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PEASANTS AND BEEKEEPING: A CASE STUDY IN THE COLOMBIAN MASSIF¹

CAMPESINOS Y APICULTURA: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO EN EL MACIZO COLOMBIANO

CAMPONESES E APICULTURA: UM ESTUDO DE CASO NO MACIÇO COLOMBIANO

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Abstract

The productive systems developed by peasant communities, are characterized by a wide network of social relationships, which are intertwined by practical knowledge. Therefore, the objective of this article was to analyze the process of emergence and establishment of beekeeping activity in a group of farmers from south-western Colombia, grouped in the Association of Beekeepers of the Colombian Massif - APIMACIZO. The applied methodology was oral history, using oral accounts as a methodological resource. Within the results it is evident the connection of different sectors to the beekeeping practice, as well as the intervention of some official sectors in the formation process of the Association. The accounts provided by some of the members of APIMACIZO made it possible to understand the coordination between different sectors (church, family, neighbors) in the life of the peasantry of this association with the apiculture practice; the coordination was possible by means of knowledge. It is from knowledge in beekeeping that bonds of friendship, neighborhood, deep friendship and family relationships were consolidated.

Keywords: Peasantry. Family relationships. Oral history. Collective memory.

Resumen

Los sistemas productivos desarrollados por comunidades campesinas se caracterizan por una amplia red de relaciones sociales, que se entrelazan por el saber en la práctica. Por tanto, el objetivo de este

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artículo fue analizar el proceso de surgimiento y establecimiento de la actividad apícola en un grupo de campesinos del Sur-Occidente colombiano, agrupados en la Asociación de Apicultores del Macizo Colombiano- APIMACIZO. La metodología aplicada fue historia oral, usando como recurso metodológico relatos orales. Dentro de los resultados se evidencia la articulación de diferentes sectores a la práctica apícola, así como, la intervención de algunos sectores estatales en el proceso de formación de la Asociación. Las narraciones proporcionadas por algunos de los miembros de APIMACIZO permitió entender la ligación de diferentes sectores (iglesia, familia, vecinos) en la vida del campesinado de esta Asociación con la práctica apícola; donde la articulación se dio por medio del saber. Es a partir del saber en la apicultura que se consolidaron los lazos de amistad, vecindad, compadrazgo y las relaciones familiares.

Palabras clave: Campesinado. Relaciones familiares. Historia Oral. Memoria Colectiva.

Resumo

Os sistemas produtivos desenvolvidos pelas comunidades camponesas caracterizam-se por uma ampla rede de relações sociais, que se entrelaçam pelo conhecimento na prática. Portanto, o objetivo deste artigo foi analisar o processo de emergência e implantação da apicultura em um grupo de produtores rurais do Sudoeste da Colômbia, agrupados na Associação de Apicultores do Maciço Colombiano-APIMACIZO. A metodologia aplicada foi a história oral, tendo como recurso metodológico os relatos orais. Dentre os resultados, fica evidenciada a articulação de diferentes setores à prática apícola, bem como a intervenção de alguns setores estaduais no processo de formação da Associação. As narrativas de alguns dos membros da APIMACIZO permitiram compreender a ligação de diferentes setores (igreja, família, vizinhos) da vida do campesinato desta Associação com a prática apícola; onde a articulação se deu por meio do conhecimento. É a partir do conhecimento em apicultura que os laços de amizade, vizinhança, compadrazgo e relações familiares se consolidaram.

Palavras chave: Camponeses. Relações familiares. História oral. Memória coletiva.

Introduction

The rural world has undergone significant transformations. The peasant is no longer a simple producer. This image does not depict him neither represents the dynamics of the social processes he is involved; on the contrary, he must be recognized as a social form of production, in the sense of being responsible for his family's subsistence, which is based on the labor organization in which natural spaces, proximity relationships and inter-knowledge are prevailing (WANDERLEY, 2010; 2014).

In the case of Colombia and according to the United Nations Development Program -UNDP (2011), "three-quarters of the country's municipalities are predominantly rural (75.5%)" (UNDP, 2011, p. 18), assuring that "this broader, more complex and unrecognized rurality goes beyond current institutional frameworks [...] It clearly shows that there is more rurality than official institution; in short, more rurality than State "(Ibid.).

In this regard, Forero et al. (2013) say "the survivance and reproduction of rural communities has been shown by their persistence under extremely difficult and hostile conditions they have faced in the Colombian countryside" (FORERO et al., 2013, p. 73). It is this peasantry that has kept itself over time, and has not been exempt from the dynamics of the rural world. According to Fals Borda (2002), despite the impact of capitalist modernity on agriculture, the classic peasant-like vocation for producing food and relating to the environment has not disappeared.

And if the peasantry is not extinct, neither the land, work, family and neighborhood relationships. This is evidenced by some data from the Colombian National Agricultural Census (CNA) in 2014, which states that 22.8% of residents in the agricultural production unit (UPA) declare that their production is for self-consumption, while 3,6% is for exchange or barter purposes (DANE, 2014). Based on the fact that the relationship between land, work and peasant goes beyond a commercial issue, this article aims at analyzing the process of emergence and establishment of

beekeeping in a group of peasants from the South-West of Colombia, currently grouped in the Association of Beekeepers of the Colombian Massif- APIMACIZO, in the municipality of La Vega, Cauca.

As we will try to explain, this Association is the result of a historical process in which various actors, both local and external to the community, converge. This fact has not only allowed an economic development of the group of farmers involved but has also established a link between a specific productive activity - beekeeping - and the peasantry identity.

Therefore, from the implementation of the oral history methodology, the discussion will be addressed in three parts: in the first section, **emergence and establishment of beekeeping in the region**: We will discuss the coming into being of beekeeping in the region from the oral memory of the members of the Association. This collective memory will be analyzed in tune with Halbwachs's thought (2004), for whom collective memory means to evoke a fact as part of our group's life, which we have made public when remembering it, from the point of view of the group. However, within memory there is also knowledge, beliefs, emotions that are transmitted and are part of the cultural practices of a group (JELIN, 2002). Hence, Brandão (1986) and Brandão (1994) theoretically make contribution to the connection between knowledge and identity. Because while it is from the collective memory that it is mentioned the role of the church in the learning process of this "new" productive practice led by one of its representatives, it is from transmitted knowledge that social ties being established during the beekeeping practice are evident. In this way, to analyze the establishment of apicultural practice, we will choose to maintain the chronological and hierarchical order of oral memories, where a process of dissemination among friends, neighbors and relatives led by a resident of the region, prevails.

The second section, **the locality**, is based on different stories that narrate their personal experiences, their life stories through beekeeping, and how it gave way to different groups to link in a certain way to a public policy and thus, the institutionalization of beekeeping begins. In this section, Woortmann's statement (1995) is used to analyze from oral history the macro-historical processes that are brought and mobilized from memory and how they are inserted into people's life stories. However, thinking about what the author called mechanisms of cultural resistance of the peasant, works by Woortmann and Woortmann (1997) and Woortmann (2001) are brought up for discussion. They criticize the economical perspective of some authors upon the peasant. They state why "working the land" must also be seen as an ethical value, and the land is not only a production factor, where work is done, but also a moral value. In this sense, the peasant must be understood as a moral subject and it is from their morality that the peasant's world is organized, being labor the patrimony of the family, on which family is built as a value (WOORTMANN, 2001).

It is in this section where the transition from the local to the regional is evident, involving the participation and presence of the State that can be thought of as "institutionalization" or formalization of the practice. In this point it is evident what Pollak (2006) highlighted of oral history, such as underground memories, "those underground memories continue their work of subversion in silence and almost in an imperceptible way emerge in moments of crisis through sudden and exacerbated shocks. Memory is drawn into dispute" (POLLAK, 2006, p.18).

That is why in the last section called **The Association**, it is shown both the space that beekeeping has gained in the lives of different inhabitants, giving way to the coordination of several groups through the formation of the Association of Beekeepers of the Colombian Massif- APIMACIZO, and the silence about the past. These silences are nothing more than political reasons for silence and this is reflected when they emerge from voluntary forgetfulness to be vindicated in specific contexts.

Study area and data collection

Colombia is a country characterized by a great biological diversity where different topographical features are mixed with varieties of cultures. An example of this is the region called the Colombian Massif, which is defined as a "geohydrological complex that has great biodiversity and all together captures, stores and regulates water, which gives rise to the sources of important rivers in the life and economy of the country" (IDEAM, 1999, p.2). According to Gulh (1945) the Colombian massif is a reflection of the Ecuadorian Andean system of volcanic origin, whose deposits of these materials filled and formed basins that were later crossed by rivers. This edge of the Andean trunk descends to the Colombian Amazon, "except for the cold part, it is completely covered by humid

forests, where the headwaters of the main river arteries of the Colombian Amazon are found" (GULH, 1945, p.170).

La Vega, Cauca, is one of the municipalities that make up the Colombian Massif. It is located in the torrid or tropical zone, characterized by a variety of climates, which together with its different thermal belts allows the growing of a wide variety of agricultural products. This fact has been historically relevant when talking about agrarian systems in the region. As a matter of fact, agriculture developed in this region "has two characteristics: family labor is only used, and it is sustainable. The peasants grow sugar cane, coffee, cassava and plantain, as well as staple foods" (MOLANO, 2011, p.2).

It is in this region, specifically in 2007, that a group of peasant families producing honey and coffee, undertook the initiative to start an organization process based on beekeeping. So, during 2008 this group decided to go from being a project to becoming an Association. Finally, in 2009, it was legally created the Association of Beekeepers of the Colombian Massif - APIMACIZO.

Figure 1: Geographic location of the municipality of La Vega, Cauca



Source: Geographic Information System for Planning and Territorial Arrangement (Colombia) -SI-GOT-.

This research was carried out between the second semester of 2016 and the first semester of 2017. However, it is relevant to clarify about the prior knowledge in relation to the Association and the leaders of the group. From there, a survey was carried out prior to the implementation of the oral history methodology, where it was possible to characterize the members of APIMACIZO who have 20 and 40 years of experience in beekeeping. For the purposes of this research they are called 'long history'. Thus, when implementing the oral history methodology, the oral accounts of 11 members previously characterized, out of the total of 41 registered in this research, were used as a methodological resource. For the purposes of this investigation, the names of the participants were altered and replaced by fictitious ones, so as to not endanger the integrity of the interviewees.

Within the wide framework of the oral history methodology, life history and collective memory were used in the 11-beekeeper group. Life story can be defined as the oral narratives of a narrator about their existence through time, trying to reconstruct the events they lived. There is no dialogue between the interviewee and interviewer or if so, it is very short; that is to say, who directs the conversation is the narrator (QUEIROZ, 1988). In the case of collective memory, we return to authors such as Godoi (1999) and Woortmann (1995), for whom the narratives refer us to a general past. It makes up the first domain where collective memory crystallizes, establishing a distinction between the past and today, marking a fundamental historical division and, in turn, allowing a group not only to define itself spatially, but historically. The latter is recreated according to the social conditions in which they are immersed. Therefore, the study of memories, a methodological resource in the field of oral history, enables the passage from the past to the present and brings to light the changes occurred over time (SILVA, 2008).

Emergence and establishment of beekeeping in the region: a "new" knowledge in production

Production systems are not empty spaces, they are socially structured spaces according to the knowledge relations (BRANDÃO, 1986). In our specific case, in working with beekeeping, it was the church as an institution that took part in the introduction of this new practice in the region. A knowledge documented from the memory of its actors. The narratives provided by these beekeepers refer us to the collective memory of APIMACIZO' members, highlighting the participation of two people who were essential for the appropriation and establishment of this practice from its frames of cultural significance (GONZÁLEZ, 2008).

Below is the account of one of APIMACIZO' members, in 2016, who tells the initial contact his family had with beekeeping as a production system.

The first bees are brought by *Father* [...], who was from Switzerland, in 1960. By that time there was no beekeeping. He had the bees in the priest's house, behind the church, because that is big, they were Italian bees and since the Italian bee is not aggressive, he had them there. He had an apiary with several hives, and my dad and an uncle learned there. Before leaving, as the *Father* was moved, he sold them to my dad and explained to him what it was like. Only honey was produced, the wax comes out by default, due to uncapping, but it was not a business (*Marcio*, 46 years old).

As our interlocutor mentions, his first contact with beekeeping is by means of the *Father*, through his family's work in collaboration with him. It is the *Father* who introduces them to the commonly called Italian bees (*Apis mellifera ligustica*). This memory, as well as that of other members of the 'long-tradition' Association, is the first reference for beekeeping in the municipality. The *Father* arrived in Colombia in 1955 and was a diocesan from Switzerland, who is remembered as an emblematic person in the region not only for being a church' representative, but also for his role as "founder" of beekeeping in the municipality. However, according to people in the region, the *Father* arrived in the municipality in 1960, and his coming to Colombia is part of the process of universalization of the Catholic Church. These Catholic missions, coming from Europe to Latin America, "came precisely to collaborate in places where there was little presence of the church [...] and came with the intention of collaborating on development projects at that time" (*Patricio*, 80 years).

The main role the father had in the municipality of La Vega was the promotion of higher education, although, his job in the area was not limited only to this activity. In fact, for the interlocutors, he and the church are more relevant for the promotion of beekeeping: "it was an activity the *Father* knew and thought it could be, let's say, a financial and nutritional support for the people. His intention was to spread a cultural practice that could serve people to improve their situation in the countryside" (*Patricio*, 80 years old).

Although the account may be taken as an individual memory of our interlocutor, as Halbwachs says "each individual memory is a point of view on the collective memory" (HALBWACHS, 2004, p. 50). Memories are always associated with a group, their reconstruction must be carried out from common notions found in the mind; our thoughts originate in defined social environments and circumstances (HALBAWCHS, 2004). In this way, and in line with Sanz's (1998) analytical argument, this individual memory becomes collective when it is legitimized, shared and preserved over time by the members of a group, as it is the particular case of the account of APIMACIZO emergence. The *Father's* memory took on more importance than that of another priest who was in the area 10 years after him, who also collaborated with the beekeeping practice. He was a Swiss man who arrived in Colombia in 1965. About him it is said "He arrived in the municipality in 1970; he was very concerned about agriculture and helped the peasants to modernize and adapt in all of this" (*Patricio*, 80 years old).

But unlike the first priest, very few people refer to him, and when they do, it is so succinct and brief that even his origin is unknown.

In this sense, as Brandão (1986) states, all communities must be seen as part of inclusive formations where their own reality is only known through production relations of goods, services and with other segments of society. In this case study, therefore, the church and its local representative in the figure of the *Father* is decisive in the construction of the collective memory of

APIMACIZO members. These are reliable sources of transmission and information, which allow for structuring, showing the group's values and the role played by the institution, giving legitimacy to memory and becoming historical data inserted in it (SANZ, 1998).

When referring to the moment of "emergence" of beekeeping in the municipality of La Vega, there is a representative figure, as is the *Father*. However, in a second moment, during the establishment of this practice another person, outstanding in the accounts, emerges; this is Mr. *Cristán*. He is remembered as the *Father's* "apprentice", who once the *Father* moved to another diocese, not only bought the bees, but was also in charge of continuing this practice in the region.

I recommended Don *Cristán* [...] that when harvesting honey, I was ready, there on the farm. I was only with *Father* on 2 occasions [...], he recommended that with Don *Cristán* [...] I could participate with him, so Don *Cristán* [...] would shout at me every time I went by and whatever I was doing, I stopped doing it and would go, as it was a little further down away, [the farm] and there I started to take great care and ask about all that thing, because I was very interested in beekeeping (*Melciades*, 63 years old)

As mentioned in the paragraph, our interlocutor trusted Mr. *Cristán* to learn beekeeping, since, although he had had previous contact with the *Father* in the beekeeping practice, it had not been enough to learn this activity. Being a Mr. *Cristán's* friend and neighbor, for Mr. *Melciades* it was easy to acquire knowledge and through practice and oral language, as he describes it, he was learning.

Mr. *Cristán* together with the *Father* are remembered for their friendly relationship, reinforced by their beekeeping labor, whose innovative practice allowed them to be part of people's memoirs. These two people's smartness allowed them to venture on beekeeping issues not yet dealt with in the region in the 1970s, such as the outbreak of diseases during the handling of bees. Mrs. *Antonia*, Mr. *Cristán's* wife, refers to some methods the *Father* and her husband invented to treat these diseases. For example, when mentioning the bee louse disease, controlled by a technique invented by them, she said "It was invented by him and the *Father*", "He got along well with *Cristán* [...]".

Therefore, our group's collective memory fulfilled its function of selecting the facts and protagonists influencing the group identity. In this way, it creates a filter in which the selected memories are those strengthening the emergence of a practice unknown so far, and its subsequent dissemination from two social actors who nowadays are considered as the beekeeping's pioneers. Furthermore, as Brandão (1994) mentions, memory is not only memories and longings, they are feelings shaping their own identity, in this particular case, a beekeepers' identity that is currently consolidating with APIMACIZO foundation.

The locality, groups of beekeepers in search of complementarity in production

In the previous section the peasants' collective memory grouped in APIMACIZO claimed the importance and participation of *Father* and Mr. *Cristán* in the emergence and consolidation of beekeeping in the municipality. Although, before the founding of the Association, small groups were created referring to domestic or neighborhood groups that began to do beekeeping in an unorganized way as it is today. Thus, once the experience of beekeeping emergence is told, the memory goes from collective to becoming personal experiences of each interviewed member of the Association. They are part of intimate memories, of own and non-collective feelings they lived during the beekeeping labor. Therefore, based on the oral history methodology, the life stories of some APIMACIZO members, memories and personal images undergone through beekeeping were analyzed.

The life stories collected in different spaces allowed to analyze some relationships emerging in the beekeeping labor. It was evidenced that from the knowledge learned, three groups emerged in different villages of the municipality. These groups were the basis for the formation of what is now APIMACIZO. In order to understand how this process of organization took place as domestic and neighborhood groups around beekeeping, we focus on the its relationship with local knowledge handed down from generation to generation, which will be described below.

I was 10 years old when I started helping my dad since [the bees] were not aggressive, that was more or less in the 80's, I worked for him some time before the Africanization [of the bees]; and more or less in 84,85 Africanization came,

I think they came from Brazil through the Amazon, down here, through Caquetá, I don't know (...) Africanization here in La Vega comes in 84,85, even we had to change the handling equipment: we had to wear overalls, we had to wear long gloves, thicker masks; because before, you simply used a face mask on the neck and without gloves or anything, that was with the Italian (*Marcio*, son of Mr. *Cristán*).

This account in which our interlocutor reconstructs his story from some events in his life over time, brings back the memory of how he started working on beekeeping. He mentions two important elements in local beekeeping practice: the first, it is family work and learning. The second, the temporariness related to the bees Africanization process. To start, the family is a decisive element in the continuity of the peasantry, it is from their family history that our interlocutor is directly related to beekeeping production, this being a process of transmission between father and son within the family unit. It is precisely in the family where our interlocutor narrates his collaboration in the process of learning and practice of beekeeping itself, being the father figure who plays a hierarchical role within it. Starting from his father's beekeeping experience, Mr. *Marcio* managed to learn a production system, maintaining the father-son relationship. Therefore, the family character is shown in social practices what implies an association between heritage, work and consumption within the family which is oriented to a specific working logic (Wanderley, 2003), being work experience the basis for their hierarchical organization (WOORTMANN, 2001).

In the case of our interlocutor, beekeeping activity knowledge is the common thread of this the experience transmission. Within his family this process begins on the part of the *Father*. Later this knowledge was adapted and directed by his dad. The generation from generation work experience transmission, is defined by some authors like Woortmann and Woortmann (1997) as *saber-fazer*, a knowledge created in the family by the father figure. This is not only a transmission of production techniques, but it also involves values, role construction and hierarchies within the family group. This knowledge, therefore, is hierarchical and determines control over the group and in the family where it is reproduced.

On the other hand, the second element mentioned is the Africanization process of bees. This element denotes temporariness and expresses a specific time in which the beekeeping labor changed the use of Italian bees (*Apis mellifera ligustica*) into Africanized bees. Martinez (2006) called the '1983 event' the process in which these bee species encountered in the Colombian context in general, that is, hybrids were generated between the different types of bees that existed in the country for beekeeping use. Examples of this are German bees (*Apis mellifera mellifera*), Italian (*Apis mellifera ligustica*), Caucasian (*Apis mellifera caucasica*), African (*Apis mellifera adansonii* or *scutellata*), whose current name Africanized is due to their more similar characteristics to the African bees. (MANTILLA, 1997). This is a macro-historical process in the sense that, as for Mr. *Marcio*, it involved changes in the beekeeping labor; it also developed at national and Latin American level.

The temporariness in this story allows us to understand the adaptability of this family group to the new situation they faced by not giving up beekeeping. It is in this way that Mr. *Marcio* and his father, Mr. *Cristán*, in the 90's started a family business called of Apiary the Massif, where honey was sold in the municipality and in nearby towns. For this family group it meant earning money and the consolidation of beekeeping as an economic activity. Although, at this time they still did not figure out that this business would later become the starting point of a larger group, which will be described in the next section.

The story we present below is the representation of solidarity work in agricultural labors, which undoubtedly shows the neighborhood union to reduce the burdens of working the land.

The story of us, of the beekeepers can be said, that here about 22 years ago we formed a working group, shift change, so after meals rest we started talking, we were no more than 11 and we started talking, and we said "apart from the work plan we had to change shift, let's think about doing something else", then and that idea of bees was proposed by *Melciades* [...], he was in the working group and I shift change, then I say to him: "but what else could we do apart from this?" *Melciades* [...] said: "Well, that is easy, we can take a job of the bees"; We didn't know anything about that and we said to him: "Well, what is that? How is that?" *Melciades* [...] said, "That is easy". We said to him: "Do you know? Do you have any idea about that?"; *Melciades* [...] said, "I have an idea", so we said to him: "Explain to us and let's do it" (*Samiro*, 67 years old)

Mr. *Samiro's* account, as he mentions it, narrates the beginning of a group called ASPICOLAS, which at the beginning was a form of collective work among friends and neighbors, a way of association in agricultural labors locally called "help exchange", and although its name may vary depending on the area (day's wages returned, change hands), it means the same. This kind of work is comparable to what Cândido (2010) says when referring to *mutirão* as collective neighborhood work, which is a way of solving the problem of limited labor with the help of a group of neighbors.

The group, as explained by the people who belonged to it, worked on weeding the farms, harvesting coffee at harvest-time, among other tasks. These tasks required labor, which was scarce in the region, or failing that, there were not the financial resources to pay them, as one of our interlocutors, Mr. *Aparicio* (57 years old) mentions: "[Help exchange] was an idea coming from the group's need, since we didn't have, our financial situation was bad, we could not pay labor, so I help you, you help me and so on".

The group members drew up a work plan on a daily basis for each member, where everyone traveled and carried out the agreed activity. Between this routine and the rest intervals, reflections are always present, questions arose about what else to do, how to complement their daily job with some other labors that would generate more than new economic income for the domestic groups, some nutritional complement. Beekeeping was a solution proposed by Mr. *Melciades*, who as we remember during the beekeeping establishment, had also met *Father* and had basic notions about this practice along with Mr. *Cristán*. In this way and taking up the suggestion and prior knowledge of Mr. *Melciades*, the group agreed to start beekeeping in the early 1990s.

The idea I told them was to have 1 or 2 little hives per participant to get a food supplement at home, because at that time to get a half of milk, a toad must be fought, so I told them "honey has so many properties, more than milk, than meat, pouring all that thing, and as it is true [...] then we consider it that way, as a food supplement for the family (Mr. *Melciades*).

In this way, for the group over time beekeeping was not only a food supplement, but also another economic source, both to coffee farming and the other crops they had. After having been successful in the commercialization of honey, they decided to legally legalize their business and thus processed the legal capacity of their group in the Cauca Chamber of Commerce, which implied the commercial legalization of ASPICOLAS.

From this organizational form, they managed to access some resources from the Departmental Coffee Growers Committee, as expressed by Mr. *Melciades*: "the Coffee Growers Committee gave us a lot of help, got some resources for us [...], a million pesos [a rough value in dollars in 1990 would be US \$1968]", resources used to improve the apiaries infrastructure, by acquiring some instruments first and foremost needed, such as the honey centrifuge. This device was essential to extract honey, since the way it was previously done, that is, manually, caused them problems and pain in their hands.

Therefore, from the first step they took to institutionalize their practice, they began to take part in training processes aimed at modernizing beekeeping step by step, and also at expanding the honey market. It is in this process that time went by and the time would come when efforts and teamwork gave way to a new grouping process that will be explained in the section called "Association".

In a last account before giving way to the unification time when APIMACIZO is created, we refer to another group of beekeepers created in the Vereda La Betulia. This group was called ASDECOB -Association of Community Development La Betulia, which also started as a group initiative of several neighbors, but in the end, it was only made up of two people. In this regard, Mr. Augusto tells us that:

We worked for a long time with *Cristán*, a long time, until I formed an organization, there, in the village, with some friends I worked with, I set up a small project and the Coffee Growers Committee helped us, we bought some materials, but the colleagues did not like it, two of us remained. (Mr. *Augusto*, 73 years old)

Mr. *Augusto*, as mentioned in the quote, worked for a long time with Mr. *Cristán* in "partnership" However, he decided to separate from don *Cristán* to form his Association together with other neighbors in the 90s, but due to his neighbors' rejection of this "new" practice, he stayed only with Mr. *Hermes*. They continued working, although like the previous group, they never thought of beekeeping as a business, but also for self-consumption, or to give to friends.

At that time honey was the only product they managed to harvest, but the benefits of this product were not known in the region. As mentioned by our interlocutor: "people did not have the culture of honey, only witch doctors [natural or traditional doctors], who used to tell one to pour two drops of honey onto this water, apart from this, there was no culture of honey consumption"(Mr. *Augusto*). Thus, although the Committee of Coffee Growers helped them at that time, they never thought of a big business, their beekeeping initiative aimed at diversifying family production. It is only after the formation of APIMACIZO that making profits was seen as a possibility of their practice.

The association: Union around APIMACIZO

This final section was called the Association, since it is the time when the meeting point of different people and their respective stories took place. These accounts were told from a group notion and also from the vicissitudes of each life taking part in this research; stories that allowed to understand the social relationships built up around a practice, such as beekeeping in our case.

As mentioned in the beginning of the text, our group's memory dynamics led us to go through the shared history of the beginning of beekeeping. However, as Jelin mentions, "memory as a narrative social construction implies [...] also paying attention to the processes of construction of legitimate recognition, socially granted by the group it is addressed to" (JELIN, 2002, p. 35). For this reason, among personal stories, family and neighborhood notions, room was given to different groups in the area, where the creation of APIMACIZO finally emerged. At this point, tensions and contradictions arise as a result of various events and the adoption of some government policies in the region making possible such unification; this fact will be discussed below.

What happens is that when forest rangers arrived, we had to save, one the conditions to be forest rangers was voluntary savings, which was not even that voluntary, but it was savings, and those savings could be used in a productive project, obviously in my case I opted for beekeeping. In addition to that, when forest rangers were created, the cooperatives, ours, the one I managed, since I was the manager of VEGACOOOP, it was called Cooperativa Multiactiva Villa Real de la Vega, so savings had to be used in production, and I in my case and other 17 forest rangers used them for that (*Marcio*, 46 years old).

The Forest Ranger Families Program (FRFP) mentioned by our interlocutor was part of the "public policies for the fight against drugs and national defense" (CASTAÑO, 2016, p.183); it was a strategy seeking to promote the "culture of legality" in populations at risk or affected by illegal crops in the rural sector. This strategy was implemented through "a commitment not to sow or replant illegal crops [...] each family received an economic incentive" (UNODC, 2009, p.9).

The FRFP was registered within the continuity and improvement of "Plan Colombia" and the "Defense and Democratic Security Policy" for the government period between 2002-2006; in 2004 the population of the Vega, Cauca got benefit from this program. Although the forest ranger families program focused on alternative development in rural areas, it was never intended as a public policy for rural development. It was more aimed at "voluntary eradication of illegal crops" in areas where there were or presumably there were. Our interlocutor was part of this program, as well as 17 other people, according to the members of APIMACIZO they are called "the forest rangers". They had to save part of the money given by the program for the crop substitution, with the purpose of investing in a productive project, so Mr. *Marcio's* proposal for the other 17 forest rangers was to work on beekeeping.

The proposal to work on beekeeping gained adherents for two reasons: the first, very highlighted in the municipality, is the low land demand in comparison to other productive activities, as mentioned by Mr. *Augusto* (73 years): "For livestock, a lot of land is required, for coffee due to height, it is not possible; it is high in La Vega [specifically in the "High" area of the municipality] so it does not work there, and beekeeping does not need a lot of land to install the apiary. "The second reason was the renowned and well-known experience that Mr. *Marcio* and his father had in

beekeeping, as seen previously, who since the 90s had been producing and marketing honey under the name of Apiary the Massif.

This small group of 17 local farmers, associated in the Villa Real of la Vega-VEGACOO Multiactive Cooperative at that time, decided to use the resources of the ranger program in a project aimed at producing and marketing honey at a municipal level. This fact led them to make the decision to expand the group and, along with it, undertake the search for other people from La Vega who already had some experience in this practice and were interested in the project. "So, the 17 forest rangers went out to look for the people [...], who had 2 or 3 little hives, so we visited them, the georeferencing [...] of those, 22 [more people] joined us" (Mr. *Marcio*, 46 years old).

It is at this point when the accounts become collective silence, people talk about being part of the forest ranger families program, but they never talk about why they entered the program. When they and their families participated in what the State called "culture of illegality". Life stories, in the sense of Pollak (2006), are like collective memory, susceptible to be presented based on the context they are told. According to this author, life history is an "instrument for identity reconstruction and not only factual accounts" (POLLAK, 2006, p.30). This is why, like any discursive process, an endless number of contradictions and tensions appear, being silence a way of adjustment to the social environment. According to Rios (2013), silence must be understood as a necessary condition of survival for the memories of the "subjugated" groups.

Although there were silences, these underground memories undergo an activation process under institutional contexts, as they want to be vindicated in spaces where the elimination and change processes of illegal crops can imply their identity reaffirmation. In this sense, Jelin states "there is not a single type of forgetfulness, but a multiplicity of situations in which forgetfulness and silence are manifested with different "uses and senses", because "the past that is remembered and forgotten is activated in a present and based on future expectations"(JELIN, 2002, p.29).

Of the 22 new people who joined the proposal for what would later be called APIMACIZO, none was part of ranger families. As expressed in some oral accounts, the intended villages to be part of the program, rejected it. Due to some families' discontent at being called growers of illegal crops, several villages arranged to oppose categorically, arguing that they did not grow anything illegal.

Of these 22 people, some were part of groups already formed like ASPICOLAS who over time had managed to make an improvement in beekeeping and have a local market. Others were part of ASDECOB, who had continued to work on beekeeping on their farms, a family-oriented beekeeping and it could be even said neighbor-oriented. Others were people from the municipality who had already worked on beekeeping, but in an individual way. However, each of these people who entered the project had someone known within the group of "forest rangers", and more importantly, most of them at some point in their lives had known about beekeeping with Mr. *Cristán* or, in the case of the youngest, with Mr. *Marcio*. In other words, beekeeping in the municipality of La Vega, to put it in some way, bore the stamp of *Cristán's* family and his son, Mr. *Marcio*.

By 2007 when this group of 39 people is formed, as it was well said, they were still associated in the VEGACOO cooperative and not in APIMACIZO, since it was just the name of the project that had brought them together. Once the cooperative was not meeting their goals and perspectives, they decided to form the new association. Thus, as one of the youngest members of the current Association states, "in 2007 the group was born, in 2008 it was given the name of Association, and in 2009 it was awarded legal capacity" (*Airón*, 33 years old).

Made the decision to create a new legal figure, in 2009 they legalized their organization when awarded their legal capacity as the Association of Beekeepers of the Colombian Massif-APIMACIZO. As of there they have managed to participate in the call for various productive projects such as MADAP - Municipal Alternative Development Areas Program, Productive Alliances Support Project - PASP, which is an instrument of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development that links small rural producers to markets through an agribusiness scheme with a formal trade partner, among others.

In this way, APIMACIZO has managed to establish marketing points in different supermarkets in the city of Popayán, capital of the Cauca Region, positioning through its brand "APIMACIZO, 100% natural". It markets not only honey, but also a mixture of "Propolis in honey" which has a therapeutic use for respiratory problems.

Conclusions

The accounts provided by some of the members of APIMACIZO allowed us to understand the connection between different sectors (church, family, neighbors) in the life of the peasantry of this beekeeping association; where knowledge was the coordination point. It is from beekeeping knowledge, where the bonds of friendship, neighborhood, deep friendship and family relationships grew stronger, which are seen when working collectively on the different agricultural labors, showing that production will decisively determine the organization ways of APIMACIZO members' social life.

From the oral accounts told by the interlocutors, two key moments in the shaping of the agrarian issue in Colombia stand out. The first is in the 90`s, the emergence of a process of partnership and collectivization. In the second moment, the implementation of the forest ranger families program, together with the "illegal crops" within the population. The latter program oriented and linked APIMACIZO to accessing national promotion projects, showing a new approach to the country's rurality.

On the other hand, the collective memory showed a phase of collective voluntary silence in the association's members, which was evident at the time of inquiry into the nature of ranger families. In this way, the interviewees' reaction allowed us to understand that on many occasions some memories are omitted on purpose by a group. This fact is known as voluntary silence or forgetfulness.

Thinking about the feelings going around memory, the contradictions and tensions that can turn into various reactions, allows us to ask ourselves when these tensions meant forging that identity that vindicate the peasant with a strong relationship with nature, and how history connects with personal experiences where there can be silent shadow zones.

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