented by changing traditional agricultural production to the long onion, which was already proven to have good prices offered by the market and was initially easy to grow it in the territory.

The arrival of the new inhabitants and the settlers, boosted not only the economy, but life itself in the village. The arrival of more families into the area of La Colonia helped public services arrive; water, the construction of the village aqueducts; access to electrical power; the transport of the chiva, the work provided by the convicts meant the road could be opened; the labor offered for day laborers or sharecroppers who were employed in the plots of La Colonia

was expanded; schools were built for children in the villages; new neighborhood networks of families such as García, Torres, Chiquito, Flor, among others, were expanded. Unlike the peasants who decided to sell and leave, those that put roots down saw the opportunity and settled.

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