

A KINGDOM OF FLOATING MARKETS: RELATIVE PRICES, RIVER TRADE FLOWS, AND PORT LINKAGES IN NEW GRANADA (1770-1810)

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The article studies the importance of river trade flows and inland port services in the Viceroyalty of the New Kingdom of Granada (present-day Colombia, Ecuador, and Panama) during the late colonial period. By measuring the market size and structure of Momox, one of the region's largest inland ports, the study provides materials to examine the extent of market widening and deepening in Caribbean New Granada. Based upon a broad set of tax records, the paper contends, first, that Momox's population and the provisioning of the vessels that docked in the port promoted consumption linkages that intertwined a far-flung set of supply nodes along the waterways of the viceroyalty. Second, the paper argues that river traffic propelled the clusterization of a wide array of economic activities that had further multiplier effects on the region's economy. Finally, the article uses unexplored price data to provide some tentative hypotheses on the mechanisms through which export-led growth encouraged interregional river trade on the eve of colonial collapse.

KEY WORDS: *Inland Ports, Markets, Viceroyalty of New Granada, Linkages, River Trade.*

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UN REINO DE MERCADOS FLOTANTES. PRECIOS RELATIVOS, COMERCIO FLUVIAL Y ESLABONAMIENTOS PORTUARIOS EN NUEVA GRANADA (1770-1810)

El artículo estudia la importancia del comercio fluvial y los servicios portuarios en el virreinato de la Nueva Granada (Colombia) durante el período colonial tardío. Al medir el tamaño y estructura del mercado de Mompox, el puerto interior más importante de la región, el estudio provee materiales para examinar la expansión y profundización mercantil en el Caribe neogranadino. Al procesar un amplio espectro de fuentes fiscales el artículo propone, primero, que el abastecimiento tanto de la población como de las embarcaciones del puerto promovió una serie de eslabonamientos de consumo que tejieron una importante red de nodos de abasto a lo largo de las arterias fluviales del virreinato. Segundo, el texto establece que el comercio fluvial alentó la aglomeración de servicios que a su vez ejercieron efectos multiplicadores adicionales sobre la economía de la región. Finalmente, el artículo emplea información inédita de precios para proponer hipótesis tentativas sobre los mecanismos mediante los cuales el boom exportador de fines de siglo promovió la expansión del comercio interregional fluvial.

PALABRAS CLAVES: *Puertos interiores, Mercados, Virreinato de la Nueva Granada, Eslabonamientos, Comercio fluvial.*

In 1808, the polymath Francisco José de Caldas published an influential essay on the economic geography of the Northern Andes. Caldas, better known in the Republic of Letters for his influence on Alexander von Humboldt's «Essay on the Geography of Plants», aimed to craft a rough assessment of the economic potential of an area traditionally depicted as a backwater of the Spanish Empire. «Do not get amazed with the wealth of Mexico or the silver of Potosí,» stated Caldas, «we do not have to envy them. Do not you see that we have a prodigious number of rivers, those canals carved by nature itself, that are destined to be the arteries through which our wealth will flow?».² Humboldt concurred with Caldas, emphasizing that the region's economic transformation during the second half of the 18th century was ingrained in an extensive network of river trade that connected the Andean core of the viceroyalty with the Caribbean.³

2. Caldas, Francisco José, «Estado de la geografía del virreinato de Santafé de Bogotá», *Seminario del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, n.º 1-2, 1809. Caldas was also a member of the Botanical Expedition to the Kingdom of New Granada.

3. Humboldt, Alexander, *Alexander von Humboldt en Colombia; extractos de sus diarios*, Bogotá, Flota Mercante Grancolombiana, 1982, pp. 35-38. The Viceroyalty of the New Kingdom of Granada encompassed the territories of present-day Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela. By the late 1770s, the Captaincy of Venezuela was granted executive and judicial autonomy. For simplicity, we will use the terms «New Granada» and «the Kingdom» to refer to present-day Colombia. The capital of the viceroyalty, Santafé de Bogotá, was commonly known as «Santafé». Throughout this article we will use the term «Bogotá» to avoid confusions for readers not familiar with the history of the region.

Despite that studies on the economic history of preindustrial Europe, Asia, and the United States have shown the importance of river transportation in the promotion of regional economic specialization and Smithian growth, local specialists have tended to depict the web of natural waterways as obstacles that precluded further economic expansion in the Northern Andes.⁴ Caldas's case for the importance of these arteries was replaced by an enduring narrative that has emphasized the difficult, hazardous, and costly nature of river travel.⁵ This perspective, however, has relied upon circumstantial evidence and no research has been done on the market structure of transportation services. In the same vein, no social-saving methodologies have been deployed to study river navigation in a more formal manner.⁶ This lack of empirical and analytical studies on the subject is the reflection of a long-lasting framework that has portrayed the colonial economy as a set of isolated regions dominated by a self-sufficient rural population. Even regions more exposed to the currents of global exchange such as Caribbean New Granada were allegedly inhabited by a self-sufficient peasantry that systematically avoided any interaction with trade networks.⁷

Recent studies have suggested, however, that Caldas's and Humboldt's considerations should be taken seriously. The viceroyalty was the largest gold producer of the Spanish Empire and, after the decline in mining output in Brazil and western Africa in the 1790s, became the world's largest producer of this metal. In tandem, the region experienced an export commodity boom that enhanced its integration into global economic currents.⁸ Exogenous forces such as the collapse of Haiti's exports of agricultural commodities, the shift in the demand curve for tropical products in Europe, and the distortion of global markets brought by the Atlantic wars transformed New Granada into an important exporter of sugar, quinine, cotton, hides, and other tradable goods. The income accrued from the export sector flowed into the economy through consumption linkages that have been the subject of recent quantitative analyses.⁹ Inland waterways played a

4. For broad surveys on these issues see: Kelly, Morgan, «The Dynamics of Smithian Growth», *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 112, n.º 3, 1997, pp. 939-964; Findlay, Ronald and Kevin, O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty. Trade, War and the World Economy in the Second Millennium*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007; Shiue, Carol and Wolfgang Keller, «Markets in China and Europe on the Eve of the Industrial Revolution», *American Economic Review*, vol. 97, 2007, pp. 1189-1216.

5. Colmenares, German, *Historia económica y social de Colombia: 1537-1719*, Bogotá, TM Editores, 1997; Safford, Frank and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001; Bohorquez, Jesus, and Gabriel Palacio, «La circulación y el consumo en las cuencas de los ríos Sogamoso y Lebrija: comerciantes y consumidores en el siglo XVIII», *Historia Crítica*, n.º 35, 2008, pp. 176-200.

6. See two classic approaches in: North, Douglas, *The Economic Growth of the United States 1790-1860*, New York, Norton, 1966; Fogel, Robert. *Railroads and American Economic Growth: Essays in Econometric History*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1964.

7. Herrera, Martha, *Ordenar para controlar. Ordenamiento espacial y control político en las llanuras del Caribe y en los Andes Centrales neogranadino. Siglo XVIII*, Bogotá, ICANH, 2011; Aline, Helg, *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia 1770-1835*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

8. Torres, James, «Bullion and Monetary Flows in the Northern Andes: New Evidence and Insights, 1780-1800», *Tiempo & Economía*, vol. 6, n.º 1, 2019, pp. 13-46.

9. See Torres, James, «Trade in a Changing World: Gold, Silver, and Commodity Flows in the Northern

pivotal role in this structure by linking the region to both global and regional supply chains.

A recent study on Mompox, arguably the most important inland port of the viceroyalty, illustrated how this hub funneled a vast array of cash crops and manufactures from the Andean interior and the Caribbean plains that were subsequently distributed to outlets on the Atlantic and the mining belts of western Antioquia.¹⁰ The structure and volume of these trade flows suggest that the region experienced an important process of market deepening (an increase in the volume, number, and quality of commodities exchanged) and widening (an increase in the geographical scope of the market).¹¹ Interregional river trade promoted the development of dry ports that offered a wide array of services. However, the multiplier effects of these activities on the economy of the viceroyalty have not been properly examined.¹²

This paper contributes to these debates by measuring the size of Mompox's urban market and providing some quantitative insights into the port services that clustered around the city. Based upon a broad set of tax records, the paper contends, first, that the city's population and the provisioning of the vessels that docked in the port promoted consumption linkages that intertwined a far-flung set of markets along the waterways of the viceroyalty. In effect, an archipelago of inland ports, to adapt Jeremy Adelman's expression coined to study Atlantic trade, managed to connect producers in the Andean slopes and the floodplains of Caribbean New Granada.¹³ The evidence confirms, as revisionist studies have suggested, that a huge process of regional specialization took place in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁴

Andes 1780-1840», PhD Dissertation, Georgetown University, 2021; Torres, James, *Minería y moneda en el Nuevo Reino de Granada. El desempeño económico en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII*, Bogotá, ICANH, 2013; McFarlane, Anthony, *Colombia before Independence. Economy, Society, and Politics under Bourbon Rule*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993; Meisel, Adolfo, «Crecimiento, mestizaje y presión fiscal en el virreinato de la Nueva Granada, 1760-1800», *Cuadernos de Historia Económica y Empresarial*, n.º 28, 2011, pp. 1-97.

10. Torres, James and José Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes and the Atlantic. The Role of Inland Ports in New Granada's Interregional Trade (1770-1809)», *Revista de Historia Económica / Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History*, vol. 39, 2020, pp. 469-507.

11. For recent studies on the region's market economy see Sánchez, Hugues, «De esclavos a campesinos, de la roza al mercado: tierra y producción agropecuaria de los libres de todos los colores en la gobernación de Santa Marta (1740-1810)», *Historia Crítica*, n.º 43, 2011, pp. 130-155; Daza, Vladimir, *Los marqueses de Santa Coa. Una historia económica del Caribe colombiano 1750-1810*, Bogotá: ICANH, 2009; De La Cruz, Maribel, «El comercio entre Cartagena, Honda y Mompox en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII», *Memorias XVIII Congreso Colombiano de Historia*, Medellín, Universidad de Antioquia, 2017.

12. For the importance of the multiplier effects of port services in other areas of the Empire see Jumar, Fernando et. al. «El comercio ultramarino y la economía local en el complejo portuario rioplatense siglo XVIII» *Anuario IEHS*, n.º 21, 2006, pp. 235-254; Alcántara, Alvaro, «Un imperio también de agua, puertos interiores, redes mercantiles y comercio de contrabando en las costas novohispanas, 1776-1795», *Illes i Imperis*, n.º 18, 2016, pp. 77-106.

13. Adelman, Jeremy, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006, pp. 28-29.

14. Torres, James, «Bullion and Monetary Flows...», cit.; Muñoz, Edwin and James Torres, «La función de Santafé en los sistemas de intercambio de la Nueva Granada», *Fronteras de la Historia*, Bogotá, vol. 18, n.º 1, 2013.

Second, the paper argues that river traffic propelled the clusterization of a wide range of economic endeavors that had further multiplier effects on the region's economy. Labor-intensive sectors such as retailing, forwarding, and warehousing flourished in the port, consolidating consumption linkages and promoting a process of market deepening in Caribbean New Granada. Light transformation services such as the production of packing appliances, shipyard services, and the processing of salted beef and pork supported additional backward linkages. The port also agglomerated foundry, fiscal, and financial services that should be the subject of future papers.

Finally, the paper uses Mompox as a laboratory to provide some tentative hypotheses on the mechanisms through which export-led growth encouraged internal trade on the eve of colonial collapse. By unearthing data on relative prices, the article states that inflationary trends nurtured interregional river commerce and that relative price favored upstream producers during the last decades of the eighteenth century. For reasons to be the subject of future inquiries, this trend experienced a downturn in 1800, with Mompox's role as distributional entrepôt and market declining during the last decade of colonial rule.

The paper proceeds as follows. The first section discusses the challenges of measuring markets in a floodplain city. The paper then peruses the available data and provides an aggregate estimate on the market of the inland port as well as some quantitative insights into some subsidiary economic activities of the port. The third section provides an estimate of the volume of specific imports and identifies the regions from which the port funneled them. Finally, the article undertakes some tentative forays into the movement of relative prices. It ends with some conclusions.

Measuring a Floodplain Market

Mompox was a river city located in the southern floodplains of Caribbean New Granada. Its hinterland is at the basin in which the Magdalena River, the most important of the viceroyalty's waterways, receives the Cauca, San Jorge, and Cesar Rivers. These streams flood the region frequently, creating a complex network of brooks and wetlands known as the Momposina Depression. These hydrologic conditions provided a unique set of reticular waterways that linked the region with markets upstream in the Andean slopes and the mining belts and downstream with the Atlantic ports and the grasslands that cover parts of coastal New Granada. Naturally, such an environment posed important challenges for the inhabitants of the city in the form of irregular floods and river course changes. In 1808 a devastating flood covered three-quarters of Mompox's urban setting and during the 1820s the diversion of one of the branches of the Magdalena doomed the prospects of further development in the port.¹⁵

15. Herrera, Martha, *ordenar para controlar...*, cit., pp. 25-29; Daza, Vladimir, *Los marqueses de santa Coa...*, cit., pp. 32-33; Gutiérrez, Daniel, «Las querellas de Mompox: subordinación estratégica, erección de

Its location at the intersection of north-south and east-west river traffic transformed Mompox into the most important inland port on the eve of colonial collapse. The port's population grew from 6,900 inhabitants in 1779 to 16,000 in 1808 and became the center of one of the most important royal treasuries and foundries of the kingdom.¹⁶ The environmental setting of the port, however, constituted an insurmountable challenge for the Bourbon drive to increase fiscal revenues. The literature has emphasized, in fact, the role of the river port as one of the largest smuggling centers of the viceroyalty.¹⁷ Humboldt asserted that both legal and illegal flows transformed the river city into a trade node more important than Cartagena.¹⁸ Yet, the emphasis on illegal trade has obscured the legal and political strategies that local merchants and entrepreneurs harnessed to curb the Bourbon attempt to tap revenues from the vast flows of goods that converged in the region.¹⁹ It is not surprising, therefore, that very few scholars have attempted to use tax records to understand the structure and size of the port's economy.²⁰ A brief examination of the establishment in 1788 of a customs house (*aduana*) and its ensuing operation can help us to illuminate these developments.

The Bourbon deployment of custom houses (*aduanas*) constituted one of the most important institutional expedients to increase fiscal revenues throughout the eighteenth century. These institutions produced a vast array of accounts that have been the main inputs to study the nature and structure of markets across the empire.²¹ These sources, however, should be used with caution since even nearby towns had different fiscal practices. Negotiations between city councils (*cabildo*), merchant representatives (*diputados de comercio*), and royal officials caused a huge divergence in the mechanics of taxation in

junta provincial e invención historiográfica de la independencia absoluta, 1805-1811», *Historia y Sociedad*, n.º 23, 2012, pp. 115-116.

16. Aguilera, María and Adolfo Meisel, *Tres siglos de historia demográfica de Cartagena de Indias*, Bogotá, Banco de la República, 2009, pp. 28-30; Daza, Vladimir, *Los marqueses de santa coa*, pp. 35-39; Henao, José «Comercio en las «Tierras de oro». Circulación de bienes de la tierra en un circuito comercial de la Nueva Granada: Zaragoza (1789-1811)», *Tiempo & Economía*, vol. 7, n.º 9, 2020, p. 44; Jara, Álvaro, «El financiamiento de la defensa de Cartagena de Indias: los excedentes de las cajas de Bogotá y Quito, 1761-1802», *Revista Historia*, vol. 28, 1994, pp. 178-179.

17. Bell, Gustavo. «La conexión jamaiquina y la Nueva Granada 1760-1840», in *Cartagena de Indias de la colonia a la república*, Bogotá, Fundación Simón y Lola Guberek, 1991, pp. 25-26; McFarlane, Anthony, *Colombia Before Independence...*, cit., pp. 46-48; Herrera, Martha, *ordenar para controlar...*, cit., pp. 40-43.

18. Humboldt, Alexander, *Diarios de viaje...*, cit., p. 35.

19. As Daniel Gutiérrez has rightly documented, the fiscal and political importance of the port led local elites to lobby in Madrid and Bogotá for the creation of a separate governorship in the port. Gutiérrez, Daniel, «Las querellas de Mompox: subordinación estratégica, erección de junta provincial e invención historiográfica de la independencia absoluta, 1805-1811», *Historia y Sociedad*, n.º 23, 2012, pp. 118-119.

20. De la Cruz undertook an important foray into some treasury records of the port during the 1750s. De La Cruz, Maribel, «El comercio entre Cartagena, Honda y Mompox en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII», *Memorias XVIII Congreso Colombiano de Historia*, Medellín, Universidad de Antioquia, 2017.

21. The literature is extensive. See the following key works: Assadourian, Carlos, *El sistema de la economía colonial. El mercado interior, regiones y espacio económico*, Lima, IEP, 1982; Ibarra, Antonio, «Redes de circulación y redes de negociantes en Guadalajara colonial: mercado, élite comercial e instituciones», *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 55, n.º 3, 2007, pp. 1017-1041; Tandeter, Enrique; Vilma Milletich and Roberto Schmit, «Flujos mercantiles en el Potosí colonial tardío», *Anuario IEHS*, n.º 9, 1994, pp. 97-126.

different dominions.²² Jurisdictional issues in Caribbean New Granada were more intricate than in other areas of the viceroyalty for several reasons.²³ First, the region's high urbanization rates were accompanied by an important number of city councils that enjoyed freedoms (*libertades*) which shielded their territories from fiscal changes. Second, the Magdalena River was demarcated as the border between the provinces of Cartagena and Santa Marta. Located at the border of the two governorships, Mompox's customs house and its branches were unable to act on the river's eastern shore and the tax farmers of the Santa Marta province were reluctant to collaborate with the new institution. Finally, the region encompassed both «lands of silver» and «lands of golds». In both territories, the monetary supply was composed of different bimetallic combinations that caused variations in the exchange rates of different coins. Therefore, traders tended to pay taxes in locations in which those rates were more favorable.²⁴

Even though some of the jurisdictional constraints were eventually ironed out, the legal resources of the region's merchants to hamper the operation of the customs house remained strong up to 1810. As Torres and Henao have pointed out, a legal crusade against the new institution led to the abolition in 1794 of the sales taxes that fell upon domestic goods (*alcabala de efectos de la tierra*).²⁵ The authorities in Bogotá ruled that a transit tax called *proyecto* already included the sales duties. Therefore, merchants only were to pay the *alcabala* on the resale of domestic goods, the sales of European wares (*efectos de Castilla*), and slave and real estate transfers.²⁶ This reform, naturally, benefitted the inland port by reducing its tax burden but hampers our attempt to craft time series of the port's market size.

The counterpoint between merchants and reformists also transformed the tax that fell upon pork and meat consumption (*sisa*). This excise, whose origins date back to the seventeenth century, was deployed in the province of Cartagena to finance the construction of the port's fortifications. Even though no research had been done on the history of this duty, the evidence suggests that it was a highly unpopular tax.²⁷ For instance, Esteban Pupo, the first director of the port's custom house, reported to Bogotá's court of accounts

22. On New Granada see: Muñoz, Edwin and James Torres, «La función de Santa Fe...», *cit.*, pp. 167-168. For a broader view of the jurisdictional problem: Grafe, Regina and Alejandra Irigoin, «A Stakeholder Empire: The Political Economy of Spanish Imperial Rule in America», *Economic History Review*, vol. 65, n.º 2, 2012, pp. 609-651.

23. On the jurisdictional particularities see: Torres, James and Jose Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes», *cit.*, pp. 475-476 and Conde, Jorge «Capitanes a guerra: Gobierno económico y político en el Virreinato del Nuevo Reino de Granada» *Historia Caribe*, vol. XI, n.º 29, 2016, pp. 175-180.

24. Henao, Jose, «Comercio en tierras de oro...», *cit.*, p. 60.

25. Torres, James and Jose Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes...», *cit.*, pp. 478-479.

26. These *ramos* (tax categories) also experienced some changes that deserve further research. For the debates that followed the reform of sales taxes that fell upon European goods see: AGN-C, Alcabalas, v. 1 f. 37-98.

27. See AGN-C, Alcabalas, v. 1, ff. 163-170; Aduanas v. 5 ff. 300-315; See also Pombo, José Ignacio, «Informe del Real Consulado de Cartagena de Indias a la Suprema Junta Provincial de la misma», in *Escritos Económicos. Antonio de Narváez y José Ignacio de Pombo*. Bogotá: Banco de la República, 2012 [1810], pp. 229-230.

in 1794 that «the *sisa* is on the verge of extinction since the city council has authorized the killing of livestock and hogs outside the slaughterhouse (*carnicería*) [...] Who is going to believe that in a city that has more than 10.000 souls only eighteenth arrobas of meat and one of pork are processed daily?».²⁸

Pupo was not overstating his point. The *sisa* revenues in the 1790s were below the levels achieved before the establishment of the customs house.²⁹ Three drivers were behind such a trend. First, merchants and landed elites requested the enforcement of a royal decree (*real cedula*) enacted in 1792 that exempted from the *alcabala* the sales of salted meat and pork. The decree originally benefitted Buenos Aires but left the door open to be deployed in other regions of the Empire. In New Granada, after a series of debates, Mompox became the first market that enjoyed such benefits in 1795. Therefore, these wares were only liable to the *sisa* and the *proyecto*.³⁰

«Second, Mompox councilmen safeguarded the “old costume” of splitting» the livestock trade into two segments. In the first one, which was to take place before noon, animals should be taken to the slaughterhouse to produce fresh meat and pork. In the second one, which was to take place after mid-day, the inhabitants were authorized to kill animals outside the slaughterhouse, producing salted meat and pork to supply the crews of the vessels that dock in the port.³¹ While the transactions in the first segment were subject to pay the *alcabala*, *sisa* and town tolls, those carried out in the afternoon were only liable to pay the town tolls and the *alcabala*. After 1795, as stated above, they were freed from the latter as well. Naturally, this strategy created a huge loophole to evade the payment of the *sisa*. As Pupo complained, most traders argued that their animals were to serve the second portion of the market and «a huge number of black male butchers (*tablajeros*) and female black corn-rolls makers (*negras bollerías*) compete with the slaughterhouse since they buy their wares on the other shore of the [Magdalena] River where they do not pay the *alcabala* in this port».³²

Why did the authorities refuse to support Pupo’s drive to eliminate such a practice? The viceregal functionaries understood the importance of the meat and pork trade for the smooth operation of river trade. «That port [Mompox]», wrote an accountant of the capital’s courts, «supply the crews that connect the transit from the coast up to Honda, including those vessels at the service of Your Majesty».³³ In addition, other functionaries emphasized that «Mompox merchants serve the markets of the lands of gold in Zaragoza, Cáceres, Antioquia, and Simití [...] therefore, any delay in the provision of the vessels was ultimately to affect the extraction of gold and thereby of your majesty’s *quintos* (mi-

28. AGN-C, Aduanas, v. 10, ff. 406-408.

29. For the revenues after the establishment of the *aduana* see: «Cuenta general de las alcabalas y aduana de Mompox 1789 1802» Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Santa Fe, 114. For the *sisa* revenues before 1788 see AGN, SAAIII, 2848, 2880, 2082, 2084.

30. AGN-C, Aduanas, v. 10, ff. 310-315.

31. *Ibidem*, ff. 394-396v.

32. *Ibidem*, ff. 380-380v.

33. AGN-C, Aduanas, v. 10, f. 430.

ning taxes)».³⁴ The authorities found a good way to serve the demand for meat and pork of both the port and the river fleets in the current system. Given that fluvial trade was somewhat volatile, the free trade operation of markets after mi-day guaranteed a more flexible counterpoint to the more rigid framework of the slaughterhouse. The viceroy, who recognized that Mompox's meat and pork trade was not «a model of a well-structured republic,» stated that any enforcement of the fiscal reforms in the port would put in peril the arteries of trade of the kingdom. Therefore, he ended up obviating Pupo's complaints.³⁵

These forays into the mechanics of Mompox's custom house show the complexity of any attempt to measure trade flows based on the port's tax records. The constant negotiation of the rules governing each duty led to an endless reorganization of the structure of the customs house's ledgers, which was repeatedly criticized by the court of accounts in Bogotá.³⁶ Only the *proyecto* records exhibit any mid-term consistency. Therefore, the task of measuring the aggregate demand of the port and its multiplier effect on the viceregal economy can only be done for the 1789-1793 years, a period during which the sales taxes (*alcabalas*) on domestic goods were charged in the customs house.

What were the mechanics of the *alcabalas* in the port? One of the first steps to establish a customs house in the river city was the crafting of local ordinances to regulate the collection of trade taxes. These regulations were to «adapt to the local circumstances the General Instructions enacted by the visitor general of the viceroyalty in 1781». ³⁷ Even though Mompox officials structured their custom house according to the main outlines of the viceregal ordinances, three relevant differences were salient. First, local ordinances exempted the goods that had enjoyed this prerogative before 1788. As in other regions of the viceroyalty, corn, cassava, plantains, and other goods of «daily consumption» were exempted. In the same vein, the goods whose marketing was a Crown monopoly such as tobacco and cane brandy were excluded from the duty. Yet, the river port enjoyed further exemptions on two commodities: wheat flour and the livestock traded at the outskirts of the city. The latter, in the words of Pupo was «the most important branch of trade that enjoys this town and its jurisdiction».³⁸

Second, local ordinances adopted the *ad valorem* framework only on the sales of European goods, slaves, and real estate at a flat rate of 2 %. The sales tax on domestic goods was to be charged according to a fixed tariff (*arancel*) that, in turn, was to be nego-

34. *Ibidem* ff. 432-432v.

35. *Ibidem* ff. 432-432v.

36. *Ibidem*, ff. 819-825.

37. The general instructions were the ordinances enacted to regulate sales taxes during the fiscal overhaul led by the visitor general Francisco Gutiérrez de Piñeres in the late 1770s. The overhaul, that included the increase of sales taxes from 2 to 4 percent, was halted by a massive revolt, the so called *comunero* rebellion. Even though the tax increases were suspended, part of the institutional reorganization embodied in the General Instructions was preserved. On the application of these regulations in Mompox see AGN-C, Aduanas, v. 10 f. 448-450. For a discussion on the «general instructions» see: Muñoz, Edwin and James Torres, «La función de Santa Fe...», *cit.*

38. For a copy of the instructions for Mompox's sales taxes see: AGN-C, Alcabalas, v. 22 ff. 658v-670.

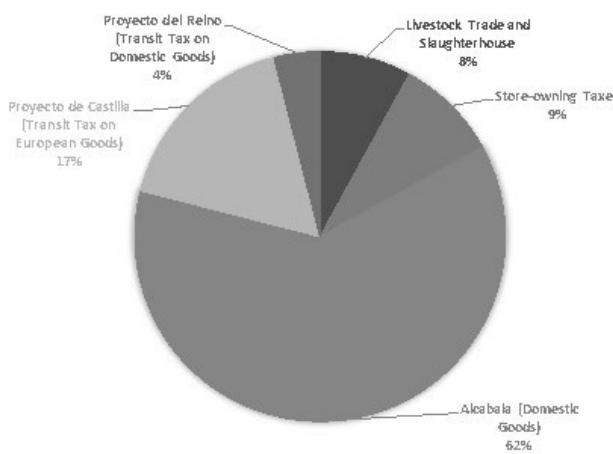
tiated annually with the trade deputies. Finally, the output of the estates that surrounded the city was to be charged as a lump-sum payment known as *composición* or *concierto* negotiated between the landholders and the officials. This method was also to be deployed with the store owners and the resellers of the city.

In short, to measure the value of the domestic goods marketed in the port, we should undertake a multi-wise analysis of the daily logbooks (*libros manuales*) of the customs house. A careful comparison of the transactions recorded in the different tax categories is necessary to avoid mismeasurement issues derived from fiscal reorganization. This exercise, properly supported with qualitative research from the legal lawsuits, provides materials to craft a lower bound estimate of the port's aggregate demand.³⁹ Let us see what we can do with the data at hand.

Floating Markets and Port Services: The Aggregate Approach

In this section, we will provide a preliminary view of the broad composition of the revenues of Mompox's custom house. This breakdown will be further refined with accounts-daily records to obtain a lower bound estimate of the goods re-exported from the inland port and the wares retained to serve the local demand of the city. In addition, we will provide tentative numbers on the structure and size of the multiplier effect of port services.

FIGURE 1. Revenue Structure of Mompox's Custom House. 1789-1792-1793.

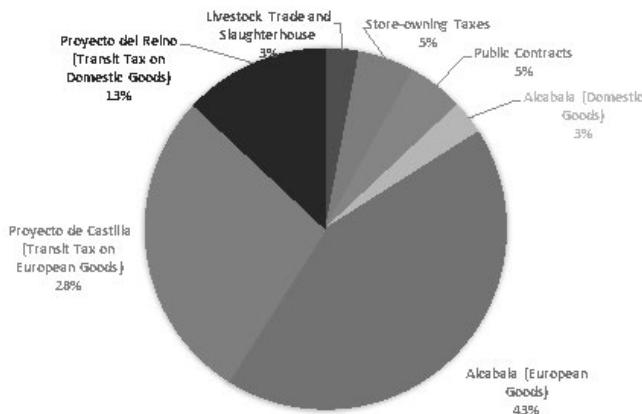


SOURCES: Appendix 1.

39. Torres, James and Jose Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes...», *cit.*, pp. 474-480.

Graphs 1-2 present the revenue structure of Mompox's *Aduana* during the two trienniums for which the information is complete. The graphs reflect the impact of the merchant's reaction against the fiscal reform and the effect of trade rerouting during the Atlantic Wars. During peaceful years such as the early 1790s, most of the income was derived from the streams of domestic goods and the port services offered by the city. Given the fiscal organization of the viceroyalty, intermediary entrepôts such as Mompox were not supposed to get much revenue from the flow of European goods since most of these wares cleared customs at the Atlantic ports and paid the sales taxes at their target market. Most Mompox merchants had access to direct imports from the Atlantic, and therefore, very few European wares were subject to pay the tax on the full spot price. More important for the customs house were the resales of foreign merchandise to regional and Andean merchants.

FIGURE 2. Revenue Structure of Mompox's Custom House. 1797-1799-1800.



SOURCES: Appendix 1.

This framework changed radically during the second triennium. While the revenues from European imports thrived during the war, the elimination of the *alcabala de efectos de la tierra* and the reform of the *sisa* significantly reduced the relative importance of the income from taxing domestic goods during the second triennium. The legalization of the imports funneled through Santa Marta stirred the importance of European imports as a fiscal source for the city. Roughly 456,000 silver pesos worth of these wares cleared customs in Mompox per year. During these years, the inland port became the most important gateway for the goods that flowed into the interior of the viceroyalty from the Atlantic.⁴⁰ Further research should examine these records to understand the structure of

40. Moreno, Nathalie, «Circulación de efectos de Castilla en el virreinato de la Nueva Granada a finales del siglo XVIII», *Fronteras de la Historia*, vol. 18, n.º 1, 2013, pp. 225-227

import trade in the port and the role of Mompox wholesalers in the broader trade patterns of the viceroyalty. In the meantime, these numbers confirm the reconfiguration of import trade in Caribbean New Granada, with Cartagena and other traditional entrepôts across the empire collapsing in the midst of blockades and the volatile commercial policy enacted in Madrid. Most of the trade was now in the hands of merchants located at alternative ports such as those operating in the Santa Marta-Mompox axis.⁴¹

Did the rise of European imports during the war reduce the absolute importance of domestic trade in the port? Some literature analyzes this question in a zero-sum game framework, emphasizing the broader competing nature between domestic and European wares. For instance, in some regions of the empire such as Cochabamba, El Bajío, and Puebla, the local textile sector thrived behind war blockades. Here, clearly, a substitution effect took place.⁴² In New Granada, however, the evidence is not as conclusive. In Mompox, for instance, the revenues of the *proyecto* in absolute terms suggest that the inland port kept acting as an important distributional center of local wares until about 1803. Torres and Henao showed that the export of local textiles to markets well exposed to European competition on the Atlantic expanded during both peace and war years.⁴³ What is behind this counterintuitive result? The evidence suggests that local textiles might have had a smaller market share in some segments of the market, but they coexisted with higher-quality European cloths as differentiated products in a segmented market. Mompox became one of the most important outlets of Andean textiles even though European imports flooded the markets.⁴⁴ The debate is far from settled, and our price analysis in the following section will provide more insights on this.

What does the revenue structure tell us about patterns of domestic trade during the 1790s? The revenues from the *alcabalas* and the *proyecto* are a proxy of the importance of the port as a distributional center and as a final market for an important amount of local wares while the income from the *pulperías* (store-owning tax) and the *sisa* reflect the importance of retailing, warehousing, and provisioning services. To understand the meaning of these insights, we should further break down the revenues and compare them

41. Bassi, Ernesto. *An Aqueous Territory. Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2016, pp. 25-36. Moreno, Nathalie, «Circulación de efectos de Castilla...», *cit.*, pp. 221-222

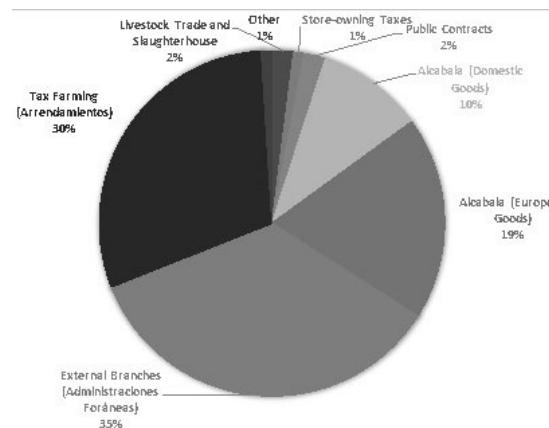
42. Tutino, John, *Making a New World. Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2011. pp. 305-309; Larson, Brooke, «The cotton textile industry of Cochabamba, 1770-1810: The opportunities and limits of growth», in Nils Jacobsen Puhle and Hans-Jürgen (eds), *The Economies of Mexico and Peru in the Late Colonial Period*, Berlin, Colloquium Verlag Puhle, vol. 34, 1986, pp. 150-68; Thomson, Guy, «The cotton textile industry in Puebla during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries». In *The Economies of Mexico and Peru...* *cit.*, 169-202.

43. Torres, James and Jose Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes...» *cit.*, pp. 498-499. For the discussion see: Torres, James, «Entre el oro y la plata: Quito, el suroccidente de la Nueva Granada y el movimiento de mercancías norandino a fines del siglo XVIII», *Colonial Latin American Review*, vol. 27, 2018, pp. 126-127.

44. Muñoz, Edwin, «Circulación de textiles en el virreinato de la Nueva Granada: el sector externo de la economía regional de las provincias del Socorro y Guanentá en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII», *Research Report*, ICANH, 2011, pp. 1-26.

with those accrued in other customs houses of the viceroyalty. If compared with the income structure of Bogotá's customs house during the early 1790s, the duties that fell upon retailing and livestock trade in Mompox were more important in relative terms.⁴⁵ While in the viceregal capital store-owning excises totaled less than 1 % of the *aduana*'s revenues, in Mompox, they made up 9 %. This pattern not only reflects the fiscal bias against retailing but also the relative importance of this sector in the overall economy of the port. The latter held roughly 48 retail grocery stores that, with a population of roughly 10,628 inhabitants, yield a store-to-population ratio of 1:221. These numbers put the river city in-between business-oriented cities such as Buenos Aires that had a ratio of 1:94 and those interior cities such as Caracas, Mexico City, and Puebla that commanded ratios above 1:300.⁴⁶

FIGURE 3. Revenue Structure of Bogotá's Custom House. 1791-1793.



SOURCE: Muñoz, Edwin, «Independencia y actividad económica», in *Las consecuencias económicas de la independencia*, Bogotá D.C., Universidad Nacional, 2012, pp. 26-30.

In Mompox, the *tiendas* and *pulperías* were accompanied by a wide array of specialized stores such as the *queserías* and *lozerías* that manufactured and retailed cheese and clay jars. As in other regions of the empire, women heavily controlled retailing, comprising an important niche of employment for urban and rural household economies.⁴⁷ In

45. For Bogotá's revenues see: Muñoz, Edwin, «Independencia y actividad económica. Tendencias cuantitativas en la renta de alcabalas de Santa Fe, Virreinato de la Nueva Granada, 1780-1821», in Bonilla, Heraclio (ed.), *Consecuencias económicas de la Independencia*, Bogotá, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2012, pp. 26-27.

46. Kinsbruner, Jay, *Petty Capitalism in Spanish America. The Pulperos of Puebla, Mexico City, Caracas, and Buenos Aires*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1987, pp. 9-13.

47. Mangan, Jane, *Trading Roles: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Urban Economy in Colonial Potosí*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2005, pp. 61-69.

the inland port, roughly 25 % of the *pulperías* were operated by women. Indeed, the city's largest store (measured through the duties they paid) was owned by Tiburcia Mora, a petty entrepreneur that also engaged in interregional trade. Qualitative sources suggest that alongside these formal traders a huge number of hawkers and peddlers proliferated in different branches of petty trade.⁴⁸ An analysis of this sector is beyond the scope of this article. However, given the role of retailing in the lowering of transaction costs of market widening in preindustrial economies, the relative importance of this sector reflects the linkages that port services had in the economy of the river city.⁴⁹

The revenues from meat and pork consumption were higher in absolute and relative terms in the inland port than in Bogotá. In per capita terms, Mompox collected roughly two times more on these wares than the viceregal capital. Again, this mirrors the attempt of the authorities to tax the most important sector of the hinterland's economy. In the viceregal capital, no tax such as the *sisa* existed. However, as we will see in the following section, this unusual role of taxes on livestock reflects the demand for meat and pork driven by port services.

The revenues from «public contract sales», which included the sales of movables and properties recorded in the city's notaries, offer further insights into the market value of other investments in Mompox. Table 1 contains a breakdown of this tax category for the years 1790 and 1799. The first insight that springs from the data is the importance of the port's slave market. Indeed, the monetary value of the 68 and 110 slaves marketed in the two years respectively surpassed the capital allocated to the sales of rural and urban estates. The number of captives sold in the port was not far smaller than in more dynamic slave markets such as Popayán, with the average prices of adult men and women in the port standing at roughly 18 % below the average price in the mining outlets.⁵⁰ Therefore, it is possible that the expected net return of investments in slaves had not been quite different in the two areas. As in other outlets of the viceroyalty, it seems that sales were fueled from local sources with creoles accounting for roughly 79 % of the transactions and women accounting for 48 % of the slave traffic.

What was the role of slaves in the labor market of the port? According to Adolfo Meisel, 17 % of the population of Caribbean cities were slaves, while recent literature has shown their strategic importance for the construction, shipyard, and petty trade sectors.⁵¹ In the same vein, the *alcabala* records suggest that slaveholding was broadly distributed among the free population of the inland port. The average seller traded 1.1 slaves and no

48. On the presence of these vendors see AGN-SAAII, Administración de Alcabalas, box 58, file 2.

49. See Heuvel, Danielle van and Ogilvie Sheilagh, «Retail Development in the Consumer Revolution: The Netherlands, 1670-1815», *Explorations in Economic History*, vol. 20, 2013, pp. 69-71.

50. Colmenares, German, *Historia económica y social de Colombia II: Popayán una sociedad esclavista*, Bogotá, Tercer Mundo, 1997, pp. 31-48 and 257-259.

51. Meisel, Adolfo and Ángela Granger. «Determinantes del precio de los esclavos en el caribe neograno-dino en el siglo XVIII», *Tiempo & Economía*, vol. 6, n.º 1, 2018, pp. 144; Solano, Sergio, «Trabajadores, jornales, carestía y crisis política en Cartagena de Indias, 1750-1810», *Historia*, vol. 51, n.º 2, 2018, pp. 556-557; Daza, Vladimir, *Los marqueses de Santa Coa...*, cit., pp. 69-78.

gangs (*cuadrillas*) were sold. Most of the captives sold in groups, in fact, were families composed of a mother and one or two children. These insights assented to the structure of slaveholding in other markets of Caribbean New Granada. Here, even in rural estates, the number of slaves per production unit was small if compared with the labor concentration in the large plantations of the insular Caribbean.⁵² Most captives in cities such as Cartagena and Mompox worked as wage earners or petty entrepreneurs, paying a fixed rent to their owners.⁵³ Even though more research is needed, it seems that the economy of the region was strong enough to sustain relatively large investments in slaves whose net return depended on the labor demand of port services and urban markets.⁵⁴

TABLE 1. Revenue Structure of «Public Contract Sales» in Mompox's Custom House.

Items	1790		1799	
	Silver Pesos	%	Silver Pesos	%
Slaves	15.120,5	64,75 %	24.076,75	88,98 %
Manumissions	1410	6,04 %	0	0,00 %
Urban Real Estates	4464,5	19,12 %	2784	10,29 %
Rural Estates	119	0,51 %	197	0,73 %
Other	2.239.625	9,59 %	0	0,00 %
Total	23.356,25	100 %	27.057,75	100 %

SOURCE: Appendix 1.

Investments in urban and rural estates were relevant as well. Unfortunately, very few studies have been written on colonial real estate markets despite the well-known importance of urban life in Spanish America. In per capita terms, the sale of urban properties in Mompox was not far below those of Quito, a city for which similar data are available.⁵⁵ This comparison is revealing since the latter's urban life was strengthened by the presen-

52. Meisel Adolfo and Ángela Granger. «Determinantes del precio de los esclavos...», *cit.*, pp. 151-152.

53. Daza, Vladimir, *Los marqueses de Santa Coa...*, *cit.*, pp. 98-99; Solano, Sergio «Trabajadores, jornales, carestía...», *cit.*, pp. 562-563; Tovar, Hermes, *Hacienda Colonial y formación social*, Barcelona, Sendai, 1988, pp. 50-51. For a systematic examination of this labor pattern in the XVII century see: Valencia, Carlos, *Alma en boca y huesos en costal. Aproximación a los contrastes Socioeconómicos de la esclavitud. Santafé, Mariquita y Mompox, siglo XVII*, Bogotá, ICANH, 2003.

54. This pattern, naturally, was not unique of this region. According to Lyman Johnson, the late colonial surge in slave labor in late colonial Buenos Aires was also led by a labor demand in the port's service sector. Johnson, Lyman, *Workshop of Revolution. Plebeian Buenos Aires and the Atlantic World, 1776-1810*, Durham Duke, University Press, 2011, pp. 39-43.

55. Fernández, Montserrat, *La alcabala en la Audiencia de Quito*, Cuenca, Casa de la Cultura, 1984, pp. 123-125. This author reports that the sales of urban properties in Quito totaled 115,369 silver pesos in the 1789-1793 quinquennium or roughly 23,077 on average per year. With a population of 25,000 inhabitants, Quito's urban sales per capita totaled 0.92 silver pesos. In Mompox, the per capita urban sales stood at roughly 0.625 silver pesos.

ce of a thick colonial bureaucracy and a wide array of semi-urban manufactures. In Mompox, naturally, urban development was associated with the consumption and forward linkages of port services. The sales of rural estates, in contrast, were not as important in the aggregate volume of investments as the other sectors so far perused. Most of these transactions encompassed mines in Zaragoza and rural estates in the eastern shore of the Magdalena River in the province of Santa Marta. Tale factories (*tejares*) accounted for a huge portion of semi-urban sales, though. These capital-intensive workshops produced a wide array of goods such as clay jars that served the packing needs of the riverboats that also found outlets in the mining belts and the Atlantic ports.⁵⁶

The *alcabala* records suggest that Mompox had a dynamic boat market as well. Merchants operating in the inland port invested in hybrid vessels (*botes de mar y río*) that navigated in both river and coastal waterways whose prices ranged from 600 to 800 silver pesos. A wide array of lesser vessels and barges (*bongos*, *balsas*, etc.) whose prices ranged from 25 to 200 silver pesos were also traded in the city. The variety of vessels and their prices indicates the presence of specialized areas in river transportation. A further discussion of this sector is beyond the scope of this paper. For now, the evidence suggests that Mompox developed a cluster of port services that promoted market-oriented activities whose importance on the aggregate sales of the port is beyond doubt.

Finally, the most important source of revenue for the port's custom house was the sales taxes on domestic goods. Roughly 120,000 silver pesos worth of these wares were taxed per year in the city. This estimate constitutes a lower bound of the aggregate market of the inland port. As stated above, the customs authorities did not control a huge portion of the traffic because of tax exemptions. In markets such as Bogotá and Potosí, the value of goods not subject to the sales taxes accounted for more than 60 % of the value of the aggregate sales.⁵⁷ In Mompox, given the exemptions on flour and cattle trade and the ubiquitous consumption of tobacco and brandy, the portion of the market taxed by the *aduana* was likely smaller than in other regions of the Empire.

In addition, the fiscal privileges that the region achieved and the intricate hydrologic setting of its hinterland that shaped its tax infrastructure created a perfect niche for further legal ways to avoid paying the trade duties. Some contemporary estimates can help us to grasp the importance of some of the flows not recorded in the customs house. According to José Ignacio de Pombo, a well-known political economist and a frequent in-

56. For the best overview of the artisans and workshops of the city see: Solano, Sergio, «El mundo del trabajo urbano en el Caribe colombiano durante el siglo XIX», in José Polo and Sergio Solano (eds.), *Historia social del Caribe Colombiano*, Medellín, La Carreta, 2011, pp. 72-118. For the tale factories and the marketing of their produce see: Torres, James and Jose Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes...», *cit.*, pp. 478-480; Anguiano, Manuel de, «Descripción militar y política de la provincial de Cartagena de Indias 1805» *Taller de la Historia*, vol. 7, n.º 7, 2015, p. 470.

57. Tandeter, Enrique; Vilma Milletich and Roberto Schmit, «Flujos mercantiles en el Potosí colonial tardío...», *cit.*, p. 246; Munoz, Edwin «Independencia y actividad económica. Tendencias cuantitativas en la renta de alcabalas de Santa Fe. Virreinato de la Nueva Granada» in *Consecuencias económicas de la Independencia*, Bogotá, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2012, pp. 27-28.

formant of Humboldt, the demand for flour in the province of Cartagena totaled 200,000 silver pesos per year, half of which was taken by Cartagena and the other half by Mompox, Simití, San Benito, and Tolú. If we distribute the portion of the latter three according to their population, Mompox's demand could have been of the order of 50,000 silver pesos.⁵⁸ Pupo, in turn, calculated that roughly 20,000 silver pesos worth of salted meat and pork was carried by waterways to the eastern shore of the Magdalena River, where they were traded on board to avoid paying the sales taxes.⁵⁹ In other words, sales worth 70,000 silver pesos of beef and flour are not included in the *alcabalas* records.

If we assume a very conservative approach, that is, that the *alcabalas* only covered 40 % of the aggregate sales of domestic wares, roughly 300,000 silver pesos per year were consumed in the port or roughly 30 silver pesos per capita annually. New Granada's GDP per capita stood at 28-32 silver pesos, according to recent estimates.⁶⁰ Our consumption estimate reflects, then, the importance of the purchasing power of the port's population and the market-driven effects of port services. However, caution should be exercised in interpreting this estimate since the *alcabalas* sales include the supply of the vessels that docked in the river city. This «floating market» was during some months as large as the port's population. In the following section we will provide some forays in this regard. For now, it is clear that the aggregate demand for staples and consumption goods in the port exerted important multiplier effects on the region's economy. This point is even clearer if we peruse the *alcabala* records to study the composition, geographical scope, and structure of the trade flows that concurred in Mompox. Let us examine this data in the following section.

An Archipelago of Inland Ports

Mompox was the outlet of a wide array of consumer goods produced across the viceroyalty. Table 2 contains a summation of the average value of the top 10 items imported to the port. Cash crops, textiles, salt, and livestock products dominated the market. Naturally, most of these wares were also part of the cargos that Mompox merchants distributed to outlets in the Caribbean, the mining belts, and the *Momposina* Depression.⁶¹ As stated above, the changing conditions of internal and global markets propelled the export of goods such as cacao, sugar, and livestock derivatives. The *alcabala* records, however, re-

58. Pombo, José Ignacio, «Informe del Real Consulado...», *cit.*, pp. 309-310. For population numbers see: Tovar Pinzón, Hermes, Camilo Tovar y Jorge Tovar (comp.), *Convocatoria al poder del número. Censos y estadísticas de la Nueva Granada 1750-1830*, Bogotá, Archivo General de la Nación, 1994, pp. 63-86.

59. AGN-C, *Alcabalas*, vol. 9, ff. 76-79v.

60. For the debates on the GDP estimates see. Torres, James, *Minería y moneda...*, *cit.*, pp. 35-39. Meisel, Adolfo, «Crecimiento, mestizaje y presión fiscal en el virreinato de la Nueva Granada», *Cuadernos de Historia económica y empresarial*, n.º 28, 2011, pp. 1-91; Kalmanovitz, Salomon, «El PIB de la Nueva Granada en 1800: auge colonial, estancamiento republicano», *Revista de Economía Institucional*, vol. 8, n.º 15, 2016, pp. 161-183.

61. Torres, James and Jose Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes...», *cit.*, pp. 480-485.

port those imports retained for local spending and the provisioning of the river fleets. The consumption pattern that springs from the aggregate data is confirmed by a small report on the provisions gathered by some vessels that docked in the port.⁶² Besides corn rolls (*bollos de maíz*), cassava flour, and cane brandy, which were exempted from the sales taxes, the supplies of these vessels were composed of cacao, rice, salted beef, pork, panela (molasses), and cheese. From which regions did the inland port draw its supplies? As Maps 1-2 show, an archipelago of inland ports along the Magdalena River and its tributaries served the city's demand. These ports were collection centers of producers across the Andean slopes and the flood plains and therefore specialized in the provision of specific wares. Let us examine the geographical scope of the main items marketed in the port.

TABLE 2. Average Value of the top 10 items imported in Mompox. 1789-1793.

Item	Value in Silver Pesos
Salted Meat	21.332,0
Cacao	11.806,1
Panela (Molasses)	9.229,2
Sugar	6.187,9
Salt	4.955,2
Coarse cotton textiles	4.748,7
Pork	3.764,0
Tallow	3.586,3
Cheese	2.396,4
Rice	1.126,6

SOURCE: Appendix 1.

The supply of cacao, the most important cash crop consumed in the region, was dominated by downriver remittances from Ocaña and Girón and their feeder ports. All these load centers drew their supplies, in turn, from cacao clusters of northeastern New Granada such as Soatá, Pamplona, and Cúcuta. Small amounts of the crop were supplied by producers in the Caribbean floodplains, which confirms the specialization of this region in other sectors. The data also suggests that the cacao market was competitive. We have calculated a Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) based on the market shares of each importer reported in the *alcabalas* records to measure the amount of competition among them.⁶³ The large number of traders involved and the low HHI suggest that the

62. See a small sample of the provisioning of these vessels in AGN-C, Abastos, vol. 2, ff. 81r-95r

63. The index is defined as follows: Where s_i is the market share of merchant i and N is the number of merchants recorded in the *alcabalas*. The index ranges from $1/N$ to 1. In this article, we will express the HHI as percentages so the index can range up to 10.000. An HHI below 100 indicates a highly competitive market and

supply of this crop had not only a wide geographic scope but also a competitive structure. This clearly contradicts the old vision of a river trade controlled by monopolists.⁶⁴

TABLE 3. HHI of Mompox Imports of Key Commodities According to the Market Shares Declared at Customs.

Year	Cacao	Sugar	Cotton Textiles
1789	527,9	374,6	822,1
1790	424,8	351,4	1.142,2
1793	552,3	533,2	3.397,1*

SOURCES: Appendix 1.

* The HHI of the textile market skyrocketed during this year due to the boycott against the custom house. On this conflict see text.

How important was the aggregate consumption of cacao in the port? Given that several *alcabala* entries only indicate the value of cacao traded, it is impossible to compare the levels of consumption of the crop with those of other markets across the empire. Yet, the 73,38 tons for which we have information suggests that local consumption was an important market in its own right. Around 1,5 silver pesos per capita or roughly 5 % of New Granada's per capita GDP was allocated to the purchases of this crop. Further research should be done on the way in which cacao consumption promoted the marketing of other complementary commodities such as sugar and durable goods such as local pots (*loza criolla*).

The geographical configuration of the flows of sugar derivatives followed a Ricardian framework with the production of goods with a higher value-to-weight ratio located further away from the port. The supply of sugar cane syrup (*miel*), an input for cane brandy production, was dominated by mills located in the *Momposina* Depression. Even though the import of Catalan brandies heavily undermined the crown's brandy factory that operated in the port, the aggregate value of the *miel* sales in the city suggests that local production was able to keep an important share of the market for alcoholic beverages.⁶⁵ Unrefined sugar (*panela*), the production of which required more processing than that of cane syrup, was sourced mainly from producers further upstream in Ocaña and its satellite ports of Simaña and Puerto Real. Suppliers in the *Momposina* Depression captured a marginal portion of this trade, reaffirming the importance of regional specialization.

The spatial scope of sugar flows was wider. Ocaña was still the main collection center,

below 1500 indicates a non-concentrated market. If the HHI ranges between 1501 and 2500 the sector is moderately concentrated and numbers above 2501 suggest high concentration.

64. Colmenares, Germán, «La economía y la sociedad coloniales, 1550-1800», in *Nueva Historia de Colombia*, tomo I, Bogotá, Planeta, 1989.

65. Mora, Gilma, *Aguardiente y conflictos sociales en la Nueva Granada durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII*, Bogotá, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1988, pp. 39-49.

but ports further upstream such as Honda, captured an important share of the market. As Humboldt himself documented, the surge in international prices after Haiti's collapse fostered a myriad of smallholders in the slopes of central New Granada to produce cash crops that were exported to global markets through river trade.⁶⁶ By focusing on the production of goods with high added value, Andean producers were able to participate in these growing networks of viceregal and Atlantic trade. Further research should be done on this bonanza. Our records, however, confirm the importance of the inland port's demand for cash crops and the role of downstream trade in the sugar supply chain. The HHI contained in table 3, finally, suggests that the sugar supply was also competitive. Many traders participated in the market, and there is no evidence that transportation bottlenecks had created a concentration of this sector in a few hands.⁶⁷

The supply of the two main non-agricultural goods marketed in Mompos -salt and coarse cotton textiles- was collected by ports at the two extremes of the waterways that irrigated the region. The main source of salt in Caribbean New Granada was in Ciénega, near-by the port of Santa Marta.⁶⁸ From there, the mineral was carried by waterways to Mompos where merchants distributed them to the owners of *saladeros* and independent black workers that produced salted meat and pork. They also forwarded salt surpluses to markets further upstream. Given its role in the supply chain of pork and beef trade, the transport of the mineral became one of the most important branches of the upriver trade that even reached outlets in the Andean slopes and the mining belts.⁶⁹ Roughly 5,477 silver pesos in salt were imported to the port. This business also had very few entry barriers, with roughly 43 importers active, each one commanding small shares of the aggregate market.

Downstream remittances dominated the import of coarse cotton textiles from Girón and its feeder ports. These nodes, in turn, funneled the fabrics from clusters such as Socorro, San Gil, and Vélez. In addition, Mompos imported woolens, finished cloth, and fique sacks (*costales*) from producers in central New Granada that embarked their wares downriver through Honda. As the literature has pointed out, Mompos was the third-largest textile entrepôt of the viceroyalty.⁷⁰ The river city not only consumed important quantities of Andean manufactures but also distributed them to markets in the mining belts and outlets further downriver such as Cartagena and Santa Marta.⁷¹ As stated above, the vitality of these flows in a period in which European wares flooded the markets of the empire further proves the segmented nature of the textile trade in the region.

As Pupo pointed out in 1793, the livestock trade was the single most important economic activity of the region. The herds of the Momposina Depression and the interior of

66. Humboldt, Alexander, *Diarios de viaje...*, *cit.*, pp. 36-39.

67. Tovar, Hermes, *Hacienda colonial...*, *cit.*, pp. 252-253.

68. Sánchez, Ramiro, «Las salinas del Virreinato y el Estanco de la sal. Una visión de conjunto a finales del siglo XVIII», *Informe final*, Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, Bogotá D.C., 2014, pp. 1-40.

69. Torres, James and Jose Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes», *cit.*, pp. 496-497.

70. Muñoz, «Circulación de textiles en el virreinato...», *cit.*, pp. 20-21.

71. Torres, James and Jose Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes...», *cit.*, p. 490.

Santa Marta's province served three main flows: the consumption of the inhabitants of the inland port, the provisioning of the crews that kept the river traffic functioning, and the demand of the mining belts and the Atlantic ports. Henao and Torres have offered important insights on the role of Mompos as a distributional center of salted beef and pork.⁷² The measurement of the other two portions of the sector remains, however, to be elucidated. As explained in the former section, a three-tier flow of meat and pork developed in the port. One part of the herds was allocated to the production of fresh meat and pork while the other was distributed to the *saladeros*. The third stream of salted meat and pork arrived at the port already processed. The *alcabala* data help us to measure the importance of each portion. Our records suggest that the port consumed roughly 45 kg of beef and 5 kg of pork per capita yearly. Naturally, as we have seen, a huge portion of this trade was outside the control of the customs house and therefore these are very conservative assessments. But even if we do not attempt to provide an estimate above the one provided by the *alcabala* records, the per capita consumption of beef is comparable to that of Bogotá (37,9 kgs) and Santiago de Chile (30,9 kg).⁷³ The crew's consumption should be factored in as well. In 1793, the city council calculated that the daily provisioning of the vessels that docked at the port matched in some months that of the fixed population of the city. This floating market constituted an important carrier sector that had multiplier effects on the region's economy.⁷⁴

Mompox sourced most of their meat and pork supplies from the *laderas*, the flood lands that were used to raise and fatten cattle seasonally in the *Momposina* Depression. The second stream of cattle and hogs came from the interior of the Santa Marta province, particularly from the inland ports on the Cesar River basin. Towns such as Chiriguaná and Chimichagua were particularly involved in this trade. As Hugues Sánchez has shown in systematic studies, these nodes benefited from Bourbon land policies that granted property rights to a considerable number of market-oriented peasants that participated in regional trade networks.⁷⁵ In addition to meat and pork, this region also supplied Mompox with other livestock derivatives such as cheese and tallow. All these wares, again, were also part of the broader circuits that reached the mining belts and the Atlantic ports.⁷⁶

The aqueous endowments of the region allowed consumers in the inland port to get alternative sources of protein. Torres and Henao have shown that Mompox merchants exported sizable quantities of salted fish to markets upstream.⁷⁷ Fish consumption was also prevalent in the city during the months in which the catholic rituals restricted the consumption of meat. The *alcabala*s sources, however, are not very well suited to calculate

72. *Ibidem*, p. 491.

73. Muñoz, Edwin and James Torres, «La función de Santa fe...», *cit.*, p. 190; Martínez, Juan, «Comercio de mercancías locales en Santiago de Chile 1773-1778», *Revista de Historia Económica-Journal of Iberian and Latin América Economic History*, vol. 39, n.º 2, 2019, p. 25.

74. AGN-C, Aduanas, vol. 10 ff. 394-396.

75. Sánchez, Hugues, «De esclavos a campesinos...», *cit.*, p. 140.

76. Torres, James and Jose Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes», *cit.*, pp. 484-485.

77. *Ibidem*, p. 499.

the size of local consumption. In the years 1789-1793, only 1,9 tons were reported on average annually. The qualitative information suggests that the region's fishermen enjoyed fiscal prerogatives while the consumption of fresh fish faced important regulation of the city council since its consumption was considered «unhealthy».⁷⁸ In 1794, during the discussions about the consumption taxes, some merchants reported that salted fish was a pivotal staple for the provisioning of the vessels that docked in the port when meat and pork were not available.⁷⁹ It seems that the catching and processing of fish was an activity that also clustered around port services. However, further research on river fisheries should be done to understand the supply chain of these wares and their aggregate importance.

The last top item marketed in the port was rice, a durable source of carbohydrates essential in the provision of the river fleets. Not surprisingly, the crop flows were funnelled from the inland ports that dotted the region's floodplains. Roughly 49 % of the rice traded in Mompox was imported from Magangué, followed by San Bernardo (9 %) and Simaña (8 %). The remaining share of the market was served by a wide array of upstream and downstream nodes such as San Benito de Abad, Chimichagua, and Puerto Botijas, each of which served less than 4 % of the port's demand. Despite its importance, rice production has not attracted the attention of the literature. Qualitative reports suggest that it was a highly commercial, smallholder crop.⁸⁰ In this vein, the *alcabala* records indicate that the rice market was competitive, with roughly 52 merchants and producers serving the market on average per year.

Relative and Nominal Prices

The former sections provided an aggregate approach to the structure and geographical scope of Mompox's market. The port services that clustered around the city promoted linkages that fueled a network of interregional trade across an archipelago of inland ports. The network linked Andean producers with markets downstream in the Caribbean floodplains and the mining belts of the viceroyalty, promoting regional specialization and market-driven growth. Naturally, this expansion was promoted in turn by the multiplier effects that gold and commodity exports had on the economy of the region.⁸¹ Yet, the mechanisms through which the increased income from the export sector was transmitted to other economic sectors remains to be further explored. For instance, what role did relative prices have on the configuration of regional specialization? Torres and Henao provided some preliminary insights in this regard by crafting an export index and performing trade elasticity analysis on some tradable goods.⁸² They found that the period was

78. AGN-C, Aduanas, vol 10 ff. 330-339v and 409-410.

79. *Ibidem*, ff. 415-420.

80. Anguiano, Manuel de, «Descripción militar...», *cit.*, 470-471.

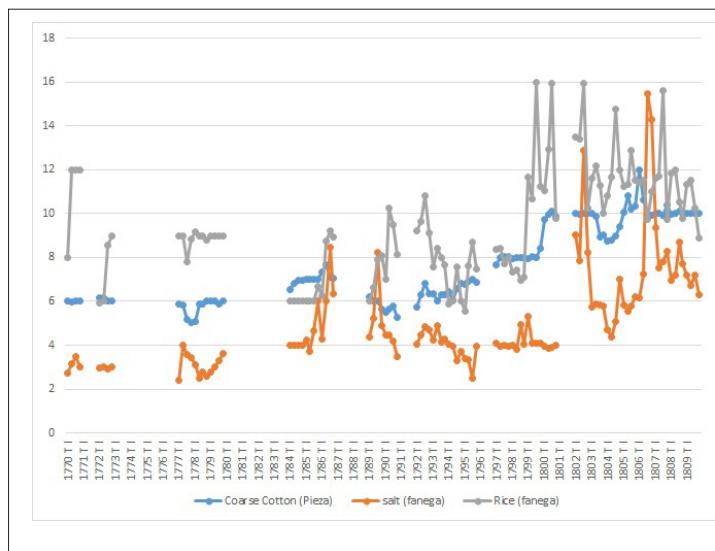
81. See footnotes 7 and 8.

82. Torres, James and Jose Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes...», *cit.*, p. 482.

one of overall inflation with prices surging 20 percent between 1770 and 1790, remaining stable until the late 1790s, and surging 60 percent up to 1809. Even though more data are needed to establish price mark-ups between markets, it is likely that this inflationary era had promoted trade by improving the total income of upstream producers and reducing thereby the incidence of transport costs on final prices

Unfortunately, it is not possible to undertake a price-elasticity analysis of Mompox's demand for specific wares since we do not have time series on the quantities of goods traded. Yet, some forays into the nominal and relative prices of the main wares imported to the port can help us to furnish some hypotheses on the structure of regional trade and provide inputs for future sectoral analyses. Graphs 4-6 present the data on nominal prices of the leading imports of the inland port. The data, in similar ways to Torres and Henao's study, were distilled from the *proyecto* logbooks that recorded the market prices used by the officials to assess the ad valorem tax that fell upon the goods re-exported through Mompox.⁸³ Even though some historians think that these records reflected administrative quotations, the volatility of the prices gave us some confidence that they were close to market prices.⁸⁴

FIGURE 4. Mompox Nominal Quarterly Prices of Key Commodities in Silver pesos.

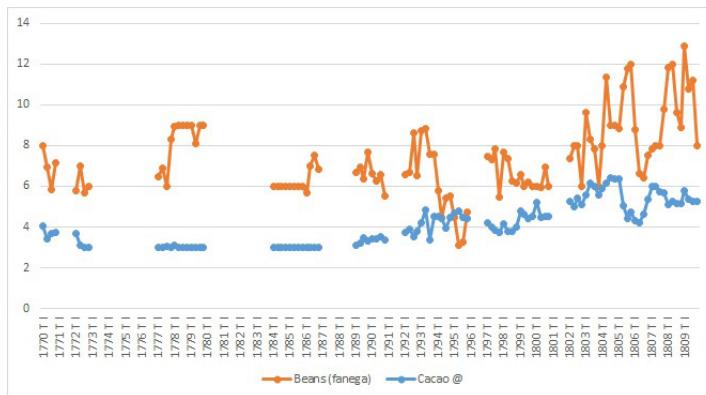


SOURCES: Appendix 2.

83. See Appendix 2.

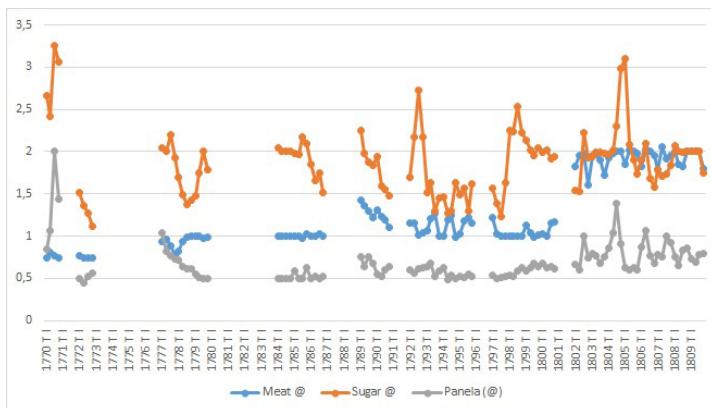
84. For a solid discussion of the use of sales taxes to distill price series see: Djenderedjian, Julio and Juan Luis Martirén, «Los aforos de alcabalas como fuente útil para el estudio de los precios en el Río de la Plata: metodología e interpretación sobre su evolución en la etapa virreinal (1782-1810)», *Folia Histórica del Nordeste*, n.º 26, 2016, pp. 75-79.

FIGURE 5. Mompox Nominal Quarterly Prices of Key Commodities in Silver pesos.



SOURCES: Appendix 2.

FIGURE 6. Mompox Nominal Quarterly Prices of Key Commodities in Silver pesos.



SOURCES: Appendix 2.

The long-run inflationary trend is palpable in most of these commodities. The rates at which prices rose varied among them, though. Cacao nominal prices remained stable until the late 1780s when they started to increase, achieving in the late 1790s levels 80 % higher than those of the early 1770s. Despite that prices collapsed in 1804-1805 -perhaps due to the short-term impact of the renewal of blockades- they recovered afterward commanding in 1808-1809 levels 60 % higher than those of 40 years before. The prices of domestic coarse cottons experienced a greater expansion, remaining stable up to the late 1780s and taking off afterwards. By the late 1790s, prices doubled with respect to the

1770s levels and plateaued there during the first decade of the nineteenth century. This surge in the price of domestic cottons amidst the flooding of European wares suggest, once more, that the textile trade was segmented and that possibly income effects were more important in shaping the demand for local textiles. Salt prices were more volatile, exhibiting peaks in 1785-1786, 1800-1802, and 1807-1808. Future research should peruse these short-term disturbances. For now, it is clear that in the years between 1795 and 1810, there was almost a two-fold increase in the prices of the mineral. The movement of sugar and panela prices, in turn, shows a different pattern from other cash crops. The long-term trend was one of stability, presenting some peaks in the early 1770s, 1790s, and 1800s that perhaps reflected the short-term disturbances in Atlantic markets.

What about the prices of goods produced in Mompox's hinterland? These goods also experienced an inflationary trend but, in contrast to the importable goods, the increase was stronger during the 1800s than in the 1790s. In other words, it seems that the terms of trade of the port vis-à-vis upstream producers experienced a counterpoint in the last two decades of the colonial period. Thus, the price of meat remained steady until 1798, fluctuating afterward at levels around 75 % above the previous trend. Given the role of salt in the supply chain of meat trade, the concomitant increase in the price of inputs no doubt passed into final customers of processed meat. Rice prices followed a similar movement even though they were more volatile. This contrast in the volatility of the two series may reveal the tighter control of the city council over the prices of meat. The supply of fresh meat, in particular, elicited frequent tremors among the elites of the city and those of Santa Marta and Cartagena.⁸⁵ Import quotas and price controls were deployed to assure stability in the livestock supply.⁸⁶ Yet, it seems that the policies were not binding since the price of meat experienced some short-term fluctuations. Be that as it may, the changing trend after the late 1790s is clear. This pattern is confirmed by the prices of beans that experienced important surges during the 1800s. The biennium 1808-1809, in fact, was a peak period with prices of 12 pesos per *fanega* as compared to 6 silver pesos in the 1790s.

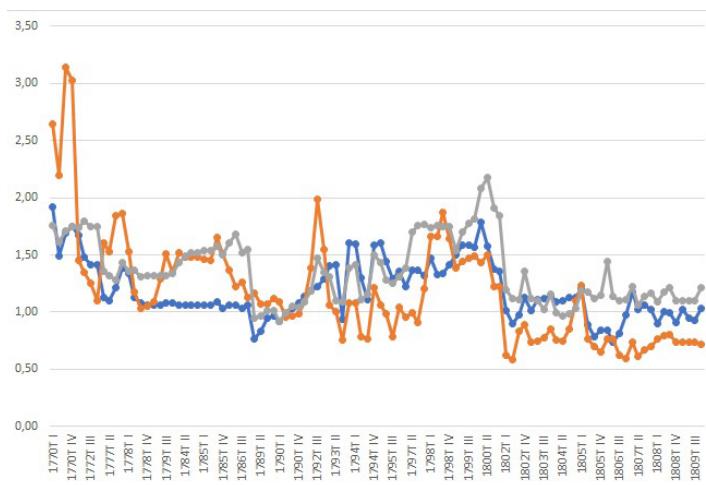
The counterpoint between the two sets of goods is better understood if we assemble times series of relative prices, more specifically of upstream goods with respect to goods produced in Mompox's hinterland. This exercise will allow us to see the conjectures in which price raises propelled additional incentives to upstream producers. Naturally, the relative price of, say, cacao to meat was influenced by factors other than internal conditions. Given the tradable nature of cacao, its relative price could also increase due to the exogenous forces of international markets. However, a decline in the relative price of cacao in terms of meat can potentially show a shift in the demand curve for the cash crop that may have affected its marketing in the port. Let us clarify these points with some examples. Graph 7 shows the relative price of three upstream commodities in terms of

85. For these conflicts see: AGN-C, Abastos, vol. 2, ff. 427-431v and vol. 13, ff. 562-571v. See also Sánchez, Hugues, «De esclavos a campesinos...», *cit.*, pp. 140-145.

86. AGN-C, Abastos, vol. 2, ff. 734-823.

meat. These numbers suggest, first, that the early 1770s and the 1790s were years favorable to upstream producers. The relative price of the three goods, in fact, rose during these periods. Conversely, the 1800s exhibited a counterpoint that turned the terms of trade in favor of floodplain producers. Here, however, some divergences took place across commodities. Cacao prices fared the downturn better than textiles and sugar perhaps because the global demand remained strong despite the Atlantic wars. The relative price of textiles returned to the 1790s levels while those of sugar fell 50 % below the prices reached during the 1770s. This constellation of price movements suggests that a sectoral approach is needed to grasp the specific contours of the market for each commodity.

FIGURE 7. Relative Quarterly Prices of Upstream Commodities in Terms of Meat. Mompox.
1790=100.



SOURCES: Appendix 2.

What forces were behind these changes in relative prices? How did these developments affect the trade in the port? As stated above, the most solid hypothesis regarding these issues suggests that the transmission to local economies via linkages of the income accrued from gold and commodity trade was behind such changes. This, again, is a debate very much open. Nonetheless, our evidence on the development of port facilities and services confirms that these activities exerted further linkages on regional economies. The income from these activities most likely shifted the demand for cash crops and manufactures produced in the Andean interior and, therefore, spurred their aggregate importance in Mompox's market during the early 1790s. Even sugar producers were experiencing better terms of trade in the inland port. Sadly, no data are available to measure the mar-

ket after the late 1790s. The analysis of Torres and Henao, however, shows that the distribution of upstream wares through Mompox toward mining and downstream markets heavily contracted after 1802.⁸⁷ To fully explain these changes, future research should craft time series of upstream prices and undertake sectoral analyses to understand the operation of markets across the archipelago of inland ports.

Final remarks

This paper has provided a study of the economy of one of the most important inland ports of the viceroyalty of New Granada. The alleged ubiquity of contraband in the region has hampered previous attempts to measure some distinctive features of trade flows that converged in the city. By showing how political and environmental conditions shaped the rules of the game of Bourbon taxation, this paper managed to distill from fiscal records some proxies to understand the size and nature of the port's market. These sources suggest that inland waterways entwined a far-flung set of commerce networks that connected nodes in the Northern Andes and Caribbean New Granada. The strength and structure of Mompox's trade flows confirm that the region experienced a process of market widening and deepening that should be further examined in ulterior research.

Beyond this broader contention, the paper made three further contributions. First, it provided a lower bound estimate of the value of a wide array of cash crops and manufactures marketed and consumed in the port. The latter's population and the provisioning of the river vessels promoted strong consumption linkages that induced trade networks across an archipelago of inland ports that fueled competitive supply chains. Second, the paper suggested that the export-led growth that experienced the viceroyalty during the second half of the eighteenth century had beneficial spillovers on the inland ports that linked the region with global supply chains. Mompox clustered a wide array of subsidiary activities that had positive effects on the region's labor markets. Warehousing, retailing, and forwarding services created niches of further growth via consumption linkages while light transformation services such as the processing of meat and the production of clay jars exerted backward linkages on markets connected via waterways.

Finally, the paper made some forays on the way in which relative prices played an important role in shaping trade flows. Even though future research should craft time series for other inland ports to establish mark-up levels and market cointegration, the evidence suggests that during the 1790s, the terms of trade favored upstream producers and possibly fostered downstream flows. This pattern changed during the 1800s, possibly affecting the role of Mompox as the distributional center of Andean wares on the eve of colonial collapse. These tentative insights, naturally, should be the subject of future forays.

87. Torres, James and Jose Henao, «Connecting the Northern Andes...», *cit.*, p. 500.

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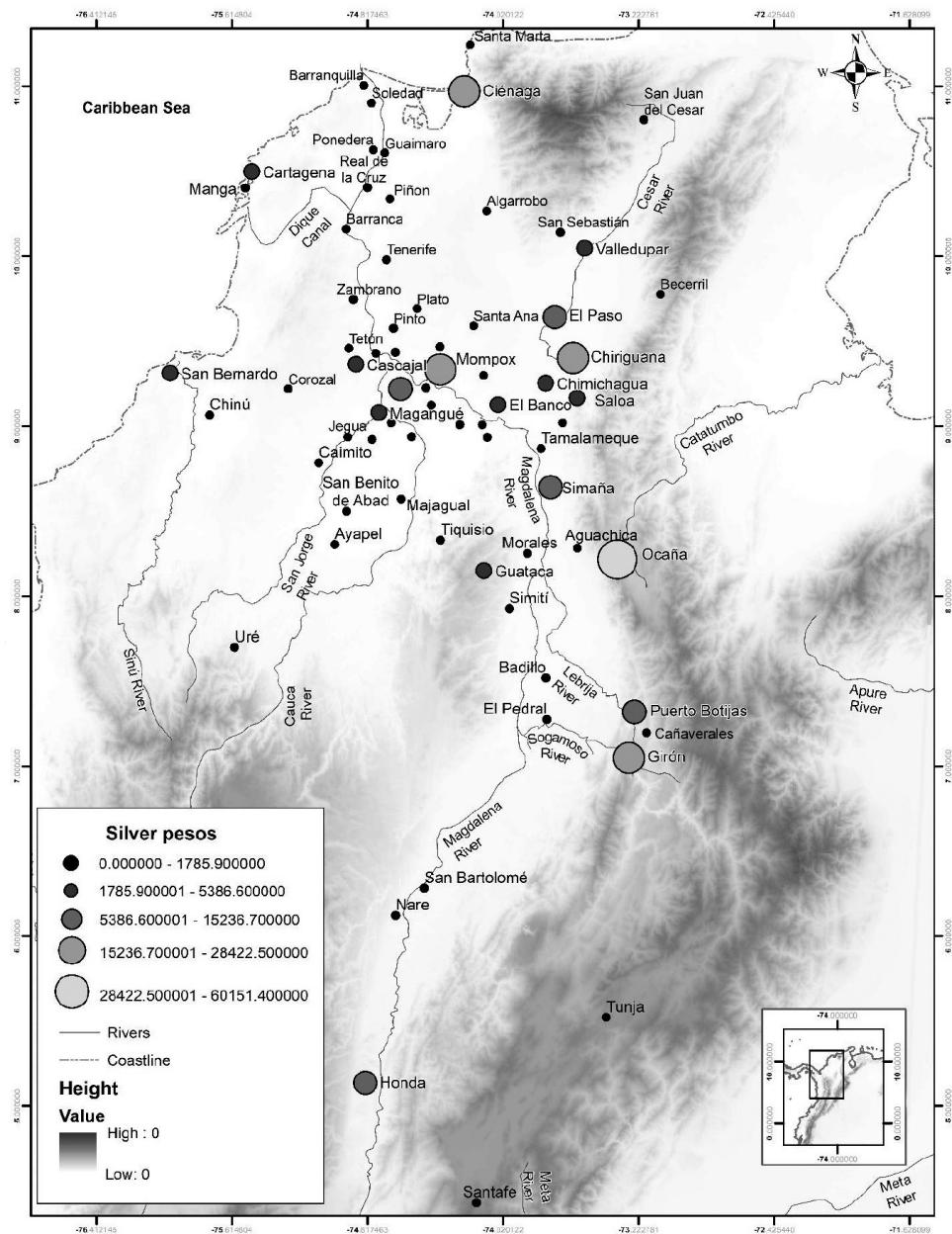
APPENDIX 1. Mompox's Alcabalas Logbooks.

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Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2012c
Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	1966c
Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2012c

APPENDIX 2. Mompox's Transit Tax (Proyecto) Logbooks.

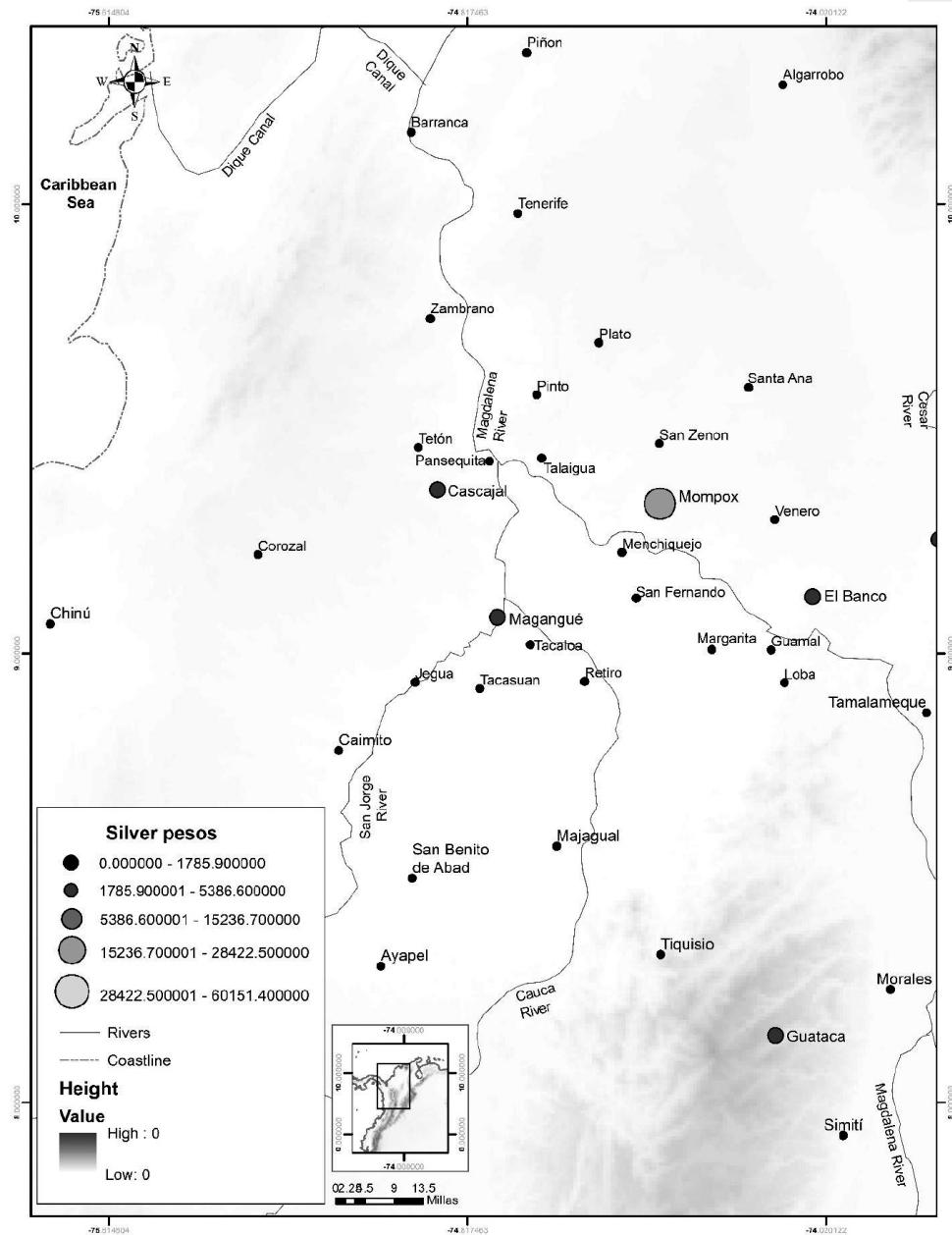
Archivo General de la Nación		
Year	Section	Reference
1770	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	1560c
1772	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2147c
1777	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	1529c
1778	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2356c
1779	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	1561c
1784	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	1704c
1785	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	1465c
1786	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	1524c
1789	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2143c
1790	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2867c
1792	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2098c
1793	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2710c
1794	Anexo II (Alcabalas)	Box 140 file 3
1795	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	1604c
1797	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2365c
1798	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	1937c
1799	Anexo II (Alcabalas)	Box 265 file 3
1800	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	1966c
1802	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2748c
1803	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2750c
1804	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2836c
1805	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2753c
1806	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2790c
1807	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2762c
1808	Anexo III (Real Hacienda Cuentas)	2669c
1809	Anexo II (Alcabalas)	Box 178 file 2

MAP 1. Markets from which Mompox Drew their Domestic Goods. (Value in Silver pesos).



SOURCES: Appendix 1.

MAP 2. Markets in the Momposina Depression from which Mompox Drew their Domestic Goods (Value in Silver pesos).



SOURCES: Appendix 1.