

Coffee expansion in the Southwest of Minas Gerais (1868 to 1920)

Expansão cafeeira no Sudoeste mineiro (1868 a 1920)

João Lucas Rodrigues*

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-7495-9809>

Abstract

This paper analyzes the expansion of coffee plantations in southwest Minas Gerais, specifically in the municipalities of Guaxupé, Guaranésia and Muzambinho, from 1869 to 1920. The process of establishing regional coffee plantations is described using data from a variety of sources – internal farm records, plantation deeds, *post-mortem* inventories, and reports from the Mogyana Railway Company. Initially, we analyze the first expansion of the coffee plantations in the area between the final decades of the Imperial Era and the first years of the 20th century. Next, we discuss the impact of the arrival of the railroad on the regional economy and the consolidation of the region as an important coffee-growing center.

Keywords: Southwest of Minas Gerais, coffee economy, railroads.

Resumo

No presente texto, analisamos o movimento de expansão da lavoura cafeeira no Sudoeste mineiro – municípios de Guaxupé, Guaranésia e Muzambinho – entre os anos de 1869 a 1920. Valendo-nos de um conjunto diversificado de fontes – registros internos de fazendas, escrituras de formação de lavouras, inventários *post mortem* e relatórios da Companhia Mogyana de Estradas de Ferro – buscamos descrever o processo de montagem da cafeicultura regional. Em um primeiro momento, analisamos o primeiro arranque de expansão das lavouras de café na área entre as décadas finais do Império e primeiros anos do século XX. Em um segundo momento, discorreremos sobre os impactos da chegada da ferrovia sobre a economia regional e a consolidação da região como um importante centro cafeeiro.

Palavras-chave: Sudoeste mineiro, economia cafeeira, ferrovias.

* PhD in History from the Federal University of Minas Gerais. E-mail: joaolucasrc@yahoo.com.br

As industrialization, urbanization, and population expansion grew in the second half of the nineteenth century, so did the demand for tropical products in the major centers of the capitalist economy. Meanwhile, in southeast Brazil, the railroads overcame the topographical challenges of the Serra do Mar Mountain Range and reached the interior of the country, expanding the possibilities for the establishment of new crops in areas far from the ports. Increased demand and crops transportation possibilities provided by the railroads fostered the expansion of crops in the eastern Paraíba Valley, Zona da Mata in Minas Gerais, and western São Paulo. In this area, the Mogyana Railway Company extended its railroads to northeast São Paulo. Farmers in the southwest of the state and the producers in the neighboring province started investing in coffee plantations, as the railroads advanced across the region, eventually approaching Minas Gerais. Following the expansion of the railroads, a new production area was established in the Province of Minas Gerais.

This paper analyzes the expansion of coffee plantations in southwest Minas Gerais, specifically in the municipalities of Guaxupé, Guaranésia and Muzambinho, from 1869 to 1920. The process of establishing regional coffee plantations is described using data from a variety of sources – internal farm records, plantation deeds, *post-mortem* inventories, and reports from the Mogyana Railway Company.

The initial boom of regional coffee growing

Colonel Manuel Joaquim Ribeiro do Valle, a farmer who lived in Guaxupé, and who was granted the title of Baron by the Emperor, wrote the following entry in one of his accounting journals:

The Mirante coffee plantation was planted in January 1868 – 8,000 trees; the Serrado coffee plantation was planted in January 1870 – 30,000 trees; the coffee plantation on the downhill was planted in January 1871 – 6,000 trees; the Bela Vista coffee plantation was planted in December and January 1873 and 1874 – 34,000 trees; the Bela Vista coffee plantation on the downhill was planted in January 1875 – 5,000 trees.¹

¹ Livro 4 (1875 – 1893). Accounts of the farmer Manuel Joaquim Ribeiro do Valle. Private archive of Fazenda Nova Floresta.

During the same period, several Guaxupé farmers visited the notary's office to register deeds of establishment of new crops. In 1869, for example, Lieutenant João Batista Pereira de Magalhães hired Antônio Vieira das Chagas to establish a coffee plantation² of 1.5 alqueires³. In 1873, Joaquim da Costa Monteiro negotiated with Gabriel Antônio de Moraes to plant 1.0 alqueire of coffee.⁴ In 1874, Geraldo Ribeiro do Valle hired João Isidoro Araújo to grow 2.0 alqueires of coffee.⁵ The following year, Vicente de Paula Ribeiro hired Francisco Jatubá, Joaquim Francisco Jatubá and Martinho Ferreira Jatubá to plant 4.0 alqueires of coffee.⁶

Those are the first records of coffee plantations in the region we found.⁷ It was not by chance that the plantations were established just after the railroads reached the interior of the province of São Paulo since the São Paulo Railway Company ran from Santos to Jundiá, and the Mogyana Railroad Company would run close to Minas Gerais. As happened in other areas, by facilitating the transportation of crops, the railroads opened possibilities for investment in coffee plantations. Local farmers, aware of the changing circumstances, began to reallocate resources to establish plantations. However, at that time, given the great distances that separated producers in Minas Gerais from any railroad station, it is very likely that only the large-scale farmers invested in growing rubiaceae since they had the means to transport their produce over long distances.

In the 1880s, Bernardino Saturnino da Veiga, a journalist born in the city of Campanha, passed through the region. He wrote about the parish of de Dores de Guaxupé, where “a lot of coffee is grown, the main product of the parish”.⁸ The writer explains that in Muzambinho “the lands of the parish are superb and suitable for all our crops, particularly coffee, which is grown on 350 alqueires, with the 1882 harvest producing around 25,000 to 30,000

² Cartório de Registro Civil de Guaxupé, livro 2, fls. 88.v.

³ Alqueire: unit of measurement for land area. However, there are various measures of alqueires in use throughout the country. In the state of São Paulo and southwestern Minas Gerais, for instance, the size of this unit is 24,200 square meters or 2.42 hectares.

⁴ Cartório de Registro Civil de Guaxupé, livro 2, fls. 144.v.

⁵ Cartório de Registro Civil de Guaxupé, livro 3, fls. 41.v.

⁶ Cartório de Registro Civil de Guaxupé, livro 3, fls. 60.v.

⁷ There are two records from the late 1860s and 26 from the 1870s.

⁸ VEIGA, Bernardo Saturnino da. *Almanach Sul Mineiro*. Campanha: Tipografia do Monitor Sul Mineiro, 1884, p. 363.

arrobas”.⁹ Similarly, Veiga said of Guaranésia that “coffee is the most widely used crop, with around 600,000 planted trees”.¹⁰

Cristiano Corte Restitutti data shows that between 1859 and 1884 coffee exports accounted for 70.1% of the value of the goods that passed through Guaxupé’s Collection Office¹¹. Between 1866 and 1884, coffee production accounted for 80.1% of the total value of goods registered in Monte Santo de Minas, a neighboring town, where there was also a collection office.¹² Considering all the collection offices on the southwest border of Minas Gerais,¹³ 1,528 kilos of coffee left the region between 1852 and 1860. Twenty years later, between 1881 and 1884, exports jumped to 2,203,589 kilos.¹⁴ The impressive growth in the volume of exports indicates a significant expansion of cultivation areas in the last decades of the 19th century.

In Alta Mogiana, in the state of São Paulo, there is a similar movement.

Rogério Faleiros points out that there was a significant increase in the number of contracts for the establishment of new plantations throughout the municipality of Franca, which indicates a growth in plantation areas in the final years of the 19th century.¹⁵ In Ribeirão Preto, during the same period, coffee plantations grew intensively throughout the land. Luciana Lopes states that local production reached its peak in the first year of the 20th century, with almost 3,500,000 arrobas.¹⁶ Considering the entire region, the number of coffee trees jumped from 57,380 million in 1886 to 202,174 million in 1900.¹⁷

Beyond land and labor, requirements related to the production process, two additional factors conditioned this expansion. Firstly, as mentioned

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 353.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 359.

¹¹ Collection offices (recebedorias) were tax offices located on the border of the Province of Minas Gerais. See: RESTITUTTI, Cristiano Corte. *Elementos da fiscalidade de Minas Gerais provincial*. Almanack Braziliense. São Paulo, n°10, p. 115-129, nov. 2009.

¹² RESTITUTTI, Cristiano Corte. *As fronteiras da província: rotas de comércio interprovincial (Minas Gerais, 1839-1884)*. Dissertação (Mestrado) – UNESP, Universidade Estadual Paulista, Araraquara, 2006, p. 200.

¹³ Restitutti’s regionalization identifies the collection offices on the southwest border as follows: Monte Santo, Jacuí, Dolores de Guaxupé, Cabo Verde, Caldas, Ouro Fino e Campanha de Toledo. See: RESTITUTTI, Cristiano Corte, op. cit., 2006, p. 144.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 202.

¹⁵ FALEIROS, Rogério Naques. *Homens do café: Franca, 1880-1920*. Ribeirão Preto, SP: Holos Editora, 2008, p. 78.

¹⁶ LOPES, Luciana Suarez. *Ribeirão Preto: a dinâmica da economia cafeeira de 1870 a 1930*. Ribeirão Preto: Fundação Instituto do Livro, 2011, p. 50.

¹⁷ HOLLOWAY, Thomas H. *Imigrantes para o café. Café e sociedade em São Paulo, 1886-1934*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz & Terra, 1984, p. 264.

before, the development of the railroad network significantly facilitated the access to natural resources across extensive regions distant from the ports. Secondly, a market increase in global coffee prices that took place from 1886 to 1894. In 1885, in the Port of Santos, a 10 kg bag sold for USD1.50, and in 1893, it was sold for USD3.079. The depreciation of the exchange rate favored Brazilian exporters and the cost in national currency ranged from 3\$950¹⁸ to 15\$800 within the same year.¹⁹

According to Delfim Netto, from 1886 onwards the global market showed extraordinary growth, especially the North American. In this scenario, the consumer income increased and also the level of consumption. As demand grew, the price of coffee surged significantly. In addition, Brazil's production fluctuated greatly between 1887 and 1890 due to the coffee plantation cycle. The 1886-87 harvest reached 6.2 million bags, whereas in 1887-88, it was only 3.3 million, and in the following year, 6.5 million. In the 1889-90 harvest, production fell to 4.6 million bags.²⁰

The favorable pricing scenario persisted until the 1895-96 harvest, albeit with diminishing prices; from that year onwards, prices fell significantly. In the great harvest of 1896-97, which already reflected the production of the new crops that were planted in previous years, prices decreased by 50%.²¹ However, with the devaluation of the exchange rate – in 1890, the mil-réis was worth 46 cents, and in 1899, only 15 cents²² – the decline was mitigated, leading to continued intensive cultivation in the production centers, especially on the São Paulo plateau.²³ In 1890, there were 154.292 million coffee trees planted in the state of São Paulo; in 1905, 613.686.²⁴ In southwest Minas Gerais – an area that includes the municipalities of Guaxupé, Muzambinho, Guaranésia, Monte Santo de Minas, Jacuí, Passos and São Sebastião do Paraíso – the production base reached 19.7 million planted trees in 1899.²⁵

¹⁸ Réis was the currency used in Brazil during the colonial, imperial, and part of the republican periods.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 268.

²⁰ DELFIM NETTO, Antônio. *O problema do café no Brasil*. São Paulo: Ed. Unesp: 2009, p. 27-28.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

²² FALEIROS, Rogério Naques, op. cit., 2008, p. 101.

²³ According to Delfim Netto, “the coincidence of a faster fall in the exchange rate than in coffee prices created the conditions for the expansion of coffee growing when the market could no longer absorb the quantity produced except at tiny price levels” (DELFIM NETTO, Antônio, op. cit., 2009, p. 35).

²⁴ HOLLOWAY, Thomas H. Condições de mercado de trabalho e organização do trabalho nas plantações na economia cafeeira de São Paulo. 1885-1915. Uma análise preliminar. *Revista de Estudos Econômicos*, vol. 2, nº6, 1972, p. 145-180.

²⁵ Letter addressed by the Municipal Council of Monte Santo to the Secretary of the Interior of Minas Gerais,

The expansion of these crops resulted in overproduction. Brazilian production flooded the market. As mentioned, prices have plummeted. Furthermore, starting in 1898, a new factor contributed to intensifying the crisis even further. Joaquim Murinho, a minister in the Campos Salles government, implemented a deflationary economic policy to increase the value of the mil-réis, which negatively impacted the domestic coffee prices. Opposed to state interventions, Murinho considered that “maladjustment would induce a natural selection, removing from the market those plantations established in the 1890s without the slightest planning and potential, merely implemented by the pressure of the abundance of currencies”.²⁶

The situation was dire, a decline in international prices and a concurrent rise in the exchange rate led to the reduction of the domestic prices. In response to this scenario and the anticipation of a record-breaking harvest in 1906, the coffee-producing states decided to intervene to hold the crisis. Coffee producers recognized the urgency to establish minimum prices to ensure the sector’s continued profitability. Therefore, in 1906, the Taubaté Agreement was signed between the three major coffee-producing states, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Minas Gerais.²⁷ The main measure agreed was the provision of substantial foreign loans to preserve part of the harvest, thereby safeguarding price stability. Although only the state of São Paulo implemented the project, prices began to improve by the end of the decade because of government intervention.

Furthermore, three years earlier, in 1903, São Paulo banned the establishing of new plantations for five years, to contain the expansion of the production base. The measure was later renewed for the same period, until 1912.²⁸

The crisis affected the region’s economy. For many producers, who were often heavily indebted to the commission houses²⁹, these years were marked

Wenceslau Braz Pereira Gomes, and published by the Newspaper *O Estado de Minas*, em 11/1/1899. Apud DIAS, Lia Ribeiro; CORNILS, Patrícia. *Júlio Tavares: café, Mogiana e PRM (1863-1906)*. São Paulo: Momento Editorial, 2009, p. 24.

²⁶ FALEIROS, R. Naques, op. cit., 2008, p. 102.

²⁷ On the Taubaté Convention, see, among others: HOLLOWAY, Thomas H. *Vida e morte do Convênio de Taubaté: a primeira valorização do café*. Local: Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1978; MENDONÇA, Sônia Regina de. “O convênio de Taubaté e a economia agrícola fluminense”. *Locus*, 5 (1), 1999. Regarding the participation of Minas Gerais, see: WIRTH, J. *O Fiel da Balança: Minas Gerais na Confederação Brasileira - 1889/1937*. 1ª ed., Paz e Terra, São Paulo, 1982.

²⁸ HOLLOWAY, Thomas H, op. cit., 1984, p. 144.

²⁹ During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the coffee trade in Brazil operated in a specific manner. The

by financial deficits and asset loss. The connection between the southwest of Minas Gerais and the global coffee market led to the development of important coffee plantations and the accumulation of large fortunes. However, this same process made the economic agents susceptible to fluctuations in demand and prices.

Joaquim Pedro Leite Ribeiro was a prominent coffee farmer in Guaxupé. His estates totaled 2,449.04 hectares and his coffee plantations had 234,250 trees. The farms were equipped with workers' facilities, drying yards, storage vats, machinery for processing the produce and ancillary facilities such as saw mills, mills, monjolos and others. His assets were valued at 260:141\$000, according to the 1904 inventory of Maria Theobaldina da Anunciação, Joaquim Pedro's wife. However, the document also describes a huge debt contracted with the commission house Marques Valle & Co., based in Santos.³⁰

In 1902, according to a deed drawn up at the notary's office and attached to the inventory, Joaquim Pedro mortgaged the Bocaina farm, where the family was based, to Marques Valle & Co. When the mortgage came due in 1904, he was unable to redeem it and had no choice but to sell the property. The liabilities amounted to 232:932\$000, and the property was valued at 108:995\$000. After an agreement, the creditors received the amount and settled the debts.³¹

Manoel Francisco de Souza, a coffee grower who also lived in Guaxupé, had assets of 21,770\$000.³² He was a medium-scale producer and his coffee plantations had 50,000 coffee trees. Similarly to Joaquim Pedro, the assets of Manoel Francisco's estate were mortgaged to secure a debt of \$13,384.256, as evidenced by documents attached to the inventory. The debts were owed to two commissioners, A. Nápoles & Co., and Valle Bastos & Co. To liquidate the debt, the land, associated improvements, and coffee plantations were subject for auction.³³

However, despite the "crisis", the railroad construction strengthened the integration of the region's production into the agro-export economy

farmer would consign their crops to a commission agent who, for a commission on the sale's value, would then pass them on to the exporter. The commissioners, in addition to their commercial function, also acted as financiers of production. See: STEIN, S. J. *Grandeza e decadência do café no vale do Paraíba: com referência especial ao município de Vassouras*. Rio de Janeiro: Brasiliense, 1961.

³⁰ FMM – Inventário *post mortem* de Maria Theobaldina da Anunciação, 1904, solto.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² FMM – Inventário *post mortem* de Manoel Francisco de Souza., 1909, 1º ofício, caixa 66.

³³ *Ibidem*.

during this period. As will be shown in what follows, the railroad revitalized the regional coffee plantation.

The Mogyana Railway Company and the consolidation of the agro-export economy

At the beginning of the 19th century, large-scale producers in the region, especially in Guaxupé, decided to build a railroad branch line that would run from Mococa to the border of Minas Gerais. In 1900, under the leadership of Joaquim Augusto Ribeiro do Valle, they obtained a permit from the São Paulo government to carry out the work and a consortium of investors was formed to raise the required capital. In that same year, the Mogyana Company assumed the contractual responsibility to undertake the construction project.³⁴ In 1901, as the construction work was in progress, the project was expanded. The local farmers obtained a permit from the Minas Gerais government to build a railroad line from the border of Minas Gerais to the Guaxupé village, thereby connecting the town to the railroad network. In 1902, as the design of the second line was approved, the underwriters decided to transfer the construction of the line in São Paulo to the Mogyana Company and reallocate the financial resources to build the section of the railroad in Minas Gerais. Considering that the proposal was advantageous in view of the possibility of transporting the coffee production of Minas Gerais, the Mogyana Company negotiated the purchase. The construction was carried out under the same conditions as the first contract.³⁵ According to the company's report, the work in the state of São Paulo was completed by mid-1903. In Minas Gerais, the preparation of the roadbed, such as mowing and earthmoving, was also completed.³⁶ Em pouco tempo, toda a estrada foi concluída. Before long, the entire railroad was completed. From Ribeiro do Valle station until Guaxupé the railroad was 45-km long. Ribeiro do Vale station, Mococa branch line,

³⁴ The company's report says: "Since Colonel Joaquim Ribeiro do Valle, together with other interested parties, proposed to compete with the capital for the construction of a branch line from the convenient point of the Mococa line to the border of the State of Minas Gerais in the direction of Dores de Guaxupé, without merging interests with those of Mogyana, this Board, judging the proposal to be advantageous, decided to promote the realization of the project through contractual clauses guaranteeing the interests of the Company. And having obtained the license from the State Government, it ordered the studies to be carried out, which it will shortly present to the Government for approval". (Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company, Campinas, 16 de junho de 1901, p. 15).

³⁵ Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company (Relatório CMEF), Campinas, 21 de junho de 1903, p. 12.

³⁶ Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company (Relatório CMEF), Campinas, 22 de junho de 1904, pp. 228-229.

was in the municipality of São José do Rio Pardo. The first station, Itaiquara, in Caconde, was inaugurated in June 1903; the last station, in Guaxupé, was inaugurated in May 1904.³⁷

The private documentation of Nova Floresta farm³⁸ in Guaxupé indicates that Joaquim Augusto Ribeiro do Valle, who would later become the Count Ribeiro do Valle, provided most of the capital (55.6%) for the construction of the branch line. There were seven other investors (Table 1).

Table 1: Guaxupé branch members

Investors' Names	Invested Capital
Custódio Leite Ribeiro Sobrinho	60:000\$000
Manoel Antônio de A.	60:000\$000
Vicente Teixeira Marques	64:000\$000
Antônio Marques de Souza e Silva	24:000\$000
Joaquim Costa Monteiro	60:000\$000
Coronel Francisco Navarro de Marques Salles	12:800\$000
Conego Esaú dos Santos	3:200\$000
Joaquim Augusto Ribeiro do Valle	356:000\$000
Total:	640:000\$000

Source: Private archive of the Nova Floresta farm, book 7 (1904–1940).

Most of them, six out of the eight, were coffee producers and residents of Guaxupé. Clearly, the financial influence of the coffee industry extended beyond the plantations to support other economic endeavors, such as a railroad transport company.

After the railroad was operational, the Muzambinho Railway Company³⁹ filed a lawsuit against the investors, accusing them of invading a privileged

³⁷ VALLE, José Ribeiro do; VALLE, Geraldo Ribeiro do. *Guaxupé: memória história (a terra e a gente)*. São Paulo, 1984, pp. 369-372; Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company (Relatório CMEF), Campinas, 25 de junho de 1905, p. 14.

³⁸ At the Nova Floresta farm in Guaxupé, owned by Joaquim Augusto Ribeiro do Valle, we found a wealth of documentation about the activities of the farmer and also of his father, the Baron of Guaxupé.

³⁹ The Muzambinho Railroad Company never operated in the region covered by the research. The trunk line started in Três Corações, passed through Varginha, Três Pontas, Campos Gerais, Alfenas and, finally, Cabo Verde. The company was also responsible for creating the Campanha branch line. This ran through six municipalities: Caxambu, Santa Rita do Sapucaí, Lambari, Águas Virtuosas, Cambuquira and Campanha. See: SILVA, Marcel Pereira da. *De Gado a Café: as ferrovias no sul de Minas Gerais (1874-1910)* – FFLCH/USP, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2012, p. 133.

area. After several years, the ruling favored the group of partners from the branch.⁴⁰ In 1908, four years after the inauguration, the Minas Gerais section of the Guaxupé branch line was also sold to the Mogyana Railway Company for the price of 675:262\$959, as can be seen in the excerpt from the company's report transcribed below.

On December 3, 1908, the Minas Gerais section of the Guaxupé branch line was acquired by the Mogyana Railway Company and, on December 31, at the Finance Secretariat of the State of Minas Gerais, the term of responsibility, acceptance and observance by the Mogyana Company of the contract of January 5, 1901, signed with Colonel Joaquim Augusto Ribeiro do Valle, for the use and enjoyment of this branch line – from Guaxupé to the borders of the State of São Paulo – was signed. This branch was acquired for Rs 675:262\$959, including the costs of transfer taxes to the State of Minas Gerais, deed seals and other expenses.⁴¹

A year earlier, on July 30, 1907, the shareholders of the Mogyana Railway Company approved the proposal to buy the Muzambinho Railway Company for 12,000,000\$00. The directors of the company planned to extend the company's rail network across the southern Minas Gerais to gain access to coffee and other agricultural products of the region. A provisional contract was signed between the presidents of the two companies on June 17, 1907. However, the deal was unsuccessful.⁴² In 1908, the Muzambinho Railway Company and the Minas and Rio Railway Company, which also operated in the area, came under the management of the federal government. In 1909, a new opportunity emerged for the Mogyana Railway Company to expand into southern Minas Gerais. In that year, the federal government published a notice through a public bidding process to lease the two companies until 1921.⁴³ The Mogyana Company participated in the bidding process, but lost to Sapucaí Railroad Company, a company whose railroad lines also ran through municipalities in southern Minas Gerais.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ VALLE, José Ribeiro do; VALLE, Geraldo Ribeiro do., op. cit., 1984, p. 372.

⁴¹ Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company (Relatório CMEF), Campinas, 20 de junho de 1909, p. 9.

⁴² Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company (Relatório CMEF), Campinas, 20 de junho de 1908, p. 271.

⁴³ SILVA, Marcel Pereira da, op. cit., 2012, p. 113.

⁴⁴ In the following years, the three companies merged to form Rede Sul Mineira. For more on this subject, refer to: SILVA, Marcel Pereira da, 2012, p. 176; SILVA, Marcel Pereira da. *Nos Trilhos Da Incerteza: A Rede Sul Mineira no contexto ferroviário brasileiro (1910-1934)*. Tese (Doutorado) – FFLCH/USP, Universidade

Despite the setback, the Federal Decree 7,704 of 1909 authorized the transfer of the right to establish new railroad lines in southwestern Minas Gerais from the Sapucaí Railroad Company to the Mogyana Railway Company. In the same year, the Mogyana Company's report stated that "the company is already in possession of these concessions by virtue of the transfer made to it by Sapucaí in a deed dated February 16, and will be able to act immediately to expand its vast railroad network".⁴⁵ During the following years, the railroad tracks were extended to the main coffee-growing towns in southwestern Minas Gerais. In 1912, railroad stations were inaugurated in the municipalities of Guaranésia and Monte Santo de Minas. The railroads of the Mogyana Company arrived in Muzambinho in 1913, and in 1914, the branch lines reached São Sebastião do Paraíso. A branch line was extended at a slower pace to Passos, where a railroad station was inaugurated in 1921 (Map 1).

The introduction of railroads had a significant positive impact on the coffee industry in the region. It allowed for the reallocation of resources formerly used for training and maintaining troops. Workers previously dedicated to crop transportation could now work in farm activities. Additionally, it led to a reduction in freight costs, faster movement and communication, increased capacity for the transportation of goods, and better preservation of the grain.⁴⁶ Thus, coffee producers were able to increase their earnings significantly. Furthermore, the arrival of the railroad and the construction of railroad stations in urban areas revitalized the economic activities. It increased the number of commercial establishments, new grain processing and storage companies were established, and large-scale farmers constructed grain storage buildings near the railroad stations. In addition, railroads increased the production of goods related to the local market and facilitated the transportation of labor to farms in the region.

de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2018, pp. 104-135.

⁴⁵ Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company (Relatório CMEF), Campinas, 26 de junho de 1910, p. 16.

⁴⁶ COSTA, Emília Viotti da., *op. cit.*, 1998, p. 219.

Map 1: Southern Minas Gerais in 1920



Source: SAES, Alexandre Macchione; MARTINS, Marcos Lobato; GAMBI, Thiago Fontelas Rosado (Orgs.). *Sul de Minas em urbanização: modernização urbana no início do século XX*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2016, p. 40.

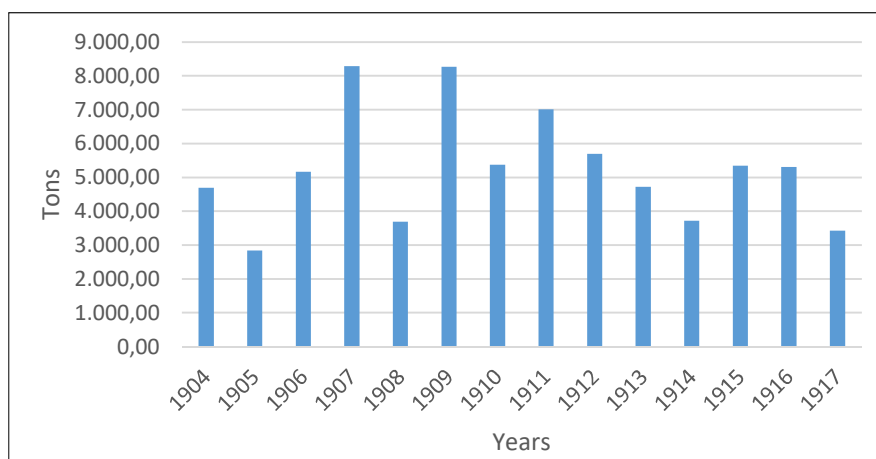
The Mogyana Railway Company drew up a detailed report on the volume of goods and the number of people transported by the company annually.⁴⁷ These documents help us to examine the amount of coffee and other products shipped from the stations. The data for the Guaxupé branch covers a period of 14 years, from 1904 to 1917.

⁴⁷ This material has been digitized by the Memória Ferroviária project team at São Paulo State University (Unesp) and is available at the following address: https://memoriaferroviaria.rosana.unesp.br/?page_id=40.

Table 1: Coffee shipped from the Guaxupé branch line (1904 -1917)

Years	Tons	Years	Tons
1904	4.692,17	1911	7.005,59
1905	2.834,75	1912	5.699,51
1906	5.167,63	1913	4.717,47
1907	8.283,79	1914	3.720,86
1908	3.692,16	1915	5.349,31
1909	8.270,34	1916	5.302,94
1910	5.376,19	1917	3.427,24

Source: Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company.

Graph 1: Coffee shipped from the Guaxupé branch line (1904-1917)

Source: Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company.

In 1904, the first year the railroad was in operation, Guaxupé shipped 4,692.17 tons of coffee. By 1907, three years later, the production increased to 8,283.79 tons, a growth of 76.5%. However, the volume of production fluctuated greatly between the years, as shown in Graph 1. This fluctuation results from the production cycle of the coffee tree itself, as well as from natural phenomena such as hail and, particularly, frost.

The data above refers specifically to the production of Guaxupé and its surroundings, Muzambinho and Guaranésia, during the years 1904-1911. It

also includes information on the grains produced in Monte Santo de Minas and São Sebastião do Paraíso, although to a lesser extent. Possibly, part of the crops from Monte Santo de Minas and São Sebastião do Paraíso were sent to other railroad stations. Producers from Monte Santo could ship their beans to Canoas station, the last station of the Mococa branch line, as well as to Guaxupé station. São Sebastião farmers, on the other hand, could now transport their coffee sacks to Batatais, Franca and Mococa stations. In 1911, the railroads of the São Paulo-Minas company, which departed from São Simão - SP, reached São Sebastião do Paraíso before the Mogyana Company arrived in the municipality.

From 1912 onwards, after the inauguration of other Mogyana railroad stations in southwest Minas Gerais, part of the coffee previously transported by the Guaxupé branch line began to be shipped to other cities. This explains the decline in shipments from 1912 onward, shown in Graph 1. Prior to 1912, the production of Guaxupé, previously concentrated in two stations, was distributed among several others, including Coronel Manuel Joaquim, Japi, and Jaboti stations.

Therefore, the data in Table 1 and Graph 1 provide a partial overview of the amount of coffee transported by the Mogyana Company in the region under study. Table 2 and Graph 2 show the data for the other stations established after 1912,⁴⁸ in addition to those of the Guaxupé branch.

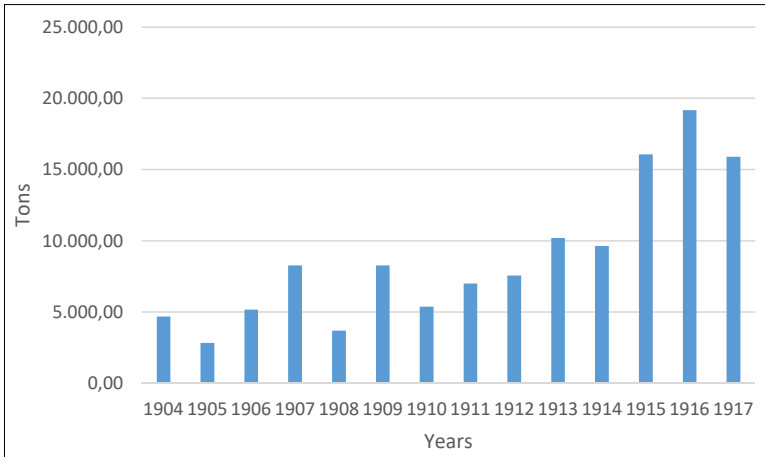
Table 2: Coffee shipped from Guaxupé, Guaranésia and Muzambinho stations (1904-1917)

Years	Tons	Years	Tons
1904	4.692,17	1911	7.005,59
1905	2.834,75	1912	7.556,17
1906	5.167,63	1913	10.200,02
1907	8.283,79	1914	9.641,35
1908	3.692,16	1915	16.057,26
1909	8.270,34	1916	19.169,91
1910	5.376,19	1917	15.890,15

Source: Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company.

⁴⁸ The stations are as follows: Coronel Manuel Joaquim, Japi and Jaboti, in the municipality of Guaxupé; Santa Esméria, Moçambo, Muzambinho, Montalverne, Palmeia, Monte Cristo, Monte Belo and Tuiuti, in the municipality of Muzambinho; and, finally, Guaranésia and Biguatinga, in the municipality of Guaranésia. See: Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company.

Graph 2: Coffee shipped from Guaxupé, Guaranésia and Muzambinho stations (1904-1917)



Source: Reports of the Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company.

As previously stated, the data from 1904 to 1911 refers to production in the region under study, as well as a portion of the production in the municipalities of Monte Santo and São Sebastião do Paraíso. The figures from 1912 to 1917 mostly refer to the harvests of the farms in Guaxupé, Guaranésia and Muzambinho, due to the expansion of the railroad. This information reinforces the upward process of local production, as shown in Graph 2. In 1904, 4,692.17 tons of coffee were shipped from the Guaxupé branch line; in 1916, 12 years later, 19,169.91 tons were shipped from the region.

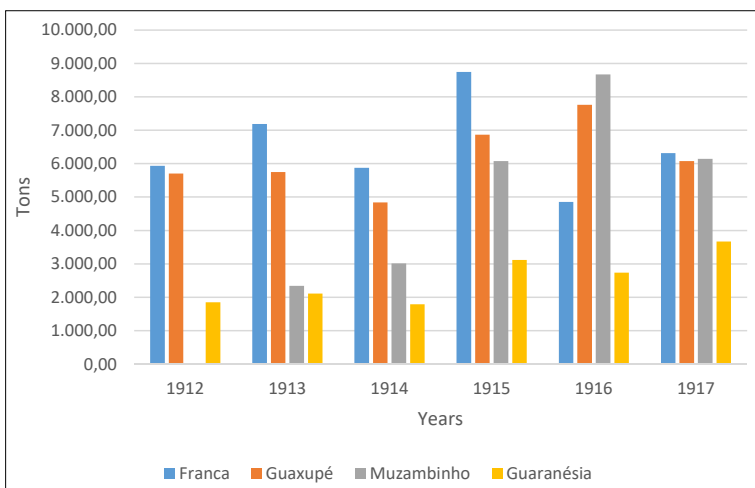
Table 3 and Graph 3 compare coffee shipments from the municipalities of Guaxupé, Guaranésia, Muzambinho, and Franca - SP between 1912 and 1917.

Tabela 3: Café embarcado nas estações de Franca, Guaxupé, Guaranésia e Muzambinho, 1912-1917 (em toneladas)

Years	Franca	Guaxupé	Muzambinho	Guaranésia
1912	5.935,37	5.703,34	0,00	1.852,83
1913	7.188,41	5.748,39	2.339,17	2.112,46
1914	5.873,35	4.836,28	3.013,39	1.791,68
1915	8.745,98	6.868,93	6.073,95	3.114,38
1916	4.852,44	7.761,51	8.670,22	2.737,37
1917	6.315,16	6.073,95	6.145,86	3.670,34

Reports from The Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company. Data on Franca: OLIVEIRA, Lélío. L. *Heranças guardadas e transições ponderadas: história econômica do interior paulista*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2016, p. 39.

Graph 3: Coffee shipped from Franca, Guaxupé, Guaranésia and Muzambinho stations, 1912-1917 (in tons)



Reports from The Mogyana Railroad and Shipping Company. Data on Franca: OLIVEIRA, Lélío. L. *Heranças guardadas e transições ponderadas: história econômica do interior paulista*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2016, p. 39.

Before analyzing the data, it is important to note the differences in the territorial dimensions of the municipalities. Based on the 1920 agricultural census, the rural land area in Franca municipality was 150,214

hectares. Guaxupé had 33,017 hectares, Guaranésia had 67,993 hectares, and Muzambinho had 86,303 hectares.⁴⁹ It can be seen that the municipalities in Minas Gerais were considerably smaller than those in São Paulo. There is a significant difference regarding Franca and Guaxupé; the area of the agricultural units in Franca was more than four times larger than Guaxupé's. When compared to neighboring towns, Guaxupé is noticeably smaller. It is less than half the size of Guaranésia and almost three times smaller than Muzambinho.

The data shows that the amount of coffee shipped from Franca and from the municipalities in Minas Gerais are similar. In the first year, 1912, the production shipped in Franca and Guaxupé was essentially the same. Between 1913 and 1916, Franca's coffee production was slightly higher than that of Minas Gerais. However, in 1916, the production of both municipalities in Minas Gerais, Muzambinho and Guaxupé, reached its peak and surpassed Franca's. In 1917, the volumes of coffee shipped in the three mentioned locations were similar. For Guaranésia, the volume of beans shipped was lower, as in previous years.

Another important aspect to consider is the production expressiveness in Guaxupé, the smallest municipality among those analyzed, as previously mentioned. This study identified that the largest coffee farms were located in Guaxupé, they might have also been the largest in the southwest Minas Gerais at the time. Based on the available sources, it is evident that the largest farms in the region became the main production centers. These farms produced most of the grain that was transported to the stations, which undoubtedly contributed to increase the local production. The larger farms had more resources available, which ensured greater productivity than the smaller ones. They controlled the most fertile land, held most forest reserves, possessed the resources to implement soil re-utilization measures, and had superior infrastructure, including roads, processing machinery, and drying and storage facilities.⁵⁰

Considering the lower volume of grains shipped from Guaranésia, despite the large number of coffee plantations in the municipality, it is highly

⁴⁹ BRASIL. Ministério da Agricultura, Indústria e Comércio. Directoria Geral de Estatística. Recenseamento do Brazil, realizado em 1 de setembro de 1920. Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Da Estatística, 1924.

⁵⁰ Concerning Rio Claro in western São Paulo, the historian Warren Dean observed that "the small estates, more likely to have old trees, or plants on less good land, were much less productive than the large farms" (DEAN, Warren. *Rio Claro: um sistema brasileiro de grande lavoura, 1820-1920*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz & Terra, 1977, p. 157).

likely that a significant portion of the local coffee harvest was sent to the Catitó station in Monte Santo de Minas. The Catitó station was located near the border of the two municipalities, and to many coffee producers it was more convenient to transport their produce to Catitó than to the main station in Guaranésia.

According to the census of agriculture, in 1920 there were 7.510.800 coffee trees in Guaranésia, 5309.333 in Guaxupé and 4037.733 in Muzambinho (Table 4).⁵¹ In the first two municipalities, coffee plantations dominated most of the cultivated land: almost 80% in Guaranésia, and 65.3% in Guaxupé. It can be claimed that in these two areas a specialization in coffee cultivation was developed. The production of other commodities declined, and most natural resources and investments were channeled to coffee production. In Muzambinho, 44.7% of the land used for agricultural purposes was occupied by coffee farms. Although these farms occupied a significant portion of the land, other activities such as food production and livestock also occupied significant areas.

Table 4: Farms and coffee plantations, 1920

Municipalities	Total area of properties (in hect.)	Total cultivated area (in hect.)	Coffee plantation area	Number of coffee trees	% of coffee plantations in relation to total cultivated area
Guaranésia	67.993	12.724	10.014	7.510.800	78,9
Guaxupé	33.017	10.845	7.079	5.309.333	65,3
Muzambinho	86.303	12.043	5.384	4.037.733	44,7

Source: BRASIL. Ministério da Agricultura, Indústria e Comércio. Directoria Geral de Estatística. Recenseamento do Brazil, realizado em 1 de setembro de 1920. Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Da Estatística, 1924.

In some municipalities in northeast São Paulo, near the border with Minas Gerais, the percentage of land used for coffee plantations was as follows: Mococa – 72.3%, São José do Rio Pardo – 61.3%, Batatais – 64.6%, Franca – 67.6%, and Santo Antônio da Alegria – 43.1%. In Santo Antônio da Alegria, as well as in Muzambinho, coffee plantations did not dominate most of the land used for agriculture purposes. However, in other locations such as Guaxupé and

⁵¹ BRASIL. Ministério da Agricultura, Indústria e Comércio. Directoria Geral de Estatística. Recenseamento do Brazil, realizado em 1 de setembro de 1920. Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Da Estatística, 1924.

Guaranésia, they occupied more than 60% of the land. As a result, the coffee plantation culture dominated the landscape of the estates and became the driving force behind the local economies.

Additionally, there were many similarities between coffee plantation in the listed municipalities of São Paulo and the municipalities located in southwest Minas Gerais. Therefore, we can consider the region under study, as well as Monte Santo and São Sebastião do Paraíso, as extensions of northeast São Paulo. While the municipalities in Minas Gerais were not as economically dynamic as the leading coffee-plantation centers in São Paulo, namely Ribeirão Preto, São Simão, Cravinhos and Sertãozinho, they did share some characteristics with important producing municipalities in the same region, such as Franca, Batatais and others.

During the 1920s, Minas Gerais maintained its position as the second-largest- coffee-producing region in Brazil. Southern Minas Gerais, particularly the municipalities located on the southwest border, emerged as a significant coffee-producing center. About 30% of the grain produced in Minas Gerais came from farms and ranches in the south, although the Zona da Mata region remained as the largest production area in the north and northeast parts of the state.⁵²

Conclusion

During the late 19th century, coffee plantations in southwest Minas Gerais underwent a major expansion due to the spread of railroads and agriculture in northeast São Paulo. The farms, especially the larger ones, became important production units and began to connect with the global coffee market. The large-scale producers used the capital accumulated in the initial phase of coffee plantation expansion to build a railroad line to connect the region to the rail network. At the beginning of the 20th century, after the introduction of the railroad lines, the integration of the region into the agro-export economy was consolidated. Production grew significantly in the following years with the establishment of railway stations in various municipalities, and the region became a prominent center of coffee production.

During this period, as evidenced by *post-mortem* inventories and data from the 1920 census, coffee plantations dominated the agricultural units, particularly in the municipalities of Guaxupé and Guaranésia. It is evident

⁵² GIROLETTI, D. A Industrialização de Juiz de Fora. *Fundação João Pinheiro*. Belo Horizonte, 10(3): 144-202 mai. 1980, p. 156.

that from 1868 to 1920, as was the case in many other municipalities of the São Paulo plateau in the same period, coffee production became a prominent economic activity in southwest Minas Gerais.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the Academic Writing Center (Centro de Escrita Acadêmica/CEA - <https://www2.uepg.br/escrita-academica/>) of the State University of Ponta Grossa (Universidade Estadual de Ponta Grossa/UEPG) for assistance with English language translation and developmental editing.

Referências

- DEAN, Warren. Rio Claro: um sistema brasileiro de grande lavoura, 1820-1920. Rio de Janeiro: Paz & Terra, 1977.
- DELFIM NETTO, Antônio. O problema do café no Brasil. São Paulo: Ed. Unesp: 2009.
- DIAS, Lia Ribeiro; CORNILS, Patrícia. Júlio Tavares: café, Mogiana e PRM (1863 - 1906). São Paulo: Momento Editorial, 2009.
- FALEIROS, Rogério Naques. Homens do café: Franca, 1880-1920. Ribeirão Preto, SP: Holos Editora, 2008.
- GIROLETTI, D. “A Industrialização de Juiz de Fora”. Fundação João Pinheiro. Belo Horizonte, 10(3): 144-202 mai. 1980, p. 156.
- HOLLOWAY, Thomas H. Condições de mercado de trabalho e organização do trabalho nas plantações na economia cafeeira de São Paulo. 1885-1915. Uma análise preliminar. Revista de Estudos Econômicos, vol. 2, nº6, 1972, p. 145-180.
- _____. Imigrantes para o café. Café e sociedade em São Paulo, 1886-1934. Rio de Janeiro: Paz & Terra, 1984.
- LOPES, Luciana Suarez. Ribeirão Preto: a dinâmica da economia cafeeira de 1870 a 1930. Ribeirão Preto: Fundação Instituto do Livro, 2011.
- MENDONÇA, Sônia Regina de. “O convênio de Taubaté e a economia agrícola fluminense”. Locus, 5 (1), 1999.

RESTITUTTI, Cristiano Corte. As fronteiras da província: rotas de comércio interprovincial (Minas Gerais, 1839-1884). Dissertação (Mestrado) – UNESP, Universidade Estadual Paulista, Araraquara, 2006.

SILVA, Marcel Pereira da. De Gado a Café: as ferrovias no sul de Minas Gerais (1874-1910) – FFLCH/USP, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2012.

_____. Nos Trilhos Da Incerteza: A Rede Sul Mineira no contexto ferroviário brasileiro (1910-1934). Tese (Doutorado) – FFLCH/USP, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2018.

VALLE, José Ribeiro do; VALLE, Geraldo Ribeiro do. Guaxupé: memória história (a terra e a gente). São Paulo, 1984.

VEIGA, Bernardo Saturnino da. Almanach Sul Mineiro. Campanha: Tipografia do Monitor Sul Mineiro, 1884.

WIRTH, J. O Fiel da Balança: Minas Gerais na Confederação Brasileira - 1889/1937. 1ª ed., Paz e Terra, São Paulo, 1982.

Article received for publication on 10/11/2023

Approved on 02/29/2024.