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ARTICLE

Positioning Maroon Archaeologies to Face Racial Violence in Ecuador

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Abstract
This article presents an approach to study marronage from the perspective of critical social archaeology, which encompasses the perpetuation of several layers of racial violence endured by the Afro-Ecuadorian population as legacies of slavery and colonialism. Collaborative and community-based projects in the ancestral Afro-Ecuadorian territories of the Chota Valley and Esmeraldas, and in the city of Guayaquil, are a basis for mapping Afro-Ecuadorian resistance strategies in the hacienda, urban, *palenque,* and border contexts. Marronage, as a response to racial oppression and systemic exploitation, has transformed over time, demonstrating the agency of the Afro-Ecuadorian community against structural violence. Archaeology illuminates the Maroon experience and its legacy in ancestral historical memory by including a critical study of slavery in the household context of plantation settings, identifying the dynamics of oppression and resistance, mapping routes of fugitivity, and examining the networks connecting actions of marronage. This study is an essential step in reconstructing the neglected history of Afro-Ecuadorian resistance and its role in shaping Latin America.

Resumen
Este articulo desarrolla una primera propuesta para el estudio del cimarronaje desde una arqueología social crítica con alcances en la discusión sobre la perpetuación de la violencia racial a varios niveles ejercida sobre la población Afroecuatoriana, como legados de la esclavitud y el colonialismo. Se considera como base los proyectos colaborativos y de base comunitaria que han tomado lugar en el Territorio Ancestral del Valle del Chota, la ciudad de Guayaquil y su vínculo con Esmeraldas para un mapeo de las estrategias de resistencia Afroecuatoriana en el contexto hacendatario, urbano, de palenque y frontera. El cimarronaje, como respuesta a la opresión racial y explotación sistémica, se ha adaptado a lo largo del tiempo, mostrando la capacidad de la comunidad Afroecuatoriana para resistir la violencia estructural. Mediante este enfoque, la arqueología ilumina la experiencia cimarrona y su legado en la memoria histórica ancestral, al incluir un estudio crítico de la esclavitud en el contexto doméstico de los entornos de las plantaciones, la identificación de dinámicas de opresión y resistencia, el mapeo de rutas de fugitividad y las redes que conectan las acciones cimarronas. Este estudio representa un paso importante en la reconstrucción de la historia silenciada de la resistencia Afroecuatoriana y su papel en la construcción de Latinoamérica.

Keywords: archaeology of marronage; Afro-Ecuadorians; racial violence; Ecuador

Palabras clave: arqueología del cimarronaje; Afroecuatorianos; violencia racial; Ecuador

Afro-Venezuelan scholar Jesús "Chucho" García (2022:17) asserts the active role of marronage as "the capacity of Sub-Saharan Africans and their descendants to combat any form of social, psychological, spiritual, and economic domination." Maroon Afro-Ecuadorian Barbarita Lara extends the notion of

marronage to the act of healing in the present: "In the face of the attack on our people, what remains for us is to strengthen ourselves internally and heal ourselves because, externally, our reality is becoming increasingly harsh" (personal communication 2024). Thus, resistance is not merely a component of Afro-Latin American historical narratives but is an active element of the descendants' collective memory and social life, referred to as *cimarronaje* or *palenquerismo* in different parts of Latin America. This practice demonstrates a complex transmission of knowledge and the preservation of ancestral survival traditions: it is a quest for liberation that is still ongoing in the context of continuing racial oppression and relentless attacks on Black freedom (Fanon 1963).

Barbarita Lara's words resonate with the significant rise in violence in Ecuador during the last three years, notably in the cities of Quito and Guayaquil, as well as in the ancestral Afro-Ecuadorian territories of the Chota Valley and Esmeraldas (the provinces of Imbabura, Carchi, and Esmeraldas; Ecuavisa 2024; El Universo 2023).[1] This violence comes in different forms: interpersonal, systematic, and symbolic (González-Tennant 2018). The province of Esmeraldas, part of Latin America's cradle of *palenquerismo* (marronage, or *cimarronaje* in Spanish) and a place (*palenque*) of encounter of Maroons from different parts of colonial Ecuador and Colombia, has been particularly affected by these outbreaks of violence.[2] Inadequate government responses to armed attacks and natural disasters in the province exacerbated the practice of necropolitics applied in connection to racial violence. This phenomenon, not exclusive to Ecuador, relies on national and transnational policies that reproduce death and determine who lives and who dies in historically marginalized communities (Tapia Tapia 2023; Wright 2020). These manifestations of violence have deep historical roots in enslavement and are evolving into a global system of racialized extermination and normalized human exploitation (Santana-Perlaza 2022).

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, a steady stream of enslaved Africans arrived in rapidly urbanizing Quito and Guayaquil, which functioned as slave trade centers for the highlands and coast of colonial Ecuador, also known as Audiencia de Quito (Bryant 2014). Here, the African population was a polyethnic community from the coast of Upper Guinea, Lower Guinea, and Central-West Africa (Bryant 2014). In urban settings, Africans worked in domestic service, construction of religious and secular buildings, artisan work, and as bodyguards (Cushner 1982; Tardieu 2012); in the haciendas (plantations), they participated in monoculture farming (sugar, coffee, cocoa, among others), as in the Andean haciendas of the Chota Valley, and in mineral extraction, such as gold mining in Esmeraldas and southwest Colombia. In 1545, in what is now Esmeraldas, a group of Maroon Africans, who were shipwreck survivors, established an interethnic *palenque* named República de Zambos (Republic of Zambos); they were led by Alonso de Illescas (Tardieu 2012). This Maroon settlement became a historical landmark for the runaway populations in the mining region in southwest Colombia, the Andean haciendas, and the cities of Quito and Guayaquil. Slavery was officially abolished in 1852, but forced work, particularly in rural areas, continued until 1965, when it was ended by enactment of the Agrarian Reform. Thirty years later, the 1998 Ecuadorian Constitution recognized the Afro-Ecuadorian population as part of the Ecuadorian nation, but there was no concrete recognition of their territorial and other collective rights. Afro-Ecuadorians today comprise 7.2% of the Ecuadorian population and still seek to maintain a dignified life in the face of territorial dispossession, displacement under the extractivist pressure of mining and logging, and the rise of hybrid political orders, notably in zones of conflict where different state and nonstate actors define the realms of violence (Duarte Villa et al. 2024).[3] Furthermore, racial violence is rooted in processes of Whitening that still privilege the White-mestizo population with greater economic and political opportunities and the right to determine the lives of the rest of the population (De la Cadena 2004; Rahier 1998).

Considering this historical context and following a Latin American social archaeology approach, research with descendant populations should meet the demands and concerns of local communities by going beyond mere investigation and preservation of the past to engage with contemporary social justice (Olivo del Olmo 2016). This engagement resonates with the collaborative and antiracist agenda of African Diaspora archaeology over the last several decades in the Americas (Franklin et al. 2020) and the anticolonial research proposed by Hartemann (2024) for Black communities in the Amazon. It is dedicated to socially responsible research that includes (1) sustainable heritage

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management, (2) dialogue with multiple voices in research design and archaeological methodologies, and (3) the co-construction of historical narratives. It also focuses on issues of historical reparation that move toward the official recognition of collective rights in terms of social and environmental justice (Perry and Rappaport 2014:34). Our approach, achieved through collaborative research, rebuilds the memory of intergenerational trauma experienced by the Afro-Ecuadorian population beginning with their uprooting from Africa and their forced introduction into Hispanic colonies through the process of enslavement.

This article is based on three research projects developed over the last decade—two in the ancestral Afro-Ecuadorian territory of the Chota Valley (Balanzátegui Moreno 2017) and one in the city of Guayaquil (Delgado Vernaza 2023)—and their connection with Esmeraldas, an area still awaiting archaeological research. Balanzátegui Moreno's doctoral dissertation, "Archaeology of the Afro-Ecuadorians in La Concepción, Ancestral Territory of the Chota-Mira Valley (Province of Carchi-Ecuador)," was based on fieldwork conducted between 2013 and 2015. This research included archaeological surveys and excavations in the former Jesuit hacienda of La Concepción, analysis of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Jesuit inventories of haciendas, and the recovery of oral traditions with African descendants in La Concepción (Balanzátegui Moreno 2017).

This research was the basis for the project "Archaeology of *Cimarronas* (Maroon Women) in the Northern Highlands of Ecuador," which involves participatory mapping of Maroon women routes from 2021 to the present. Its main research themes are (1) the life of eighteenth-century enslaved populations, including patterns of production and consumption of ceramics and foodways in Andean Jesuit haciendas, (2) politics of heritage and historical narratives of the Afro-Ecuadorian past, (3) collaborative and ethical practices of African Diaspora archaeology, and (4) strategies of fugitivism and resistance used by eighteenth-century Maroon women and their descendants. These projects were based on joint community-based work, using dialogue and learning in collaboration with the organization of African-descendant women CONAMUNE-C, the National Coordinator of Black Women-Carchi (Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Negras-Carchi), and other local government representatives.

Génesis Delgado Vernaza's undergraduate thesis, "Spaces of Materiality of Exploitation and Resistance: Black Archaeology in Guayaquil," addresses the absence of an approach to the history of exploitation and colonial resistance of African-descendant people in the city of Guayaquil and its location in a broader and cohesive landscape of *palenques*. This research mapped sites of memory through an analysis of primary and secondary literature and the recovery of oral traditions (Delgado Vernaza 2023). In both the Chota Valley and Guayaquil studies, Esmeraldas appeared in memories of their descendants as a referent of a Maroon landscape that persisted over time. The kinship relationships between those in the Chota Valley and Esmeraldas and the historical displacement from Esmeraldas to Guayaquil were fundamental to including Esmeraldas in this discussion (Figure 1).

Based on these archaeological projects, this article considers the different levels and expressions of Maroon actions and their connection within Ecuador's colonial and modern landscapes using a diachronic perspective; it aims to foster a dialogue about the Long Emancipation of African descendants (Reilly et al. 2024) in three interconnected regions: the Chota Valley, Guayaquil, and Esmeraldas. Investigating African-descendant households, engaging in participatory mapping, delving into the historical archives, and recovering oral traditions with descendant communities allow us to underscore the interconnectedness of historical legacies of oppression and the contemporary struggles of Afro-descendant communities, highlighting their resilience and ongoing quest for liberation amidst systemic challenges. We explore different forms of survival, liberation-seeking actions amid resistance to slavery during the colonial period (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries), and the cumulative networks of interconnected communities that contributed to the construction of the nation-state—one that responded to these contributions via the geopolitics of marginalization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Coronel and Cadahia 2018).

Maroon Methodologies

From the perspective of Afro-Ecuadorian scholars, marronage comprises a set of epistemologies that African descendants developed empirically throughout the diaspora to enable the survival and creation

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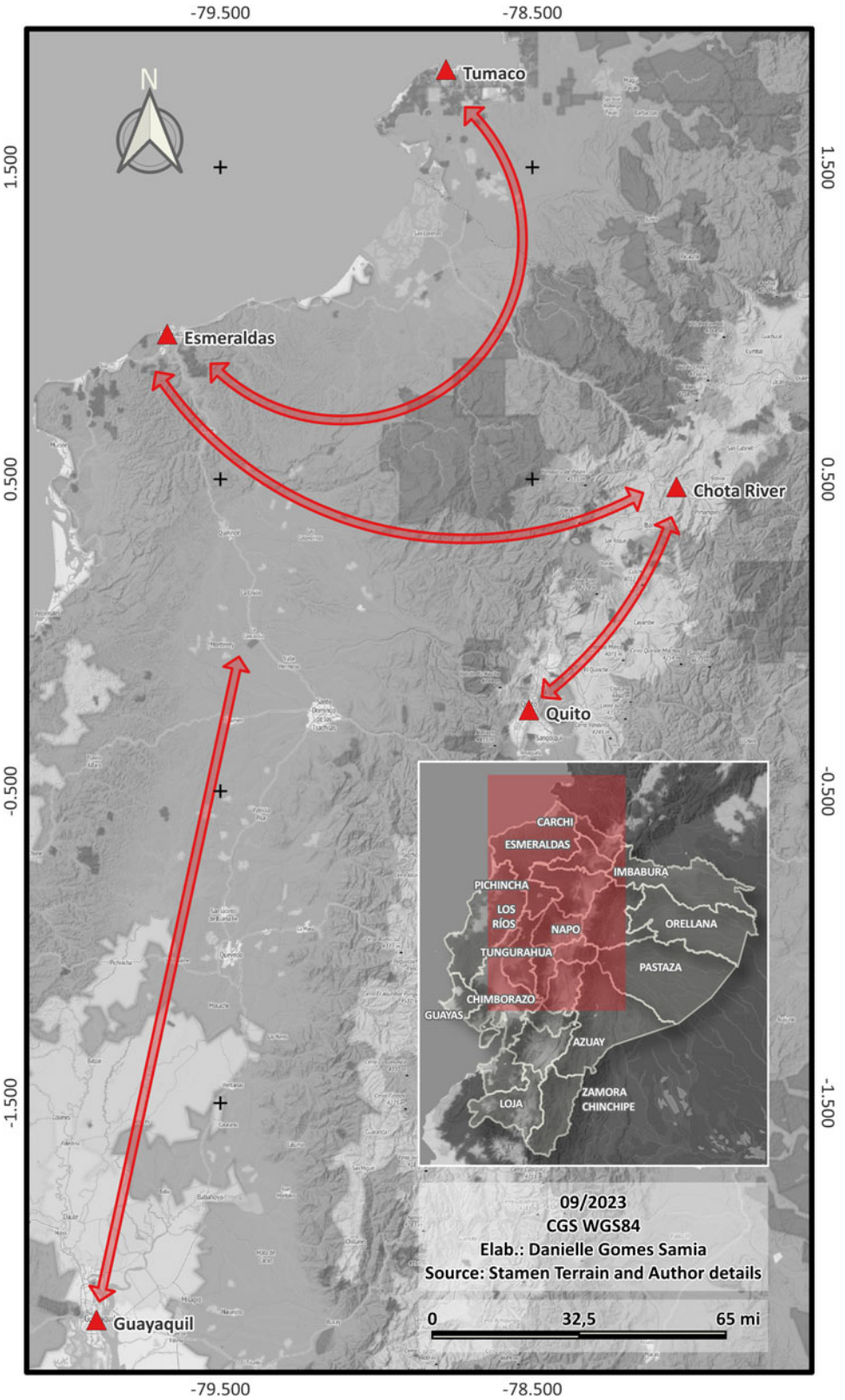

Figure 1. Chota Valley, Esmeraldas, Guayaquil, and Quito locations and their historical interactions. (Color online)

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of communities using organizational skills beyond mere creativity and occasional escape—instead encompassing forms of negotiation, appropriation, and transformation that manifest from ancestral geography to the very re-existence of the being (Balanzátegui et al. 2021; García Salazar 2020; León Castro 2015). In this sense, resistance incorporates more than disconnected acts of rejection or rebellion: it includes concealed, everyday forms of defiance to violence (Baschet 2019). These actions range from surviving the violent transatlantic slave trade to refusing tasks imposed by a given political system. Responses and strategies to violence, ranging from threat to extermination, go beyond the physical and may include acts that can manifest themselves in both movement and immobility. Resistance may be divided into (passive/stillness) gradual actions within the context of oppression that yield progressive results and (active/movement) struggles to transform reality with immediate results (Žižek 2009). Weik (2012) defines four main categories of anti-enslavement actions: (1) environmental accommodation/adaptation, (2) collaboration among actors and communities and interethnic cooperation, (3) autonomy by acts such as developing more independent means of subsistence or buying one's freedom, and (4) militant approaches in the form of escape and revolt. Furthermore, as Dunnavant (2021) explains, freedom can be defined as the politics of movement, in which enslaved people experienced certain forms of freedom, or "semi-freedom," until they could escape and create a new identity as a Maroon. These actions do not always follow a linear progression and cannot be understood in isolation. Instead, they should be seen as interconnected components of a more widespread system—marronage—that operates in a comprehensive, complementary mode.

In Ecuador, as in several parts of Latin America, the documentary record related to Maroon communities provides an incomplete version of their history; therefore, it is necessary to explore this complex system through a multiscalar and interdisciplinary approach (Balanzátegui et al. 2021; Mantilla Oliveros 2022). The lack of earlier research on African Diaspora archaeology in Ecuador requires a historical and heritage mapping of sites with memories of slavery and resistance (Chalá Mosquera et al. 2023). Using methods of historical archaeology, political geography, and the revitalization of oral traditions, we explored the landscape comprising the interactions of Afro-descendant populations between the Chota Valley, Esmeraldas, and Guayaquil. We carried out our analysis of the historical construction of marronage in Ecuador using an asynchronous approach, meaning we examined events and phenomena that occurred at varying historical moments. The practice of social archaeology with descendant communities appeals to the "humanism of the social scientist." Archaeological research must be "governed by the diachronic and synchronic integral character of humanity," seeking to "approach humanity, its essence, at any historical moment" (Olivo del Olmo 2016:369).

To capture the diversity of experiences and contexts related to marronage, we covered diverse geographical points, both in urban and rural landscapes, and did spatial analysis on a local, regional, and national scale (Patterson and Kelley 2000). We conducted research in two historical archives from Quito and Guayaquil, focusing on documents recording the lives of the enslaved population, city planning, and property disputes. This integrative analysis used geospatial data and critical analysis of historical documents, along with the recuperation of oral traditions, through which descendant communities are actively transmitting and practicing marronage (Dunnavant 2021:887).

In the following three sections, we present our analysis of material remains excavated from an Afro-descendant midden of the eighteenth-century Jesuit hacienda La Concepción and the mapping of three initial Maroon routes in the Chota Valley. In the outskirts of Guayaquil, we were able to identify and locate 58 sites of exploitation/resistance and *palenques* through the systematization of archival data. Lastly, we discuss the connections generated with Esmeraldas, one of Ecuador's largest Maroon settlements. Along the same lines, Rodriguez and colleagues (2024) use GIS models to investigate landscapes of marronage and trace patterns of fugitivity on the Caribbean island of Dominica (Wai'tukubuli). Reconstructing a network of anti-slavery actions within a context of multiple interregional connections resonates with Dunnavant's (2021:3) research on Maroon mobility in the Caribbean islands as a way of "navigating the colonial landscape and making life."

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Marronage in the Colonial Andean Haciendas of the Chota Valley

In the Chota Valley, located in Ecuador's northern Andes, the Afro-descendant population arrived by force between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, mainly to work in sugar and cattle production on eight Jesuit haciendas (Figure 1): La Concepción, Santa Lucía, Cuajara, Chamanal, and Pisquer along the Mira River; and Caldera, Carpuela, and Tumbabiro along the Chota River (Coronel Feijoo 1991). In 1767, the religious order was expelled from the Americas, and their properties were passed to the colonial state through the transitional institution Temporalidades, which sold the haciendas to private owners. These sales resulted in administrative changes, which worsened the living conditions of enslaved families and fragmented family life. This exploitation continued even after the 1852 abolition of enslavement under the *huasipungo* system, whereby relations of indentured labor and dependence were established (Bouisson 1997). Nonetheless, it was only through enactment of the Agrarian Reform in 1965 that most of the peasant population gained the right to land ownership.

Our study of Chota Valley marronage (sixteenth to the twentieth centuries) in the context of slave-owning haciendas as coloniality-bounded spaces involved five processes: (1) mapping the historical scenarios of enslavement in which colonial infrastructure undermined families and community organizations (Smith and Bassett 2016); (2) reconstructing the everyday life of resistance and revising the layout of the haciendas to reframe Maroon actions within the plantation setting (Battle-Baptiste 2011; Flewellen 2017); (3) exploring African-descendant ecologies of sustainability (Carney 2021; Mery and Balanzátegui 2023); (4) mapping movements of Maroon communities and individuals between haciendas, to *palenques*, and other escape scenarios (Fellows and Delle 2015; Smith and Bassett 2016); and (5) studying interethnic collaboration among Indigenous peoples, mestizo peasants, and Maroons.

Households in Jesuit Haciendas

Data Collection

This section presents the results from the 2013–2015 archaeological investigation of eighteenth-century households of African descendants (known as *rancherías* in the Jesuit and post-Jesuit haciendas) in the Jesuit hacienda of La Concepción (Chota Valley). In this archaeological survey, we mapped the buildings of the Jesuit hacienda, investigated the eighteenth-century inventories, and identified the households of African-descendant populations and their midden. We then excavated an eighteenth-century midden in the area of enslaved households. This feature measures 6 m in diameter (28.26 m^2) and has a depth of 80 cm to sterile soil. Five units, representing 28% of the midden, were excavated for a total of 8 m^2. We recovered around 7,000 ceramic sherds and 10,000 animal bones, among other materials.

Results

Enslaved workers were immersed in a rigorous disciplinary system, regulated to achieve maximum sugar production and the husbandry of sheep and bovids for the Jesuit enterprise (Coronel Feijoo 1991; Mintz 1986). During the eighteenth century, living conditions in Jesuit haciendas were neither ideal nor benevolent. A series of paternalistic actions and moral economies (Bryant 2014) defined food- rationing levels and demanded grueling working hours, with limited breaks for the enslaved to supplement their subsistence practices and other forms of domestic economics necessary for survival (Schwartz 1985). The cultivation of vegetables in gardens adjacent to the captives' homes appears in legal claims denouncing rights violations committed against the enslaved population in the Chota Valley (Mery and Balanzátegui 2023). The faunal remains in the midden demarcate processes of environmental adaptation, along with the development of household economies (Balanzátegui Moreno 2017; Mery and Balanzátegui 2023). A zooarchaeological analysis demonstrates a large presence of cows (*Bos taurus*), pigs (*Sus scrofa*), goats (Caprinae, *Capra hircus*), and horses (*Equus* sp.), along with the limited use of endemic species (Mery and Balanzátegui 2023). The composition of this assemblage, as in other archaeological faunal collections of colonial sites with African-descendant populations in the Andean region (Reitz 1988; Weaver et al. 2019), demonstrates dietary patterns based on beef rations and supplemented by the opportune hunting of small animals near their gardens (Crader 1990; Mery and Balanzátegui 2023; Wallman 2018).

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Ceramic remains from the same household midden indicate the development of African Diasporic cultural practices: they include a combination of appropriated elements from Spanish majolica and Indigenous styles, as well as the creation of local ceramics with symbols recognized in comparative research as part of African Diaspora repertories (Bakongo cosmogram, asterisks, smoking pipes, and others) that were distinct from local Indigenous iconography (Balanzátegui Moreno 2017). Based on the recuperation of oral traditions, cultural expressions, such as iconographic designs, have an important role in maintaining ancestral traditions from Africa while preserving the connection with resources in their new environments (Barbarita Lara, personal communication 2014).

Afro-Ecuadorian Maroon women who are part of CONAMUNE have suggested that the collective practice of marronage fostered attention to space creation within the boundaries of colonial geographies, such as plantations and the ungovernable environments of fugitivity, thereby granting communities autonomy in the Chota Valley. Inventories of the Chota Valley haciendas around 1767 when the Jesuits were expelled reveal that the religious order promoted the maintenance of complete nuclear families within each hacienda. Similarly, the consistency of the last names and historical references of family members distributed across different haciendas demonstrated extended kinship relationships in the Chota Valley (Inventario Colegio Maximo de Quito 1767, Archivo Aurelio Espinoza Polit [AAEP]; Fondo Esclavos, Caja 8, Exp. 26, year 1778, Archivo Nacional de Historia [ANH]). In the preindustrial colonial infrastructure of the Jesuit haciendas, their dependence on others in the area to produce sugar and increase livestock allowed some form of movement of the enslaved population around a landscape, seen as one from the outset. Based on the analysis of eighteenth-century accounts of the haciendas and the life of the enslaved population in the Chota Valley, the household economies of African-descendant families might have included the production and trade of vegetables, prepared food, and sugar products (Mery and Balanzátegui 2023; Fondo Esclavos, Caja 4, Exp. 4, year 1794, ANH).

The Routes of Ancestral Marronage with Afro-Ecuadorian Women

Enslavement by the Jesuits occurred at the same time as African-descendant populations living in Andean haciendas were attaining some human rights (Coronel Feijoo 1991). Subsequently, when the Jesuits were expelled, the African-descendant population raised a series of legal claims citing rights violations, notably those related to interpersonal violence, scarce food and clothing rationing, intrusion into cultivation areas designated for the Afro-descendant population, and family separations caused by the divisions of haciendas (Mery and Balanzátegui 2023). It was at this time that other forms of resistance that had been brewing since the establishment of the Jesuit haciendas came into the open, along with previously unknown rebellions organized at the community level and runaway actions making gradual advances toward the Esmeraldas *palenque* as the main escape point.

Data Collection

Our initial exploration of mid-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Maroon routes led by women of African descent began at the National Archives of Ecuador (*Fondo Esclavos* and *Fondo Haciendas*, ANH; Balanzátegui et al. 2021). In earlier research, Chaves (2000) uncovered a series of anti-slavery strategies led by Afro-descendant women and their families in the Chota Valley and the "complex network that enslaved women drew upon in their fight for the legal recognition of their honor and control over their lives" (Bryant 2014:118). Based on this historical research, a collaboration was started between the Latin American Historical Archaeology Lab (University of Massachusetts, Boston) and the National Coordinator of Black Women-Carchi (Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Negras-Carchi). This investigation involved participatory mapping and recovery of oral traditions of Afro-Ecuadorian women relating to the roots of Maroon women in the Chota Valley (Young and Gilmore 2013). In 2022, we registered three routes that asserted the ancestral control of Maroon women over this territory (Figure 2). One of our partners in this project, Barbarita Lara, conducts this research through her positionality as a self-recognized Maroon and a CONAMUNE-C leader and from her former economic experience as gatherer and trader of *churos* (native snails) endemic to the Chota Valley landscape.

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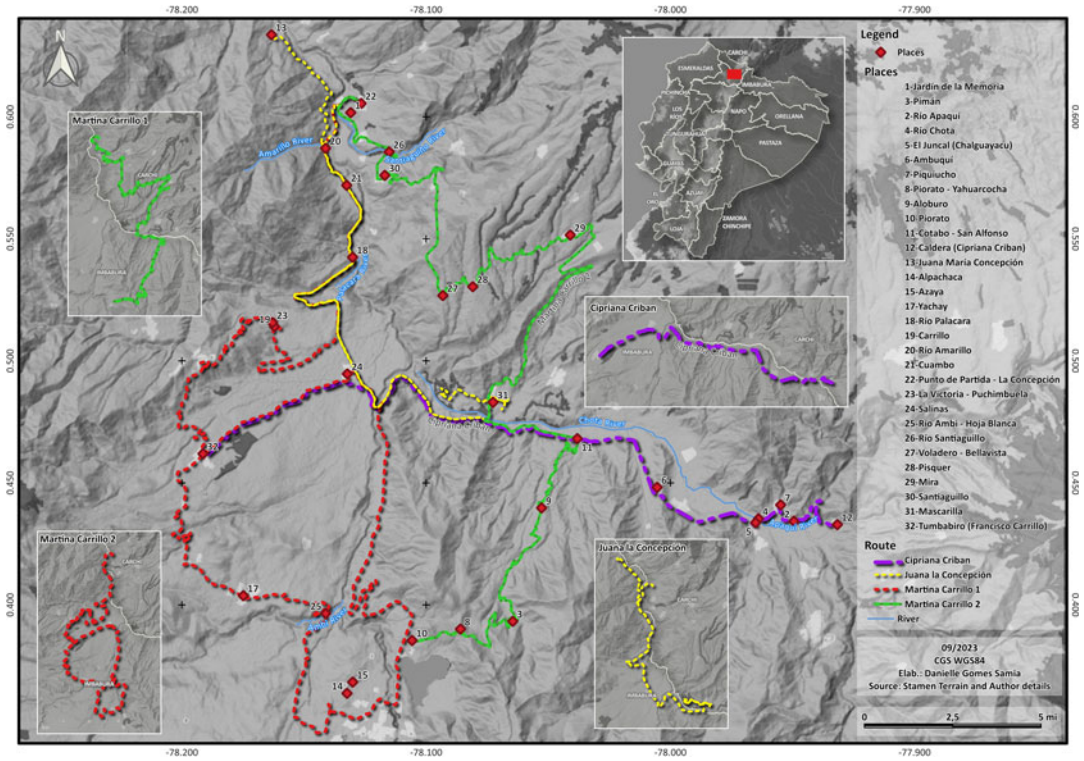

Figure 2. Participatory mapping of Maroon women's routes in Chota Valley, 2022. (Color online)

During the early stage of the investigation and based on dialogue with Barbarita Lara (CONAMUNE-C), the project reimagined the paths taken by the ancestral Maroons, considering the limitations of the documents recording their escapes, uprisings, and forms of self-liberation. As a second step, the project reviewed three legal cases involving the self-purchase of freedom, revolts, and escape in Chota Valley post-Jesuit haciendas. These documents included testimonies of Afro-descendant individuals, Indigenous and mestizo hacienda workers, criollo owners (American-born Spanish descendants), and White-mestizo hacienda administrators. These legal cases record tensions in the post-Jesuit context regarding the Maroon experiences of Martina Carrillo, Juana Maria La Concepción, and Cipriana Cribán. In the final stage of participatory mapping we (1) reestablished connections with Black Maroon women in Chota Valley on the basis of their collective memory of their ancestors; (2) walked through suggested routes revitalized by the memories of the descendants to establish possible paths of escape; and (3) completed the untold stories of the ancestors from Barbarita's and other women's memories, based on their traditional control of the territory. The collected information included recognized plants and animals, geographical features, and possible refuges.

Results

Martina Carrillo, a Maroon woman, escaped with four other women and two men from the hacienda La Concepción to colonial Quito to denounce the mistreatment, lack of basic services, and violation of human rights endured at the hands of the property's administrator (Fondo Esclavos, Caja 8, Exp. 26-year 1778, ANH). Two possible routes, marked in green and red on Figure 2, were reconstructed to preserve the memories of Carrillo.

Cipriana Cribán was a Maroon woman who lived in the hacienda La Caldera. In the eighteenth century she was arrested and accused of illicit trade, concubinage, and other offenses while attempting to buy her freedom; she was confined to prison and later to a hospice. According to one of the

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documents drafted by her legal intermediary, Cipriana responded to these accusations by arguing that the system of enslavement was an imposition on her humanity and was contradictory to her natural right to freedom. Her story included elements of social mobility, negotiating living conditions for herself and her community, the control of hacienda space, adaptation processes through the development of domestic economies, and planning processes of escape and self-liberation (Fondo Esclavos, Caja 4, Exp. 4, year 1794, ANH). The route connecting La Caldera with the Martina Carrillo Route was named Ruta Cipriana Cribán in her honor (it is in purple in Figure 2).

Fugitivity for the Chota Valley Afro-descendant population required community planning and organization, including establishing internal strategies for escape planning both within and between haciendas (Balanzátegui et al. 2023). The landscape of the Chota Valley echoes Smith and Bassett's (2016) investigation, which showed that gullies and caves in the context of the Barbadian plantation settings became liminal spaces where, through collaboration and cooperation between enslaved people of different estates, the construction of a deep social network was generated and runaway actions were developed.

The Malbucho Road, in yellow in Figure 2, was traditionally used by communities of African descent to move between the Chota Valley and Esmeraldas. The road connects the municipalities of Ibarra–La Concepción–Quajara–Malbucho–San Lorenzo. At this time, the Maroon routes project has advanced from La Concepción to Quajara. A recent collaboration with the Center of Africa and Afro-America (Universidad Intercultural de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas, Amawtay Wasi) continued the route to Malbucho and recovered a series of references to Indigenous settlements and descendant people moving in the direction of San Lorenzo (Chalá Mosquera et al. 2023; Mery et al. 2023). One document that recounts the escape of the African-descendant population from Quajara to La Concepción to Esmeraldas describes the story of a group of nine Maroons, including women, men, and children, who escaped in the direction of Esmeraldas and took refuge near Quajara before being captured by the colonial militia. One of the nine was 11-year-old Juana María La Concepción, after whom the route is named; she was able to escape in the direction to Esmeraldas (Fondo Esclavos, Caja 21, Exp. 7, years 1815–1819, ANH). Gradual advances to Esmeraldas, including the establishment of temporary escape points, showcase a complex network of relationships with Indigenous settlements and communities on other haciendas by the eighteenth century. This area was likely perceived by the colonial authorities as inhospitable and sparsely inhabited. The connection of the Chota, Mira, and Santiago Cayapas Rivers enabled moving along the hydrographic route to the northern *palenque*. The Chota *palenque* was established in 1810 (Chalá Cruz 2006) for the communities from the haciendas adjacent to the Chota River.

In conclusion, the mapping of these three Maroon routes recognizes the active intervention of Afro-Ecuadorian women in their processes of adaptation and their in-depth knowledge of the ancestral territory of the Chota Valley and its connections with Esmeraldas, Quito, and Ibarra. Maroon women were escaping, rebelling, and transmitting knowledge based on control of their landscape. The places where there were productive and reproductive economies formed the basis of an extensive support network that made interregional marronage possible. According to Barbarita Lara (personal communication 2023), these routes demonstrate the transmission of knowledge concerning cooperation and solidarity between Black, Indigenous, and mestizo women from different communities in former colonial haciendas.

Antislavery Actions in Colonial Guayaquil

The colonial city of Guayaquil has been an important commercial geographic location since the sixteenth century, well known for its prominent activity in shipbuilding and the export of wood to Lima (Lizárraga 1916:47–48; Sáenz 2009:83). Its port also played a crucial role in connecting the coast with Quito, facilitating the transportation of goods and people along the Guayas River (Lizárraga 1916:48). The conquistadores initially settled on the Daule River, facilitating trade and the movement of the Afro-descendant population to Quito, Popayán, and Callao. Baltazar de Terranova, a free Black man, participated in the conquest, marking the entry into the territories from this port (Bryant 2014; Vázquez de Espinosa 1629). The trade included raw materials such as

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cocoa and other products like rigging, indigo, coffee, fine woods, sarsaparilla, tobacco, tar, and sugar destined for Mexico, Central America, Peru, and Chile (Avilés Pino et al. 2006:20), alongside formal and informal transactions of enslaved individuals. Despite colonial regulations and restrictions, Black settlements engaged in subsistence activities and trade in the region during the seventeenth century (Chávez Franco 1944; Rueda Novoa 2001:15).

During the eighteenth century, the urban African-descendant population actively participated in the port economy. Their social alliances originated from active engagement in brotherhoods and crossing the lines of *mestizaje,* which endorsed social and economic mobility, as in other cities in the Spanish colonies (Cope 1994; Lewis 2003). Urban Black intellectuals supported the campaigns for independence (1830), promoted the abolition of slavery (1852), and later participated in the 1895 liberal revolution led by former president Eloy Alfaro (Antón Sánchez 2012:16). In the twentieth century, the African-descendant local population declined, and the number of migrants from Esmeraldas grew, which still needs to be investigated.

Based on an analysis of sixteenth- to nineteenth-century historical accounts of the urban Black population and historical maps of the colonial city (Croquis 1770–Paulus Minguet; Croquis 1858–Manuel Villavicencio; Plano del 1772–García y Pizarro), Delgado Vernaza (2023:142–143) has written about their struggles in their daily lives, urban working settings, and *palenques*. Nevertheless, locating escape routes and *palenques* associated with Guayaquil remains challenging.

Garay Arellano (2010) classified and mapped four levels of resistance by the enslaved population to colonial systems of oppression. The first level deals with the forced displacement of Black communities struggling to survive away from their homes and the different forms used to sustain their survival; this can be explained as the act of being alive. The second level reflects their struggle to maintain their identity through the transmission of knowledge and cultural persistence in the face of inhumane conditions of exploitation. The third level points to subtle resistances while remaining enslaved and sustaining the illusion of prolonged freedom under domination, such as acts of sabotage or freed individuals remaining at home to still work as domestic laborers. The fourth level, under the formation of *palenques*, describes escape strategies and reconstructing a new society amid colonial oppression (Delgado Vernaza 2023).

Data Collection

In 2022, based on references from secondary literature on Guayaquil's history and the indexes of the archival collections regarding the enslaved population of Guayaquil and its surroundings (provinces of Guayas and Los Rios), 40 documents were selected for further analysis from the National Archives of Ecuador—Fondo Esclavos and the Municipal Archives of Guayaquil. The registered variables included (1) the archival name of the document; (2) reference to names, last names, age and gender, group or family of the enslaved population, or general information regarding the individuals; (3) date of the event; (4) geographical locations; (5) form of oppression; (6) description of the antislavery action; and (7) the level of resistance. These places of resistance and oppression were located based on spatial references within the documents that were then corroborated with existing oral tradition. The resulting maps, developed for each century—thereby yielding an overarching depiction of long-term phenomena in the urban landscape of Guayaquil—offer a multidimensional perspective on the experience of slavery and resistance in the city. However, this project also underscores the ongoing need for broader, deeper research to address the complexities and lasting impact of slavery and the complex system of marronage in Guayaquil.

Results

Fifty-eight historical sites from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century were identified based on archival research; Figure 3 displays additional locations where there were intersections between sites of oppression and resistance. The geographical information was classified into areas (polygons) and sites (points) where colonial exploitation and resistance occurred. The areas marked by a red polygon were defined as settings having simultaneous characteristics of colonial oppression and actions of resistance.

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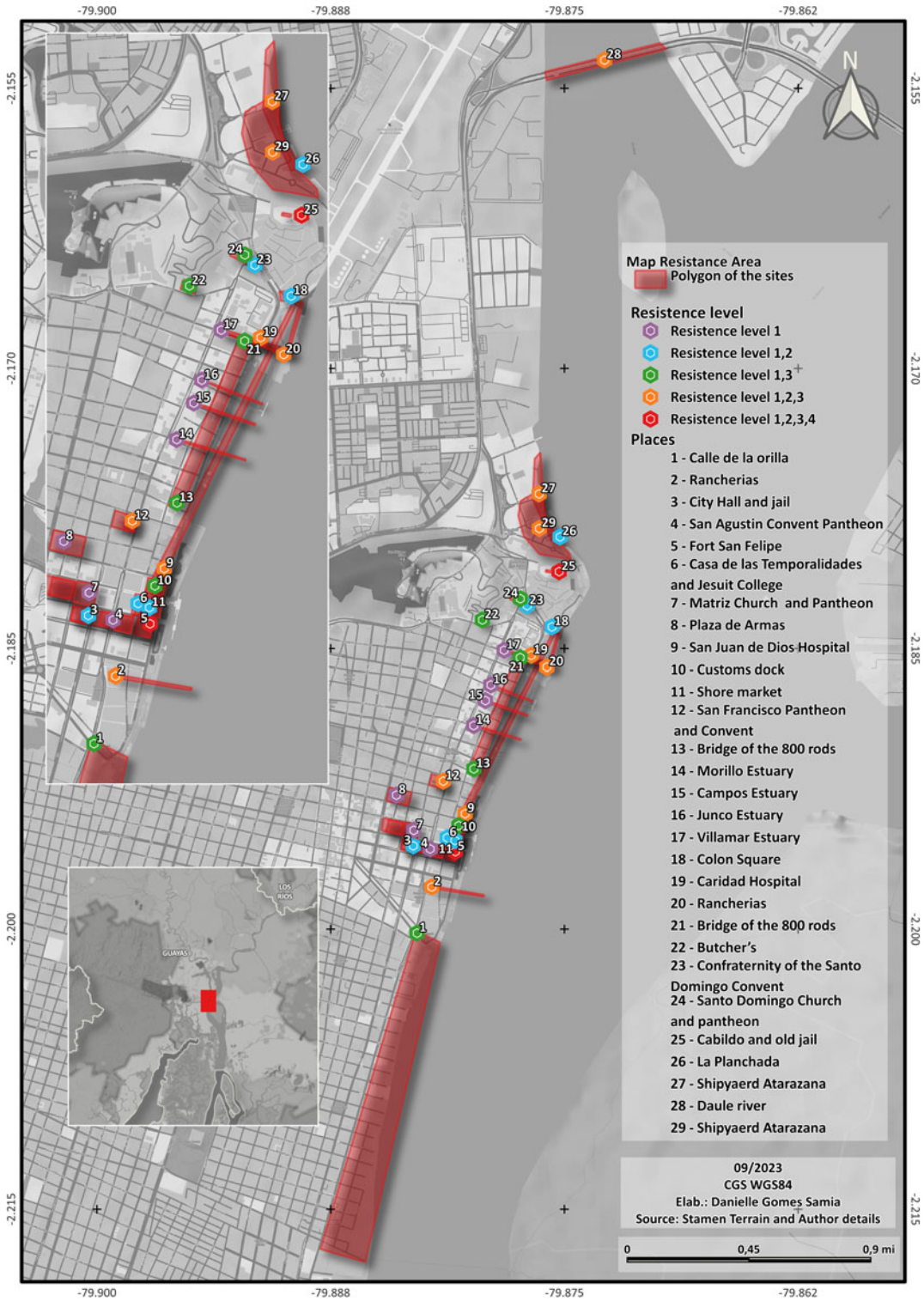

Figure 3. Areas of oppression and resistance in the colonial city of Guayaquil (sixteenth to the nineteenth century). (Color online)

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Level 1 (purple) represents initial forms of resistance within the context of kidnapping and forced migration. The case of Manuel Bozo illustrates two levels of antislavery actions, during the context of forced kidnapping in the intra-American slave trade (Laviana Cuetos 1982). He was a mulatto (Black and Spanish mixed race) who fled and voluntarily supported corsairs in the seventeenth century, guiding pirates to attack the city of Guayaquil (González Suárez 1890:330–331). Although initially considered a collaborator of the pirates, he embodied a form of defiance against the oppressive system that had subjected him to enslavement. This is a poorly documented case that nevertheless allows us access to the feelings and desire to escape oppression, which presents two sides of suffering during the slave trade.

Level 2 (light blue) includes cultural manifestations in the form of Black organizations and whole communities actively participating in the Catholic Church, as exemplified by brotherhoods in colonial Guayaquil (City Council Book of July 12, 1653), such as the Brotherhood of Santo Domingo in 1574 (point 23 on the map) in which enslaved and free Blacks interacted (Arias 2006). In these locations, where the captives could work free of slaveowners' surveillance, the congregation or brotherhood served to release the tensions of forced labor. In comparable cases in other parts of Latin America, the interaction between church and brotherhoods has been directly connected to preserving African Diaspora rituality, which also fostered the organization of revolts and rebellions (Reis 1993; Sweet 2003).

Level 3 (green) comprises forms of resisting slavery with some form of apparent freedom, such as the case of María Chiquinquirá, who defied the limits imposed by urban colonialism in eighteenth-century Guayaquil (Chaves 2001). After moving in with the elite Cepeda family, Chiquinquirá had a daughter with a free mulatto tailor. Based on her mother's self-manumission inheritance, Chiquinquirá advocated for her and her daughter's freedom, filing a lawsuit against Presbyter Cepeda (Chaves 2001). Chiquinquirá and her daughter struggled for liberation within an environment of prolonged apparent freedom but that was still under colonial rule, illustrating the persistence of resistance even in adverse conditions. Actions toward liberation represented a challenge to the colonial slave system, demonstrating the growing strength of the anti-slavery movement initiated by the urban Black population.

Level 4 (orange) refers to the possibility of escaping from or rebelling against the different forms of oppression, of seeking to transform the power structures of oppression, and of creating other forms of living outside colonial-bounded landscapes (Dunnavant et al. 2023; Sayers et al. 2007). This study has identified escape routes and at least one *palenque* related to Guayaquil, El Palmar (Chávez, quoted in Delgado Vernaza 2023).

The connection between Guayaquil and Esmeraldas during the colonial period is further revealed in the Maroon settlements shown in level 4. The torrential rivers like the Esmeraldas River and the Babahoyo River in Guayaquil created a challenging hydrography that increased the chances of shipwrecks of vessels transporting enslaved people (Alsedo y Herrera 1879). Shipwreck survivors might have reached the shore, fostering a landscape of fugitivity along coastal rivers.

Another illustration of these regional relationships between Maroon leaders is the story of Andrés Mangache or Maganche, an African-descendant enslaved person who traveled from Spain to Peru. Although we lack details about his age, slave owner, or African ethnic group, according to the *Geographic Dictionary of the Indies* (García Salazar 2020:53–54), he is connected to the region of Zambos in Guayaquil and the Daule River. Andrés Mangache and Alonso de Illescas, leaders of "the Illescas" and "the Mangaches" Maroon communities of the Zambos in Esmeraldas and Guayaquil, respectively, led the resistance against Spanish authorities and negotiated the legitimacy and recognition of the Republic of the Zambos (García Salazar 2020). *Palenques* like El Palmar and El Zapotal might also be part of regional connections between Esmeraldas and Guayaquil, forming a complex of Maroon settlements on the coast. These territories that were difficult to access and control were the sites of the struggle for freedom in both regions, demonstrating how this interconnected geography became a hub of Afro-descendant resistance. It is also worth noting that Tardieu (2006) mentions that Alonso de Illescas ordered the death of Andrés Mangache. This remains part of the story that needs further research. Nonetheless, the internal dispute for control over the Maroon settlements demonstrates that

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the sociopolitical organization of the coastal *palenques* represented structured units of regional advancement, posing a risk to the colonial organization of the territory.

These multiple levels demonstrate a network of different axes of resistance happening simultaneously, confirming that antislavery actions cannot be considered in isolation. The classification of these levels in colonial Guayaquil can be seen as a mosaic, where each piece is a case of exploitation that ultimately outlines forms of bearing under and acting against slavery. Furthermore, the anthropological and geographical analysis of long-term phenomena shows how processes of exploitation and resistance left an indelible mark on Guayaquil's urban and rural landscape to the present day. Based on archaeological anthropology (Olivo del Olmo 2016), this research has initiated a discussion regarding the transformation of Guayaquil's urban and rural areas from the colonial period onward. The urban landscape of Guayaquil demonstrates the persistence of historical patterns of rationalized geographies (Campoalegre Septien 2021:82) in the outskirts of the city where the enslaved were settled, isolated from colonizers on their arrival (Delgado Vernaza 2023:144–145). Thus, this interdisciplinary study of Black resistance in colonial Guayaquil enriches our understanding of the history and social dynamics of the region, providing unique perspectives on struggles for justice and equity that resonate with a lengthy emancipation process. It is essential to continue researching and mapping these phenomena to build a more inclusive and collective historical narrative of Guayaquil.

Esmeraldas: Reflection from the *Palenques*

The province of Esmeraldas as a *palenque* and refuge for Maroons in early marronage in America has scarcely been explored from an archaeological perspective (León Castro 2015:33). An exploration of its history enables us to delve into the interregional dynamics of marronage vis-à-vis the Chota Valley and Guayaquil: this approach is essential to viewing marronage as a structured system, rather than as isolated acts of resistance. This section considers the connections discussed earlier and expands on the transformation of the Maroon landscape into the borderland of survival and modern violence.

The landscape of Esmeraldas, on the northwest coast of Equador, was marked by dense jungles that the colonizers found difficult to access; this facilitated their use as Maroon refuges (Espinoza Soriano 1999; Estupiñán Tello 1967). In 1545, a ship carrying approximately two dozen enslaved individuals from Panama to Callao (Peru) was shipwrecked in this region (Tardieu 2012). The fugitive population moved into the interior of the tropical forest, which was inhabited by the Indigenous populations of Niguas and Atacames, with whom they formed alliances and negotiated territorial control of the province (Cabello Balboa 1945 [1583]; Tardieu 2012).

Esmeraldas was a desired route for the intra-American slave trade to Ecuador and Peru, as well as to the gold mines of the Popayán and Chocó (Colombia). This region is known for its complex relationship with the Spanish Crown and the tension it generated within the colonial system because of the challenge presented by the República de Zambos (Cabello Balboa 1945 [1583]). According to Tardieu (2006), engaging in political and economic negotiations with the crown strengthened Esmeraldas's resistance and autonomy. The leaders of the República de Zambos managed to negotiate an agreement with the Spaniards in Quito; they are depicted in a famous painting titled *The Three Mulattoes of Esmeraldas* (1599), currently housed in the Prado Museum in Madrid. In the eighteenth century, the Maroons negotiated with the authorities of the Audiencia de Quito for recognition of their control over the province; subsequently, the area attracted more runaway populations from different points of colonial Ecuador and southwest Colombia (Robles 2005; Tardieu 2012). A network of interregional communication was strengthened between African descendants in the cities of Quito and Ibarra and the haciendas of the highlands, particularly in the Chota Valley through the aforementioned Malbucho Road, the mines of Popayán and Chocó (southwestern Colombia), coastal towns and cities such as Guayaquil, and the Maroons of Esmeraldas (Robles 2005; Rueda Novoa 2001).

Based on the information presented here on the Maroon routes in the Chota Valley, enslaved peoples, freed women and men, and Maroons shared the ideal of achieving freedom. Occasionally, they managed to build escape routes by using colonial road infrastructure. Better access to *palenques* might have facilitated the development of revolts and runaway actions in urban settings and haciendas (Bryant 2014). For instance, García Salazar (2020:55–56) writes about the sixteenth-century movement

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of a Maroon group from Esmeraldas to the province of Los Rios in the direction of Guayaquil to form a *palenque* for the enslaved population of Guayaquil. Later in the seventeenth century, the *palenque* El Palmar near Guayaquil appears in historical accounts as part of this Maroon settlement network, confirmed by a possible interaction between the Illescas and the Mangaches, communities connected through rivers. The role of the nineteenth-century *palenque* of Chota in the Chota Valley, still a living expression of freedom and a Maroon settlement for haciendas closer to the Chota River, still awaits investigation (Chalá Cruz 2006; Figures 1 and 2).

The independence campaigns in Ecuador also led the African-descendant population to organize and achieve freedom collectively by joining the Independentistas (Independence Army; Figueroa 2022). However, during the rise of the Ecuadorian Republic in the nineteenth century, criollo elites feared that African descendants could organize revolts, buy their freedom, or escape. In this atmosphere, the Afro-descendant population was portrayed through the imagery of fear. According to Rahier (1998), discourses about this population in Esmeraldas were imbued with racial discrimination rooted in fear, relativistic confinement to savagery, and the rhetoric of the primitive. The desire to contain the Afro-descendant population within the order of a White-mestizo society spurred the enactment of criminal laws reflecting institutionalized racism (Rahier 1998; Robles 2005).

Since the national administrative delimitation of modern Ecuador in 1830, the province of Esmeraldas has remained isolated and was later shaped by the extractive exploitation of timber, oil, and mining and accompanying violence (Figueroa 2022). Colombia and Ecuador have established geographical and imagined borders in this region, functioning as checkpoints to safeguard national integrity while Esmeraldas remains beyond national control. Currently, in the ancestral territory of Esmeraldas and Tumaco (present-day Colombia), African descendants do not own land and suffer forced migration to other provinces of Ecuador and Colombia. According to Antón Sánchez (2014:62), timber extractivism increased the interregional migration of African-descendant families from Esmeraldas to Guayaquil during the 1950s and 1960s (Figure 1).

Finally, the notion of a geographical border is limited not only to its administrative elements but also encompasses political, social, and economic isolation from the Ecuadorian nation-state configuration. Thus, the archaeological research in this region demands the recognition of Maroon resistance as much as identifying the material heritage of Black Republicans during the Guerra de Concha (Battle of Concha, 1913–1916). The organized Black army of Esmeraldas fought in this battle in defense of the liberal movement in Ecuador, motivated by the liberal movement of former president Eloy Alfaro. The official historical narrative of Ecuador has silenced their participation in this battle and their role as active leaders of this liberal revolution (Figueroa 2022). The exploration of these events from an archaeological perspective will establish a starting point for understanding the national political organization of the African-descendant population and their contribution to the situated universalism that promoted human and civil rights for all Ecuadorians in the early twentieth century.

Final Remarks

Navarrete's (2001) archaeological study of the African diaspora in Venezuela characterizes marronage as a form of African-descendant resistance to escape enslavement and regain control over their destinies. The ancestral legacy of marronage in Ecuador has unified the cultural and political struggles of the Afro-Ecuadorian people since the colonial period at different historical and geographical points. Through this multiscale analysis of different forms of resistance at various levels and their interconnection, this article initiates a conversation about marronage as a sociopolitical formation where complex and diverse strategies used by both the enslaved and Maroon populations to face colonial oppression transformed the configuration of colonial territories.

For instance, the cases of Cipriana Cribán in the Chota Valley and María Chiquinquirá in Guayaquil demonstrate comparable actions of manumission in the household setting of cities and haciendas. Community-building actions in the context of *rancherías*, churches, and brotherhoods also demonstrate parallel forms of resistance within the system of enslavement. This standpoint resonates with Mantilla Oliveros's (2022) archaeological study of marronage in Palenque de San Basilio (Colombia), serving as a metaphor for healing the wounds of slavery and erecting communal spaces of care.

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Future research should investigate the connections among the *palenques* of Esmeraldas, Guayaquil, and Chota Valley. According to oral traditions, these regions are connected by kinship relationships; still needed is an historical explanation of the genealogies resulting from the constant movement of the African-descendant population (Olivo del Olmo 2023).

During the twenty-first century, the Chota Valley has changed significantly due to agricultural modernization and urban development (Antón Sánchez et al. 2022). Esmeraldas remains a region with a significant Afro-descendant population, influenced by the extraction of natural resources and local tourism. Guayaquil is now a smaller metropolis with a diversified economy. Although it retains its historic center, it has undergone significant changes brought about by urbanization and industrial development (Rojas Mosquera 2020). Movement between these places still occurs, particularly from Esmeraldas and the Chota Valley to urban centers; this migration since the mid-twentieth century was facilitated by a modern infrastructural system of highways and railroads. The Chota Valley has not yet experienced the same level of extractivism or violence on the scale of ethnocide as Esmeraldas, which faces a reality marked by state violence, binational conflicts, and the proliferation of criminal groups with interests in resource exploitation. This has transformed *palenquerismo* into an extreme mode of survival. Although Guayaquil experiences less interpersonal violence than does Esmeraldas, it still suffers from systemic violence that affects the Afro-descendant population.

In the ancestral territories of the Chota Valley and Esmeraldas, Afro-descendant community leaders have established a narrative whereby historical practices are promoted together with symbols of union, freedom, and the revitalization of the identity of marronage. However, despite 500 years of African inhabitation, the ancestral territories have not been officially recognized; instead, the provinces of Esmeraldas, Guayas, and the Chota Valley are places where marginalized communities of diverse ethnicities are still subject to historical silencing, isolation, and a lack of land-ownership recognition. There has been an ongoing hegemonic agenda, evidenced by historical narratives, the neglect of disaster response, and interpersonal violence in Esmeraldas and the Chota Valley that are comparable to the state abandonment of Black neighborhoods of the cities of Quito and Guayaquil. Nonetheless, the traditions of fugitivity and the continuing process of resistance are found within the history of Maroon women's networks; the interregional connections between Maroons and the creation of *palenques* opened spaces for physical and mental escape in this territory. The historical narratives of Maroons in Ecuador echo Odunyemi Agbelusi's (2024) accounts of liberated Africans in Sierra Leone in the context of a long process of liberation.

Collaborative forms of historical, archaeological, and ethnographic research into marronage in the Chota Valley have questioned the geographies of dispossession and surveillance under the colonial hacienda system. Black women reproduced a set of strategies to construct a community identity and control the North Andean landscape by tracing escape routes and connecting haciendas. The preservation of a survival-oriented Maroon culture is a fundamental pillar in the existence of people of African descent in Ecuador, from reproduction to provisioning and care. Recounting the lives of enslaved people within the hacienda system also enables a holistic view of the Maroon population in Ecuador and how they combat exploitation today.

Finally, although the history of enslavement in the Spanish and English colonies differs, the institution of enslavement and its legacy still affect the lives of Black people in the Americas, Africa, and Europe. The history of Black political culture requires a transnational approach that considers the scenarios of the Middle Passage, the imposition of enslavement, the plantation setting, and the construction of modernity, among other factors. The historical archaeology of the Afro-Ecuadorian Maroon population in the northern Andean region must also be contextualized in the history of the Black Pacific and Black Atlantic. This interdisciplinary approach to Afro-Ecuadorian marronage is a necessary component in the discussion of official historical narratives. Studying this ancestral network of actions of resistance sheds light on contemporary realities and the persisting struggles of Afro-descendant communities in confronting violence.

Advances in this multiscalar and multisituated research, along with the work of Black grassroots organizations, scholars, and community leaders, should contribute to developing public policies and tangible actions in the realm of historical reparations. Moreover, this model to examine marronage

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has served as "a method of bearing witness to modes of resistance, struggle, freedom, and dignity passed down from enslaved ancestors to present communities of African-descended peoples fighting for liberation" (Brown-Vincent 2019:115).

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Competing Interests. The authors declare none.

Notes

1. In Esmeraldas, the rate of homicides increased 1,000% between 2020 and 2023. See https://www.planv.com.ec/historias/crimen-organizado/esmeraldas-alcanza-niveles-record-violencia-estas-son-100-ciudades, accessed October 2, 2024.
2. *Cimarronaje* and *palenquerismo* are defined as acts of liberation and the creation of freed communities outside the slavery system (Picozza 2022:11). In the article, the terms marronage, *cimarronaje,* and *palenquerismo* are used to describe the group of actions, forms of living, strategies, and even a philosophy of life toward liberation, while Maroon settlements, *palenques, quilombos, mocambos,* or *cumbes* represent places of liberation and autonomy (De Friedemann and Cross 1979:38). These places were also refuges of solidarity and sanctuary beyond state control (Sayers 2012).
3. Population Self-identification Results from the 2010 Census, CPV (Censo de Población y Vivienda 2001 and 2010). The results of the 2023 census have been challenged, because a reduction of 2.4% of the Afro-Ecuadorian population does not seem to reflect their actual representation in Ecuador.

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