Overcoming Inherited Fears and Complexes of Distant Colonial Times in Tropical Cool Climate Viticulture

The Puntalarga Wine Growing Project

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Abstract

Growing various selections of deciduous fruit trees of France at his Hacienda La Ramada in Sogamoso in 1927, Don Hernan Archila Montejo played a central role for the introduction of post-colonial quality fruit growing to Boyacá. The success of this process is attributable in great part to the capacity of French advisor Don Joseph Duret, who accompanied the project. A native of Saint Hilaire, a wine village of the Loire Valley, Don "Chepe," as he was affectionately known, also acted as an efficient local ambassador of wine, from France. In 1930 for the installation of the particularly successful plantings of French pear, plum and peach trees at Hacienda San Marcos in Sogamoso, Don "Chepe" Duret advised from the election of the planting site until well into the production stage. It was a convenient length of time for establishing a school on deciduous fruit trees growing and wine appreciation culture. Persevering in its seasonal behavior against tropical climate monotony, the deciduous fruit tree grown at high altitude in Hacienda San Marcos created an atmosphere and lifestyle among people involved with them, similar to that encountered in their regions of origin. Those conditions, together with the background of the mentioned Duret’s school, favored the birth and grow of the post-colonial tropical cool climate viticulture in Boyacá. The last execution of a colonial prohibition breaching wine grower in Boyacá occurred at the beginning of the 19th century. After this lesson, a great many years elapsed, until the appearance of the initiative to resuscitate the regional wine growing.

In 1982 our quality wine growing project started at the Puntalarga Hill which resuscitates that, in any way, timid colonial viticulture. Vineyards are situated between 2400 and 2600 meters a.s.l, on suitable sloping land soils, under enough sunshine, daytime heating, nighttime cooling and water deficit, which are desirable conditions for producing premium wine grapes. The obtained results show that it is possible to compensate for the low latitude agro climatic conditions through altitude. Throughout the year, the regional agro climatic conditions could be considered equivalent to those of a good autumn, in a cool temperate climate. Since the nineties, viticultural extension is under way in several places. It seems that the Chicamocha River exercises, on the viticultural extension pattern, effects comparable to those attributed to other wine rivers. The geographical viticulture extension pattern follows the Chicamocha River course direction. It practically extends over the distribution pattern of pre-hispanic population spots under Sogamoso’s religious center influence before 1537. The distribution pattern of descendant individuals of the Mission grape’s colonial introductions, shows a similar behavior. These phenomena could possibly be related to the regional geological history, particularly of the Chicamocha River. Understanding the mentioned phenomena could deliver valuable clues into the deep background of the regional “terroir,” increasing the mystique, founded on quality, which the regional wine already reveals.