

CACAO HACIENDAS IN CHORONÍ, VENEZUELA: UNDERSTANDING AND CONSERVING
HISTORIC CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

by

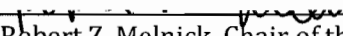
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A THESIS

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"Cacao Haciendas in Choroni, Venezuela: Understanding and Conserving Historic Cultural Landscapes," a thesis prepared by Ernestina R. Fuenmayor in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science degree in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program: Historic Preservation. This thesis has been approved and accepted by:



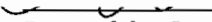
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HISTORIC CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

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The Cacao Haciendas have been an important element of the Venezuelan cultural heritage since the seventeenth century, especially the haciendas in Choroní. These historic agricultural landscapes have been threatened since the decline of agriculture and the rise of the oil economy in the country, beginning in the 1930s. In Choroní, agriculture was replaced by tourism and fishing, creating a need for housing and hotels in the area that were constructed in the agricultural spaces and destroyed the landscape heritage that has lasted almost 400 years. To understand and analyze these sites, I studied three haciendas of the six remaining in Choroní, identifying the character-defining features that shaped these historic cultural landscapes and proposing a conservation plan for the remaining haciendas. The cultural landscape analysis and conservation plan are designed within the Venezuelan conservation heritage laws and the needs of the local society and culture in Choroní, building on parallel practices in the United States.

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To my grandfather Pedro Machado Rodríguez, for believing in Choroni

To the people that shaped Choroni's landscape

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION:
WHY CONSERVE CACAO HACIENDAS IN CHORONÍ?

Cultural landscapes are part of our everyday life; they are basically the consequence of human activity on planet earth.¹ Cultural landscapes can be found in cities or forests, can be designed gardens, agricultural fields, mining camps or even plazas in city centers. The challenges of conserving or preserving these sites come from their many layers of history, and how to understand, and in some cases decide, what is relevant to the landscape.² In this thesis the words “conservation” and “preservation” will be used inter-changeably, because what is known in the United States as *historic preservation* is internationally known as *heritage conservation*.

Agricultural and industrial landscapes are the most threatened spaces in Venezuela and through much of the world. This happens mainly as a result of the lack of knowledge of their inhabitants and leading authorities to recognize the importance of these places and the history they carry. Thousands of acres of agricultural areas close to the cities are being developed every year as population grows and city boundaries are pushed in response to these demands. New sources are created due to economical crises that can also affect the growth, or desertion, of certain areas. All of these events impact the cultural landscape from archeological artifacts, buildings, water canals, rivers, houses, crops, roads, to many other elements found on the landscape. They could tell the stories of their creators through analysis, conservation, and interpretation as part of our past. This thesis was written for

¹ Arnold Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick, eds., *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 6

future generations, to learn about their past, my past, and spread the knowledge that thousands of people left within Choroní's cacao haciendas.

The primary questions are: why is it necessary to conserve the cacao haciendas in Choroní? What is a cacao hacienda? Who were the creators of such places in Venezuela? There are probably more questions than answers, but in this thesis all of the above questions and more will be addressed. The purpose of this thesis is to better understand through detailed analysis the cacao haciendas in Choroní, Venezuela, to determine their character-defining features and to propose a conservation plan that can preserve these agricultural sites for future generations.

The big challenge for the study came from reading and interpreting a landscape from childhood with the more studied eyes of a preservationist trained in the University of Oregon. Tools such as the National Register Bulletin N°30 from the National Park Service *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscape*, were key to deciphering the components of the landscape, as well as to interpreting the elements found during the survey. The methodology used in the United States for understanding historic buildings and landscape was easily adapted to the haciendas landscape, even though the culture is different now, as are the climactic conditions. This bulletin also served as a filter to write the conservation plan for the haciendas.

The selection of this thesis topic was personal and was inspired by my own grandfather, Don Pedro Miguel Machado Rodríguez, who decided to invest in a cacao hacienda in 1940 in a small coastal Venezuelan town called Choroní. He was born in Zaraza, a town on the *Los Llanos* area (plains, open range), where there are neither mountains nor sea, nor cacao, only cattle ranches, but decided to move to an isolated town with an unpaved dangerous and narrow road, a place no one wanted to go. Everyone questioned his decision, suggesting that he should have invested in a commercial property in Caracas. Pedro Machado was part of a generation that was proud to call themselves *Agricultores* or farmers, today they called themselves businessmen or hacienda owners. However, 70 years later, Choroní is the premier tourist destination in Venezuela, and a highly desired vacation spot for European tourists. My grandfather died in 1973, and I never had the pleasure to meet him and ask him, why Choroní? Maybe, he was enchanted as the poet José Antonio Maitín was when he moved to a cacao hacienda in Choroní in the 1820s, after living in

London for many years, and who wrote the poem *El Hogar Campestre*³ (In the Home Country), explaining why Choróní over London, here are some excerpts:

Allí no hay bellos palacios,
ni dorados artesones,
ni estatuas en los salones
sobre rico pedestal
ni músicas exquisitas,
ni bulliciosos placeres,
ni artificio en las mujeres,
ni en los hombre vanidad;

Pero hay árboles copados,
que se mecen blandamente,
y un arroyo trasparente
con sus ondas de cristal
y una tórtola amorosa,
oculta en la selva umbría,
que se exhala al nacer el día,
su arrullo sentimental.

(...)

¡Oh valle ameno y frondoso,
que el sol temprano matiza,
cuyo arroyo se desliza
entre violas y azahar!

Contigo están mis amigos,
contigo están mis amores,
en ti mis dulces dolores
y mis placeres están.

(...)

(Translation by Garret Hongo and edited by Ernestina Fuenmayor)

Though these are not beautiful palaces
With golden-coffered ceilings
And parlor statues on rich pedestals,
Not raucous diversions with a music exquisite
Danced to by ornamented women and vain men,

A slow rocking with the breath of the day's birth
Nonetheless rolls through the giant canopy of these trees
And the crystalline waves of a transparent stream,
While, hidden in the forest shadows,
A turtledove makes its passionate call.

(...)

O, kind and verdant valley tinged by the newday sun,
Whose streams course through violas and azahar blooms,
With you are my lovers and my friends,
My earthly pleasures and my sorrows sweet!

(...)

Over the past 20 years, Choróní became nationally and internationally known as a tourist destination, doubling its population and changing its economy from mainly fishing and cacao-based to tourist-based. In past years, not only poems and songs have been written about this place. TV commercials, national and international movies have also been filmed there, and more publicity continues to attract people here.

However, what really attracted the conquistadors to this beautiful valley in the 1600s was the possibility of cultivating an American fruit called cacao or "the fruit of the Gods", from which Native Americans extracted a powder after drying the seeds on the sun

³ Real Academia Española, ed., *Antología de Poetas Hispano-Americanos: Cuba, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, Venezuela* (Madrid, Spain: Real Academia Española, 1893), 533.

and crushing them against a stone, that when mixed with water created a tasty liquid. Chocolate was a success in Europe during the eighteenth century and Choroni was the heart of cacao production in Venezuela during that time. Many haciendas were created during that period and live on today as our legacy. Nonetheless, the tourism that was once attracted to the shade of the large trees that protect the cacao plantation, the colonial architecture and the remoteness of Choroni, is also the major force of destruction of the green spaces. New hotels and housing for incoming tourists and workers is needed and the haciendas are being developed. Their numbers reduced from more than 30 during the past centuries to only six remaining to tell their stories.

Today Choroni's community, the next generation, the hacienda owners, and most importantly, the authorities need to understand the layers of history we are losing every time an old tree falls and a new house or hotel rises. The price being paid is very high, but with education, training and interpretation about the haciendas it is possible to conserve the haciendas for the next generations. It might take many years to see results from these changes, but our grandchildren will be ever grateful for living in a better earth than ours, if an effort is finally made. Preserving the cacao haciendas is not about protecting private property, conserving old trees or old buildings; it is about the future.

CHAPTER II

HACIENDAS OF THE VENEZUELAN ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Se las da de gran cacao y no llega ni a borra de café
(He thinks he is a big cacao and he is not even coffee dregs)⁴

THE HACIENDA

European settlement in the Americas created two different types of agrarian systems. In the north, the land was divided into medium-sized farms cultivated mainly by the owners and their families. To the south, in contrast, the main pattern was one of large aristocratic estates worked by landless workers or slaves. These estates were known in English and French as *plantations*, in Spanish as *haciendas*, and in Portuguese as *fazendas*. In Latin America, this traditional system of large estates, called the hacienda system, has survived to the present day. However, it has increasingly come to be seen as an obstacle to modernization.⁵ This chapter will explain the concept of the hacienda: its origin in America and in Venezuela, as well as different kinds of land uses, and the affect on the economy in the past and present day. The main agricultural products in Venezuelan haciendas will be discussed, as well as their processes and architecture.

The term *Hacienda* is oftentimes misused. The concept originated in Mexico and was there used in connection with various types of permanently assigned land grants. It was not until the seventeenth century that the term began to be used for a rural estate.

⁴ This is a saying in Venezuela. Big Cacaos or Grandes Cacaos were the name given to the elite cacao planters. Today this expression is still used for rich and influential people.

⁵ Robert Keith, ed., *Haciendas and Plantations in Latin American History* (New York, New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc, 1977), 1

Usually the hacienda denoted agricultural grants combined with harvest and livestock grants, creating an estate.⁶ In Venezuela, the term 'hacienda' is applied to "the vast plots of land used for crop production whilst 'Hato' is used for cattle ranches. In other Latin American countries, haciendas are called 'estancias'."⁷

Regardless, the meaning of hacienda involves more than real estate. As defined above, it usually describes a large estate, and this clearly refers in a social sense to an aristocratic or socio-economic status. The possession of haciendas was important in Latin American history. In an economic sense, on the other hand, the two terms are not exactly the same. The principal meaning of *estate* in English is "property," something that belongs to someone. A land estate could be, and usually is, no more than a sophisticated country residence surrounded by parks and gardens. The term Hacienda, on the other hand, derives from the Latin *facienda* that means "things to be done" and later was changed in Spanish to hacienda, translated as a profit-making or an income-producing enterprise.⁸

Haciendas were not always related to an agricultural enterprise. In the past in different regions of Latin America, there were lumbering haciendas, mining haciendas, and even glass-making haciendas. Also the treasury, which is the organization that collected the King's taxes and proved his income, was known as the *Real Hacienda* or Royal Hacienda. Today in many countries the department in charge of the treasury is called Hacienda. Overall, it is currently more accurate to call the agricultural haciendas 'large farms' or *latifundia* than 'great estates'. Although haciendas cannot simply be called large farms, they must be distinguished from small farms which were not always haciendas. This distinction cannot be done on the basis of size alone, since its value is not always directly proportionate to its size. The location of the hacienda can also influence its significance; e.g., large haciendas in remote areas may be worth less than smaller one close to the cities.⁹

Basically, the traditional hacienda is defined as these either an estate which belonged to a recognized member of privileged elite, or a commercial farm which provided

⁶ Philip Riley Bartholomew, "The Hacienda: its evolution and architecture in colonial New Mexico, 1598-1821" (PhD, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1983), 3.

⁷ Graziano Gasparini and Ermila Troconis de Veracoechea, *Venezuelan Haciendas*, trans. Anne Lafeber (Caracas Venezuela: Armitano Editores, 2000), 28

⁸ Keith, *Haciendas and Plantations in Latin American History*, 1

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-2

a sufficient income to support the prominent consumption and demonstrated aristocratic status. Preferably this income did not depend on the owner's direct involvement in the enterprise, because in the traditional perspective aristocrats were not expected to engage in manual labor or commercial activities. Aristocratic income was supposedly unearned income. This unwritten rule of aristocracy greatly influenced the development of Latin American society, but it was not strictly enforced. Therefore, members of the elite could earn money from government jobs. Wealthy landowners could hire administrator or *mayordomos*; however, this decreased their own incomes because they needed to be involved to a considerable extent in the overall management of their haciendas. The avoidance of manual labor generally remained a way to distinguish the elite from the masses. However, this concept changed during the twentieth century, when the middle class could afford haciendas, and these places became family owned and the ownership of the agricultural lands was not a distinguisher of aristocratic status. Therefore, the question of whether a farm was to be called a hacienda or not came to depend less on size, but instead on whether the owner and his/her family had to perform required physical labor themselves.¹⁰

In the diverse manifestations of rural architecture that emerged in Latin America during the colonial era, the hacienda has a fundamentally important position within one of the essential economic axes of Latin America. As a final expression of a singular economic system, the hacienda synthesizes diverse factors that then conform to the system, the characteristics of the physical environment, and the agricultural products. The hacienda also connects the agricultural experiences of the indigenous people with the Spaniards, forming a biological and cultural cross-breeding that extends from a hybrid society to the crops, permitting the coexistence of cotton, cacao and corn from America beside European wheat, African coffee and Asian sugar cane.¹¹

The Spaniards had to adapt to a very different geography and to a variety of produce. This adaptation produced a model which established a formal act of creation specifically for America (even though antecedents from Europe do not have a direct

¹⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹¹ Lorenzo Gonzalez Casas, "Las Haciendas en Venezuela: Territorio y Memoria Histórica," *Ciudades: Revista del Instituto Universitario de Urbanística de la Universidad de Valladolid* 4, Territorio y patrimonio (1998): 204, <http://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2241159> (accessed November 16, 2009)

connection to it). Perhaps because of this, the hacienda has been one of the least studied subjects in Latin American architecture, and paradoxically, only today has begun to get attention as it is gradually extinguished.¹²

Authors like Gisela Wobeser, for example, explains that the main characteristics of a hacienda system were 1) control over the natural resources of the area (land and water); 2) control over the force of labor; 3) dominance over the regional and local market.¹³

Each hacienda acts as an independent microcosm responding differently to its specific surroundings. In this way, it adjusts to the natural conditions, producing microclimate systems, creating specific vegetation around the built structures, and creating strong synergies with the surrounding landscape. On the other hand, the physical components were both fed by and limited by the resources in the local region. The walls of *bahareque*,¹⁴ adobe and tapia, and the roofs built with wood and cane are part of the solid, yet simple structure, constructed by techniques and native materials. The buildings are essentially waiting to return to the earth from where they came.¹⁵

The hacienda is like a flexible organism, capable of growing or shrinking depending on the geography or economy. It is a system and a site in continuous evolution, whose expression transforms depending on the needs of its inhabitants.¹⁶ Within this broad definition of the hacienda, there is room for a great deal of variation. Historically, the hacienda was not a particular kind of estate, which could be defined in abstract terms but rather could be any type of estate, as long as it belonged to an aristocrat and produced a satisfactory income. The hacienda had an impact, not only on the economy but also on society, and can be studied to learn the patterns of that society. The traditional agrarian structure of Latin America was essentially a stable organization, and was not altered in any fundamental way before the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Today, there are several

¹² Ibid., 204-205.

¹³ Gisela Wobeser, *La Formación de la Hacienda en la Época Colonial : El Uso de la Tierra y el Agua.*, 1st ed. (Mexico City, México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1983), 51

¹⁴ Daub and wattle system used by the Native American people in Latin America.

¹⁵ Gonzalez Casas, "Las Haciendas en Venezuela," 206

¹⁶ Ibid., 209

modern developments that have caused instability and change in the traditional system of the hacienda. The most obvious of these is the increased number of social groups seeking the successful redistribution of land and wealth. Another development has been the growth of the industrial sector of Latin American economies, especially in Venezuela with oil production, and the slow retreat in importance of the agricultural sector. Commercial control has shifted to new groups, and their wealth and power do not depend on the ownership of land, forcing the old landowning elite to diversify its interests to maintain their position. A third development is the speedy increase in direct foreign investment in Latin America, particularly into tourism, which has tended to introduce new and less sensitive elements to the environment and architecture into the local power structure, interfering with the adjustments needed to maintain stability. In the past, from a social and political point of view, the traditional agrarian system was able to perpetuate itself without much difficulty. Now it has become increasingly difficult to do so, especially with diversification of the economy.¹⁸

The most damaging development to the haciendas has been the growth of the power of the national government. To a large extent the traditional agrarian system depended on the limitation of power of the central government, and on the government's inability to intervene decisively in the affairs of the countryside in opposition to the interest of the land owners. The strong expansion of the role of the government in recent years, especially in Venezuela, has provided the state the power to intervene in rural areas that it never possessed before. This has fundamentally altered the balance of power, even where the predominance of large estates has endured. As a consequence, social and economic patterns are now being altered very rapidly and their influence will continue to be felt many years in the future.¹⁹

EARLY CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT ATTITUDES IN VENEZUELA

In the history of humanity, no other country founded so many towns, villages and cities in one territory, in a short period of time, and in such a regular and organized way as

¹⁷ Keith, *Haciendas and Plantations in Latin American History*, 2-3

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

did Spain during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This enterprise of conquest was not only “organized” and repeatable in its reticular urban form for the cities, but overall it was “organized” to follow precise legal rules dictated by the Spanish Crown (Figure 1).²⁰

The colonial process was undertaken by the Spanish Crown at the beginning, but it was not funded only by royal bureaucracy or the military. It was actually funded by individuals who recruited and financed their own forces, at their own risk through the *capitulaciones* or concessions given by the royalties. However, this individualized process was not disorganized as some might think. On the contrary it followed a central policy and precise rules dictated by the Royalty. These policies were used in America to ensure conformity throughout the settlements' incorporation of the new lands discovered in the Indies by the Spanish Crown. These rules applied equally to the governors and forefronts (first conquistadors), in addition to the content of the specific clauses in each *capitulación*.²¹



Figure 1. Viceroyalties of Spain in America during the colonial era. Source: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

²⁰ Allan R. Brewer-Carías, *La Ciudad Ordenada* (Caracas, Venezuela: Criteris Editorial, C.A., 2006), 53.

²¹ *Ibid.*

There were clear differences between the English and the Spanish colonial processes in America. Although in both cases individuals or independent groups were in charge through royal concessions at their own risk and venture, in the case of the Spanish conquest and colonization the process was quickly organized by the construction of cities or towns in the New World. The town planning was enclosed in specific legal Spanish policies, giving origin not only to the *Leyes de Indias* or “Laws of the Indies”²² or the group of laws dictated especially for the Indies or Americas, but also to a rational politico-territorial organization and hierarchy for the internal government in the New World that had not been seen in Spain before. This was very different than colonization in North American.²³

A few other concepts are important to comprehend the settlement process in Latin America. The fundamental legal title for the process of discovery, colonization and settlement was formalized in the *Capitulación* document. In contemporary terms, this process can be considered as a kind of land concession contract that the Crown granted to the chief of discovery expeditions. Its origin is medieval, a consequence of the *Reconquista*,²⁴ as an instrument to grant the conquistador the lands that were conquered. Basically, that America was conquered by people from Andalusia and Extremadura was a consequence of the postwar times of the Reconquista.²⁵

The Capitulaciones gave the conquistador the title of *Gobernador* and *Capitan General* (governor or similar position) of a specific area for its conquest, known as the *provincia* or province. Subsequently, the first politico-territorial institution that emerged in the New World, which was formalized, and successively integrated as a global territorial organization, was formed by *Virreinato* (viceroalties), *Audiencias*, and *Capitanías Generales*.

²² The Laws of the Indies or *Leyes de Indias* are the entire body of laws issued by the Spanish Crown for its American and Philippine possessions of its empire. They regulated social, political and economic life in these areas. Throughout the five hundred years of Spanish presence in these parts of the world, the laws were compiled several times, most notably in 1680 under Charles II in the *Recopilación de las Leyes de los Reynos de Indias* (Compilation of the Laws of the Kingdoms of the Indies).

²³ Brewer-Carías, *La Ciudad Ordenada*, 54

²⁴ The Spanish and Portuguese word for “Reconquest” in regards to the period of 800 years (710 to 1492) in the Middle Ages where the Iberian Peninsula was retaken from the Muslims.

²⁵ Brewer-Carías, *La Ciudad Ordenada*, 122

This political organization dramatically influenced today's cultural landscape because it defined the countries and boundaries that are mostly still in place.²⁶

Most of the towns founded in America by the Spanish were located in active existing Indian villages. In order to dominate the Native Americans, the Spanish employed a system called the *repartimiento* (partition or distribution) to partition the land between the conquistadors. This system was practiced in the Iberian Peninsula during the Reconquista period for cities and lands reconquered by the Christian Spaniards from the Reign of Castile. The private property of the settlers was consolidated by following conditions such as the edification of houses or working the land. In America, this system was adapted to re-distribution of Native Americans and used for the first time by Christopher Columbus. He distributed the natives as slaves among the conquistadores in exchange for their 'protection' so that they could benefit from the native people's labor.²⁷

Native Americans were initially considered free subordinates of the Spanish Crown. They were believed to be innocent individuals who should be treated as minors under tutelage, because of their assumed ignorance. With this approach, the repartimientos were created. The system included a kind of legal recognition of the indigenous land right, where the conquistadores were legal guardians of the Native American's possessions that required supervision by a Spaniard. Native's Land and people were *repartida* or distributed among the Spaniards.²⁸

In the *Recopilación de leyes de Indias* from 1680, it was ordered in a general statement that lands "owned" by Native Americans, either individuals or the community, including the areas with water and canals (acequias or another attribute which improved the land), should be reserved for the Natives' use first and that they should not be sold or alienated under any circumstances..²⁹

This attitude of the Spanish Crown, praised by many historians, did not translate into any real protection of Native Americans rights. Sadly, it appears to have been a mere

²⁶ Ibid., 54.

²⁷ Ibid., 113

²⁸ José Rafael Lovera, *Vida de Hacienda en Venezuela: Siglos XVIII al XX*, Historia (Caracas, Venezuela: Fundación Bigott, 2009), 31

²⁹ Ibid.

formality in many cases. Whether in the form of tutelage or forced repression or some other process, the indigenous peoples were stripped of their lands. Many complaints were filed by the Native Americans before the Crown, even formal statements on the *Real Cédula* were promulgated, but one way or another they lost their rights.³⁰ In towns like Choroní, this partition of the lands greatly modified the landscape, because the area given to the Indians was later formalized as a town, today Puerto Colombia.

The repartimiento preceded the *encomienda*, a system used in America until the late eighteenth century, when it was officially abolished. The *encomienda* was legally defined in 1503, and “consisted of a grant by the crown to a conquistador, soldier, official, or others of a specified number of Indians living in a particular area. The receiver of the grant, the *encomendero*, could exact tribute from the Indians in gold, in kind, or in [slave] labour and was required to protect them and instruct them in the Christian faith.”³¹ This was essentially a form of slavery. The *encomienda* did not include a grant of land; however, the *encomenderos* gained control of Indian lands and typically did not fulfill obligations to the Indians. The Law of Burgos (1512-13) and the New Law of the Indies (1542) were attempts by the Crown to end the severe abuses from the *encomenderos*.³²

The impetus for the *encomienda* was to meet the needs of the colonies’ early mining industry. However, with the abuses suffered under the *encomienda* system, and the diseases introduced by the Spaniards, the Native American population declined dramatically. With the loss of free labor, mining activities were replaced by agriculture. The newly conquered lands automatically belonged to the Spanish Crown. The *encomienda* system lost its effectiveness and was slowly replaced by the *hacienda* system of landed estates.³³ Most of the sites that started as *encomiendas* later became towns with *haciendas*.

The only way to own property individually during this time period was to mediate some kind of concession of the royal rights. There were four ways to obtain one of these transfers: the *repartimientos*, the *cédulas de gracia* or *merced*, the *ventas* (sell), and the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Encyclopædia Britannica, “Encomienda,” *Britannica Online Encyclopedia*, 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/186567/encomienda> (accessed November 22, 2009)

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

composiciones (composition). The repartimientos, as explained above, was usually exercised by the captain of the forefront conquistadores, however, the Audiencia (a kind of tribunal) were also given the right to distribute the lands and lots. The second way, the *cédulas de gracias*, was a concession given directly by the monarchy, as a reward for services rendered. As the name indicates, it was a kind of “thanks.” The third one consisted of a simple alienation, whereby the Crown would exchange a portion of land for a price paid by the buyer. Generally, this class of operation was related to the necessities of funds by the treasury. The last way, the *composiciones*, was a kind of indemnification where the land was given under certain conditions, without the need of any kind of title. This last type of land ownership permitted the creation of many *latifundia*.³⁴

The Settlement of Venezuela

The Hispanic period in Venezuela started with the third voyage of Christopher Columbus in 1498 when he landed at the mouth of the Orinoco River, in what is today the Venezuelan territory. Starting in 1514 to 1515 Spanish missionaries began to arrive on the coast. However, it was not until 1569 that cities began to be established and the settlements became more secure from native population violence.³⁵ The territory was founded initially for the creation of Indian towns with the doctrines' religious presence being added later. In 1680, when the *Recopilación de las leyes de los Reynos de Indias* was published (Recompilation of the Law of Indies), Venezuela was comprised of five provinces: Margarita, Caracas, Nueva Andalucía or Cumaná, Guayana and Maracaibo (Figure 2).³⁶

In contrast with other territories in Latin America that were under one or another viceroyalty, Venezuelan provinces in 1680 were divided: Guyana and Maracaibo were under the jurisdiction of the *Real Audiencia de Santa Fe* (what is today Colombia) as part of the *Virreinato de Perú* (Viceroyalty of Peru); and the Provinces of Caracas, Cumaná and Margarita, were part of the *Real Audiencia de Santo Domingo* in *La Española* island under the *Virreinato de Nueva España* (Viceroyalty of New Spain, in Mexico). In 1718, after the

³⁴ Lovera, *Vida de Hacienda en Venezuela*, 37-38.

³⁵ Graziano Gasparini, *Caracas Colonial* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1969), 6

³⁶ Brewer-Carías, *La Ciudad Ordenada*, 382

creation of the *Virreinato de Nueva Granada* (Viceroyalty of New Granada), the provinces under the jurisdiction of the Real Audiencia de Santo Domingo were designated under this new viceroyalty.³⁷

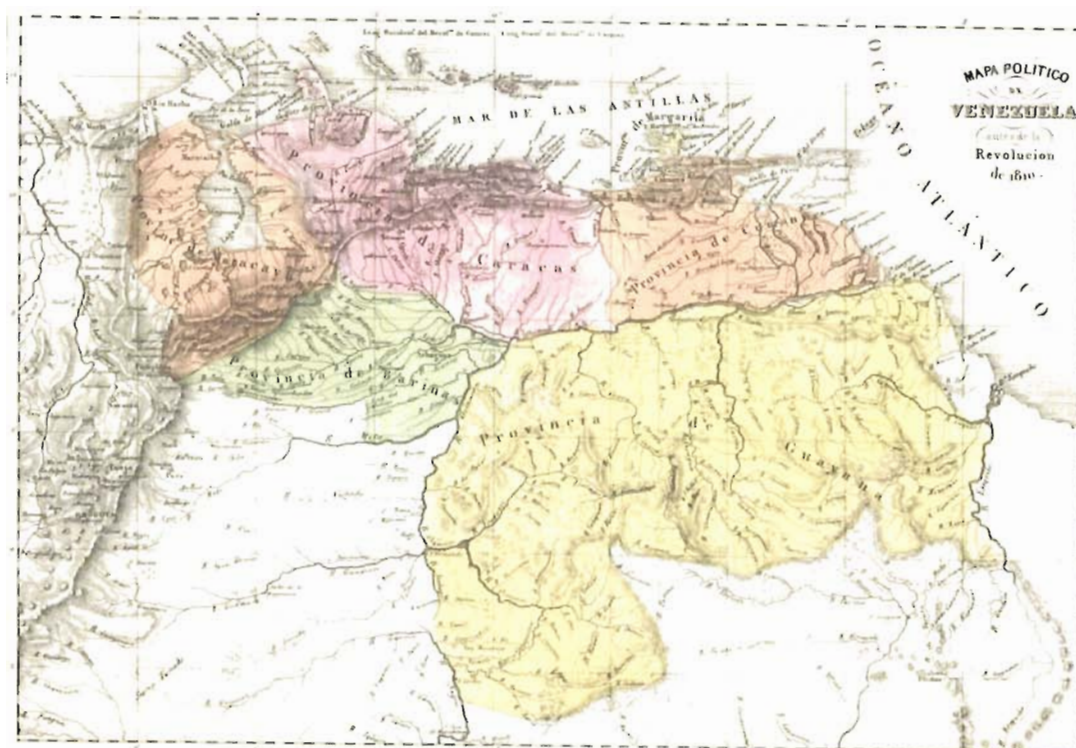


Figure 2. Political Map of Venezuela. Circa 1840 by Agustín Codazzi. Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, Cartography Associates, www.davidrumsey.com

At the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century, the first cities in Venezuela were already founded. Tocuyo, Coro, Caracas, Maracaibo were among others that would later become capitals of the principal political jurisdictions. The conquistador would become a colonizer, abandoning the idea of looking for gold and starting to consider the land as an object for agricultural exploitation.³⁸

The provinces of Venezuela were integrated in 1776 and in 1777, the *Capitanía General de Venezuela* was formed (a kind of government with similar characteristic as a viceroyalty). In 1786, the *Real Audiencia de Caracas* was created. By 1793, it was called the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lovera, *Vida de Hacienda en Venezuela*, 19

Real Consulado de Caracas (Great Consulate of Caracas), incorporating all the provinces mentioned above.³⁹

Land Ownership

The Venezuelan soils were thought by politicians and geographers in the past, in Venezuela, to be very fertile. However, recent studies have demonstrated that only about eight percent of the country is really fertile.⁴⁰ This resulted in the land being considered a friend of the aborigines in the pre-European era, to an object of appropriation by the conquistadores. From the early times of European settlement into America, it was necessary to legislate land possession, especially coveted properties. Left behind were the millenary native cultures who believed land was a common and sacred entity. Possession of the land was justified by the need to Christianize and civilize the Native Americans so that the land would become the property of the conquistadores, although at the beginning these intentions overlapped.⁴¹

The *encomienda* system, already in its splendor in other parts of Latin America, was developed later in Venezuela. While in other places it had evolved to a more organized system, with the reduction of the Native American population, and other localized problems, in Venezuela it was still enforced at its basic structure, even to the end of the seventeenth century. The *encomienda* evolved slowly in Venezuela, not because of a lack of interest from the Crown, but instead because of due strong resistance from the *encomenderos*.⁴²

The process of transition from *encomienda* to haciendas is not completely clear. Different authors suggest that it was a slow transition, where the *encomenderos* were forced to sell or give up part of their lands to obtain funds to sustain themselves. Many of the *encomiendas* mentioned the name of the *encomendero*, and various haciendas and groves.

³⁹ Brewer-Carías, *La Ciudad Ordenada*, 382.

⁴⁰ Lovera, *Vida de Hacienda en Venezuela*, 23

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 30

⁴² Lucas Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeso: Las Querencias de Azul y Oro*, vol. 1 (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 2002), 58

However, the relationship of the Spanish Crown and the Native Americans is not explained.⁴³

There are some differences in the land occupation between hacienda, hato and *producción familiar mercantil* (farm). As Eligia Calderón-Trejo explains, the hacienda was structured as an organic unit of production supported by the plantation. The labor force of the plantation was controlled by the owner of the land, in a self-sufficient economy, whose basis was constituted by the binomial *plantación-conuco*⁴⁴ or a way to tie the *peón* or worker to his job. The conuco was usually located nearby or within the plantation, encouraged by the owner in order to reduce the mobility of the worker. In general, the haciendas functioned with a minimum investment, depending on the land and the harvest as it is the fixed capital.⁴⁵

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Hato is basically a cattle ranch. It functioned as a self-sufficient unit supported also by conuco activity with limited agricultural production, only to satisfy the necessities of the owners and the *vaqueros* (cowboys). Cattle need large expanses of land, creating different kind of jobs: the work on the *vaquerías* or herd, the supervision of the herd, and the cheese factory (activity not necessarily present in all the hatos); activities which do not require large numbers of laborers. The hato is the main reason for the predominance of masculine workers living in these areas without constituting a community. Based on this, the community is then formed outside the work area with workers' families depending on the labor of this productive unit. In this case, as in some haciendas, the location of rural clusters is the focus of settlement that would stimulate growth of towns and cities. Hatos are mainly located in the *Los Llanos* (plains or flat areas) in the central area of Venezuela.⁴⁶

The farm or *Producción Familiar Mercantil* (family mercantile production) can be defined as a combination of different crops for subsistence, and generates a limited surplus for selling at the local market. Geographically, farms are mainly found in the Andes region

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ The conuco is a smallholding land use by workers in the Haciendas. This word has its origin in the Indigenous Taino language.

⁴⁵ Eligia Calderón-Trejo, *Casas de Hacienda: Un Caso de Arquitectura Vernácula en Mérida* (Mérida, Venezuela: Talleres Gráficos Universitarios, Universidad de Los Andes, 1998), 15

⁴⁶ Ibid., 16

with primary products of coffee, tuber, wheat or cane. The fields are worked using irrigation and a plow and the nuclear family is the labor force for small and mid-sized lands. During harvest, the workforce required is complemented with the contribution of mid-size producers who sell their work in exchange for additional income.⁴⁷

AGRICULTURE IN VENEZUELA

After early exploration and the constitution of formal settlements, and the establishment of encomienda and missions, the Native Americans and the colonists were brought together to share their lives in the first founded communities. For a long time the Europeans had to depend upon pre-Columbian products like tuber, corn, vegetables, and fruits for survival. Before they could plant their usual food (which they pined for) they had to adapt to and learn the agricultural traditions of their new environment. In a place without traditional climactic seasons the terms “winter” and “summer” were applied to rainy and dry seasons, respectively. Also, the foodstuffs that formed traditional Spanish foods had to be adapted to local soils and weather specific to the region. Meanwhile, the conquistadores had to adapt to eating the native food. The first adapted crop was wheat needed to make bread.⁴⁸

Sugar cane was also planted for the first time around the area of El Tocuyo valley, located on the west-central side of Venezuela, and later the crop would extend to diverse areas. The harvest of native tobacco had reached prominence as well, and, by the early seventeenth century, it covered the coastal regions that were frequently visited by French, British and Dutch smugglers.⁴⁹

In some regions, cacao replaced tobacco, after its harvest was regulated and considered too low profit. Cacao had a large domestic demand and was also appreciated in foreign markets. Its production was very important, and almost defined the country as a

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Cecilia Fuentes and Daría Hernández, *Cultivos Tradicionales de Venezuela*, 1st ed. (Caracas, Venezuela: Fundación Bigott, 1993), 21

⁴⁹ Ibid.

mono-producer in agriculture, dominating agricultural production during the colonial era in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.⁵⁰

In the middle of the eighteenth century, with the predominance of cacao production in the *Gobernaciones de Tierra Firme* (the Governments on Terra Firma)⁵¹ the Crown insisted on the production of other agricultural products, such as the Asian sugar cane, native tobacco, and cotton, along with new crops like Arab coffee and añil (indigo).⁵²

In a short period of time, the Native American population was decimated by the slavery work and diseases in the area, so slaves imported from Africa by the Spanish and Portuguese Crown were incorporated into the agricultural labor force. Many were from agricultural tribes in their native lands and thus were experienced and resilient workers. There was no law to protect them like earlier indigenous people (although largely ignored) and the Africans were simply viewed as property. Their labor was critical to the successful agricultural development of the country during the colonial time.⁵³

In Venezuela, the lack of precious metals motivated the development of agricultural commerce in the founding of the colony. This scarcity of wealth made sustainable agrarian development essential, and later the surplus of agricultural products were sufficient to export. These exports became the main commerce for the country. Then, in 1926 oil replaced coffee – and the entire colonial agricultural tradition – as the principal product of the economy.⁵⁴

The Hacienda has been the most utilized agricultural system in the central region of Venezuela, and presents particular characteristics that distinguish it economically, socially and morphologically from the farms of the Andes region and the Hato (cattle ranch) in the Los Llanos region, which create different variants of space occupation.⁵⁵ In Venezuela,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ The *Gobernaciones de Tierra Firme* or the Governments on Terra Firma or Dry Land, was the name given, during the colonial era, to Venezuela, Panama and part of Colombia, the area that later will be part of the Viceroyalty of New Granada. Originally, it was also referred to all the coastal area of South America from Guyana to Panama.

⁵² Fuentes and Hernández, *Cultivos Tradicionales*, 21

⁵³ Ibid., 22

⁵⁴ Gonzalez Casas, "Las Haciendas en Venezuela," 205

⁵⁵ Ibid.

haciendas are divided into three distinct types: coffee, cacao, and sugar cane. The central coastal region of Venezuela is a mountainous area, where cacao and coffee have been harvested since the 1600s. However, the soil and climate favor cacao over coffee. Therefore, the majority of haciendas on the coast of Aragua State, where Choroní is located, produce cacao.

Agricultural Production: Sugar Cane, Coffee and Cacao Haciendas

Graziano Gasparini in his book *Venezuelan Haciendas*⁵⁶ discusses the various types of haciendas in Venezuela, differentiated by their use. As he indicates, the architecture during the sixteenth century in the provinces that would later become the nation of Venezuela was simple with no signs of ostentation. This author argues that this simplicity was a result of the scarcity of skilled labor. Early Venezuelan architecture cannot be compared with the one developed on the Viceroyalties of New Spain (Mexico) or Peru, for two main reasons: these areas had more resources than Venezuela, and secondly the European craftsmen who came to America preferred to settle in the Viceroyalties where they could make more money from their specialized skills.⁵⁷

Early Venezuelan colonial (1500s to 1700s) architecture, both urban and rural, consisted of forked wooden posts, wattle and daub, and straw roofs. As the province's economic situation improved, these materials would be replaced with tapia or adobe, carved wooden posts or brick columns and cane and tile roofs.⁵⁸

During the nineteenth century, houses and buildings suffered, especially in war times such as the War of Independence (1811-1823), and the Federalist Wars (1859-1863), and during natural disasters such as earthquakes, that occurred nearly every 100 years. Depending on the owners' economic situation a building might be promptly restored or left for years to decay, ending up in ruins or being demolished in favor of existing structures to construct new and improved buildings.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Gasparini and Troconis de Veracoechea, *Venezuelan Haciendas*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 17

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

The cacao-based economy that boomed in the eighteenth century in Venezuela ignited a significant change in architectural design. The *Real Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas*⁶⁰ (the Royal Gipuzkoan Company of Caracas) had a big impact on the hacienda architecture, because of the great interest they displayed in utilitarian construction. During these prosperous times, “new houses were built in the cities as well as large, comfortable hacienda houses in the countryside, and many older and more dilapidated houses were remodeled.”⁶¹

The main difference between urban and rural homes was that in urban houses the family life revolved around a central patio or garden, while in the rural home everyday activities were mainly pursued on large verandas or in corridors that were built around the exterior perimeter of the house (Figure 3). Also, because of their setting, hacienda houses



Figure 3. The urban houses are built around interior courtyard, as is this house in Choróní, from the Machado Family. There is usually only one door for residences and many windows on the façade, however, all the rooms face the corridors in the patio or courtyard. Photo by author, August 2009

⁶⁰ A Spanish trading company in the 18th century, operating from 1728 to 1785, which had a monopoly on Venezuelan trade.

⁶¹ Gasparini and Troconis de Veracoechea, *Venezuelan Haciendas*, 17.

did not need an elaborate façade because their open verandas looking out onto the landscape were their most attractive feature. These buildings tended to be utilitarian in design and had very few luxurious details (Figure 4).⁶²



Figure 4. These buildings tended to be utilitarian in design and had very few luxurious details. This is the house of Hacienda La Aljorra, today a hotel. The veranda looks out to the plantation and the drying patio.

Most hacienda owners did not live there year round, because this was a working place; however, they tried to ensure that the hacienda houses had the minimum facilities to make the family feel comfortable during their stay there. If the house was to be the family's main home, it was very important to provide essential family comforts, within the context of the time.⁶³ Some of the haciendas were close to cities or town where the owners lived. This created a different pattern, where the buildings were designed to house the mayordomo or administrator's family instead. However, this did not diminish the architecture since many countryside houses close to urban areas are prominent and detailed in architecture because the mayordomos had an important social-status in colonial society as the overseers of the hacienda.

⁶² Ibid., 17,19.

⁶³ Ibid., 19

The Sugar Cane Haciendas: The Sweet Fields

Sugar cane in Latin America is said to come from Central Asia, Conchinchina and Bengal. Whatever the origin, by the sixteenth century, sugar cane was already being planted in Latin America. In Venezuela, sugar cane production started in El Tocuyo around 1578, and then in Caracas, Guanare (Lara State in the west-central region), and Trujillo (Andes region). Of all the different products extracted from the cane, rum was the most famous in the province of Venezuela. By the seventeenth century, sugar cane was being cultivated in towns such as Caracas, Valencia, Barquisimeto, Carora, Mérida, San Cristóbal, Gibraltar, Coro, and El Tocuyo.⁶⁴

The Spaniards were accustomed to using sugar in their diet, and as a result this was one of the first products brought to the New World. The evolution of sugar cane products in Venezuela was slow due to the decrease on the indigenous population, resulting in a lack of labor, and the prohibition by the Spanish Crown to use Native American people as a workforce on the sugar cane plantation as a strategy to stop the decrease of population. At the end of the seventeenth century, the development of these plantations increased again because of the introduction of African slaves.⁶⁵

Increasing demand for sugar, and the difficulties with transportation of the crop, favored the establishment of numerous local *trapiches* and *ingenios*⁶⁶ (sugar mills) to satisfy the demands of the local community. Production increased especially during the Compañía Guipuzcoana period (1728-1785), which put discipline into agricultural activities and its commerce. The development of the sugar industry, for both domestic use and export, was affected by the Wars of Independence (1811-1823). During this period many properties were confiscated (especially from owners who supported the independents movements) and the ingenios and trapiches were destroyed; with regions that produced sugar cane being abandoned.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁶⁵ Fuentes and Hernández, *Cultivos Tradicionales*, 28-29

⁶⁶ The Trapiche and the Ingenio are sugar mills, moved by either water or animal traction. However, Ingenio was used in substitution to the name hacienda, implying the whole complex, when trapiche was used to the machinery itself, and sometimes to a small sugar mill.

⁶⁷ Fuentes and Hernández. *Cultivos Tradicionales*, 29

After independence was gained in the 1830s, the production of sugar and *papelón*⁶⁸ (jaggery) was resumed, with some for export but mainly for domestic consumption. The plantations were expanded as demand grew, and during the twentieth century new techniques in the harvest and process were adapted, further increasing production and simplifying spaces in the buildings. However, the *papelón* in both its forms, conical and cubic, continues to be produced in the traditional way in small communities.⁶⁹

Today in Venezuela, more than 130,000 hectares (321,250 acres) are planted with sugar cane; 70% are located in the Lara, Yaracuy and Portuguesa States in the west-central region; 12% in the Aragua and Carabobo States in the north-central region; 10% in Sucre, Anzoátegui and Monagas State in the northeastern region; and the rest in Zulia and Táchira in the western region.⁷⁰

Sugar cane is a germanous plant that requires loamy soils and a luminous environment. The best climate is a tropical humid one with long and hot summers; rain is needed mainly for the growing process and the dry and cool weather for the maturation and harvest. It is cultivated from sea level up to 1,500 meters (4,920 feet). The plant has a vegetative cycle of 10-18 months⁷¹

Sugar cane haciendas are usually located in plains or flat lands, with houses perched on a hill overlooking the fields. The architecture of the haciendas is simple, usually one story with wooden or masonry columns of Tuscan style. The corridors or verandas are open on two or three sides; there are some houses with peripheral verandas, similar to the plantation homes of the southern United States. Chapels were usually included in the design, and in many cases are attached to the houses. If there are patios, they are internal and for family use, however, after the coffee economic boom, some haciendas built drying patios for coffee production (Figure 5).⁷²

⁶⁸ *Papelón*, also known as jaggery, *panela*, *rapadura*, *chancaca*, *piloncillo*, *panocha*, *atado dulce* or *empanizao*; is a traditional unrefined non-centrifugal sugar consumed in Asia, Africa and South America. It is made for direct consumption. This type of sugar is a concentrated product of cane juice without separation of the molasses and crystals, and can vary from golden brown to dark brown in color.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 30

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 33

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

The trapiche or mills operations could be powered by animal track or water. Steam motors can be found also with brick towers as evidence of past technologies. In coffee and cacao haciendas, trapiches can be found, usually for internal use, most of them are in ruins, but some are still in use. Many of these colonial haciendas have been abandoned, changed uses or simply taken over by the communities and local government.



Figure 5. Drying patios for coffee production in sugar cane Haciendas. Observe the tower of the trapiche. House of Hacienda La Vega, Caracas. Photo by Graziano Gasparini from the book *Hacienda Houses*

Coffee Haciendas: Awakening of the Economy

Coffee was brought to Venezuela from the Caribbean islands in the eighteenth century. Its introduction to the country is attributed to the missionaries. It was first grown around the Orinoco River in the southern part of the country, around 1730. During this time, it displaced other older drinks in its production and in beverage preference. Coffee is

⁷² Gasparini and Troconis de Veracochea, *Venezuelan Haciendas*, 66-73

produced today in the Táchira, Mérida, Trujillo, Sucre, Monagas, Lara, Aragua, Portuguesa, Carabobo, Barinas, Falcón, Guárico, Bolívar, Miranda, Anzoátegui, Yaracuy and Delta Amacuro State, which is mainly the entire mountainous region.⁷³

In 1785, Venezuela first exported coffee to Spain, and from that point on production increased. Occasionally, prices were even higher than cacao. From the last decade of the eighteenth century up to 1950s, the surrounding areas of Caracas were cultivated with beautiful *cafetales* (coffee plantation). Between 1810 and 1930 coffee replaced cacao as the main export product (Figure 6 and Table 1).⁷⁴ The record of production, which remains unbeaten today, was set in 1919 when 82,382 tons of coffees were exported. During this time, Venezuela was one of the leading coffee exporters in the world, not only in quantity but also in quality.⁷⁵

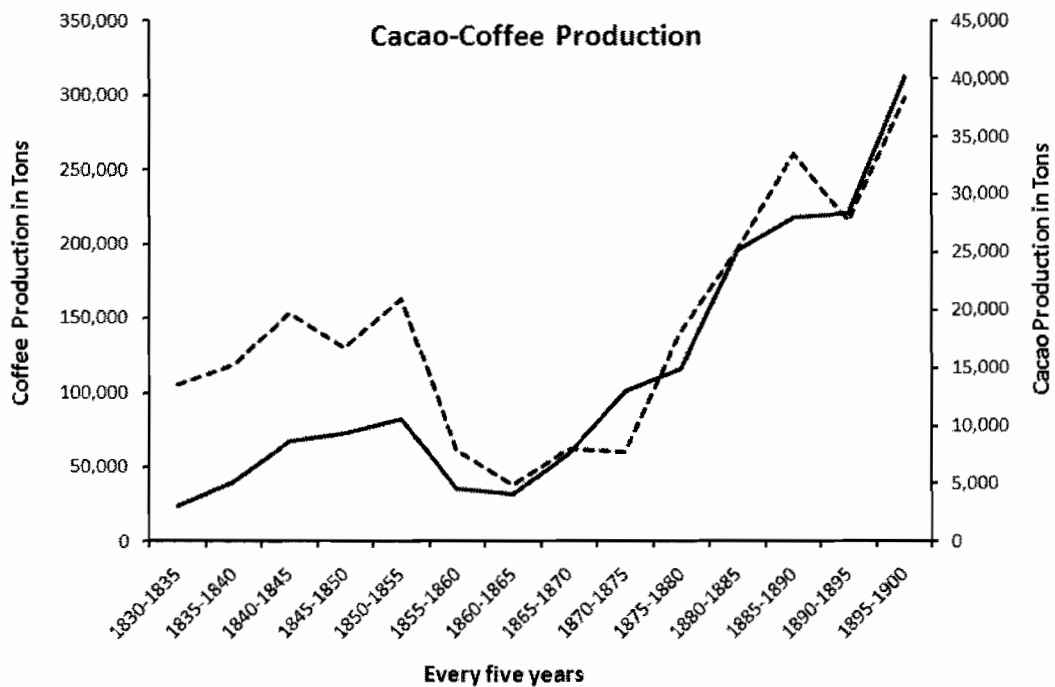


Figure 6. Cacao and coffee production from 1830 to 1900, data taken during five years. Data: Johnny Alarcón Fuentes in *El Arte del cacao: Chuao, el Cultivo de una Tradición*

⁷³ Fuentes and Hernández, *Cultivos Tradicionales*, 151.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Gasparini and Troconis de Veracochea, *Venezuelan Haciendas*, 78

In 1870, the Andes region of Venezuela began to be cultivated with coffee because this area has a perfect climate, large workforce, and soils suitable for this kind of plantation. This region is today the leading producer in the country. At the present day, coffee is still a major generator of income for Venezuela.⁷⁶

Years	Café (Tons)	Cacao (Tons)
1830-1835	24,184	13,592
1835-1840	39,902	15,229
1840-1845	67,351	19,715
1845-1850	72,662	16,715
1850-1855	82,466	20,893
1855-1860	35,311	7,873
1860-1865	31,353	4,848
1865-1870	57,968	7,977
1870-1875	101,076	7,772
1875-1880	115,796	18,114
1880-1885	195,650	25,259
1885-1890	217,521	33,498
1890-1895	220,403	27,714
1895-1900	312,375	38,341

Table 1. Cacao and coffee production from 1830 to 1900, data taken during five years. Source: Data from Johnny Alarcón Fuentes in *El Arte del cacao: Chuao, el Cultivo de una Tradición*

The coffee plant is a perennial shrub that can be cultivated at 800 to 1,600 meter (2,625 to 5,250 feet) above sea level. The plant can live for 30 years, and the first harvest is six years after planting.⁷⁷

The coffee haciendas used an architectural element introduced by the cacao plantation, the drying patio, to dry the beans under the sun. However, these drying areas are larger in coffee haciendas; because the amounts of beans produce by coffee plants are larger than cacao. By the end of the eighteenth century, several sugar cane haciendas that had the proper conditions began to grow coffee as well, therefore it is not unusual to find drying patios that have been added onto the hacienda houses or to the chimneys of the sugar mills. On the other hand, the coffee hacienda houses built in the nineteenth or early

⁷⁶ Fuentes and Hernández, *Cultivos Tradicionales*, 151-152.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 152

twentieth century followed precise plans that provided appropriate spaces for the tasks related to the harvesting, drying and packing of coffee (Figure 7).⁷⁸



Figure 7. Precise plans that provided appropriate spaces for the tasks related to the harvesting, drying and packing of coffee. The patios are used for drying, an element originated in the cacao haciendas. Photo by Graziano Gasparini from *Hacienda Houses*

Coffee haciendas are located in mountainous regions, each with its own unique topography; however, all of them have trees for shade, a house that is used as residential and storage, as well as process center and a drying patio. These unique settings were also taken into account for the buildings within the plantation, choosing a higher elevation that could overlook the fields. The architectural style as well as the construction is very similar to the cacao haciendas, because they started in the country after the cacao haciendas following a model that worked very well.

The Cacao Haciendas: The Power of Chocolate

The *Theobroma cacao* or “food of the Gods,” also known as a cacao tree or cocoa tree was already known by the Native Americans when the conquistadors arrived to what is today the coast of Venezuela. It is unknown when the cacao plantations started, but

⁷⁸ Gasparini and Troconis de Veracoechea, *Venezuelan Haciendas*, 77-78.

consumption of chocolate appears to have reached beyond America by the end of the sixteenth century (Figure 8).



Figure 8. *Theobroma cacao* the “food of the Gods.” This is a cacao tree in Hacienda Monterosa, Choroní. Photo by author, August 2009

For more than thirty years after 1580, wheat, and the occasional shipment of tobacco or cattle hides supplied Caracas residents with lucrative exports. Between 1600 and 1620, the people from the Province of Caracas (Venezuela) discovered that cacao beans could be sold for profit to Indigenous costumers in Mexico. The market for Caracas cacao was large, and the cacao trade across the Caribbean kept Caracas as a strong colony in the economy of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. “The cacao trade was directly responsible for the transformation of the labor base in the Caracas province from Indian encomienda to African

slavery. Alone of Spain's American colonies in the seventeenth century, Caracas came early to depend on slave labor."⁷⁹

Veracruz was the destination of Venezuelan cacao in Mexico, and in Spain it was Seville. To stimulate the cultivation of cacao, due to its acceptance in Europe, the Spanish Crown exonerated taxes of *almojarifazgo*⁸⁰ to the embarkations, as long as they were managed by people from the same government. This exoneration lasted from 1638 to 1650.⁸¹

Many haciendas were established during the seventeenth century, to meet the increasing demand for the product. Most of these haciendas were located on pre-existing Indian villages in coastal valleys like Choroní, Chuao, Turiamo, Cepe, Ocumare, and others in today Aragua State; also in Caucagua, Capaya, Curiepe, El Guapo, Cúpira in the Miranda State; along of the Aroa River in Barquisimeto, San Felipe in the west-central area; in Trujillo, Merida, Zulia in the west, etc. These haciendas had to incorporate African slaves as their workforce, as explained before, because the intense work of the cacao plantation drastically reduced the Native American population.⁸²

Venezuelan cacao was greatly appreciated in New Spain for its high quality, and therefore the *hacendados* or hacienda owners became an elite class, that was so powerful that they even dared to buy royal titles. They were called the *grandes cacao*s. Today this term is still used for members of the aristocracy or very rich people in Venezuela.⁸³

After the diffusion of cacao consumption in Europe, in the eighteenth century the Dutch and the British dedicated themselves to establishing illegal trades with the hacendados, to acquire the product in contraband. The Spanish could not ignore this situation; the corruption had reached all levels, including the government. In 1728, King Phillip V decided to implement more restrictive policies. The principal instrument was the *Real Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas*, the first royally chartered commercial monopoly

⁷⁹ Robert Ferry, *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas: Formation & Crisis, 1567-1767* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1989), 3.

⁸⁰ A colonial customs tariff in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires.

⁸¹ Fuentes and Hernández, *Cultivos Tradicionales*, 166

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

company created by Spain. This company, whose headquarters were in San Sebastián in the Basque province of Guipúzcoa, enjoyed the exclusive rights to carry cacao from the province of Caracas to Spain. The hacendados were not content with this decision and even more contraband was shipped during this time. In reaction, the company established custom houses in all the principal ports in Venezuela. In Choroní, this building was constructed with stone, locally known as the *Castillito* (little castle) or the *La Casa de los Cofres* (the House of the Coffers), it survived until 1950s when it was demolished to build a concrete walkway along the beach.⁸⁴

Between 1740 and 1749, the company exported more than 170,000 fanegas,⁸⁵ three times the amount before its founding. Between 1750 and 1778 one million fanegas were exported. Following a series of conflicts and bad investments, the company closed in 1785, however, by 1780 the free market competition was re-established.⁸⁶

In 1790, coffee cultivation started to increase, and in Europe the drink that was prepared with sugar or papelón almost completely replaced the popular cacao, which never reached the same level of popularity as a beverage. During the nineteenth century with the Wars of Independence (1811-1823), the abolition of slavery (1854) and the Federal War (1859–1863), cacao prices and export declined drastically. After 1875, the cacao economy recovered, and in the early twentieth century, Venezuela exported 20,000 tons. The boom lasted about 300 years. Between 1963 and 1984, the production descended 50%, enough for just the internal market, with little export.⁸⁷

Plantation process

The cacao plantation requires medium to highly fertile soils, which must be carefully prepared before sowing. To maximize growth, the plantation must have a median temperature of 25° Centigrade (77° Fahrenheit). If the temperature is too low, then

⁸⁴ Ferry, *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas*, 4.

⁸⁵ Fanegas was a unit of dry capacity used for grains, about 117.5 liters (about 3.33 U.S. bushels, that is 117.34 liters)

⁸⁶ Fuentes and Hernández, *Cultivos Tradicionales*, 168

⁸⁷ Ibid.

flowering is reduced. It also needs water year round, which is the reason that many haciendas are located on riverbanks.⁸⁸

Cacao can be propagated by planting seeds, cutting, and/or grafting. It is recommended to seed, because seeds produce trees with strong and deep roots that attach better to the soil. The plants must grow in dense shade, that can be reduced later to let more sun reach the trees. The cacao tree has a life span of 40 to 50 years, and as it gets older its production decreases.⁸⁹

If the site does not have good shade soils, plantain or banana trees are used to protect the small cacao trees, the fruit from which can also be used as profit (Figure 9). The cacao trees are planted every three meters and the shade trees about 24 meters apart. In Choroní, the haciendas were established many hundreds of years ago, and large trees like *mijao* (*Anacardium excelsum*), *guamo* (*Ceratonia siliqua*), *higuerote* (*Coussapoa pittieri*) o *cedro* (*Cedrales fissilis*) were used to protect the plantation. This shade protects the cacao



Figure 9. Plantain or banana trees are used to protect the small cacao trees, while the large trees are growing at the side. Hacienda El Casibo (part of Hacienda Monterosa). Photo by author, August 2009

⁸⁸ Ibid., 169,171.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 171

trees from the sun and wind, and helps to regulate the humidity of the plantation, which should not be too high because it could cause plagues and diseases.⁹⁰

Entering a cacao plantation is like coming into a mysterious, shadowy world. The sound of footsteps is mitigated by the bed of leaves that fall from the large trees that provide the shade, and a murmur of insects can be heard along with the water running through the acequias or water canals. Venezuela is one of the few places that irrigates cacao. Generally, in other countries the precipitation of 2,000 mm is distributed more evenly throughout the year.⁹¹

The cacao harvest happens twice each year, June and December. During the year some fruits are produced and recollected. The traditions of the cacao haciendas are now part of our culture. Towns along the coast, as explained before, are now mostly populated by African descendants who have mixed with Europeans and Native Americans. The celebration of June's harvest starts on May First with the *Cruz de Mayo* (Cross of May), a celebration with drums and African dances, wishing for a good harvest. It is common to find a cross in every drying patio on the cacao haciendas (Figure 10). Also, the patron of the



Figure 10. There is a cross in almost every drying patio on the cacao haciendas, as part of the tradition of Cruz de Mayo to celebrate the first harvest of the year. Hacienda La Sabaneta (part of Hacienda Monterosa). Photo by author, August 2009

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

African descendants in Venezuela is *San Juan Bautista* (Saint John the Baptist) and his holy day is June 24th, during the first harvest of the year. The celebration is very important among the coastal towns, especially between Choroní, Chuao, and Ocumare. Drums are played from town to town for three days, celebrating the saint's patron day.

The cacao tree is a small evergreen tree about four to eight meters tall (15–26 feet). The first flowering is at three or four years, and the flowers and fruits can grow in unexpected places along trunk and in branches, called *cojines*. These small flowers are very delicate and the yield can be damaged if touched.⁹²

The fruit is called a cacao pod and has a rough leathery rind about three centimeters thick (1.2 inches), and about 15 to 30 centimeters long (6-12 inches) in an oval shape, and 8 to 10 centimeters wide (3-4 in). As mentioned before, the pods grow from the trunk and branches and when ripe they turn green, red or yellow, depending on the variety. It can hold from 12 to 50 seeds inside, which are called beans, that are embedded in a white pulp. There are three main varieties of cacao: *Criollo*, *Forastero*, and *Trinitario*. The first one has the best quality; the plantations in Choroní use this kind of cacao, however they are very delicate and require constant care. This cacao is considered a delicacy. The second one is the most common and widely used and is also very resistant to insects. The third type is a hybrid between criollo and forastero. It has higher yields and is very resistant to plague and diseases, however it has the lowest quality of all of the varieties.⁹³

The cacao harvest consists of three main steps: collection, fermentation and drying. In the collection, the pods are removed from the trunk with a tool called *desgarretadera*, cut from bottom to top, to prevent diseases (Figure 11-A). Then the pods are placed in baskets and carried to a large pile at the plantation, on a bed of plantain or banana leaves. On site the pods are cut with a machete and the seeds are extracted and placed in a large basket reinforced with leather or other material on the bottom, to prevent the dripping of the pulp. The rind is left on the site as fertilizer (Figure 11-B). The baskets are transported to the main house to the fermentation room by placing them on the head of the worker, on top of a roll of cloth or banana leaves, and carried to the site. In some haciendas, this practice has been mechanized using motorized carts to transport the pods to the cutting site and to the

⁹² Ibid., 171-172.

⁹³ Gladys Ramos, Pedro Ramos Arrieta, and Antonio Azócar Ramos, *Manual del Productor de Cacao* (Caracas: Fondo Intergubernamental para la Descentralización (FIDES), 2006), 17

main house (Figure 11-C). In the past, even as recently as thirty years ago, and in some haciendas still today, the recollection process was performed by women. Today it is either gender.⁹⁴

The next step is the fermentation. Beans are put in a room called *desbabadero* where the pulp will drip and also the cacao will ferment. Depending on the size of the plantation, the beans can be placed in baskets, or in wooden boxes covered with plantain or banana leaves. The boxes have openings that channel the drip to a canal that usually ends in an



Figure 11. In “A” are women using a “*desgarretadera*” for the collection of the cacao. In photo “B” are women extracting the beans from the pod, the beans are placed in baskets and the rind is left on site as fertilizer. In picture “C,” the cacao beans are being transported to the main house in the head of the worker. Photos A and B by José Agustín Catalá, Hacienda in Trujillo State, 1960. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de Venezuela. Photo C by Victor Muñoz Elizalde from www.artelista.com

⁹⁴ María Teresa Rojas, “Lexico del Cultivo del Cacao en una Hacienda de Barlovento” (phD, Universidad Central de Venezuela. Instituto de Filología Andrés Bello, 1972), 60-63.

acequia (Figure 12). The beans have to be flipped every 24 hours, to reach a uniform fermentation. The duration of this process varies, depending on the kind of cacao, from two to seven days. The forastero requires more time than the criollo. This process is usually performed by men.⁹⁵

At the end of the fermentation process, the humidity of the beans is about 60%, and this can be reduced to 8%. If is too dry, the skin will break too easily and if is too humid it

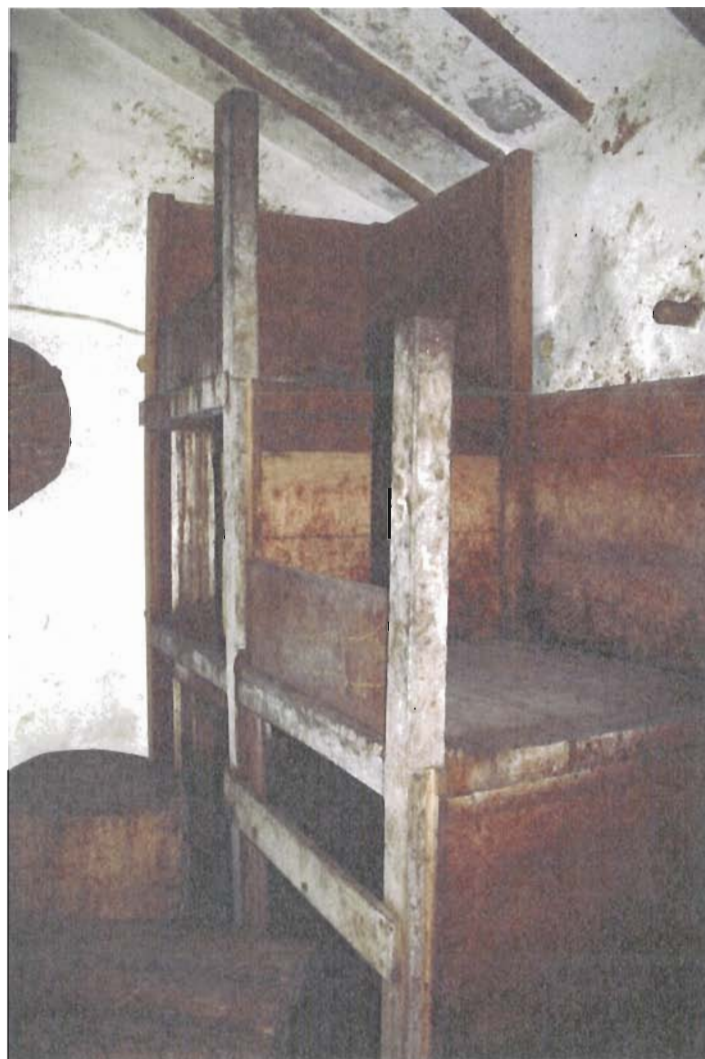


Figure 12. In the desbabadero, the beans are placed in wooden boxes with openings that channel the drip. Hacienda La Sabaneta (part of Hacienda Monterosa). Photo by author, August 2009

⁹⁵ Ramos, Ramos Arrieta, and Azócar Ramos, *Manual del Productor de Cacao*, 62.

can develop fungus during storage. There are two types of processes for drying the beans: the natural and the artificial. The natural type is done under the sun and the artificial type is done in ovens. Under the sun, the temperature can reach up to 50° C (122° F) and with ovens it could reach 65°C (149° F), a process that can distort the enzymatic activity, affecting the quality. In Venezuela, because of the climate the natural process is used. The patio is an important element introduced to the colonial architecture to perform this step on the cacao harvest.⁹⁶

The beans are laid in the sun in thin layers directly on the floor of the patio. These floors were originally built with lime and sand, but today they are mainly concrete. It starts with a few hours of sun exposure in the morning during the first days, gradually extending the time to a full day (Figure 13). The excess heat can cause acidity to the flavor. The beans are ready after four and six days. Then the skin will come off easily if is ready, and it should break easily with low pressure. Every day the cacao is recollected and stored in rooms that are usually finished with wooden boards to prevent humidity. It should also be protected



Figure 13. The cacao is dry on the patio, few hours of sun exposure in the morning during the first days, gradually extending the time to a full day. In the photo is Vicente Fuentes, owner of the Hacienda Torres. Photo by author, August 2009

⁹⁶ Ibid., 66-67.

from the rain. Some haciendas, mostly the ones located on the Trujillo area in the Andes region, have railings with roofs that slide on the patios to protect the cacao from the rain.⁹⁷

Once dry, the beans are stored in sacks of about 50 kilograms (110 lb) and transported to distribution points. It can last from nine to twelve months. The haciendas usually do not process the cacao, or extract any product beyond family consumption.

The complex process of harvesting and producing a final product that can be sold is tedious and requires skilled labor. It is very intense, because there is also a large component of regular maintenance of the plantation, from cutting weeds, moving the acequias and small canals to prevent overwatering of the plants, and controlling animals and disease. The haciendas were the center of life of many towns, from sharecropper to the housing on site. Up to the 1940 in Choroní, as in many places in the country, the payment was limited to *fichas*, an internal currency that was worth something only in the hacienda, limiting the life of the workers to the site.

Until recently, hacienda life in many towns was the same as a hundred years ago, except for slavery, and the processes are mostly the same in recent years. Many towns that were isolated have preserved their traditions. Today we carry on traditions whose origins are not necessarily known, like the Cruz de Mayo or the celebration of San Juan that were created as part of the cacao culture in Venezuela. The cacao haciendas carry on with a historic legacy that started almost 400 years ago. Many traditions that we conserve today are inherited from the builders of these haciendas: Europeans, Africans and Native Americans.

All of the historic events discussed in this chapter have, in one way or another, shaped the hacienda as we know and study today, and reciprocally the hacienda, as a complex organism has also shaped our cultural landscape, architecture, society, culture, economy and even political affairs.

The case of Choroní, located in the Aragua State in the central coast of Venezuela, is a good example of the big changes that Venezuelan culture has endured during the past 500 years. The cacao haciendas have changed ownership, shrunk and/or grown. The population changed from Native Americans, to Africans, to mestizo; the economical and cultural values shifted from isolated agricultural community to a popular touristic destination. This small town has seen all these changes in the past years, and the haciendas

⁹⁷ Ibid., 66-69.

are the elements of the old and out-of-date agricultural system that without a conservation plan will not survive in the next ten years.

As will be discussed in the next chapters, both the conservation and dissemination of traditions are necessary to conserve the haciendas. The historic values that these sites represent have to be understood by the community to recognize the roots and reconstruct the origins of our traditions; by educating residents as well as the tourist, it is possible to initiate the conservation of our past.

CHAPTER III

SANTA CLARA DE ASÍS DE CHORONÍ: A CACAO TOWN

In the previous chapter, the importance and impact of the hacienda system in Venezuela was discussed, and its major impact in the central coastal region of the country, especially in Choroní, Aragua State. This chapter will resume discussion of the historic conquest and colonization of the Central Coastal Region, especially Choroní. A general geographic description of Venezuelan Regions and the Valley of Choroní is presented, in order to comprehend the changes and attributes of this valley. The impact of the cacao plantation on Choroní's landscape is an important part of this thesis, and will be also explained in this chapter, with the analysis of the landscape impact it will introduce the three case studies used in this project.

HISTORY OF THE SETTLEMENT OF CHORONÍ, PROVINCE OF CARACAS

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, Lázaro Vásquez was granted an encomienda in Patanemo (25 miles west from Choroní), from the Guayquerías Indians, which extended to the Choroní littoral and Maya Valley (15 miles east of Choroní) (Figure 14).⁹⁸ The daughter of Lázaro Vásquez, Mariana de Rojas, married the Captain Diego de Ovalle, a Portuguese captain who traveled to the *Provincia de Caracas* (Province of Caracas). Lázaro Vásquez gave in dowry 40 Native Americans from his encomienda (they counted only the ones that could work), located in the valley of Choroní; the new Ovalle's encomienda was granted by Governor Arias Vaca on March 16, 1602. Later on, because of legal issues surrounding the encomiendas under Sancho de Alquiza's rule, all encomiendas were declared vacant. Ovalle reclaimed his encomienda again, and it was then granted to

⁹⁸ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeño*, 1:53.

him on August 12th, 1610. However only 36 Indians remained to serve as labor for the plantation.⁹⁹

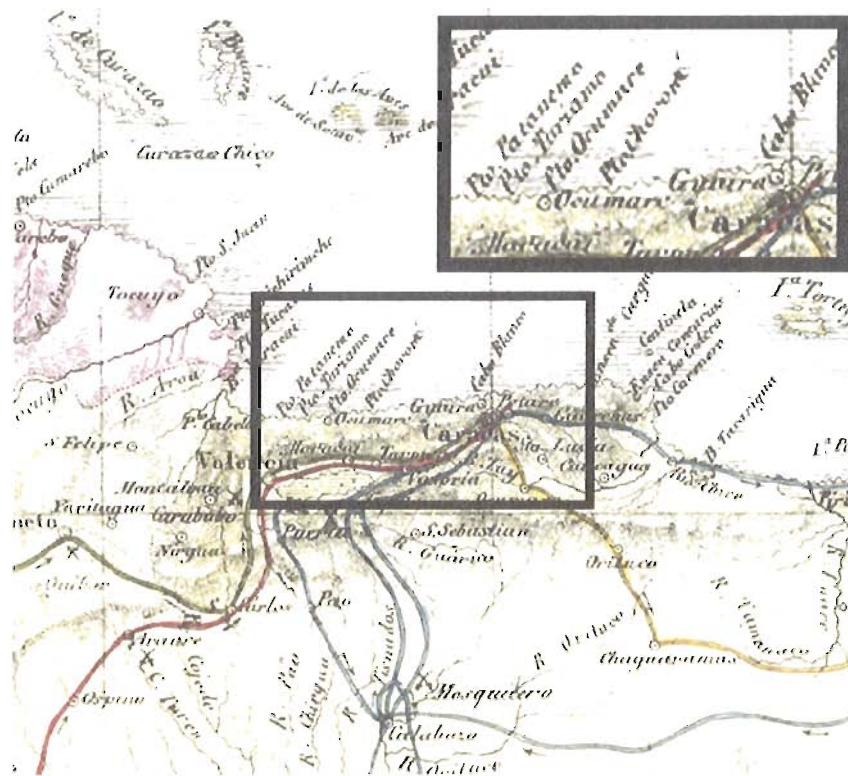


Figure 14. Observe Patanemo, Turiamo, Ocumare, and Choroní. Detail of Political Map of Venezuela. Circa 1840 by Agustín Codazzi. Source: David Rumsey Map Collection, Cartography Associates, www.davidrumsey.com

In the first months of 1622, many *Pueblos de Indios* or *Cabeceras de Doctrina*¹⁰⁰ (Indian towns) were founded by the Catholic Church on the coast of Venezuela, including *San Francisco de Paula de Choroní*. The establishment of these towns included the construction of a Church building as part of the indoctrination. Although the Franciscans were working in Choroní before 1600, there is not documentation to prove the exact date when the first Choroní mission was established.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1:54.

¹⁰⁰ Because the Native Americans on this area lived separately in remote places, difficult for the priest to reach, in 1609 the Spanish King order the creation of organized towns in a placed selected by the clergy and the civil leaders. The church should be in the middle of the settlement and in high places, with lots of water, trees, and fertile soils for agriculture. The Native Americans were moved to the places as the convenience of the Encomendero.

The Episcopal records of Caracas indicate that Father Diego Francisco Romero had worked for more than thirty years as a *doctrinero* on diverse encomiendas, including *Baruta, Antímano, Caraballeda, Maiquetía*, (today these are cities in Venezuela). Romero claimed that he was the first priest to enter those conquered lands to catechize the Aycamán Indigenous or land of Maya, on the encomienda of Antonio Sequera, and also Choroní, on the encomienda of Captain Diego de Ovalle, indicating that before 1600 the European had already started to modify Choroní's landscape. By 1694, the town of Choroní was known as Santa Clara de Asís de Choroní. The impetus for its establishment and exact date are unknown, but in 1772 the new name of the town was legally confirmed (Figure 15).¹⁰¹

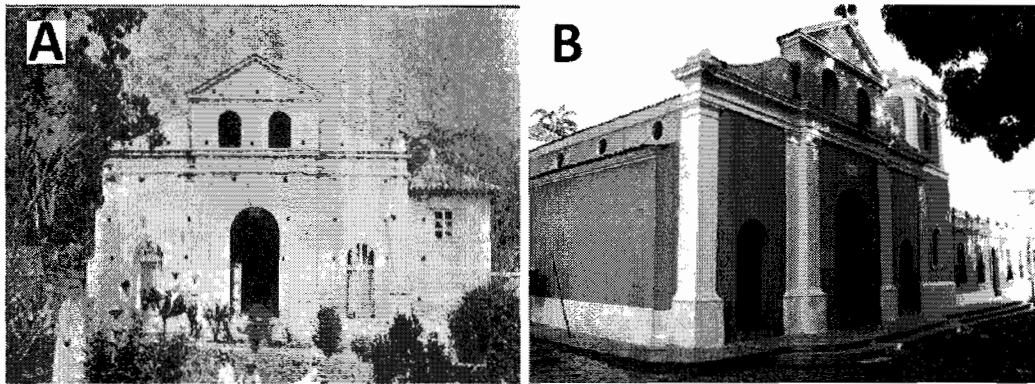


Figure 15. In photo "A" is the Church of Santa Clara de Asís in 1895, during one of the many reconstructions. In photo "B" is the church in August 2009. Photo "A" from *El Cojo Ilustrado*, courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de Venezuela, and photo "B" by autor, August 2009

The encomenderos were not pleased with this intense campaign of settlement undertaken by the Governor La Hoz Berrío and the Bishop Fray Gonzalo de Angulo. With the founding of new Pueblos de Indios or parishes, many encomiendas that did have a church were banded together to fulfill their Christian requirements of conversion. The place chosen to build the town was Choroní and the encomiendas close by, including Chuao, Cepe, and Ocumare had to bring their people to Choroní in order to convert. The opposition was strong, and the founding of towns stopped, which explains the different settlements that occurred in other areas compared with Choroní. At this point the other encomiendas did not have to move their people to Choroní. Their concession was to rotate the priest *doctrinero* between the encomiendas in order to reach all Native Americans. While the

¹⁰¹ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeso*, 1:62,63,66.

haciendas were growing, Ocumare, a very fertile valley, was finally founded as a town; however, even today Chuao, Cepe and Choroní are part of the same parish and still share one priest.¹⁰²

As explained in the previous chapter, cacao contributed to create an elite society because of the great fortune this grove produced. Robert Ferry, in his book *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas*, explains that by the seventeenth century in the *Provincia de Caracas* (Province of Caracas), Captain Diego de Ovalle was one of the seven most powerful men in the province. "In 1607, the slave factor and six of the town's encomenderos, including Ovalle, were from Portugal...He [Ovalle] was also a shrewd trader. In 1618 Ovalle sold one of the first lots of cacao ever to leave the Caracas coast to the Basque merchant Juan de Ibarra."¹⁰³ Ovalle found his fortune from an unexplored business that nobody could imagine would be so profitable.

Ovalle made a good deal of money selling cacao, and he used his wealth to protect himself from problems that might arise, both because he was Portuguese and because the cacao business was in its unsettled infancy (...) However, unlike others of his economic position, he did not acquire municipal office, and neither he nor his wife owned town property [Houses in Caracas]. They were permanent residents at Choroní, and it was there that they made their principal investment: African slaves...¹⁰⁴

The life and importance of Ovalle is crucial for the development of Choroní, since he built a foundation that later on attracted many investors into the cacao business. Robert Ferry describes his wealth by the hacienda house as:

...It was a simply furnished, two-story stone structure with a tile roof. (...) The upstairs rooms contained just the touch of luxury in a style already common to Caracas cacao exporters (...). Close by were the other buildings used for maintaining the estate and preparing cacao for shipment. A substantial wooden storehouse doubled in the upper loft as a drying shed. Carpentry tools and a forge, both used by African artisans, were kept in a second structure. The slaves' quarters, because they represented no value to Ovalle, were not included in the inventory of his holdings, but the livestock and agricultural implements used to produce the food to feed them were counted: seven milk cows, a hundred

¹⁰² Ibid., 1:66-70.

¹⁰³ Ferry, *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas*, 55

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

head of cattle, six teams of oxen with harnesses, several plows, hoes, and a variety of other tools filled out the list...¹⁰⁵

Ovalle was the *encomendero*, which means that he did not own the land. When he realized the importance of this new cacao enterprise, he requested the possession of the land, and this petition was granted in 1616.¹⁰⁶ Diego de Ovalle died in 1658; his wife Mariana Vásquez de Rojas succeeded him on the *encomienda*.¹⁰⁷ However, because Ovalle and his wife did not have immediate heirs, their valuable Choroní property was subsequently inherited by Ovalle's nephew Juan.¹⁰⁸

From Pueblo de Indios to Pueblo Mixto

The priest or *doctrinero* from the *Pueblos de Indios* was dedicated exclusively to the Native American inhabitants from the conquest period up to 1699, when a Real Cedula dictated the incorporation to the religious masses of the African slaves and whites, as well as the Native Americans; it was the formal change from *Doctrinas* to *Capellanías*. The *amos* or owners of *encomiendas* and *haciendas*, and their *mayordomos* and services, *blancos de orilla* or *Canarios* (white people whose origins were unclear or who were from the Canary Islands), *pardos* (mix between white and native Americans), *mulatos* (mix of African slaves and native Americans), *zambos* (mix of African slaves and white) and African slaves were all served by the same priest *Doctrinero* who would become the *Capellán*.¹⁰⁹

In Choroní, this process eventually transformed the segregated indigenous community into an open mixed community. The Native Americans were already losing integrity as a community, as their population decreased from death or dilution of the gene pool, so that parallel groups formed (*mulatos*, *pardos* and *zambos*). With the integration of these different communities, their traditions and lifestyles changed and their physiognomy and even the urban structure were modified. The original town was moved to outside the *Isleta*, to the present area of Choroní, farther south and in a raised area. However, the old

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

¹⁰⁶ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeso*, 1:89

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:162

¹⁰⁸ Ferry, *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas*, 54,55,297

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 101

town, still inhabited by the Native Americans, was slowly becoming an area of mixed workers. This period, from 1690 to 1700, coincided with the change of the town's name from San Francisco de Paula de Choróní to Santa Clara de Asís de Choróní. This new name naturally stemmed from the community's new beginning from the population, with its town and location.¹¹⁰

In 1790, the Governor of the Province of Caracas ordered Don Domingo de Sosa, the Administrator of the Real Hacienda of Choróní, to move the five remaining tributary Native American individuals to Turmero, an inland town. With this sentence, there was no need for any Indigenous government on site or *Cabildo de Indios*, who had been fighting for their rights and lands for over 200 years. This decision abruptly ended indigenous life in Choróní. It was no longer a Pueblo de Indios. With this governmental disposition, a vast world of unnamed and unknown (to us now) culture and history sheltered in the Valley of Choróní was terminated. Their genes are still in the blood of the locals, but many traditions and culture have been, maybe, erased from our memory or blend with the African and European traditions. The disappearance of the Native Americans from the governmental power, as well as from the documents for the eighteenth century, makes it difficult to identify their heritage from the other cultures that affected the landscape. This act also contributed to bringing more African slaves to Choróní, and with a stronger justification regarding the lack of workers to labor in the haciendas.¹¹¹

Revolutionary Winds in Choróní

The 18th century was a prosperous time for Choróní, which became a very important town in the cacao industry. Some of the most powerful men in the Province of Caracas had their haciendas there, including José Félix Sosa, son of Domingo Sosa, who would go on to sign the Act of Independence. However, as much as Choróní attracted these powerful figures, it also attracted the less desirable element, namely the Dutch from Curaçao.

Not only were the Dutch interested in these coastal towns. The British also intended to take over many of these towns during early 1800s. On January 26, 1800, two British frigates with one schooner started a fire in the town. With a small trench and one small

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 103.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 160-161

cannon, the hacendados, slaves and the men from the town, awaited the enemy at the beach. They approached with four boats and a small boat to the mouth of the river, and when they put ashore, rocks and fusils were fired from the mountain. They backed away, but tried again through the mouth of the other branch, the Tipire, but they encountered fire again. Two British were wounded or dead, but no one in Choróní was seriously injured. However, because the fire lasted for three and a half hours, many houses and cacao groves were damaged. The British retreated but tried again in many other towns that appeared to be easy targets because they lacked military constructions.¹¹²

After independent movements started in the late 1700s, the country was further disrupted when the Declaration of Independence was passed in April 19th, 1810. The Spanish crown started the persecutions, and many hacendados from Choróní were affected by this, mainly by the takeover of properties that were owned by the patriots.¹¹³

Besides these actions, there was not much revolutionary activity in town, due to the distance from Caracas and the inland areas. However, in 1816 the patriotic movement passed through Choróní. Simón Bolívar, *El Libertador* (The Liberator) arrived to Ocumare, the closest important cacao town west of Choróní, on July, 6th 1816. From there Bolívar sent the Commandant Judas Tadeo Piñango and a group of officials without troops to Choróní, with the mission to recruit more troops, cross the mountains, and take over Maracay or Turmero. They succeeded in their mission. However, on July 14th the independence movement lost a battle in Ocumare, and had to retreat quickly, barely escaping. In the confusion Bolívar and his officials rashly decided to start an operation in Choróní, and through the Aragua valleys they would reach the southern plains or Los Llanos, to meet the revolutionary army that was waiting for them. But, all this territory was mostly *realistas* (Spaniard Viceroy Army). Piñango and General Gregor MacGregor,¹¹⁴ were the leaders of this strategy, commanding 700 men to Choróní. They accomplished their mission and for a

¹¹² Ibid., 194.

¹¹³ Ibid., 205

¹¹⁴ Gregor MacGregor (December 24, 1786 – December 3, 1845) was Scottish soldier, adventurer and colonizer who fought in South American independence. In 1803 he initiated his military career. He was attracted by the independent movements in America, especially in Venezuela where he arrived in 1811. By 1812 MacGregor was already an assistant to General Francisco de Miranda. He married Josefa Antonia Lovera, Simón Bolívar's cousin.

short period of time Choróní was a Patriot Headquarters. On July 18th, the troops reached the Cumbre and began their trip to Maracay.¹¹⁵

Bolívar embarked from Ocumare at the last minute and encountered his adversaries. After recovering part of the armament, Bolívar finally arrived in Choróní on July 19th. However, MacGregor had already been gone for two days, and now the realistas occupied the valley. Bolívar had to leave to Chuao with his people to get the news from the patriot movement.¹¹⁶

Even though it was a short stay in Choróní, these days must have transformed the town, having militaries all around, and probably dividing the town in the support of the revolutionary cause and against it. There are not written records of these days, but a couple of distinguished young men from Choróní continued the journey with them and got close to Bolívar. Sadly, after the fall of the Republic in the 1830s, these men were persecuted, and their properties confiscated, and some were even executed.¹¹⁷

With the terrible conflagration of the War of Independence, the economy of the country was in disarray and the cacao production in the coastal Aragua valleys diminished. As years passed, some improvement occurred, however, civil wars arose all over the country and continued to affect the economy. In Choróní, a modest increase of the population continued into the late nineteenth century.¹¹⁸

In terms of the economy, the cacao haciendas were reestablished and increased in number. Also during the nineteenth century coffee was introduced to the market, and quickly cultivated in the Aragua valleys. The out-of-fashion and embattled slave workforce was freed and paid for their work.¹¹⁹ The freedom of the slaves affected many families who could not afford to pay for them and they subsequently lost their haciendas. In Choróní,

¹¹⁵ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeño*, 1:206, 207.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:207, 208

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:208

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:239

¹¹⁹ The slavery is abolished first with Simón Bolívar in 1810, however this decision was not consolidated until March 24th, 1854 with President José Tadeo Monagas who promulgate a Law to abolished the slavery.

many haciendas that started to cultivate both, cacao and coffee, added patios and rooms to accommodate both products.¹²⁰

The Growth of Choroní

In 1720, Don Pedro José de Olavarriaga traveled through the Province of Caracas by orders from the Viceroy of New Grenade Don Jorge de Villalonga. During his travel, Olavarriaga stopped in Choroní and recorded the number of haciendas, their production, and the population and described the valley (Figure 16). This record is an excellent source for gaining insight into some aspects of colonial life during the 18th century. Olavarriaga indicated that the following haciendas existed in Choroní (Table 2).

Haciendas	Number of trees	Fanegas
Los López	9,000	90
El Padre Doctrinero Ignacio Vásquez de la Cruz	5,000	50
Doña Micaela de Ovalle and other four (4) amos	6,000	60
Payare, of Nicolás Gama	5,000	50
El Conuco Grande, of the Ovalle	6,000	60
El Casino (also El Casibo), of Don Simón Coupar	14,000	140
Los Ovalle	26,000	260
La Isleta of Doña Catalina de la Torre	4,000	40
Don Simón Millán	5,000	50
Some <i>conucos</i> of the Indians	5,000	50
Total	85,000	850

Table 2. Data from Don Pedro José de Olavarriaga visit to Choroní in 1720. Data published by Mario Briceño Perozo in *Instrucción General y Particular del Estado Presente de la Provincia de Venezuela en los Años de 1720 y 1721*.¹²¹

These numbers make it possible to document the rapid growth of the haciendas and the large plantation of cacao trees found in this area, only 100 years after the foundation of Choroní. The Ovalles were still an important family with three large haciendas.

In 1760, the priest Manuel Joseph Montenegro did a census of the population, counting the houses, general location, number of people, number of slaves (if any) ,and the tributary Native Americans (the tributaries where the Native Americans that could work, usually young men and women). Montenegro counted a total of 1,384 inhabitants of

¹²⁰ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeso*, 1:240.

¹²¹ Pedro Olavarriaga, *Instrucción General y Particular del Estado Presente de la Provincia de Venezuela en los Años de 1720 y 1721*, ed. Mario Briceño Perozo, 1st ed., Fuentes para la Historia Colonial de Venezuela 76 (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1965), 230

Choroní. The areas mentioned in the census included Payare, Casivo o Casino, among others.¹²²

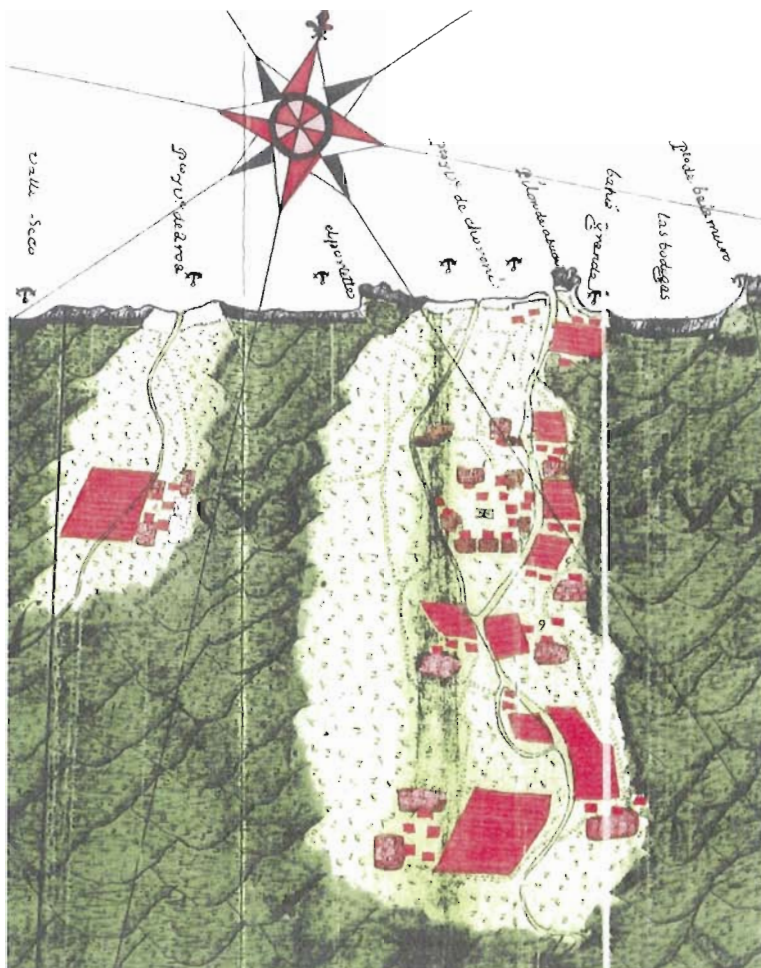


Figure 16. *Plan de la Costa Marítima de la Provincia de Venezuela desde el puerto de Macuto hasta la punta de los Flamencos* (Plan of the Maritime coast of the Province of Venezuela from the port of Macuto to the Flamencos) by the Engineer Juan Amador Courten for Pedro José de Olavarriaga. 1720-1721. Source by Mario Briceño Perozo in *Instrucción General y Particular del Estado Presente de la Provincia de Venezuela en los Años de 1720 y 1721*

Bishop Mariano Martí initiated his activities as bishop in 1770, and in 1772 he started a journey to each town of the Dioceses of Caracas. This journey would last twelve years. In December 30, 1772, Bishop Martí arrived in Choroní, and stayed for a week.

¹²² Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeno*, 1:171.

During his visit, Martí completed a census of the local population and found a total of 1,541 people living in this area, as shown in Table 3 below.¹²³

In 1790, another census was conducted in Choróní by Priest Joseph Antonio Sabino Gómes. This census is similar to Montenegro's breakdown by houses and areas. The locations mentioned are *El Pueblo* (the town of Choróní), *El Portete*, *La Isla*, *Playa Grande*, *Barrio Colorado*, *El Casibo* (Casivo or Casino), among others. Unfortunately, one folio of this census is missing and the total population is unknown. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, this survey is important because it not only mentions the family names, but also the names of the areas, which are still the haciendas' names today. During the end of the 18th century, other surveys were done in Choróní. Don Francisco Saavedra counted 51 houses and 1332 inhabitants, including 201 whites, six free Indians, 82 tributary Indians, 751 free people of color and 292 slaves working in 22 haciendas.¹²⁴

Population Groups	Number of Houses
Native Americans living in the town	12
Native Americans living outside the town	6
Spaniards and other mix groups living in the town	144
Total Houses	311

Table 3. Survey prepared by Bishop Mariano Martí, during his visit to Choróní in 1772. Source: Data from Luis G. Castillo Lara in *Nortemar Aragueño*

Another important census was recorded during this period, and although the specific date is not given, it is assured to be conducted near the end of the 18th century. The surveyor, Licenciado Manuel Jacinto de Sosa, listed the names of the haciendas, owners, mayordomo (if any), and the number of slaves. This information is important to determine the history of the haciendas, and their origins. The haciendas covered in this study are mentioned in this survey: Casibo, Isleta, Santa Polonia, Sabaneta, Torres, Playa Grande, among others that were not case studies, but were known to be haciendas up until the end of the 20th century, like Payare, Santa Clara, La Soledad, La Aljorra, San Antonio, La Rinconada, Santa Bárbara, among others (Table 4).¹²⁵

¹²³ Ibid., 1:153.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 1:171-179

¹²⁵ Ibid., 1:181-183

Hacienda Name	Plantation	Owner and/or Mayordomo	Number of Slaves
<i>Casivo</i>	<i>Cacao and sugar cane</i>	<i>Doña Catalina Pérez</i>	61
<i>Isleta</i>	<i>Cacao</i>	<i>Don Domingo Sosa</i>	2
El Níspero	Cacao	D. Nicolás Gracia	2
Payare	Cacao	Dr. Fuentes Inheritors, and Mayordomo D. Joseph Manuel García	3
Nuestra Señora Del Carmen	Cacao	Onetto Basurto	1
Santa Clara	Cacao	Francisco Simancas	0
Las Animas	Cacao	Juan Josef Valles	0
San Antonio	Cacao	Luis Gómez	0
<i>Santa Polonia</i>	<i>Cacao</i>	<i>D. Josef María García</i>	8
El Santísimo	Cacao	Doña Vicenta y Doña Soledad García	7
La Soledad	Cacao	D. Diego García	1
La Aljorra	Cacao	D. Bruno Perdomo and Mayordomo Josef Antonio Rodríguez	14
<i>Sabaneta</i>	<i>Cacao</i>	<i>Juan Josef de Ochoa</i>	5
San Antonio	Cacao	D. Juan Antonio Hernández	6
La Escorzonera	Cacao	Vicente Becerra	-
La Rinconada	Cacao	Don Josef Antonio Rodríguez	7
Nuestra Señora Del Carmen	Cacao	D. Josef del Rosario Roldán	4
<i>Torres</i>	<i>Cacao</i>	<i>Dr. Fuentes Inheritors, and Mayordomo D. Nicolás García</i>	7
El Carmen	Cacao	Licenciado Josef Miguel Sosa and siblings, Mayordomo Juan Antonio Coro	31
Jesús Nazareno	Cacao	D. Rafael Rodríguez	9
San Josef	Cacao	Doña Manuela Pedrosa	2
Chimine	Cacao	D. Ignacio Eizaguirre	28
Nuestra Señora De Candelaria	Cacao	D. Josef Calderín	10
<i>Playa Grande</i>	<i>Cacao</i>	<i>D. Antonio González and D. Josef Calderín</i>	9
La Isla	Cacao	Antonio de Ovalle	6
Nuestra Señora Del Carmen	Cacao	Candelaria Caro	11
Santa Bárbara	Cacao	Bartolomé García	-
Note 1: Besides the haciendas included in this survey are also multitudes of groves with different owners that because the small number of cacao trees and do not have slaves were omitted on this survey.			
Note 2: The haciendas used as case studies in this thesis are highlighted in Bold and Italic.			

Table 4. Surveyed by Licenciado Manuel Jacinto de Sosa. Source: Data from Luis Guillermo Castillo Lara in *Nortermar Aragueño*)

By 1833, when Choroni included 2,279 inhabitants, the town was part of the Canton Maracay. In 1849 Puerto Colombia or simply Colombia, was elevated to a parish, with its

village formed around the port and its vicinities. During the same time, it was also declared a port for commerce with a customhouse. It was to serve as port of Maracay and the Aragua Valleys, and a road was going to be built to connect Maracay and Choroní, however this project was never completed due to lack of funds. In 1873, the independent Department of Choroní with the Districts of Choroní and Colombia were created.¹²⁶

In 1875, when Miguel Tejera visited Choroní, there were 677 houses with 3,460 inhabitants. He was enchanted with the town and wrote that the village of Choroní was:

...built a short distance from the seashore in a delicious valley flaunting the most rich and widest variety of vegetation. From the port to the city, the area traveled is a precious garden, where there is nothing that cannot invite men to delight in the contemplation of the beautiful countryside. The river meandering, murmuring between the rocks; a green carpet covers the banks; and the dense vegetation of the houses and properties that extend on the margin, invite in this way to live and to enjoy all the beauty that life can offer.

The original quote in Spanish reads:

...Esta villa se halla construida á muy poca distancia de la costa del mar en un valle delicioso donde se ostenta la más rica y variada vegetación. Del puerto á la ciudad, el trayecto que se recorre es un precioso jardín, en que nada hay que no convide al hombre á deleitarse en la contemplación de las bellezas naturales. El río que serpentea, murmurando entre las piedras; la verde alfombra que cubre sus orillas; y la tupida vegetación de las quintas y propiedades que á sus márgenes se extienden, convidan de esa manera á vivir allí gozando de todas las delicias que puede ofrecer la vida.¹²⁷

Also during 1875, Choroní contained 32 cacao haciendas, 26 coffee haciendas and 3 for sugar cane. It produced 127,564 kilos of cacao and 11,820 kilos of coffee. The other areas mentioned in the Choroní District vicinity included: Bella Vista, Cumbe, El Carmen, Sitio Cajima, Campo Alegre, Casibo Abajo, Sitio El Coral, Sitio Ceciba, Chuponal, Sitio El Placer, Payare, Rinconada Abajo, Rinconada, Santa Bárbara, Sitio La Soledad, Sitio Torres, Sitio Tesoro and Morundo, Uraca, Izaguirre (Eizaguirre); and in Colombia District are: Chuao, Cepe, El Portete, Tujica, Valle Santa Rosa (Playa Grande) and Valle de Aroa.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Ibid., 1:240.

¹²⁷ Miguel Tejera, *Venezuela Pintoresca é Ilustrada: Relación Histórica (Desde el Descubrimiento de la América hasta 1870.) Geográfica, Estadística, Comercial é Industrial Usos Costumbres y Literatura* (Paris: Librería Española de E.Denné Schmitz, 1875), 347

Almost a century later in 1961, Choróní produced 270,700 coffee trees, planted on 152 hectares and only 91 were producing coffee: 22,488 kilos. There was also an important coconut production of 8,137 trees and about 400,000 units. By 1980, coconut production was the largest. However, the production was reduced due to an increased use of the Playa Grande beach by tourists and the improper use of the trees, including abuses from the local government who cut down trees to allow vehicles at the shore. In 2010, the plantation is being restored only in Playa Grande, while Tipire, the former El Portete hacienda abandoned the agricultural production completely for housing and hotels.¹²⁹

Twentieth Century: Decline of Agriculture and Rise of Tourism

Choróní witnessed many changes during the twentieth century, more than this town had seen in the prior 300 years of its history. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Venezuela was under the military regime of Juan Vicente Gómez (24 July 1857 - 17 December 1935), who ruled the country from 1908 to 1935. During this period, Gómez lived in Maracay, even though the capital of the country was Caracas. From there he bought many haciendas across the country including Choróní, becoming the richest man in Venezuela.¹³⁰

In 1934 in Choróní Gómez acquired the following properties from José Antonio Hernández Maitín, Miguel Adolfo Gordils, among others (Figure 17):

- Hacienda *Playa Grande*
- Hacienda *Uraca*
- Hacienda *La Trinidad* or *Izaquirre* (Eizaguirre)
- Hacienda *El Rosario* or *La Pantojera*
- Hacienda *Campos Elíseos* or *La Gonzalera*
- Hacienda *Santa Rosa*
- Hacienda *Torres*
- Hacienda *El Pensamiento*

¹²⁸ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeño*, 1:240, 241

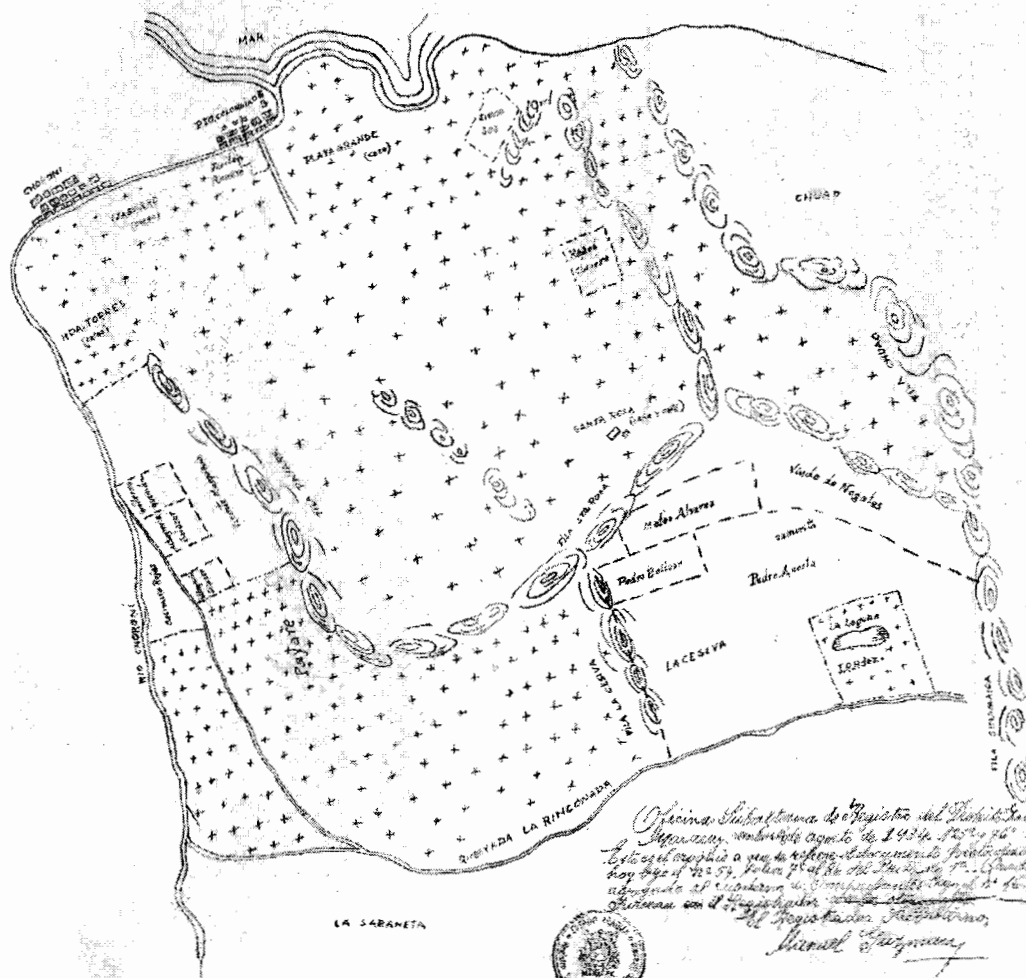
¹²⁹ Pedro Modesto Bolívar B., *Apuntes Geo-Históricos de Choróní: en sus 370 años de Fundado*, Colección Pembol No. 12 (Maracay, Venezuela: Concejo del Municipio Girardot, 1992), 43-44

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 63

HACIENDA "PLAYA GRANDE" PROPIEDAD DEL SEÑOR GRAL. J.V. GOMEZ.

*Terrenos de las Rafael Hernández y los particulares propiedades que
están dentro de sus límites.*

*Esta carta es formada según datos suministrados por
Enrique Ramos y Vicente Mosquera
La marca con el 1 y 2 corresponde a la de José Rafael Hernández.*



Oficina Subalterna de Registro del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, San Juan, P.R. Agosto 8 de 1934.
Este es el original a que se refiere el documento de compra que hoy tiene el No. 54, Folio 85 al 86 del Libro No. 7. El cual se encuentra en el Registro de Compraventas del No. 16. Se transcribe con el fin de que sirva de referencia.
El Registrador Público,
Manuel S. Hernández
J. Gómez
José Rafael Hernández
Enrique Ramos y Vicente Mosquera

Figure 17. Plan of Choróní included in the deeds of the properties that were bought by Juan Vicente Gómez. Dated August 8, 1934. Map courtesy of Rosa Haydée Machado Segovia

- Hacienda and house *La Colonia*
- Hacienda *Payares*
- Hacienda *La Escorzonera o Romerito*
- Hacienda *Tremaria*
- Hacienda *Valle de Aroa*
- A cacao grove located in Puerto Colombia
- Potrero (pasture) *La Laguna*
- Five houses in Choroní
- The house *Quinta Villa Emilia*¹³¹

Gómez died in December 1935, without getting to enjoy these properties. After his death, all of his properties were passed to the nation through a Confiscatory Agreement. Most of these haciendas were sold, and offered first to people who were politically affected by the regime as an apology from the new government, as with the Hacienda Playa Grande, bought by Don Pedro Miguel Machado Rodríguez in 1940; and the Hacienda Torres by Vicente Fuentes in 1942.¹³²

Under Gómez's government, many new roads were built to connect Maracay to the coastal towns of Turiamo, Ocumare de la Costa, Choroní, and Puerto Colombia. The anticipated projects for these towns were to build modern seaside resorts and luxury tourist hotels. However, Henry Pittier informed the government and the scientific community of the time about the importance of conserving the natural environment by protecting springs, flora, and fauna, so only the roads that are still in use today were built. In 1937, under the presidency of Eleazar López Contreras, after Gómez's death, a National Park was founded.¹³³ The Choroní-Maracay road is the main access by land to Choroní. It was paved in 1976. In addition, in the last thirty years, the number of haciendas has decreased because of the increased demand for hotels and housing.

¹³¹ Ibid., 64.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Héctor Herrera H., "Propuesta en apoyo a la sostenibilidad de la biodiversidad del Parque Nacional Henri Pittier," *Papeles de Fundacite Aragua*, September 2003, http://www.fundacite-aragua.gob.ve/archivos/pdf/p.f_proyectohenripittier_.pdf (accessed December 22, 2009)

Choroní has been occupied for thousands of years, and in the last 400 years Europeans were enchanted by the beautiful landscape and the mystery of the valley. However, as humans we have not been able to accept the landscape as it is, we have to modify it even as marvelous as it may be. The town is located in a country full of diversity that built itself upon agriculture and then became a world leader of oil production. To understand the nature of this town, the geography is as important as the history.

VENEZUELA AND ITS GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

Venezuela is located north of the equator, on the northern coast of South America. (Figure 18). The coast along the north by the Caribbean Sea extends 2,813 Km (1,748 miles); the south borders the Republic of Brazil with 2,000 Km of frontier (1,243 miles); to the east along the Atlantic Ocean and the Republic of Guyana, the border is 743 Km (462 miles); and to the west there is the Republic of Colombia with a frontier of 2,050 km (1,274 miles). Venezuela embraces about 18% of the South American continental area, with a total of 916,445 square kilometers and a land area of 882,050 square kilometers (344,551 square miles). This is about twice the size of California.¹³⁴

Venezuela is a diverse country, not only in its *mestizo* people, but even more so in its geography. Throughout the territory, one may find deserts with dunes in the Falcón area, large lakes like Maracaibo or Valencia, and even the snowcapped Andes. The impressive Amazonia extends through most of the country. Meanwhile the largest cities are located along the coast, with view of nearby mountains and refreshed by the easterly winds that make Venezuela an ideal site. This territory does not have any volcanoes, nor do hurricanes ever reach the coasts because they change their course when they hit the Caribbean islands. This privileged geographic situation was recognized by the Spaniards when they founded their cities. The only difficulties they found were earthquakes that hit the country every hundred years or so, which prevented them from building structures higher than two stories. Other than this disadvantage, the territory was perfect for agriculture, with excellent soil and weather that can be adapted to diverse products.

¹³⁴ Centro Nacional de Tecnologías de Información, "Regiones Geográficas," Official, *Gobierno en Línea*, n.d., http://www.gobiernoenlinea.ve/venezuela/perfil_geografia3.html (accessed December 17, 2009).

Geographically, Venezuela is divided into five major regions (Figure 19):

- Northwest with the *Maracaibo Basin* or lowlands
- South Central region of *Los Llanos*, the wide *Orinoco* plains
- Southeastern Amazonian area with its highly dissected *Guayana* region (Guyana highlands)
- Southwestern region of *Los Andes*
- North Central Coastal area - where this study area is located.

The Basin of Maracaibo Lake is located in the Northeastern part of Venezuela, forming an angle between the *Cordillera of Perijá* and *Cordillera of Mérida*. It extends about



Figure 18. Topographic map of Venezuela, 1993. Source: Perry-Castañeda Library, Map Collection. www.lib.utexas.edu

52,000 square kilometers. It is mainly flat with two main regions, one with good drainage and little rain on low hills, no higher than 100 meters (328 feet); and a second region that is muddy with bad drainage, humid and rainy. On the eastern side of the Basin is the main oil production area of the country. The *Guajira* area is located in the northwest of this region and is shared with the Republic of Colombia, and is the strongest (as a community) Native American community in the country. Their traditions have survived to the present day, and are now well integrated into the Spanish culture.¹³⁵

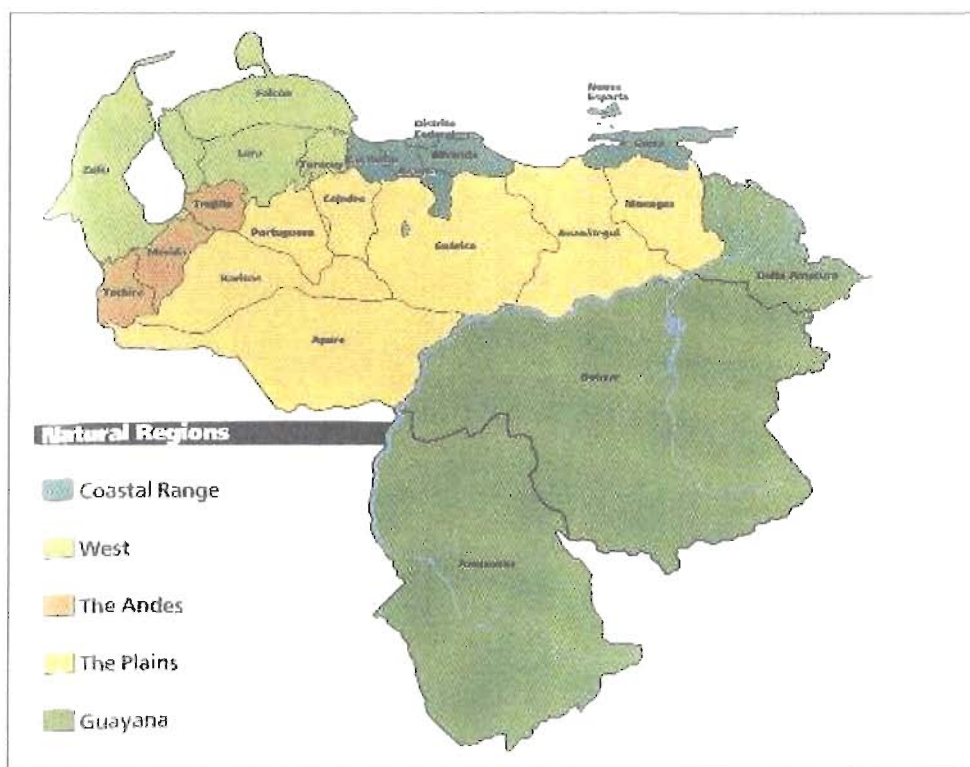


Figure 19. Natural regions of Venezuelan: Coastal Range, West (Maracaibo Basin), the Andes, Los Llanos (the plains) and Guayana. Source: www.fao.org

Los Llanos is a large plain, located in the southern central region, at an elevation of 200 to 500 meters above sea level (656 to 1,640 feet). It covers 25% of Venezuela extending 1,300 Km (808 miles)¹³⁶ from the mouth of the Orinoco River¹³⁷ in the east, to the Andes to the west. In this huge area, there are large deposits of petroleum.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

As was explained in the previous chapter, *hatos* (cattle ranches) are located in this area. Because of the minimal amount of work required for raising cattle compared with running the haciendas on the coast, there was no need to bring African slaves to the region. This created a different kind of culture. The music and dances in the area are very similar to Spain, with *arpa*, *cuatro* and *maraca*¹³⁸ (harp, kind of guitar and rumba shakers) as instruments.

Guayana or *Macizo Guayanés* is located to the southeast; occupying the Bolivar and Amazonas States with an area of 423,000 square kilometers, which is about 45% of Venezuela. The oldest geological formations in the world are located in this region. On the Southeastern edge, the physiology is characterized by impressive, high plateaus or *tepuis* that reach 2,275 meters high (7,464 feet). At the northern end of the region, there is the open range or *sabanas*, with diverse vegetation. The most important mining resources are located in this region, mainly iron and bauxite. The *Guri* dam was built here on the *Caroní* River, and powers most of the country. The largest waterfall in the world, Angel Falls (indigenous name is *Parakupavena*) is also located in this region. Because of the large trade with British Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, there are some groups whose language is a mix between Spanish and English. Also, the local culture has been largely influence by African slaves mixing with the large native population that is still located in this area. The southern part is set aside for conservation as a national park and also contains a reservoir for Native American inhabitants; most of the aboriginal population of the country is located in this area.¹³⁹

Los Andes is a mountain system with the highest peaks in the country. They are an extension of the Colombian Andes, which forks at Pamplona, Colombia into two ranges: the

¹³⁷ The *Orinoco* River is one of the longest South America at 2,140 km, (1,330 miles). Its drainage basin, sometimes called the Orinoquia, covers 880,000 km², 76.3% in Venezuela with the rest in Colombia. The Orinoco and its tributaries are a major transportation system for the Llanos in Venezuela and the Llanos of Colombia.

¹³⁸ The *cuatro* is smaller than a guitar. *Cuatro* means *four* in Spanish, although current instruments may have more than four strings. The *maracas* are a native instrument of Puerto Rico, Cuba, Venezuela, Guatemala and several nations of the Caribbean and Latin America. They are simple percussion instruments (idiophones), usually played in pairs, consisting of a dried *totumo* o *taparo* (Crescentia cujete) filled with seeds or dried beans. They may also be made of leather, wood, or plastic.

¹³⁹ Centro Nacional de Tecnologías de Información, *Regiones Geográficas*

Cordillera of Perijá and the Cordillera of Mérida, better known as the Venezuelan Andes. This range runs from the *Táchira* State on the southwestern extreme of the country, passing through *Mérida*, *Barinas*, *Trujillo*, *Portuguesa* and ending in the *Lara* State in the north central area. There are five glaciers, and the snow covers the mountains above 4,200 meters, and sometimes as low as 3,800 meters. The highest peak is *Pico Bolívar* at 5,007 meters. In chapter II, this region was referred to as perfect for coffee plantation because of the area's climate.¹⁴⁰

The Coastal Range is located on the Central Coastal area, a northeastern extension of the Andes Mountains also known as the Maritime Andes. These mountains make up only about 3% of Venezuela; however, they contain the highest density of population. This range runs parallel to the Caribbean Sea for 870 km (540 miles) and varies from 10 to 80 km wide (6.2 to 50 miles) with elevations of 600 to 2,675 meters (1,970 to 8,775 feet). It extends from the *Lara* State to the west, to the *Paria* and *Araya* Peninsula to the east, with only one important interruption: the *Unare* depression, dividing the range in two: the central and eastern system.¹⁴¹

The coastal range consists of two parallel ranges, running east and west along the coast of the Caribbean Sea: the range of the littoral, and the inland. "Between this chain and the inland range lies the garden of Venezuela, the valley of Aragua, one of the most beautiful in South America. At its western edge is the famous lake Valencia, 1410 feet above sea level. Its estimated area is 220 square miles."¹⁴² Caracas is located in the highest inland section, about 1,000 meters above sea level (3,280 feet). The highest altitude in the littoral range is at *Pico Naiguatá* at 2,765 meters (feet) and *Pico Turimiquire* at 2,595 meters (feet) in the inland range. There are three important cities in the interior valleys of the Central Coastal area: Caracas, Valencia and Maracay.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² George Earl Church, "South America: An Outline of Its Physical Geography," *The Geographical Journal* 17, no. 4 (April 1901): 333-406, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1775550> (accessed December 19, 2009)

¹⁴³ Centro Nacional de Tecnologías de Información, "Regiones Geográficas."

The Aragua State

Choroní is located in the Aragua State within the Central Coastal region. Aragua has llanos (plains), jungles, and a large littoral area of about 7,014 square kilometers (2,708 square miles). It ends at the Caribbean Sea to the north; the Capital District and the Miranda State to the east; the Guárico State to the south and the Carabobo state to the west. The state's climate is tropical with the inland portion receiving more rain than the coast. The Aragua River Valley in this state produces a variety of agricultural products, mainly sugarcane in the inland portion, although potatoes are also an important crop. Other important crops include cacao, coffee, cotton, corn, rice, and tobacco. In the southern part of the state, where the llanos are located, there are large hatos dedicated to cattle raising. The state's industrial development (including cereal companies, toys, furniture, and cement plants, among others) has also been an important part of the economy, especially in and around Maracay, the capital.¹⁴⁴

Maracay has played an important role in the Venezuelan economy, as well as in politics (as the home to the Air Force). Most of its recent development is related to this military influence. During the colonial period, Maracay was also a large producer of indigo, sugar cane and corn.

This valley is flat and has an annual rainfall of 800 mm. The rainy season starts in May and extends to October, with a dry period from November to April. The annual average temperature is 24.6°C (76.28°F), with an average high of 32.1°C (89.7°F), and average low of 18.3°C (65°F).¹⁴⁵

In order to access Choroní by land, it is necessary to drive through Maracay. The Castaño area, today one of the most expensive locations in Maracay, is at the skirt of the mountains that access Choroní. *Las Cocuizas* Park, with hot springs and beautiful scenic views, is the entrance to the road to the Henri Pittier National Park, which leads to Choroní. Many have travelled these roads, and most have been impressed by the landscape and the

¹⁴⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica, "Aragua," *Britannica Online Encyclopedia*, 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/31938/Aragua> (accessed December 20, 2009).

¹⁴⁵ Douglas Sucre, "Delimitación de Áreas Ecogeográficas del Estado Aragua," *Papeles de Fundacite Aragua*, March 2003, 30

vast diversity of Aragua. Alexander Von Humboldt stayed in Maracay between 1799-1804 and described the trails to Choroní and the coastal area (Figure 20):

(...) To the North of Turmero, a granitic summit rises in the Cordillera of the coast [The Chuao valley], from the top of which we discern at the same time the sea and the lake of Valencia. Crossing this rocky ridge, which runs toward the west farther than the eye can reach, paths somewhat difficult lead to the rich plantations of cacao on the coast, [and] to Choroní, Turiamo, and Ocumare, [both] noted alike for the fertility of the soil and the insalubrities of their climate...¹⁴⁶

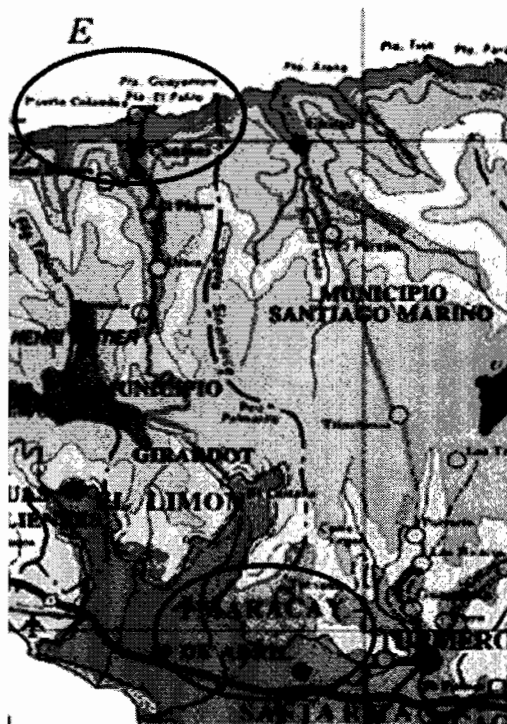


Figure 20. Detail of Aragua State Map, note Puerto Colombia and Maracay, with the topography indicated in colors, as red the highest point and green the lowest. Source: <http://eshuar.tripod.com>

The littoral area is defined by the mountain range. This impressive landscape contains diverse vegetation, fauna, and soils. To protect this historic landscape, the first national park in Venezuela was created in 1937, and originally named *Rancho Grande*. This national park changed its name in 1953 to Henri Pittier National Park, in honor of the Swiss

¹⁴⁶ Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland, *Personal narrative of travels to the equinoctial regions of the new continent during the years 1799-1804*, trans. Helen Maria Williams (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1827), 115.

geographer and botanist who helped to create it. With an extension of 107,633 Hectares (266.3 acres), it is located between two states, Aragua and Carabobo, in the Coastal Range. It is a reservoir of great biodiversity, with endemic species of high scientific value. There are more than 578 species of birds, representing 43% of all Venezuelan birds, and 6.5% of the world's bird species; more than can be found in Europe. There are also about 22 endemic species of fauna. The diverse vegetation exists because of the different environments there including semi-deciduous forest, humid tropical forest, deciduous forest, *sabana*, mangrove forest, arid vegetation, and many water resources.¹⁴⁷

Two roads traverse this National Park. Both start in Maracay and pass through the mountains to the Caribbean Sea. One leads to Ocumare de la Costa to the west, and the other connects to Choroní to the east. There are no roads parallel to the Caribbean Sea that connect at sea level; they are all “one-way” roads, because they only go inland from the coast and back again. Consequently, there are no connections by land, only by walking or *lanchas* or boats to other nearby towns like Chuao, Uricao, Cepe, Valle Seco, Aroa, etc.

The road to Choroní starts at the base of the mountain on the Cocuizas Park and crosses to the Henri Pittier National Park, to a hidden paradise on the other side. Choroní is not only beautiful to locals, but also for many tourists that have come only to visit but then stayed for the rest of their lives. There are many places to explore in the mountains, forests, arid areas, beaches, and urban life. The mountain in Choroní reaches 1,130 meters (3,707 feet) at the *La Cumbre* summit, with temperatures that can reach 6-12 °C (42.8 -53.6 °F). This road to Choroní was built between 1920 and 1935, ordered by President General Juan Vicente Gómez, a dictator who, at the time, bought many haciendas and houses in the area, as explained above.¹⁴⁸ The workers used to build the road were political prisoners. The year the road was finished and everything was ready to receive him, Gómez died and never visited Choroní.

Journey to the Valley of Choroní

Access to Choroní is by boat from La Guaira, Ocumare, or Puerto Cabello, or by automobile along the 52 km (33 miles) Choroní-Maracay road that meanders over the

¹⁴⁷ Herrera H., “Propuesta en apoyo a la sostenibilidad de la biodiversidad del Parque Nacional Henri Pittier,” 1-2

¹⁴⁸ Bolivar B., *Apuntes Geo-Históricos de Choroní*, 65

mountain, to reach Choroní requires almost two hours by vehicle. This dangerous but paradisiacal road was built between 1920 and 1935, and paved and widened to accommodate more cars in 1976 as a response to request of the community. Choroní is a *Foreign Municipality*¹⁴⁹ within the Girardot Municipality that comprises Maracay and is located at longitude West 67° 36' 35" and latitude North 10° 30' 05". The boundaries of Choroní are North to the Caribbean Sea; East to *Santiago Mariño* Municipality; South to the peak of *Palmarito*, along the crest *Fila Alta* to the *Chimborazo* hill; West to Ocumare de la Costa de Oro Municipality (Figure 20).¹⁵⁰

At higher elevations, the weather gradually changes from very hot at Maracay to a cooler and humid forest climate. Upon reaching the *Cumbre*, the highest point on the road, in the afternoon it is common to find fog that strikingly embellishes the landscape. The heavy traffic on this road has kept animal wildlife far from it; however, at times *Araguatos* (large reddish monkeys) can be seen in the trees (Figure 21-A). The geography in this area is dominated by the basin of the Choroní River, which runs south to north. On the shore of the sea the valley opens up to high mountains, and is embellished by the dense foliage of massive trees. The many slopes formed by the mountainous region create micro-valleys with dense populations in villages and towns.¹⁵¹ Choroní, like most of the Northern coastal region towns, is influenced by the east winds or *vientos alisios*, which are constant in direction, but variable in intensity, especially during summer, and are located in the tropic around the 30-35° of altitude.¹⁵²

In the upper area of the valley, the river is named Río Grande del Medio (Grand River of the Middle) and receives its water from the upper crest. In this area, the *Selva Nublada* or the Foggy Rainforest is found (Figure 21-B), also named by the naturalists, "*ombrófila*", meaning always green and dense, with an annual average temperature of 18°C

¹⁴⁹ Foreign Municipality or *Municipio Foráneo* is the term given to Municipalities in Venezuela that are part of a municipality that can potentially become autonomous in the future.

¹⁵⁰ Bolívar B., *Apuntes Geo-Históricos de Choroní*, 58-60

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 60

¹⁵² Sucre, "Delimitación de Áreas Ecogeográficas," 10

(64.4°F). Where the altitude is higher than 2,000 meters, the temperature is below 15°C (59°F). The annual rainfall at the crest Fila Alta can reach 1,800 mm.¹⁵³

Past the Cumbre, as elevation decreases, the road continues downward, the fog disappears quickly and the slope increases. About twenty minutes later by car, the first settlements become visible, and people start to appear along with small houses and fruits stores with churches, and schools. Romerito is the first village, with houses surrounding the road; construction here is almost non-stop until the coast. The villages and hamlets located along the road have taken the names of the old haciendas that once produced cacao, coffee, sugar cane, among others: Romerito, Tremaria, La Esmeralda, Uraca, Paraparo, El Charal, Los Cerritos, La Planta, El Mamón, La Soledad, La Loma and the most recent villages created are El Parnaso, El Cumbe, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, and El Portete.



Figure 21. Road Choróni-Maracay. In photo “A” are the Araguatos in Choróni-Maracay road. In photo “B” is the *Selva Nublada* or the Foggy Rainforest. Photo “A” by Eloísa Fuenmayor Machado, and photo “B” by Laura Fuenmayor Machado

The Choróni River and its tributaries must be crossed many times along this road. To the north, in the lower part of the valley near the beach, are towns of Choróni and Puerto Colombia, where the weather and vegetation change completely. This area is a tropical dry forest with an average annual temperature of 26-28°C (78.8 - 82.4°F), and average annual precipitation of 795.2 mm with extreme rains dumping 82 to 92 mm in three hours. There

¹⁵³ Bolivar B., *Apuntes Geo-Históricos de Choróni*, 60

are nine months of drought annually, which require a net demand for irrigation of 400 mm. The original vegetation is essentially tolerant of an arid climate.¹⁵⁴

Spanish settlers modified this landscape when they arrived in the late sixteenth century by irrigating the valley with acequias, planting massive trees to shadow the land and protect the cacao trees from the sun. This modification affected not only the vegetation and wildlife, but also the local microclimate, creating a more refreshing and livable town. The fauna has also adapted. For 400 years, the area has been irrigated and protected by large trees, allowing some animals to come down from the higher elevations. Today with the deforestation and lack of irrigation, the original vegetation is returning, the temperature is rising around Choróní. There are not studies related to these changes in the area, as it would be difficult to differentiate the effects of climate change or deforestation, or if one is the consequence of the other, but what is clear is that there is a change in the weather, wind and water levels on the river.

Santa Clara de Asís de Choróní

As the road approaches Choróní, population density increases and the temperature rises. Traveling north, when the Hacienda *La Aljorra* is left behind (has now been converted to a hotel), and the road turns east, there is the majestic and powerful Choróní River, as it flows to the sea. Here, the mountain is left behind and the lower part of the valley begins. The large *mijaos* and *caobas* are now part of the landscape, but only on the east side of the river, because at the west few trees remain. Instead of the former haciendas, hotels, houses, and commerce dominate the landscape. Their shiny metal roofs reflect the sun that is capable of toasting cacao. The dense foliage that used to enchant the poet *José Antonio Maitín*¹⁵⁵ is now losing its integrity, and can only be observed on the other side of the river,

¹⁵⁴ Sucre, "Delimitación de Áreas Ecogeográficas," 10.

¹⁵⁵ James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds., "Appleton's Cyclopædia of American biography," in *MAITIN, José Antonio (mi-teen')*, vol. 4, Revised. (D. Appleton and company, 1888), 178 José Antonio Maitín was a "Venezuelan poet, b. [born] in Porto [Puerto] Cabello in 1798; d. [died] in Choróní in 1874. In consequence of persecution, he emigrated to Havana, and there he made the acquaintance of Fernandez Madrid, who taught him to cultivate science and poetry. In 1824 he returned to his native country, and in 1826 he was appointed by Santos Michelena attaché to the legation at London. On his return he began to write poetry, and in 1835-'8 published in Valencia two dramas in verse, which were favorably received by the critics, but are not included in a collection of his poems that appeared later. In 1841 he began to publish poems in the literary papers. He afterward retired to the valley of Choróní, where his poetical talent found new inspiration, and where he spent the rest of his

to the east, where the haciendas Torres and Playa Grande still exist. Then the river is out of sight at the entrance of the colonial town of Choroni.

In this area, the Colonial town of *Santa Clara de Asís de Choroni* also is visible, with its narrow road and one-story houses. Adobe and tapia buildings stand at both sides of the street, elevated from the river about five meters (16.4 feet), with the strong, fast-flowing and rocky river, treating them to a calming sound and cool breeze (Figure 22).

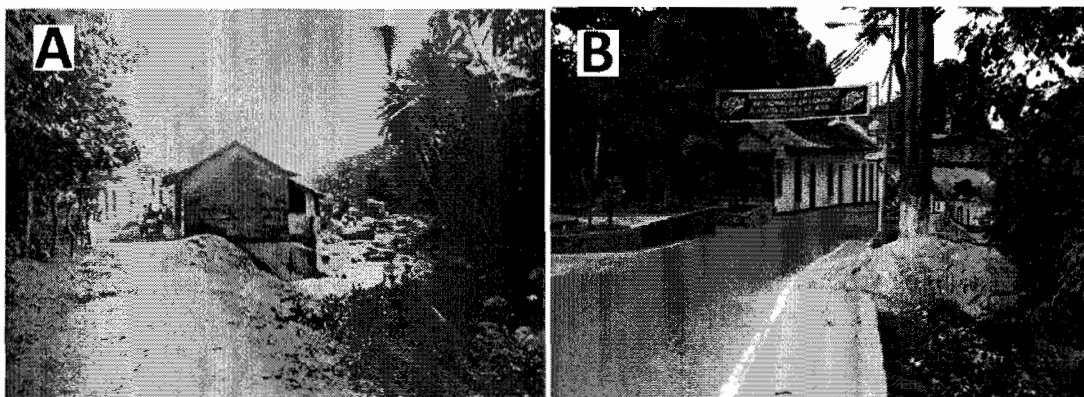


Figure 22. In photo “A” is the entrance to Choroni in 1904, and in photo “B” is as it looks in August 2009. Photo “A” from *El Cojo Ilustrado*, Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de Venezuela. Photo “B” by author, August 2009

Choroni was designed following the based on Law of Indies (see chapter II). This small town has been confined to a grid system with two streets that run south-north, and three streets going east- west. Here stand the impressive homes originally built for the *hacendados*, white powerful Spaniards and *criollo* (Creole), owners of the cacao haciendas that historically surrounded the town. Santa Clara de Asís de Choroni is organized around a plaza with a church to the west. The streets are very narrow, and buses and trucks often struggle to pass through the projecting *quitapolvo* or *vierteaguas* and *repisas*¹⁵⁶ of the

days. He published a collection of his best poems under the title of “Ecos de Choroni” (1844) [Echos of Choroni], and an edition of all his works, entitled “*Obras poéticas de José Antonio Maitín, comprendiendo todas las publicadas por el autor en diversas épocas, y algunas inéditas*” (Caracas, 1851) [Poetical work of José Antonio Maitín, comprising all the author’s published work in diverse times and some unpublished]. The general tone of Maitín’s verses is plaintive, but his style is elevated and pure.”

¹⁵⁶ The *quitapolvo* or *vierteaguas* is the projecting upper part of the window that protects it from the water, usually built in bricks, and is deep enough to let the head stick out to observe the street. The *repisa* is the lower projecting part of the window that supports the grille, usually finished in wood but built in brick or adobe.

windows. Large trees were left at the south, east (the other side of the river), and west to the *Santa Barbara*, also known as *San Pablo* or *Santa Clara* creek. The only trees are on the plaza, and are small compared with the Mijaos. However, the crotons, *guavas*, *mangos*, or other trees provide this plaza with pleasant shade for spending comfortable afternoons (Figure 23).

The town was originally surrounded by haciendas. The Hacienda El Parnaso where the poet José Antonio Maitín lived until his death is the southern border. This hacienda was forcibly occupied by local people with houses and hotels. To the east, past Santa Barbara Creek, is the former Hacienda *Santa Clara* that is also developed and deforested. To the north was originally the hacienda *El Rosario*, also known as *La Pantojera*, which was donated in the 1960s by Don Pedro Miguel Machado Rodríguez, the deceased owner of the Hacienda Playa Grande, to expand the town to what it is today. The northern border of the La Pantojera area is also developed, part of the former hacienda *El Portete*, the area called *Entre Ríos*.

Leaving the town behind going north the landscape becomes a mix of mijaos and hotels. Some large trees still shade the former haciendas on both sides of the road, but underneath their branches are now shade the hotels, houses, and commerce. The *Tipire*

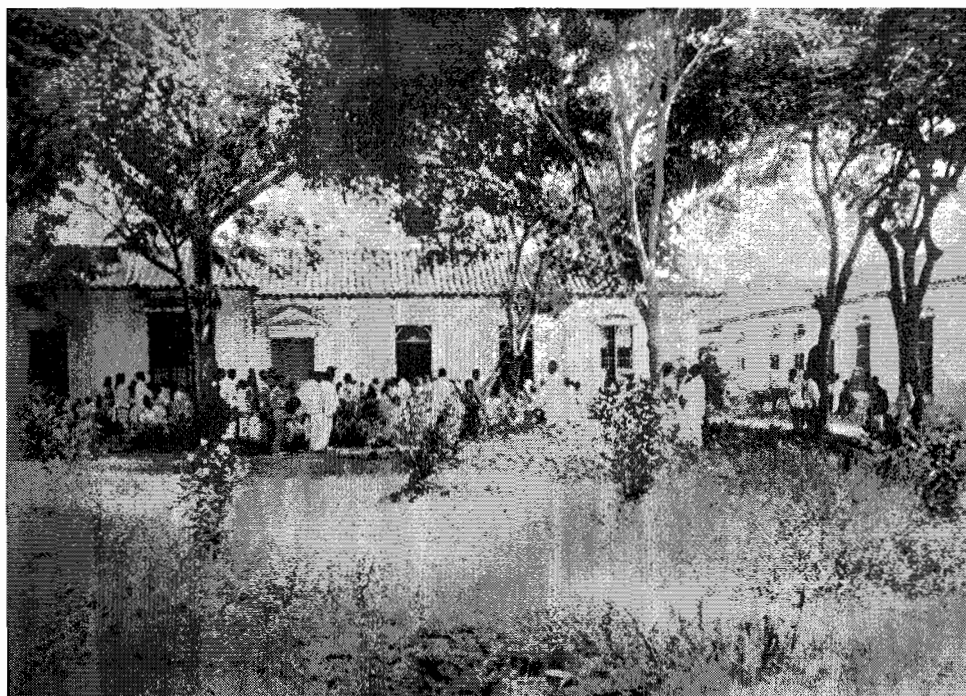


Figure 23. Plaza of Santa Clara de Asís de Choroní, 1904. Photo from *El Cojo Ilustrado*, courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de Venezuela

River is crossed by a small concrete bridge where the road turns east. A rural road continues north (west of the bridge), where the main section of the former hacienda El Portete used to be, and where there are now two large hotels and private upscale housing. The cemetery is located at the north end of the road at the foot of the mountain.

In 1720, Don Pedro José de Olavarriaga visited the Valley of Choróní. In his notes, he described the valley as large, about two *leguas*¹⁵⁷ long (5.2 miles) and one legua wide (2.6 miles):

...The land is good and is traversed by a river with abundant water that flows into the sea in two streams. A lot of people live here, including an Indian village in the *Isleta* [small island] that is formed by the two streams of the river, with a Church and a Priest. On the beach are two houses used by the guard and the fishermen, and there are three pieces of disassembled iron cannons. There are more than ten cacao haciendas of good quality with some small crops from the Indians, but it is the Dutch who take advantage of the production. Toward the west is the beach of Choróní [today Tipire] that ends at a large rock. On the other side is the *Portete* [small port], a flat rock at water level where the boats arrive to export cacao that is carried here by the blacks via a difficult trail...

In Spanish this quote reads:

...El valle de Choróní es espacioso, tiene dos leguas de largo y una de ancho, el terreno es bueno y lo recorre un río de abundante agua que desemboca al mar por dos brazos. Vive en él bastante gente y hay una población de indios en la Isleta que forman los dos brazos del río, con su Iglesia y Cura. En la playa había dos casas que servían para la guardia y los pescadores, y se encontraban tres piezas de cañón de hierro desmontadas. Las haciendas de cacao eran de buena calidad y se contaban más de diez, entre ellas algunos conucos de los indios, pero su producto lo aprovechaban en gran parte los holandeses. Hacia el Oeste la playa de Choróní termina en un peñasco, a la vuelta del cual está el Portete, un peñasco raso del agua adonde llegan las lanchas para recibir el cacao que los negros traen a este paraje por un camino tremendo, y esto es cuando se ofrece algún impedimento...¹⁵⁸

As Don Pedro de Olavarriaga observed in the eighteenth century, the river forks into two streams just north of Choróní, with the east branch keeping the same name and the west branch called the Tipire River. According to Olavarriaga, Puerto Colombia, the Indian

¹⁵⁷ A Legua or League is an antique Spanish distance measurement that expresses the distance a person, or a horse, can walk in one hour of time.

¹⁵⁸ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeso*, 1:28

village of Olavarriaga, is located on the island between the two rivers. Today, the two towns still dominate the landscape.

Across the bridge on the east side, the island is developed with housing and hotels, mainly in an area called Entre Ríos (“Between Rivers”) where low-income housing was built by the government, circa 1985. In 2009, the government built a bus terminal, causing fifteen mijaos trees to be cut down. This large concrete construction was not properly planned and is now an uncomfortable bus stop with high temperatures. As a result, the buses and people have returned to their old terminal in the shade of a mijao tree. The road that meanders around all these sites finally reaches the Choroní River again. The landscape changes and shade crowns the area. The Hacienda Playa Grande is on the other side of the river, to the east, and the main entrance is just 100 meters past where the road meets the river. After a grove of bamboos with fresh water, the modern houses and hotels appear again. The river disappears again from our sight behind the houses that wall off each side of the road. The slope in the street is subtle but can be felt when the colonial houses reappear between the modern structures, and the Caribbean Sea is observed beyond. The first one is the house of the former Hacienda San Antonio. The street then continues north, but vehicles have to turn east to reach the beach, and go counterclockwise around the town.

Puerto Colombia is bordered by the Caribbean Sea, with a Malecón or seaboard walkway at the end of the road that plays the role of plaza (Figure 24). This concrete structure was built in the 1950s, replacing the sandy beach with *uversos* (*Coccoloba uvifera*) and *almendrones* (*Terminalia Catappa*) (some of these trees are still in the site). In order to

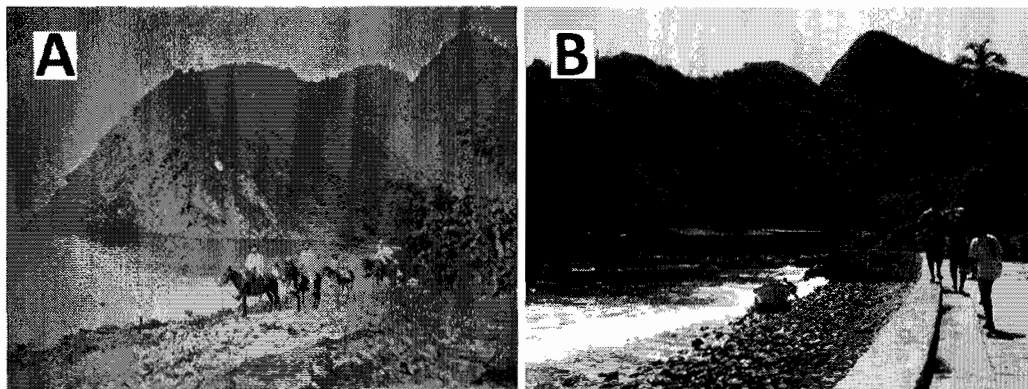


Figure 24. Photo “A” is the Puerto Colombia beach, 1904. Photo “B” is the Malecón built in 1950s. Photo “A” by M. Leoncio Porras in *El Cojo ilustrado*. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de Venezuela. Photo “B” by author , August 2009

build this Malecón, the Guipuzcoana Company's colonial construction locally known as *El Castillito* (little castle) mentioned in Olavarriaga's description of the guard house and also referred to in the previous chapter, which was built in late 18th century, was demolished. At the east side of the Malecón is the mouth of the Choróní River and the port where all the *lanchas* or boats and the commercial activity go. Many *lanchas* go in and out of the sandy port, carrying fishermen and tourists every day. Parallel to the Choróní River is the *Calle Los Cocos*, the road that vehicles must take in order to get to the Malecón, or to Playa Grande.

To access the beach, vehicles cross the river at the south edge of the mountain known as *Cerro Pan de Azúcar*, meaning that the mountain has the shape of a pile of sugar (Figure 25). This road is part of the Hacienda Playa Grande, and used to be a trail with acequias at one side. Today it is paved without any trees or acequias. Informal commerce (non-regulated stores and restaurants, located illegally on private property) skirts the south side of the road. The road goes west-to-east and the Cerro Pan de Azúcar is located to the north. The Playa Grande beach is oriented northeast, almost diagonal with the Malecón, and is part of the hacienda, with large coconuts and a cacao plantation. This beach is approximately 700 meters long (2,300 feet) and is the main tourist destination of most visitors. At the southeast end of the beach is another mountain range that runs north-to-

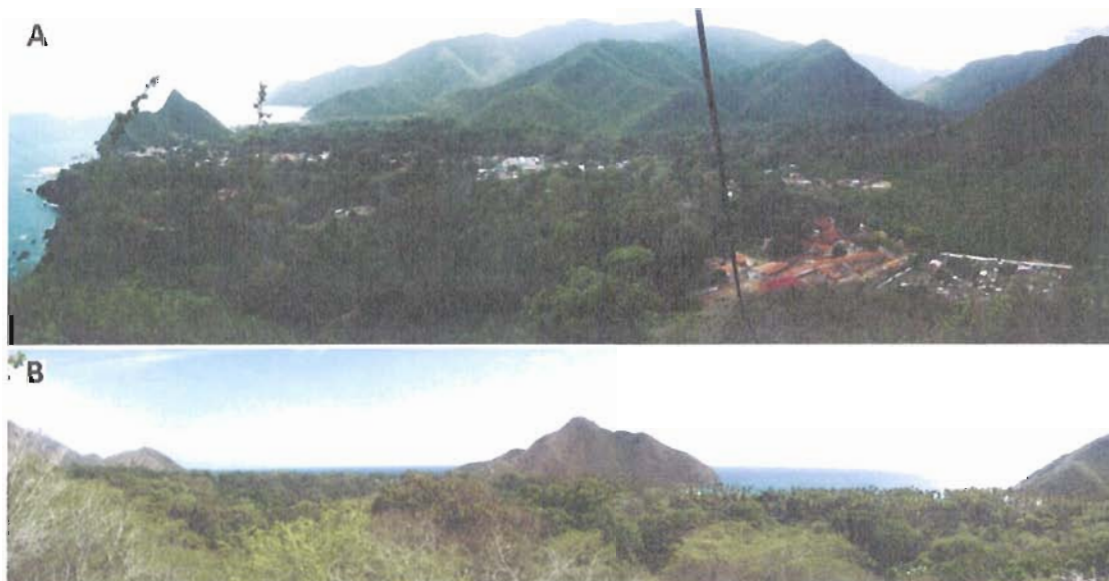


Figure 25. Photo “A” of Choróní Valley from the west mountain range. Photo “B” is a view of Choróní Valley from the east mountain range. Photo by author, August 2009

south and its crest is the limit of Hacienda Playa Grande, while at its foot is the *Santa Rosa* creek that reaches the sea. The area between this mountain range and the Cerro Pan de Azúcar is flat. It is the largest level area in the Choroní Valley and is part of one hacienda, Playa Grande.

Another mountain range runs parallel to the Choroní River. It turns east to meet the one that comes from the sea at the main entrance of the Hacienda Playa Grande, where its house is located. This is the windward side of the mountain, and consequently it has arid vegetation caused by the winds. Another mountain range also runs north-south that goes through the west side of the valley.

The Tipire River that reaches the sea at the west side of the Malecón is the limit to the former cacao and coconut hacienda El Portete, named after the first port that was used by the Spaniards in this area. This hacienda also has a beach called *Tipire* which is small and rocky and not usually frequented by tourists. It is small compared to Playa Grande and is oriented to the north. As described by Olavarriaga, this beach ends at a large rock, and at the west side of this rock is a flat rock used as the port in early years of conquest and colonization until the 1800s. Later a wooden pier was built where the Malecón is now, demolished also in the 1940s. This mountain range supports arid vegetation and is very steep.

The soil of these mountains is very rich in red clay, and thus brick kilns are found in many of the haciendas. The area between the Tipire River and the mountain is semi-flat and it was originally planted with cacao and coconut trees at the beach. The flat area between the two mountain ranges was irrigated by the acequias. This has been classified as loamy soil, perfect for cacao, sugar cane, and fruitages (Figure 26).¹⁵⁹

The area between Tipire River and the west mountain range has changed use through time. Its fertile agricultural soils are now used for housing and hotel development, and the acequias have stopped irrigating. The mijaos, coconut trees and the *uversos* at the Tipire beach are slowing dying due to a lack of fresh water. The only vehicle access to this area is at the west side of the bridge that crosses the river, previously described, around the cemetery.

¹⁵⁹ Samuel J. Strebin, *Atlas de Capacidad de Uso de las Tierras de los Estados Centrales y Centro Occidentales*, 1st ed. (Venezuela: Ministerio del Ambiente y de los Recursos Naturales Renovables, 1989).

THE IMPACT OF THE CACAO PLANTATION ON THE LANDSCAPE

The landscape that has enchanted caciques, encomenderos, priests, travelers, poets, politics, architects, and tourists alike, has been molded by Europeans, Native Americans, and African slaves. This juxtaposition of cultures is seen in the ethnic heritage of the people, in traditions that are carried on through time, music, food, and ultimately in the architecture of the landscape and buildings. Most of the features of the landscape were engineered with careful thought, starting with the location of towns, the port, the acequias, and the buildings



Figure 26. Soil's map of Choroni. IIIs = loamy soils. Moderate fertility. Coluvio-aluvial. 0-2% slope. well drained. Vle= loamy clay. Moderate fertility. Mountain. With 5-40% slope. Well drained. VIIs =Sandy soils. Low fertility. With 0-1% slope. Poorly drained. VIIe= clay soils. Moderate fertility. Mountain. With 20-70% slope. Some to excessive drained. VIIIes= loamy soils. Low fertility. Mountain. With 40-70% slope. Excessive drained. Source: Samuel J. Strebin, *Atlas de Capacidad de Uso de las Tierras de los Estados Centrales y Centro Occidentales*

that would serve the cacao haciendas. None of these historical landscape features were arbitrarily placed. The intentional location of these features was due to use and design principles that stemmed from the cacao hacienda uses. Many of them have been preserved enough to tell the stories of their past.

The cultural landscape of Choroní can be observed in the layers of history that have left a mark on the site. Arnold Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick define cultural landscapes as places that “exist virtually everywhere that human activities have affected the land.”¹⁶⁰ In the previous chapter of this thesis, and throughout the present one, most of the elements that have affected Choroní’s cultural landscape have been discussed. However, the possible influences from the Native Americans previous to the Spanish conquest have not been documented or studied to determine whether any of the settlements or elements of today’s landscape are a consequence of their activities or lifestyle. Nonetheless, the most recent 400 years of historic layering on this cultural landscape are sufficient to consider its importance and its preservation.

The hacienda has played a major role in the development of Choroní as has been discussed, not only on for its economic development and importance, but also in the shaping of the landscape. The hacienda emerged on the landscape of Venezuela as a new architectural and agricultural model adapted to the geographic conditions discussed above, very different from the geography known to the Spaniards and Portuguese in Europe, or even with New Spain (today Mexico). This situation contributed to the urgency for the Europeans to develop new agricultural products such as cacao, potato, corn, among others, as a source of food and income, especially in Venezuela where no precious metals were found during the colonial era.¹⁶¹

As discussed earlier, each hacienda is an independent microcosm, creating a different response to its surroundings depending on the existing conditions, producing microclimatic systems, with distinctive vegetation around buildings and communicating effectively with the surrounding landscape.¹⁶² In Choroní, the major product that shaped this cultural landscape is Cacao, the production of which involves many steps before the dry

¹⁶⁰ Alanen and Melnick, *Preserving Cultural Landscapes*, 3.

¹⁶¹ Gonzalez Casas, “Las Haciendas en Venezuela,” 204

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 206

beans are eventually processed into chocolate. Cacao production involves at least three processes of collection, fermentation, and drying. Steps that precede these include cultivation, irrigation, and decisions related to building locations in regard to trading points.

Cacao requires constant water and shade. However, typical Venezuelan weather has a dry season that can be very severe and have negative effects on the plantations. For this reason the Spaniards used their knowledge, transferred from the Arabs, about the use of water canals or acequias, (the word comes from Classical Arabic "as-sāqiya," which means "water conduit"). Before the buildings were built, an acequia system was laid out. This historical engineering required an understanding of topography, geology, and water flows since it depended on gravity to operate. Many of these acequias were simply constructed of earth, but the main acequias or *acequias madres* usually were built with a base of *lajas* or stone slab. The water comes from the river through a structure called *toma* (intake), a lime and stone (later of concrete) channel (Figure 27-A). There are also distribution points called *calicantos* (cal-y-cantos, which literally means lime and stone), that control the flow of water using wooden gates to open and close, and let water flow to different channels. Throughout the haciendas' landscape, it is possible to see still many of these calicantos (Figure 27- B).



Figure 27. In photo "A" is one Toma of the acequia, the water flows by gravity in the canal where the leader indicates. In photo "B" is the Calicanto or distribution point. Photo by author, August 2009

The acequias, which were built based on geographic studies, were not restricted to particular boundaries or property lines. The system had, and still today does have, many tomas, and crossed numerous haciendas ending at the sea. Several of these acequias in

Choroní are still active today, a majority of which are part of this research project and still feed active cacao haciendas. In the Hacienda El Casibo, the main acequia flows into a former creek (the creek dried several years ago) keeping it active for use by the Hacienda Torres. Historically, and even today, there were conflicts between hacendados over maintenance of acequias.

This character-defining feature is an important element in the historical cultural landscape that is attributed to the cacao in Choroní. Without the acequias, there would not be large trees, or cacao plantations. Even at their last stop, the sea, *uveros* and *almendrones* are irrigated to grow thick and large leaves to keep the cacao safe from the salty air. Today the large trees are dying due to the inactivate acequias in the El Portete, Santa Clara and Tipire area (west Choroní). Uncontrolled fires also affect the mostly tourist areas that have been developed into housing and hotels, because of the dry vegetation and the lack of water to wet the ground. Proposals for reopening the acequias for reasons of water needs and as a fire control, are been requested by neighbors envisioning the future.

The acequias also serve as a network to orient people and to connect different buildings or structures needed by the workers. In the collection process that happens on the site, as explained in the previous chapter, the cacao is carried to the main house, to be weighed and to ferment.

The cultural landscape that comprises the cacao hacienda involves more than the plantation land, since the buildings are at the center of the economic and social activities of the hacienda. There is an invisible system of edification (hacienda houses and offices) and landscape whose interactions result in a specific sense of place. There are mainly two general types of buildings: 1) those related to the residential activities and 2) those related to the agricultural production, administration and storage activities. “Casona”, “oficina” or “casa grande” (house, office, or big house) are some of the names used for the cluster of buildings where these activities concentrate on the haciendas in Choroní. These buildings, as explained in the previous chapter, are open to the landscape with a veranda or corridor with colonnade facing the plantation.¹⁶³

In the houses of the hacienda, the concept of building and territory is dissimilar to the urban house whose outside exposure is typically limited to a private garden. Hacienda

¹⁶³ Ibid., 207.

houses are in harmony with their surroundings.¹⁶⁴ It is also important to mention the freedom of organization in the haciendas due to their geographical isolation. The buildings, although not controlled by a rigorous urban grid, did follow new composition lines that could evolve to generate various floor plan schemes. The typical configurations are “L,” “H,” or “U” shape, as around a patio, similar to the monastery in medieval times, with Roman precedents.¹⁶⁵

The “L” shape is the most common option (Figure 28). It created the possibility of a simple functional setting with two wings generating two open spaces for expansion: an open external space dominated by corridors, and an internal space with a link to the patio. In Choroni, most of the haciendas use this plan, and the areas connected to the patio are usually public, while the others are for social or residential use. Outbuildings such as

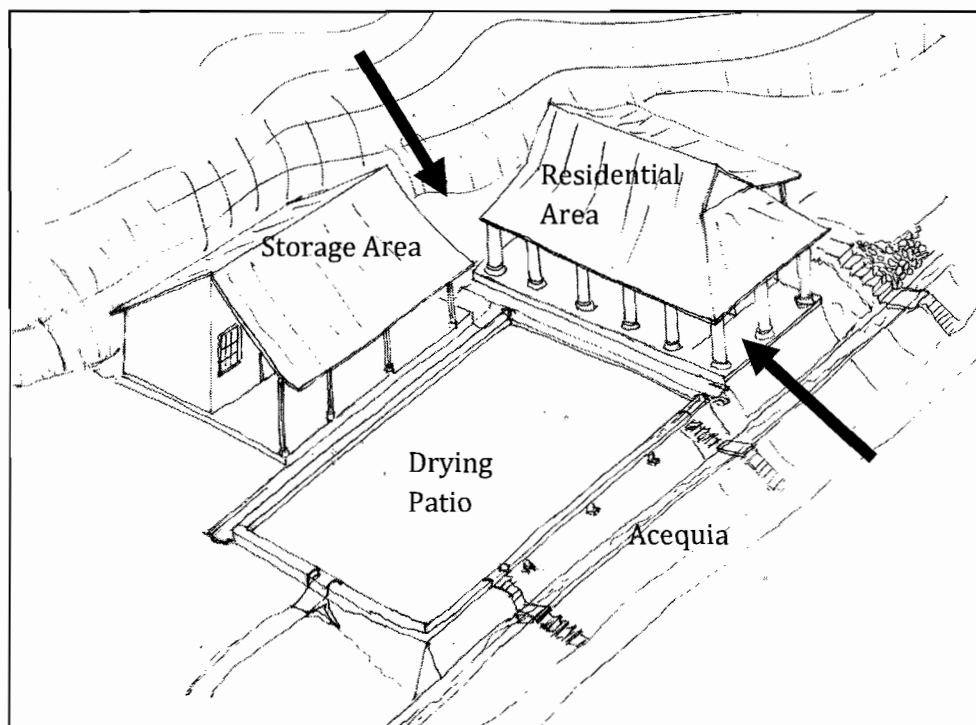


Figure 28. In the hacienda houses the “L” shape is the most common option. This sketch is a conjecture of how the house from Hacienda Playa Grande might have been originally. The arrow on the right is pointing the area that was later infill with the *desbabadero*, because fermentation was later added to the process of cacao. The arrow on the left indicates the area later built to link both buildings. Drawing by author

¹⁶⁴ Calderón-Trejo, *Casas de Hacienda*, 24.

¹⁶⁵ Gonzalez Casas, “Las Haciendas en Venezuela,” 210

trapiches (sugar cane mills), lookout houses, kilns, are usually close to the main house, but not directly connected.

The architecture of the hacienda has been adapted to the cacao processes. Following the collection is the fermentation, a step that started later. There is no documentation of this, but approximately the first time that the fermentation process was applied to cacao was at the end of the nineteenth century. But it is known that it was not something the Aztecs or Mayas did.¹⁶⁶ Originally, after the beans were extracted they were cleaned with water and then dried in the sun. The criollo specie from Choroní is semi-sweet, and requires 1-2 days fermenting, however the forastero is fermented 4-6 days because is bitter and its flavor is attenuated by the fermentation process. This might be the reason that this process was not commonly applied in Choroní. The fermentation rooms or *desbabaderos* are found in the haciendas as an annex to the main buildings, usually at the closest point to the acequias, because the *baba* or liquid that comes from this process falls into the acequia. It is also directly related to the patio and workspaces (Figure 28).

The patio, a new element created specifically for the cacao haciendas, was later adopted by coffee plantations. This character-defining feature was essential in the natural processing of cacao, and utilized nature to the fullest by capitalizing on the area's strong sun's rays. This cacao processing technique may have been learned from the indigenous people. The patio works as an organizational element too, sometimes repeated or fractionated, depending on the functions needed (Figure 29).



Figure 29. Patio of Hacienda Playa Grande. At the left is the *desbabadero*. View to the northeast. Photo by author, August 2009

There are also houses on the haciendas that do not have a patio, but these buildings are usually located at very high points so they can overlook the landscape. A good example

¹⁶⁶ Maricel E. Presilla, *The New Taste of Chocolate* (Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 2001), 18.

is the house in Pan de Azúcar, Choroní, which is today part of the hacienda Playa Grande. Earlier there was a family house with a plantation but no patio (Figure 30).



Figure 30. House in Pan de Azúcar, Choroní. This house never had a patio, but has a simple veranda looking at the plantation, probably built only for residential purposes.

The locations of the buildings were also carefully designed. Patios require the maximum amount of sun, so they are strategically located in close proximity to the plantation with large trees, separated enough to get sun during most of the day. Around the residential buildings are always trees that provide fruits, sugar cane, flowers, and other trees such as mango and guava for household use. Mango is very distinctive in Choroní; almost every house has a mango tree as well as guava trees.

Every element on the haciendas is flexible and was adapted to the cacao process. The landscape was shaped to interconnect all these elements, a factor essential to cacao business. From water to storage rooms, patios, trees and network, the designers of this architecture studied and perfected the setting over 400 years, making it worthy of preservation.

The river protects the haciendas east of Choroní. Today the haciendas Playa Grande, Torres and Monterrosa (that comprises El Casibo, La Sabaneta, Isleta and Santa Polonia) are still cultivating cacao and continue maintaining the acequias. However, due to ownership

changes and the group of antique haciendas, many of the buildings that were initially part of other haciendas were abandoned and only their ruins remain as witnesses to the past. A good example of this is the hacienda Monterrosa that now uses only the house of La Sabaneta to process cacao.

In the next chapters, three haciendas will be studied in detail as case studies to understand this historic cultural landscape. Their character-defining features will be discussed, and a preservation plan will be proposed to conserve the last remaining haciendas, and help disseminate the information about their importance. The methodology and research design used to study these haciendas will also be discussed. The community of Choroní remains unaware of its past, and its contribution to the economy of the country, to the rise of the new republic, its contribution to the landscape and to the history of Venezuela. The preservation plan will help resolve this issue and identify find possible solutions that can help conserve the haciendas in Choroní.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to identify the character-defining features of the Cacao Haciendas in Choroní, Venezuela and to propose a conservation plan for the remaining haciendas.

THE PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

This study pursued an analytical approach where data collected defined the needs of the community in order to conserve the historic haciendas.

The town of Choroní was founded by agricultural properties that cultivated cacao since 1600. At the end of the 18th century, Choroní had more than 30 haciendas,¹⁶⁷ and during the next two hundred years this number did not change drastically. Today the area has shifted from agricultural to tourism and is gradually destroying these properties. The number of haciendas has been reduced to six in the survey done in summer 2009. This quantitative fact raises the question: How can we conserve these haciendas? It is urgent that a conservation plan for Choroní is created using the community and the national authorities.

The main research question is: What stories do the cacao haciendas in Choroní continue to tell and why are they important?

This thesis focuses on the importance of the cacao haciendas in Choroní and finding the character-defining features that have historic value. The definition of these characteristics indicate the path to follow to create a conservation plan to protect these endangered sites.

¹⁶⁷ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeyño*, 1:181-183.

General Approach

There were several phases to the study of these complex landscapes.

1. Identify the physical components of the haciendas landscape by a survey done in summer 2009:
 - a. Identifying and recording those components on maps and aerial photographs,
 - b. Understanding the history of those elements,
 - c. Evaluating the significance and integrity of those components in the haciendas.
2. An extensive research and literature review was completed to understand the origin and significance of the cacao haciendas in history and how they affected the social, economical and political life of Venezuelan society.
3. Understand the Hacienda Playa Grande, Hacienda Torres and Hacienda Monterosa, as case studies.
4. Understand conservation principles regarding historic cultural landscapes, and conservation planning issues in this country and apply them in Venezuela.
5. Understand and apply National Register Bulletin N° 30 *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes* to Venezuelan cultural landscapes.
6. Understand Venezuelan conservation heritage laws, and the influence of the politics in heritage conservation in the country.

In the survey of summer 2009, the existence of six haciendas was affirmed: Playa Grande, Torres, Payare, Monterrosa, Tesoro and Aljorra. Three case studies have been chosen: Hacienda Playa Grande, Hacienda Torres and Hacienda Monterrosa. These three sites are the best examples of the remaining cacao Haciendas in Choroní. These properties have been used for agriculture continuously since their founding and have retained their cultural integrity.

The Hacienda Payare is still cultivated, but it is not in good condition due to poor maintenance. The survey of the area was difficult and was discarded due to the intricacy in accessing the property. The Hacienda Tesoro is still used for cacao production; however,

the owners were not in the area during the time of the survey, which caused the exclusion of the hacienda in this study. The Hacienda Aljorra has changed its use, and now hosts a hotel; although the house has not lost integrity, the landscape is not a cacao orchard anymore.

The area of Choróní was comprised of more than 25 Haciendas; many have changed to provide space for growing housing needs. Others were bought by the government, and today are villages along the road that connects Choróní with Maracay, the state's capital. Few still produce cacao, having not been developed for housing or hotels.

The study area is divided by the Choróní River, a key feature in the development of Choróní. On the east side of the river are four Haciendas: Playa Grande, Torres, Payare, and Monterrosa. In the west side are the smallest Haciendas: El Tesoro (still producing cacao), El Portete, Santa Clara, El Cumbe, El Parnaso and La Aljorra; that have been developed or taken over by the community for housing (figure x).

The case studies helped to determine the characteristics of a cacao hacienda in Choróní, and through the compare and contrast method; the information gathered proved the importance of these sites. The triangulation of the data collected with the analysis, and interpretation resulted in common elements, as well as differences between the haciendas, that indicated a typology of the haciendas layout and landscape organization.

Field work

During the months of July and August 2009, intensive fieldwork took place on the site. A survey form was developed based on the *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*,¹⁶⁸ and was used to identify the characteristics of the landscape and the architecture. One form was required for each Hacienda.

The fieldwork consisted of taking photographs of character-defining feature on each hacienda. The photos were taken in similar orientations and hours, to compare the different views and the effects of the sun.

Using aerial photographs and topographic maps, sketch maps were created to annotate major natural features: building, bridges, outbuildings, roadways, waterways,

¹⁶⁸ Linda Flint McClelland et al., "Bulletin No. 30. Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes, National Register of Historic Places," *National Register Publications*, Revised 1999 1989, <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb30/> (accessed October 12, 2009).

acequias, orchards, fields, pastures, quarries, boundary demarcations. The predominant vegetation was identified as well as the land use in these sketches.

The condition of the landscape characteristics was recorded, noting evidence of historic field patterns, roadways, acequias or boundary markers; deteriorated and altered buildings and structures; ground disturbances; new land uses and construction; condition of the vegetation; abandoned fields or roads; reforested areas; areas invaded or expropriated.

The visible changes in the landscape were noted by comparing historic and contemporary views provided by maps, illustration, and photographs. The changes to the historic boundaries of properties due to subdivisions, consolidations, growth, invasions, expropriations or abandonment, were indicated by deeds documents and site visits. Any characteristics or processes requiring further research were also noted.

For the buildings, the same technical process of surveying for the landscape was used. The fieldwork included photographing the character-defining features on each site. Sketches of the settings of the buildings were produced indicating: cardinal location, main roads, outbuildings, immediate setting, acequias, and topography. The vegetation was also identified, and an approximate timeline for the additions was estimated. The integrity of the buildings was recorded, as well as the shape of the floor plan, number of stories, location of fenestrations, roof shape, wall cladding, structure, roofing, doors and windows material, floors, and condition of the overall building. Visible changes were noted by photography, sketches and description in structure, by comparing historic and contemporary photographs, when they were available.

Research on the deeds was done to establish the history of each hacienda. The Institute of Geography of Venezuela provided the information related to all existing maps and aerial photographs of Choróní. The National Library of Venezuela, located in Caracas, was also a source of information in the research.

The main link between the procedures in the United States and Venezuela for the understanding of the landscape was Bulletin N° 30, because it allowed for a clear observation on the field, as well as to delineate the character-defining features of the haciendas. After the research was completed, and the field work was finished, this Bulletin was used as a filter to comprehend the landscape and decipher the complexity of the landscape, in order to produce the conservation plan. The processes and physical

components of the cultural landscape indicated on the bulletin were crucial to develop the conservation plan. Based on these two elements, the plan was organized in landscape strategies, conservation of physical components, and cultural and education components.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE CACAO HACIENDAS

Every person that has lived in Choróni has, in some aspects, left a fingerprint on the cultural landscape observed today. From the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors and encomenderos, to the Native Americans whose land was taken, from the African slaves that were forcibly brought to work on the agriculture and to build many structures, to the heirs of the haciendas, and the new owners that saw a future on the cacao. Even more than ever today's visitors and residents decide on the future of Choróni. Every person has collaborated in shaping today's landscape. As discussed in earlier chapters, the historic trends at the national and local level have had some role in the development of the haciendas in Choróni. The first part of this chapter will study the evolution of vegetation, roads and growth of the construction of Choróni during this past century through aerial photographs from 1936 (Figure 31), 1974 (Figure 32), and 2005 (Figure 33), in order to determine major threats for this landscape. These three major processes and characteristics are good examples of the changes that Choróni has confronted in the last 70 years, which have therefore instigated the destruction of the haciendas.

To comprehend the development of the haciendas and how each piece connects to each other, three cases were studied in more detail, and discussed in the second part of the chapter at the landscape level. These sites are Hacienda Playa Grande, Hacienda Torres, and Hacienda Monterrosa. As explained earlier, the complex process of cacao cultivation has had a large impact on the architecture of the landscape and the buildings. The study of these elements is key to determining the character-defining features of the landscape and the buildings that define the haciendas of Choróni. The destruction or disappearance of any of these character-defining features affects the integrity of the haciendas and the sense of place these sites express, not only for the community, but also for the tourists of Choróni.

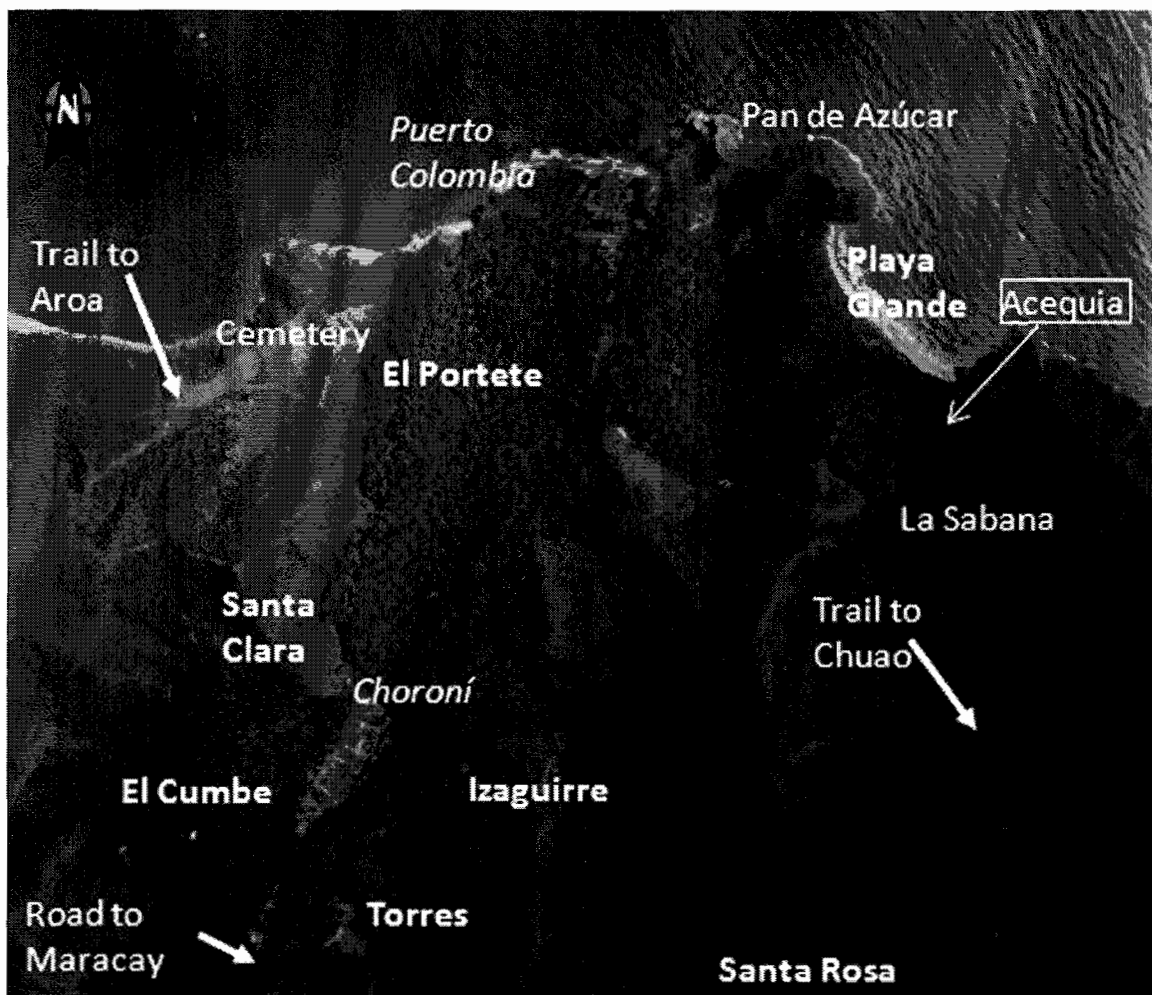


Figure 31. Aerial photograph of Choróní from 1936. The names of the former and active haciendas are in bold. The trails and roads are point out with thick arrows and the acequia in La Sabana is shown with an arrow. Other areas within the haciendas are also indicated on the photograph. Source: Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar

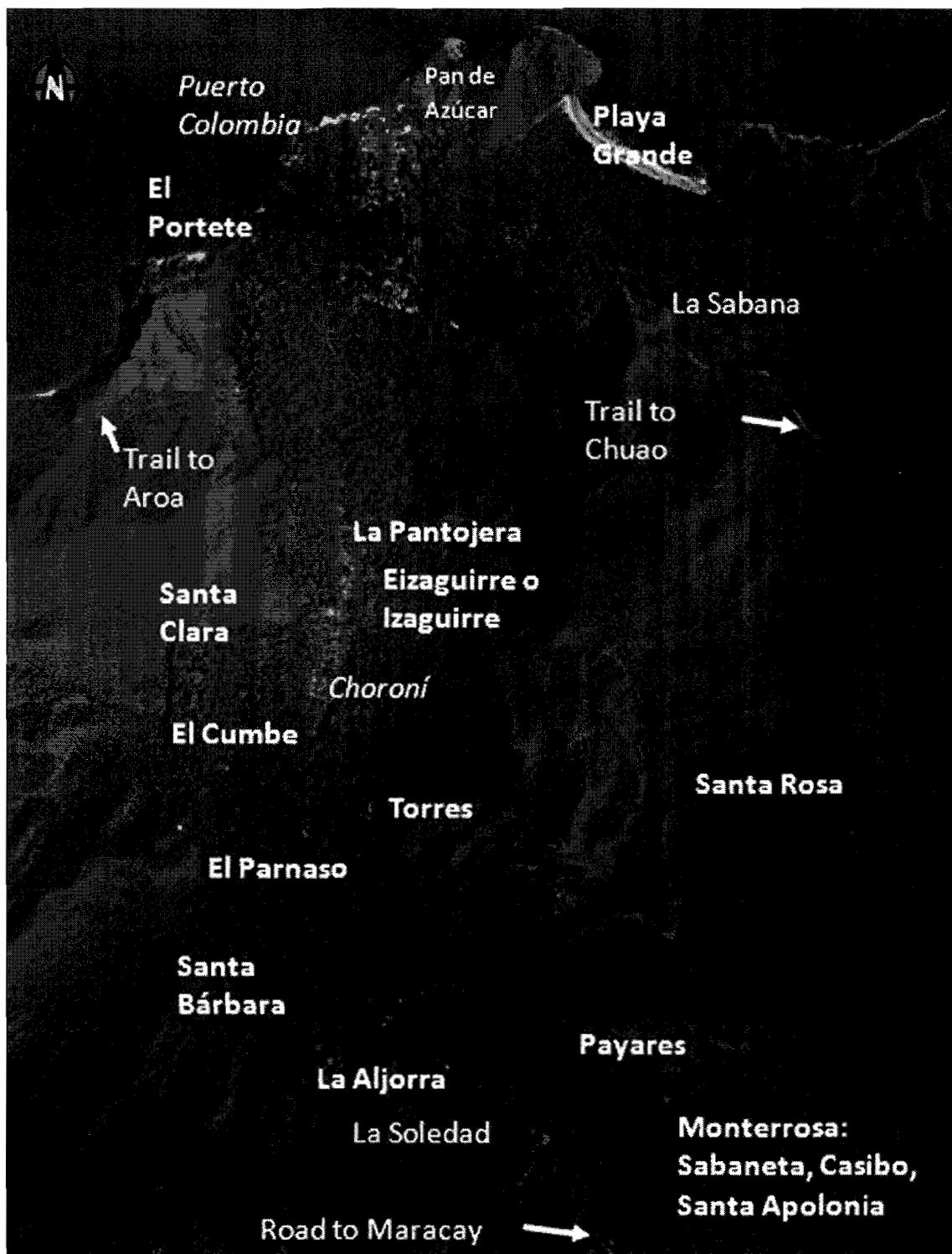


Figure 32. Aerial photograph of Choroni from 1974. The names of the former and active haciendas are in bold. The trails and roads are point out with thick arrows. Other areas within the haciendas are also indicated on the photograph. Source: Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar



Figure 33. Aerial photograph of Choroní from 2005. The names of the former and active haciendas are in bold. The trails and roads are point out with thick arrows. Other areas within the haciendas are also indicated on the photograph. Source: Google Earth

VEGETATION IN CHORONÍ: EVOLUTION OR INVOLUTION

The cacao plantations have specific vegetation: the trees that provide shade to the cacao trees are large - approximately 50 meters in height (164 feet), easily recognizable in the aerial photographs by their density and the tree canopy's size (Figure 31, Figure 32, and Figure 33). The only areas not covered by this thick layer of vegetation are the developed spaces and the mountains.

There is also a different plantation, a coconut plantation observed along the shore and at both mouths of the two branches of the river, which can be noticed by the size of the tree canopies and the space between the trees. These agricultural areas, as explained in previous chapters, serve as buffers from the wind and saline for the cacao plantation, along with the *uveros* and *almendrones*.

The valley is surrounded by mountains, with plantations located on the flat areas where the land is at 2% or less in slope with loamy soils. There is one pocket to the southeast of loamy clay soil at a 5-40% slope, where the haciendas Sabaneta and Casibo are located. These flat soils observed from the air are shaped like an openly deformed "C," with the opening to the east, and will be referred to as thus in this thesis. The two towns, Choroní at the south and Puerto Colombia at the north are clearly distinguishable in the aerial photographs (Figure 31, Figure 32, and Figure 33) as well as the topography. In the north is the *cerro* (hill or mount) "Pan de Azúcar" that symbolizes the valley and has been the beacon for ships and travelers seeking the port.

The haciendas are distributed along the valley, the areas that are not towns or villages are haciendas. Up to the 1960s, there were settlements in some haciendas. In the properties bought by General Juan Vicente Gómez in Choroní in 1934, the owners that acquired the land from the nation after Gómez's death had the option to ask the occupants of the land to move out within five years, if there was a large crop or a single year with a small crop or if they needed a house built. Each situation was handled on a case-by-case basis, as indicated in the deed of the Hacienda Playa Grande.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ "Escritura de Adquisición (Deeds): Pedro Machado Rodríguez." (Registro de Oficina Subalterna. Estado Aragua, Venezuela, 1940), No. 134. Folios 103 a 109 del Protocolo Primero adicional del Segundo Trimestre.

Acequias

The acequias are shared amongst the haciendas, and since the colonial era this has been a source of much complaining, as explained before. During the eighteenth century, the hacendados worked as communities in cooperation. However, the acequia system has always been a difficult subject. By the end of the 18th century, the owner of the hacienda Torres Antonio Martínez de Fuentes filed a suit against the neighbors of Payare for abusive behavior related to the acequia.¹⁷⁰ The people from Payare, living higher in the mountain obstructed the use of the water, and did not clean the acequia. During the dispute, the Payare neighbors argued that they used a creek as a water source, so they had no responsibility for the acequia. Situations like this were common and even today the owner of Monterosa argues that the owner of Torres should pay for the maintenance of the acequia they share, because Monterosa is delivering water to Torres. This kind of dispute might have been different if they would have resolved it as it was done in the New Mexico acequias, where an association was formed to manage the water resources.¹⁷¹

The acequias are the main reason that large trees survive in Choróní. There is an abrupt ending at the foot of the mountains of this dense layer of trees. As seen in the aerial photographs (Figure 31, Figure 32, and Figure 33), the most elevated acequias are the elements that create this boundary while they irrigate the soils to help maximize the efficiency for the cacao plantation. From the air, some acequias can be seen meandering through the landscape, and are easily discernible from the creeks and river by their snake-shape, which created enough slope for water to flow in these flat soils. In the area known as *La Sabana* (the open range) located to the northeast in the Hacienda Playa Grande, at the top of the "C," the acequia is easily identified particularly in the aerial photograph from 1936 in Figure 31 as it reaches the sea.

Comparing aerial photographs from 1936, 1974 and 2005, it is possible to clearly observe the spreading out of the boundaries between the large trees and the mountains. This process was caused by the drying up of the acequias in many of the haciendas, particularly the ones located at the foot of the western mountain range. A series of maps

¹⁷⁰ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeño*, 1:189.

¹⁷¹ José A. Rivera, *Acequia Culture: Water, Land, & Community in the Southwest* (New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 47

indicating these boundaries was produced for this thesis as shown in Figure 31, Figure 32, and Figure 33.

In La Sabana, as previously mentioned, the vegetation was significantly reduced between 1936 and 1974, and even more dramatically in the 2005 photograph. This decrease in vegetation started to occur in the 1960s when the state government decided to build a road from Choroní to Chuao, the nearby town to the east of Choroní, and dynamited part of the existing trail to widen the road. This event caused the demise of the acequias, and might have also affected the Santa Rosa Creek's course, since it is believed to have killed the large trees along with the cacao plantation. Today only dead trees and vegetation adapted to arid climates grow in this area (Figure 34).



Figure 34. In this photography is the Hacienda Playa Grande. The area La Sabana was affected by governmental actions in 1960s. Observe the dead trees indicated with an arrow. Photo by author, August 2009

The road was never completed, however the impact of such an arbitrary act is still felt on the landscape, and even more so on the fauna that once occupied the area. The Santa Rosa Creek was famous for its large volume of water. It formed a lagoon, referred to as a boundary line of the Hacienda Playa Grande; this lagoon was named *El Pozo del Diablo* (The Devil's Deep Pool) because it was dark and deep enough to support otters and other

mammals. Following the road project, these aquatic mammals had to migrate to other areas or died and have not been seen in Choróni since.

This event not only affected the vegetation, it also had consequences for the fauna. For example, the impact on the lifestyle of troops of capuchin monkeys that used to inhabit La Sabana. There is not a scientific study about this matter, but in the last 40 years or so, the monkeys have migrated out of La Sabana and now wander the haciendas, affecting crops and roofs (looking for insects underneath the tiles), and have become a major cause of damage to buildings.

It is also interesting to note the growth of the coconut plantation in the Hacienda Playa Grande, from 1936 photograph and reflected in the map (Figure 31 and Figure 35), at the northeast on the upper part of the "C," compared with the 1974 photo and map (Figure 32 and Figure 36). In the 1936 data, the coconut trees have enough space between them to recognize single trees in the photo, and the sugar cane seems to grow under the coconuts, indicated on the 1936 photo as a diamond shape crop that appears close to the trapiche. By 1974, the production of coconut increased and became an important source of income on this hacienda; however, in the 2005 photo and map (Figure 33 and Figure 37) there is an important diminution of the vegetation due to the growth of tourism and the intervention of local governments, as explained in Chapter III.

There was a change in the vegetation around Puerto Colombia, where the former haciendas adjacent to the town were still in the process of development. While, many green areas can be observed in the 1936 and 1974 photograph and maps, this is not the case in 2005, where most of the area between the two rivers was developed. Taking a closer look at the 1936 and 1974 photos of Puerto Colombia, the acequias can be recognized by their snake-shape form by the tree canopy, between the two rivers. The last acequia in this area was still active until 2008, when the bus terminal interrupted its route and a bank was built on top of it. However, the channel still exists through the rest of the area.

In the 2005 photograph and map, the dramatic reduction of the vegetation on the west side of the river can be observed. In this area, the acequias also disappeared and the shade trees were cut down or burned to open up space for houses and hotels.

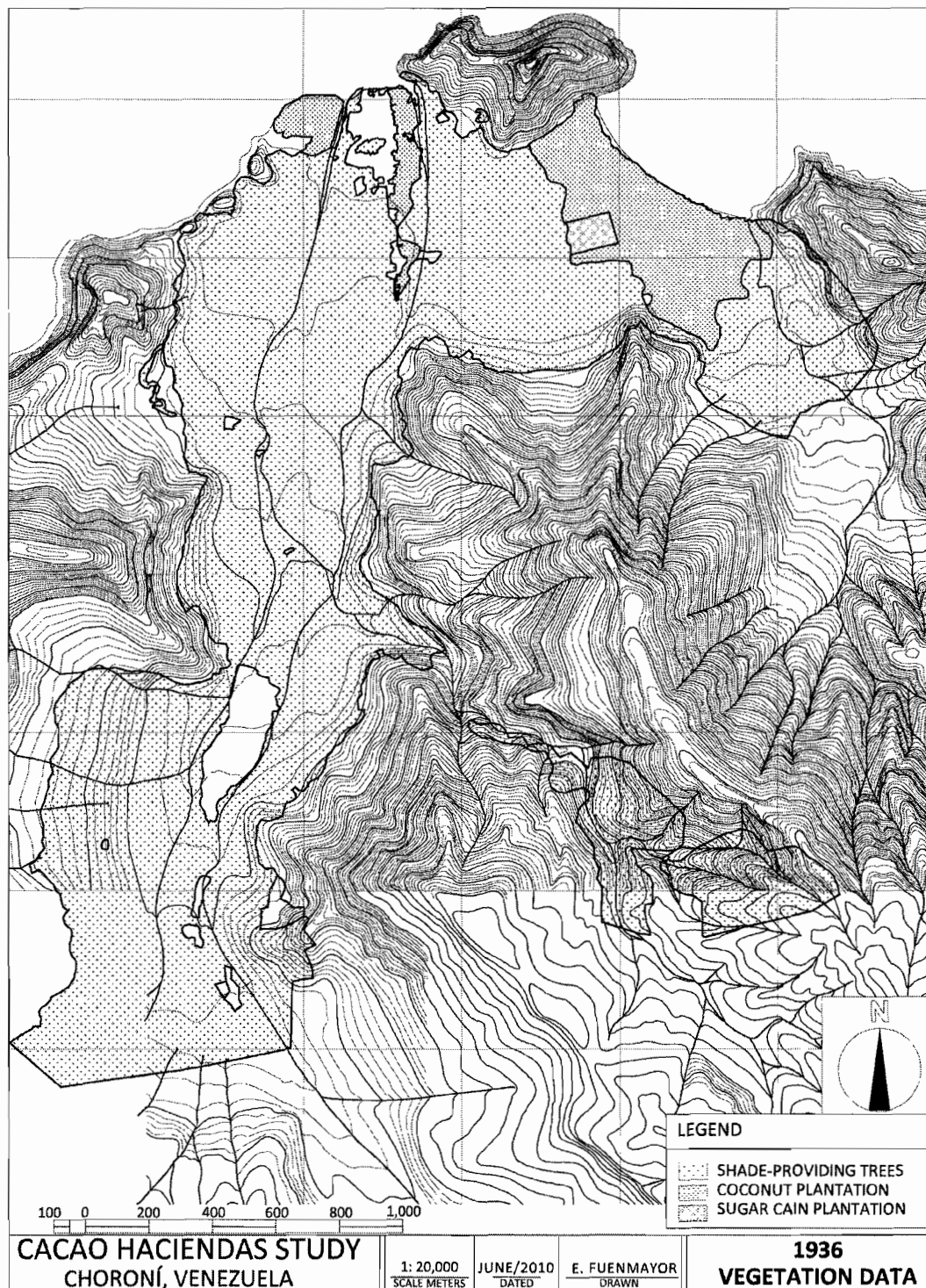


Figure 35. Vegetation analysis based on the aerial photograph from 1936. The dense hatch indicates the coconut plantation, and the light hatch the cacao plantation. Source: Data from aerial photo 1936 and topographic map from 1984, courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

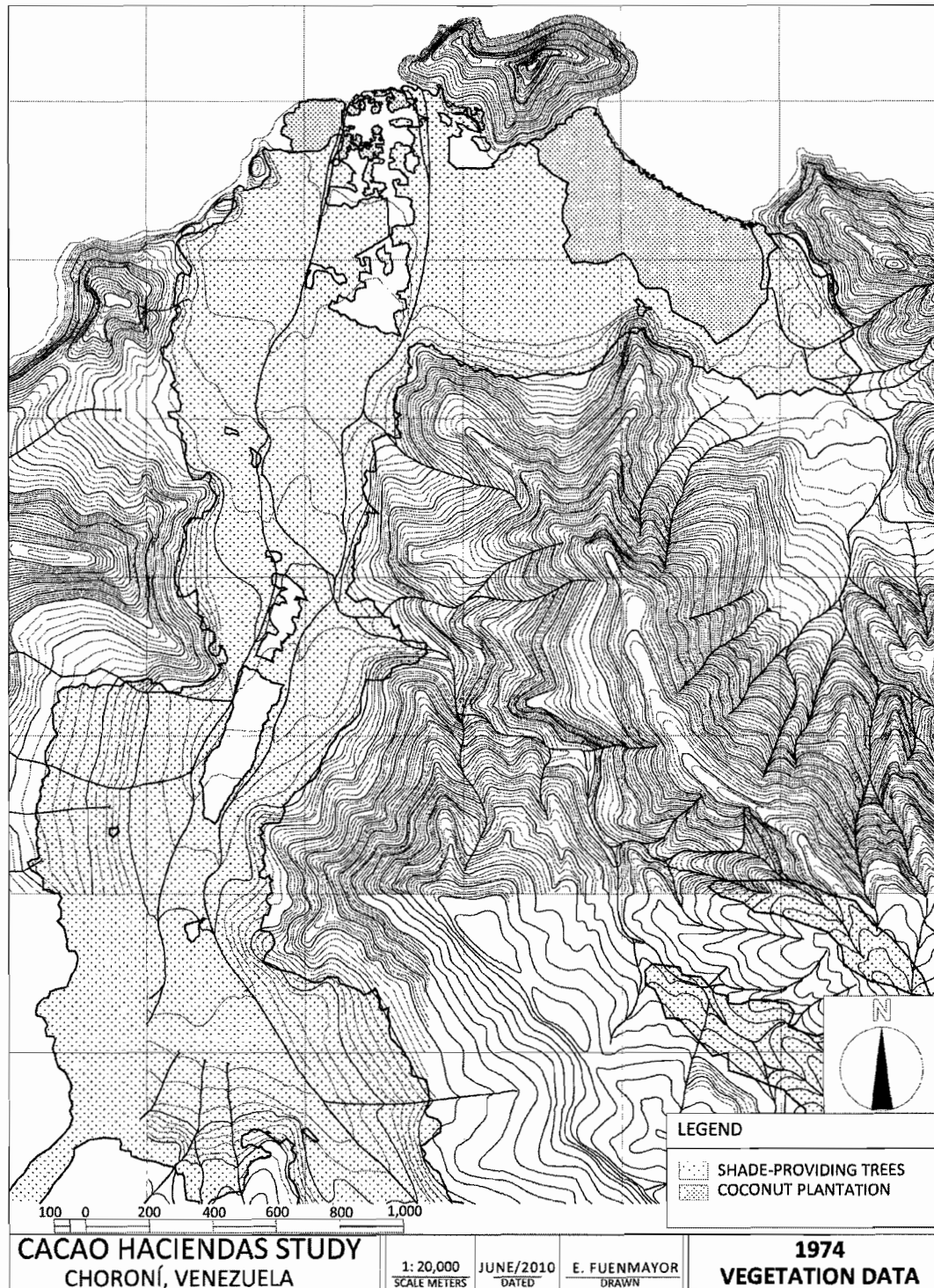


Figure 36. Vegetation analysis based on the aerial photograph from 1974. The dense hatch indicates the coconut plantation, and the light hatch the cacao plantation. Source: Data from aerial photo 1974 and topographic map from 1984, courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

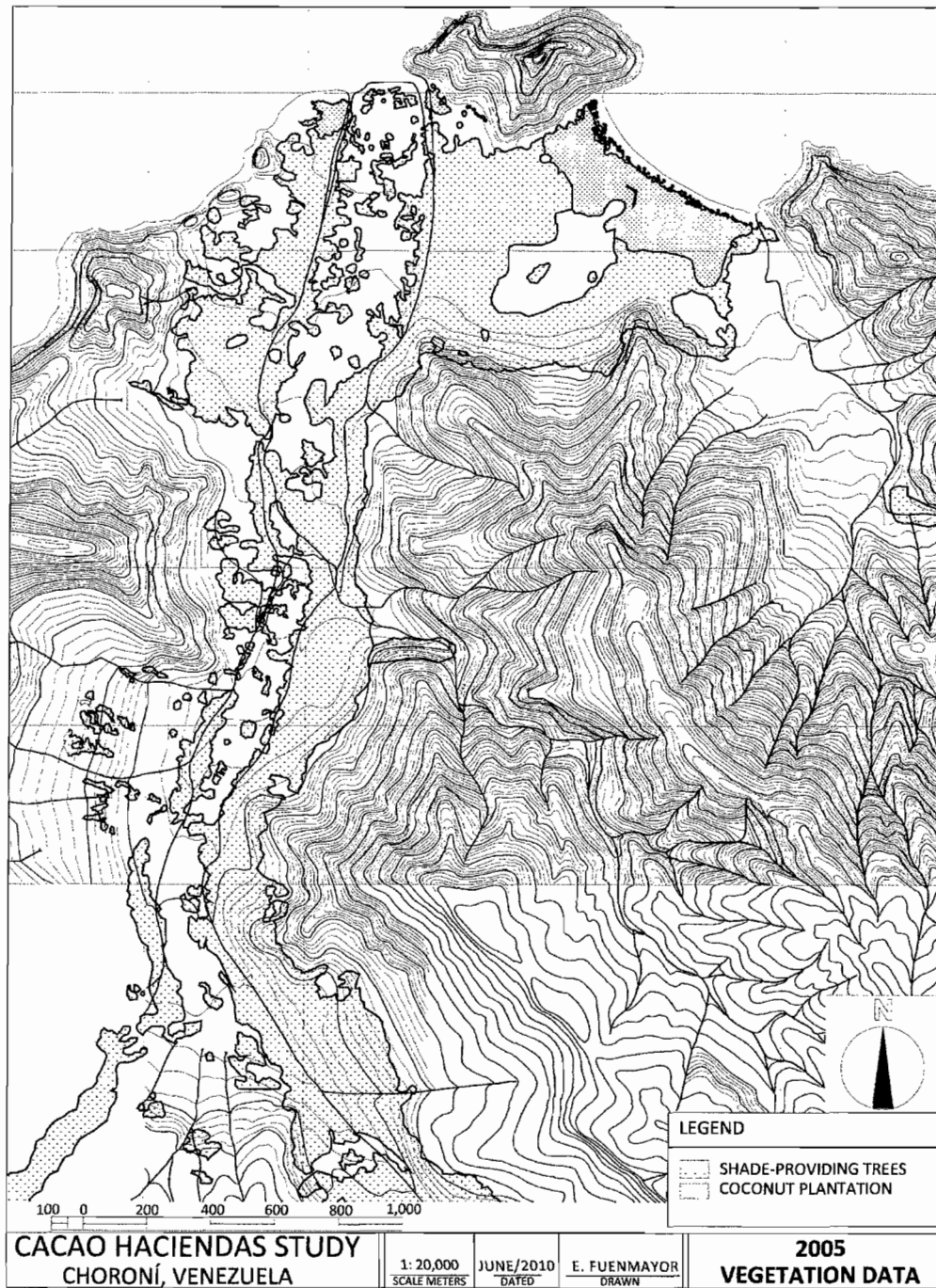


Figure 37. Vegetation analysis base on the aerial photograph from 2005. The dense hatch indicates the coconut plantation, and the light hatch the cacao plantation. Data from aerial photo 2005 and topographic map from 1984, courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

The vegetation in Choroní with the large mijaos and other trees for shade, and the cacao trees became a tourist attraction in the early 1980s, when the road was freshly paved. The sense of being in a jungle at just two hours from the city, incite people to visit regularly. The loss of more than 40% of the vegetation in less than thirty years is alarming. The lack of water has affected not only the vegetation but also the fauna that inhabits this landscape. The protection of the remaining green areas at least to the east of the river is a protection not only for the fauna, but also to ensure that tourists will still have a view of the rich paradise.

GROWTH OF TOWNS AND TOURISM: INCREASE AND REDISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION

A major cause for the decreased vegetation, and therefore of the haciendas, has been the growth of towns and tourism. The growing need to build housing and hotels in the last twenty years has created a new cultural and physical landscape. The population has not dramatically increased during this period, as can be observed in Table 5 and Figure 38. However, the geographic distribution of the people over the valley has changed due to new ownership of the haciendas and changes in lifestyle that require more distance from the workplace than before.

In the census conducted by Priest Manuel Joseph Montenegro in 1760, Choroní had 1,384 inhabitants distributed in different areas. The first zone had 91 houses. The area is not identified, but it could be assumed that it was around the towns and church because Montenegro was counted first on this section of the census. Then were three more areas: La otra banda (the other side) with fifteen (15) houses and the Sitio de este lado del río (site on this side of the river) that counted twenty one (21) houses and one (1) hacienda, and finally Payare with 58 houses.¹⁷²

By 1790, a census by Priest Joseph Antonio Sabino Gómez, as mentioned in previous chapters, identified the areas with more detail, however the folio that could have given more information was lost. For the purpose of this thesis, the important data are the large number of houses and people living in the different areas. Below it is a list of the areas mentioned on the survey:

¹⁷² Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeño*, 1:163-181.

1. El Pueblo (the town)
2. Indios Tributarios (its meaning in this context is not defined. The tributary Native Americans were the ones used for labor, but the census included houses of Spaniards with their slaves)
3. El Portete
4. La Isla
5. Playa Grande
6. Barrio Colorado
7. El Casibo.¹⁷³

Year Census	Venezuelan population	Aragua State population	Choroní's Population
1,873	1,883,055	94,151	3,460
1,881	2,097,081	104,967	3,562
1,891	2,314,138	94,994	N/A
1,920	2,666,156	95,902	N/A
1,926	2,758,952	105,839	N/A
1,936	3,617,577	129,746	N/A
1,941	4,096,565	138,235	N/A
1,950	5,413,804	189,891	2,485
1,961	8,004,254	313,274	2,487
1,971	11,405,874	543,170	2,210
1,981	15,609,392	891,623	2,040
1,990	19,405,429	1,108,196	4,680
2,001	24,858,832	1,533,531	N/A
2,009	26,814,843	1,767,884	5,235

Table 5. Venezuela, Aragua State and Choroní Population comparison. Source: Data from Bolívar Chollet

Almost a century later, in 1873-1875, President Antonio Guzmán Blanco ordered the First Official Census of Venezuela. The population of the country was 1,784,194. Important cities like Caracas had 48,897 and Valencia 28,594. The Aragua State (named Guzmán Blanco at time) counted 94,151.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Ibid., 1:171-179.

¹⁷⁴ Miguel Bolívar Chollett, *Sociopolítica y Censos de Población en Venezuela: Del Censo "Guzmán Blanco" al Censo "Bolivariano"* (Caracas, Venezuela: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 2008), 62-63

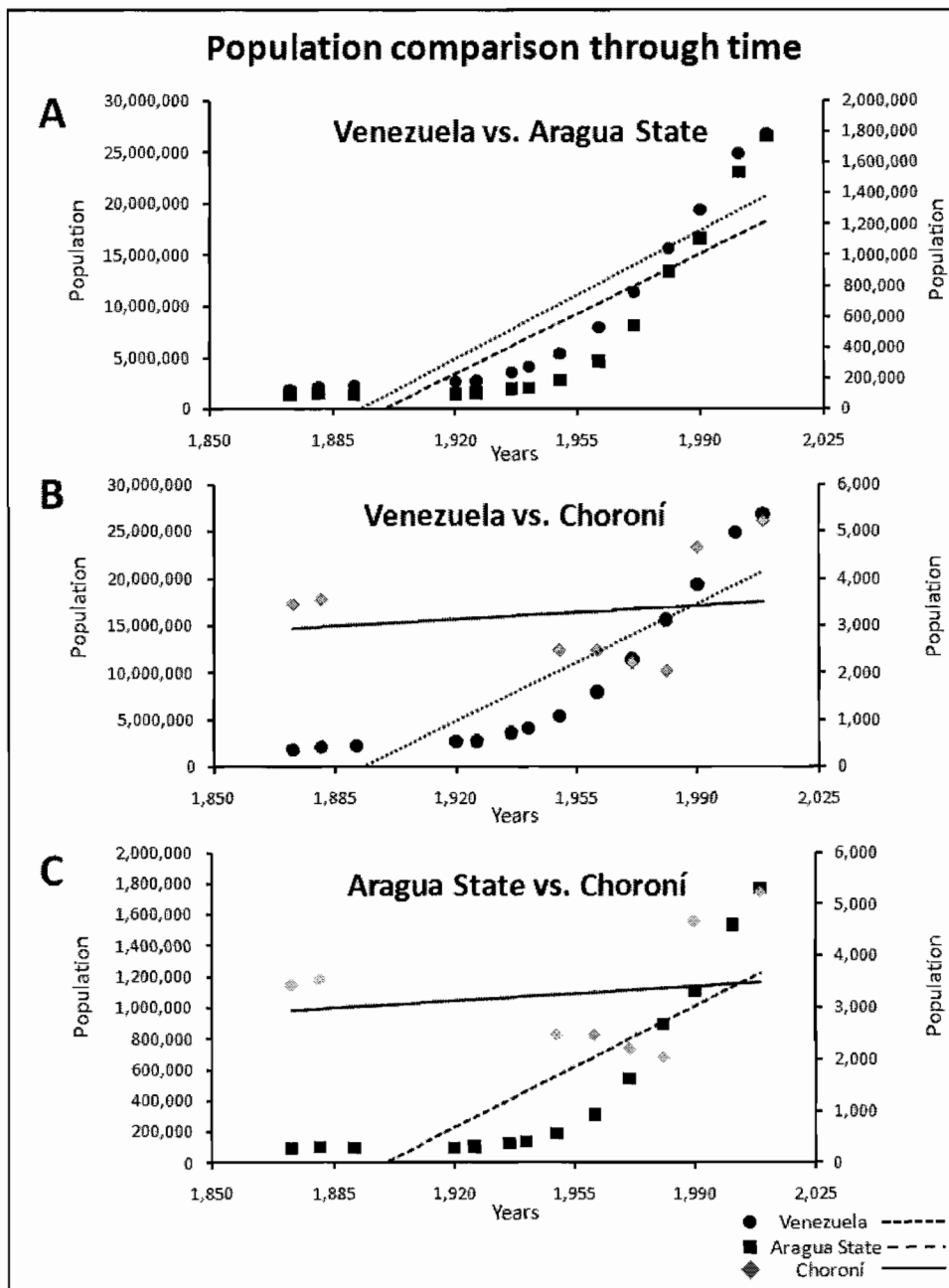


Figure 38. Population Comparison at local, regional and national level: “A” Shows the Venezuelan population against Aragua State. “B” Shows Venezuelan population and Choroni. “C” Shows Aragua State against Choroni’s Population. The lines represent the linear regression on the population analysis from Table 6. Source: Data from Bolívar Chullet

During this census, the following places where people lived or used were identified:

1. Choroní
2. Bella Vista
3. Cumbe
4. El Carmen
5. Sitio Cajima
6. Campo Alegre
7. Casibo Abajo
8. Sitio El Corral
9. Sitio Ceciba
10. Chuponal
11. El Charal
12. Dos Ríos (no-inhabitants)
13. La Esmeralda
14. Florida
15. Hoyo
16. El Pindo
17. Sitio El Placer
18. Payare
19. Rinconada Abajo
20. Rinconada
21. Santa Bárbara
22. Santa Apolonia
23. San Juan
24. Santa Clara
25. Sitio Torres
26. Tesoro y Mocundo
27. Uraca
28. Isaguirre [Eizaguirre or Izaguirre]
29. [Puerto] Colombia
30. El Portete

31. Valle de Santa Rosa¹⁷⁵

The 1873 census counted 3,460 inhabitants in the valley of Choróní; however, it included the nearby towns of: Chuao, Cepe, Aroa and Tujica. The survey recorded 32 cacao haciendas, 26 coffee haciendas, and three sugar cane haciendas.¹⁷⁶

This information indicated how the population in the valley of Choróní during the past 300 years was dispersed (Figure 39). The change in the distribution of the people in the area was also related to the economy. When the cacao lost commercial importance, and

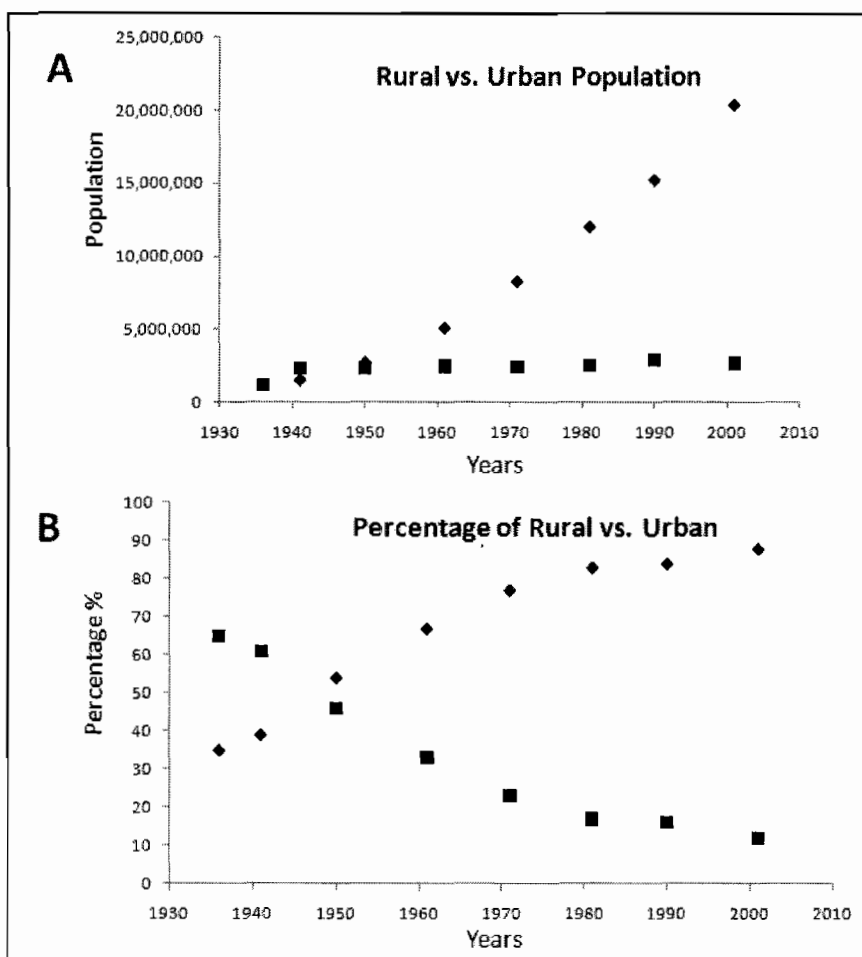


Figure 39. Venezuelan rural and urban population.

A Shows population growth.

B Shows percentage of the growth.

The squares represent rural population and diamond represents urban population. Based in Table 6 data. Source: Bolívar Chollet

¹⁷⁵ Bolívar B., *Apuntes Geo-Históricos de Choróní*, 40-41.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 42

the fishing industry started to grow, people moved closer to towns in order to find other means of living. Today, with tourism as the main source of income, direct contact with the arriving tourists is essential for making money. At the same time, agriculture has found new products that do not require permanent care and labor, like bananas or plantains, allowing farmers to live in town while going to take care of the plantations over weekends or every other day.

Urban population growth in the past hundred years has been dramatic, as shown in Table 6 and Figure 39, the percentage of urban population increased from 35% in 1936 to 88% in 2001.¹⁷⁷ It is also interesting that the rural population has not changed as much or decreased, staying almost the same. This growth of urban inhabitants also indicates the density of these spaces, but what is more important is the conversion of the rural areas to urban spaces, as is happening in Choroní.

Year	Total population	Total Growth rate	Urban Population	% Urban	Urban Growth rate	Rural Population	% Rural
1936	3,364,347	---	1,168,039	35	---	1,168,039	65
1941	3,850,771	2.75	1,516,444	39	5.40	2,334,327	61
1950	5,034,838	3.03	2,709,344	54	6.70	2,325,494	46
1961	7,523,999	4.00	5,073,845	67	6.30	2,450,154	33
1971	10,721,522	3.37	8,276,661	77	4.70	2,444,862	23
1981	1,516,735	3.09	12,034,373	83	3.60	2,482,362	17
1990	18,105,265	2.49	15,226,528	84	2.70	2,878,737	16
2001	23,054,210	2.22	20,381,757	88	2.70	2,672,453	12

Table 6. Urban and Rubal Growth in Venezuela between 1936 and 2001. Observe the drastic increase of urban growth. Source: Data from Bolívar Chollet

The growth of the towns is obvious on the aerial photographs from 1936, 1974 and 2005 (Figure 31, Figure 32, and Figure 33). The maps created with this information seen in Figure 40, Figure 41, and Figure 42, reflect that there were still some spread out buildings on the haciendas by 1936, but that the areas closer to towns were expanding, especially Puerto Colombia. In the southern area of this town, some clusters of buildings grew over time, and by 1974 there stood a complete neighborhood. The areas today called Pueblo Nuevo (New Town) and *La Avenida* (the Avenue) were well developed by 1974.

¹⁷⁷ Bolívar Chollett, *Sociopolítica y Censos de Población en Venezuela*, 305.

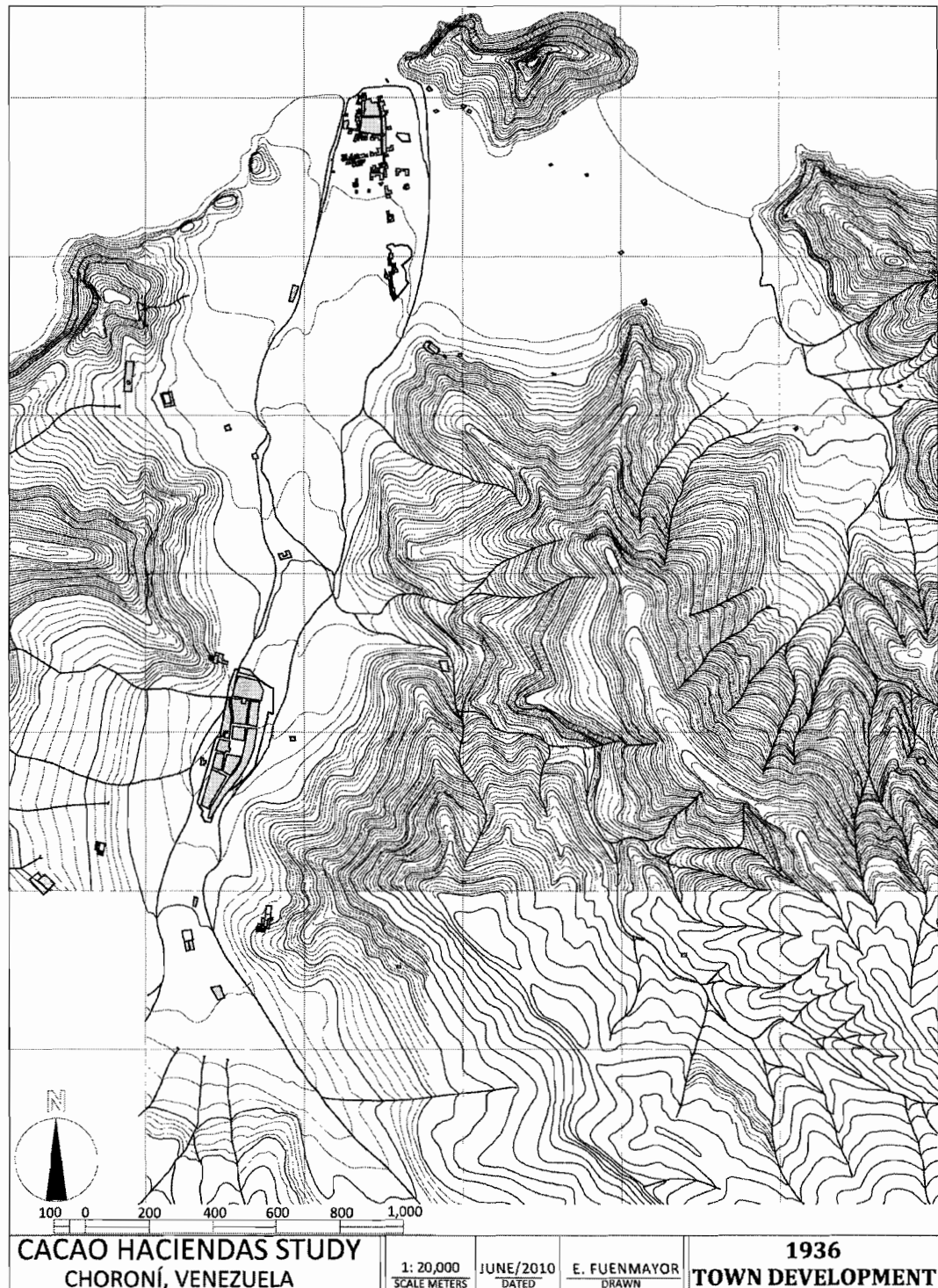


Figure 40. Town development analysis from the aerial photograph from 1936.
Source: Data from aerial photo 1936 and topographic map from 1984, courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

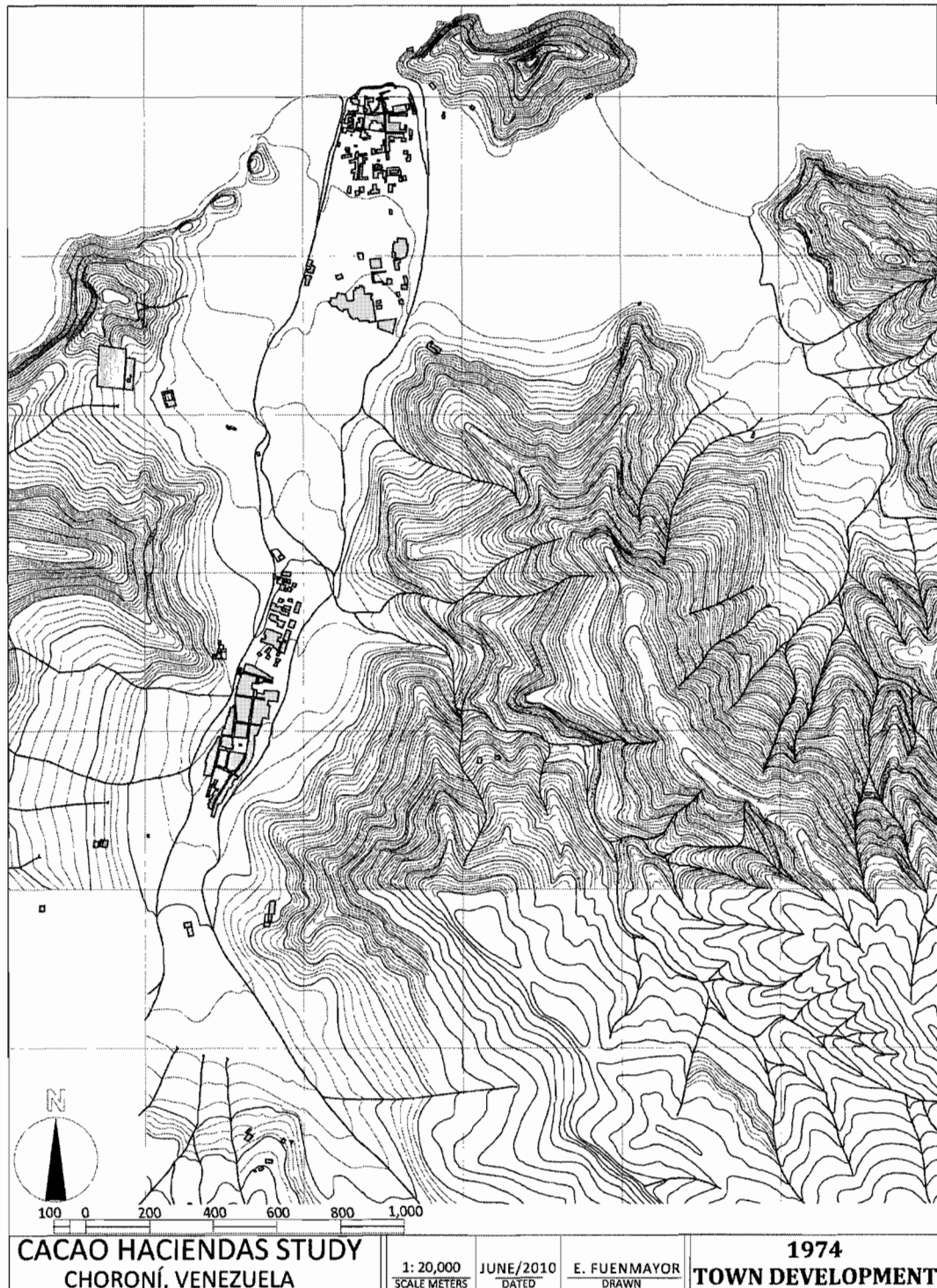


Figure 41. Town Development analysis from the aerial photograph from 1974. Source: Data from aerial photo 1974 and topographic map from 1984, courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

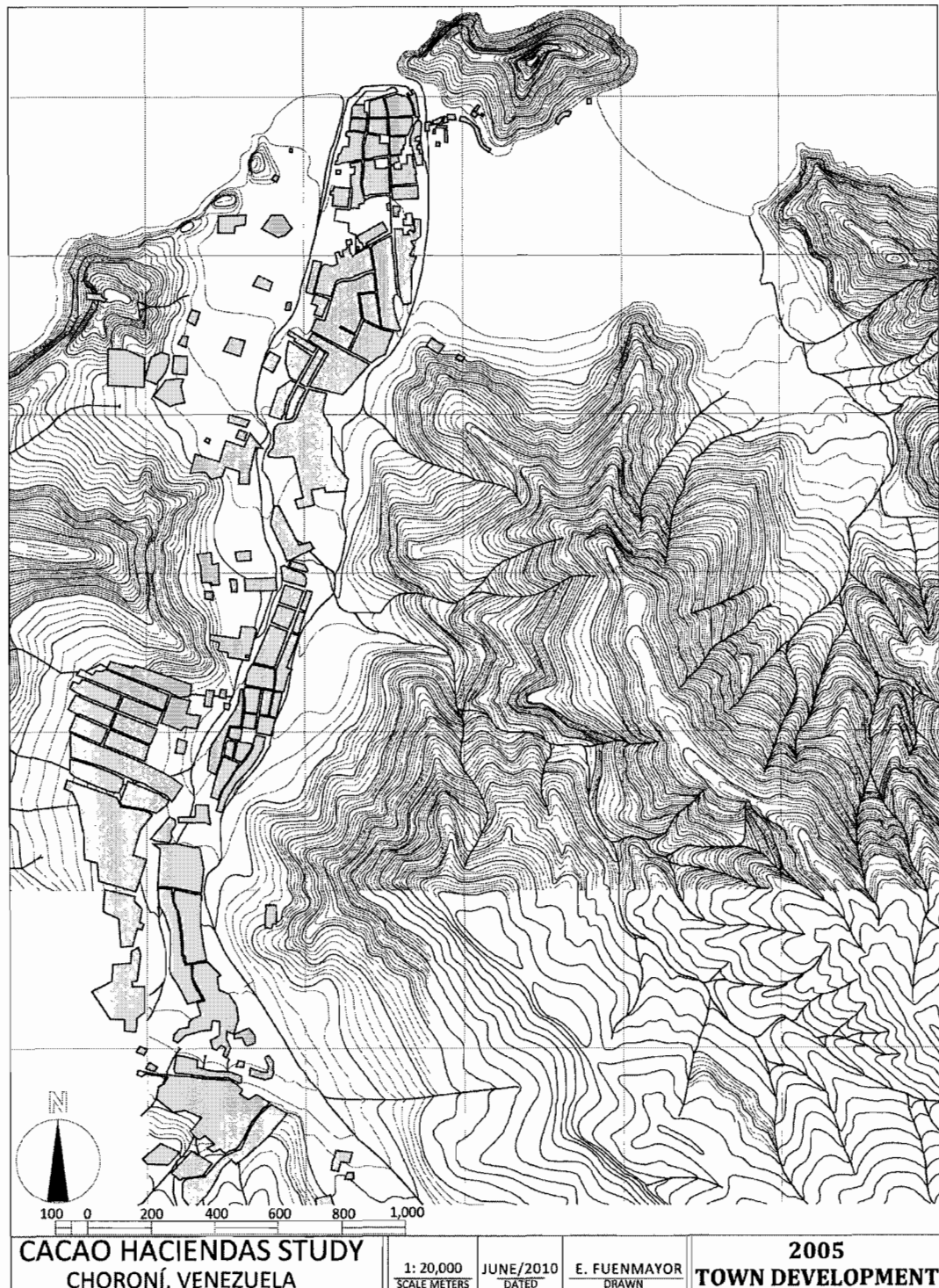


Figure 42. Town development analysis from the aerial photograph from 2005.
 Source: Data from aerial photo 2005 and topographic map from 1984, courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

La Avenida was built with modern houses starting in the 1940s-50s in the former hacienda San Antonio. This area was made exclusive to higher income people coming from Caracas or other cities to enjoy a vacation home. Today most of these exclusive houses are being converted to hotels. However, the neighbors have kept traffic away from their houses by preventing pavement on the streets as a strategy to maintain their exclusivity. This community was also the group that supported the continuation of the acequia mentioned before, that was interrupted in 2008 for the construction of the bank. Many of the houses included the acequia as a feature in their landscape design.

In the aerial photo from 1936, the hacienda houses are clearly observed on the landscape, and can be identified on the respective map. The vegetation surrounding the houses was kept away from the buildings, as a working place. In the 1974 map and aerial photo this is less visible, and some of the houses are more difficult to find compared with 1936. In 2005, the Playa Grande, Torres, and Aljorra are the only hacienda houses clearly visible; the house from La Sabaneta in Monterrosa is not included in the aerial photograph from 2005. The hacienda houses, as the Hacienda San Antonio in Puerto Colombia (Figure 43-A), and El Cumbe in Choroní (Figure 43-B) are fused with the rest of the buildings and have become part of the urban fabric, as a result of the deterioration of the hacienda system, and the construction of the urban spaces.



Figure 43. Photo “A” is the House of former Hacienda San Antonio in Puerto Colombia. Today, only the sign above the door remains the people that this house used to be part of a cacao hacienda. The building is fused with the surrounding landscape, losing the sense of hacienda. Photo “B” is the House of the former Hacienda El Cumbe. Among today’s cultural landscape are the ruins of many hacienda houses that have lost their context and today remain as hollow buildings. Photos by author, August 2009

Immigration to this valley has increased in the last twenty years along with the tourism boom. The former haciendas Santa Clara, Parnaso, Santa Barbara, and El Portete, among others are now a continuous series of zinc and tile roofs as seen in the aerial photograph. There are no longer acequias visible in this area, only the creeks' vegetation is being maintained.

This aggressive pace of construction has been hurried along with the necessity to respond to the region's growing tourist trade; an industry that can only be supported by using a lot of space for hotels and not necessarily housing the community. Also, there has been a large influx of people from Maracay, Valencia and Caracas, whose parents or grandparents emigrated from Choroni to the cities in the '50s and '60s, and who are now coming back to claim their "rights." However, in reality they are renting their houses, building new hotels on their agricultural properties or simply invading (taking) part of the former haciendas to use as land for a beach house and its supplementary rental income. This group of immigrants is bringing new traditions with them and new values, which affect the society that was in some degree isolated from the urban culture previously. Choroni is becoming more urban than rural every day, doing so without any planning by the government or enough infrastructures to support this population growth. Continually, the solution is always to build instead of study and preserve the few pieces of history that remain.

ROADS AND TRAILS

Historically, communication between Choroni and the other coastal valleys was maintained along the sea. This was not easy for the fragile embarkations because the sea is often rough and strong. People kept in constant communication with La Guaira (Caracas's Port about 45 miles east) and Puerto Cabello (the second most important port of Venezuela located about 30 miles west), and even with Curacao or Aruba. However, the rest of the communication was via ground travel along trails. These old paths were Native American trails modified during the colonial period (1498-1810). There were three main trails as seen in the aerial photographs and maps (Figure 31, Figure 32, Figure 33, Figure 44, Figure 45, and Figure 46): one to the south via Maracay, another to the east which connected to Chuao (reaching La Guaira, and eventually Caracas), and another west that connected Choroni with Aroa, Cuyagua and Ocumare. These were intricate, difficult and dangerous

paths and thus, were not commonly traveled.¹⁷⁸ There is a traditional song whose lyrics illustrate how difficult these trails were:

*“Préstame tu burra pa’ ir pa’ Choroní
Sí tu burra es buena,
Yo vuelvo a venir...”*

Translated:

“Lend me your donkey to go to Choroní
If your donkey is good,
I **could** come back...”

During the Independence movements, there was some research and review done on these trails for military reason. In 1815, the officials from the Expeditionary Army of Pablo Morillo,¹⁷⁹ did an inventory of the different trails, indicating the sites and features of the paths, as well as the duration needed to complete them. They even outlined the trajectories as flat, upward, or downward.¹⁸⁰

In the description of the Maracay-Choroní itinerary, there was a warning indicating that the trail was narrow with precipices, steps, continuous turns, and many other features that made this trail almost impossible for pack animals to travel. They said that even only one man could barely pass through the extremely narrow path. Besides, “they [the mules] should be very good mules and be rested, so they can do the journey without quitting during it.” The warning emphasized that it was “absolutely impossible for any troops to do the journey from Maracay to Choroní in one day. To do this trail there should be an overnight at the foot of the mountain, and during sunrise start the journey to the other side, staying another overnight after crossing, and getting to Choroní the next day in a short time. To start the route there should be good weather, because if there is rain, it is absolutely impossible to walk the trail because all the way is a river and a very strong one.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeso*, 1:213.

¹⁷⁹ General Pablo Morillo y Morillo (1775-1837) was Count of Cartagena and Marquis of La Puerta and a Spanish General. Morillo was one of the leaders of the Spanish Army during the Independent of Venezuela.

¹⁸⁰ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeso*, 1:213

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1:213-217

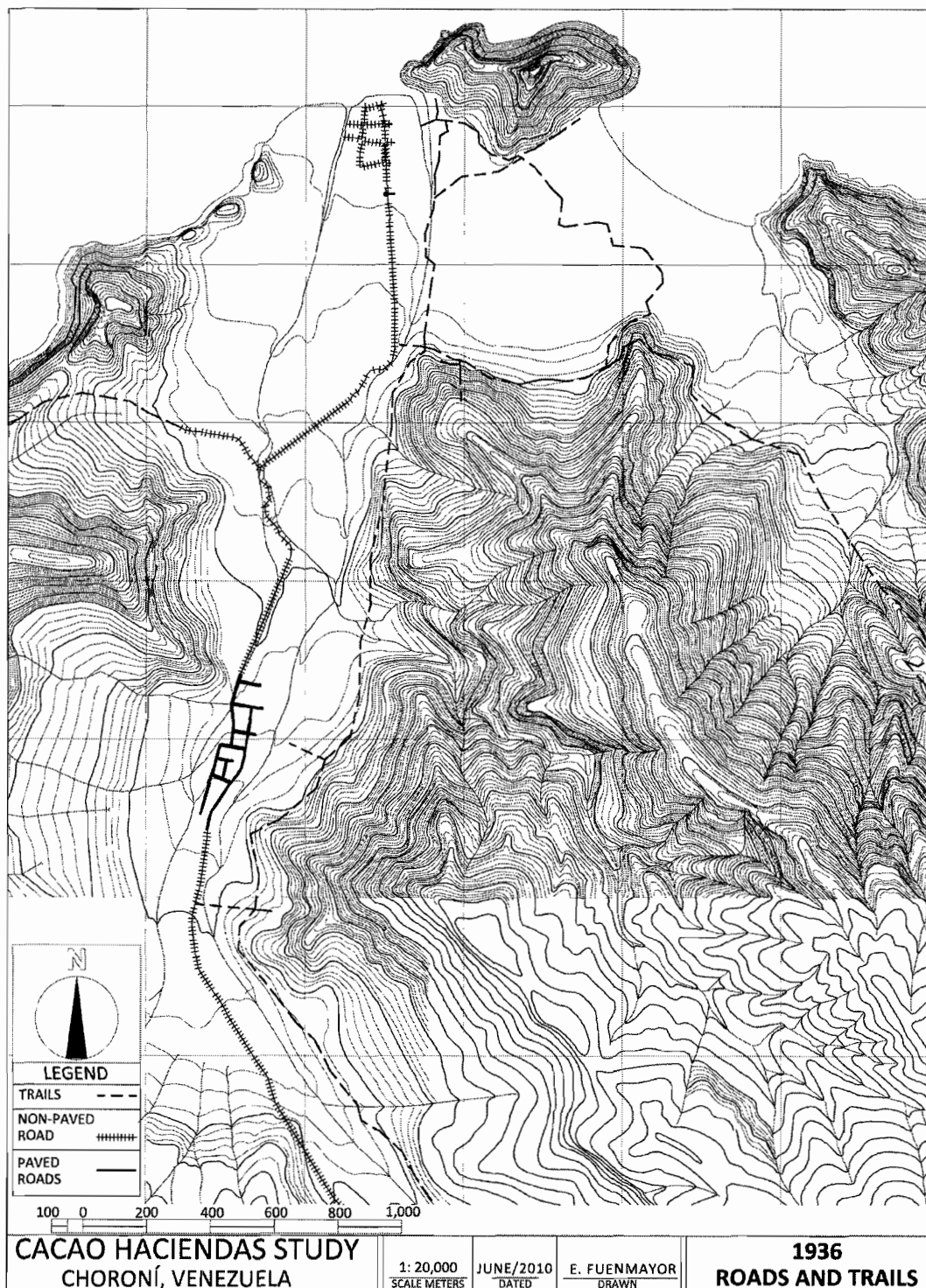


Figure 44. Roads and trails analysis from the aerial photograph from 1936. Source: Data from aerial photo 1936 and topographic map from 1984, courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

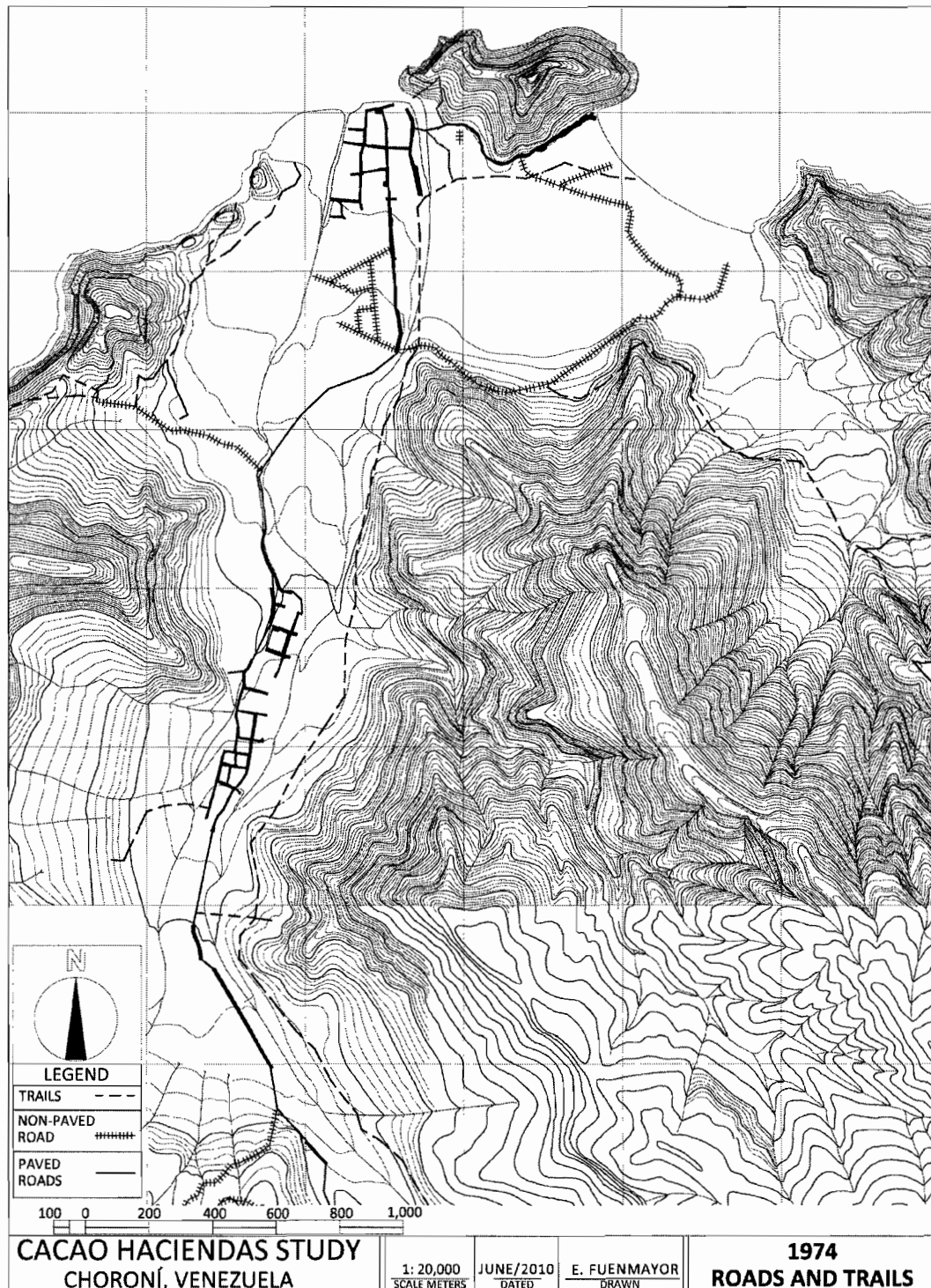


Figure 45. Roads and trails analysis from the aerial photograph from 1974. Source: Data from aerial photo 1974 and topographic map from 1984, courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawing by author

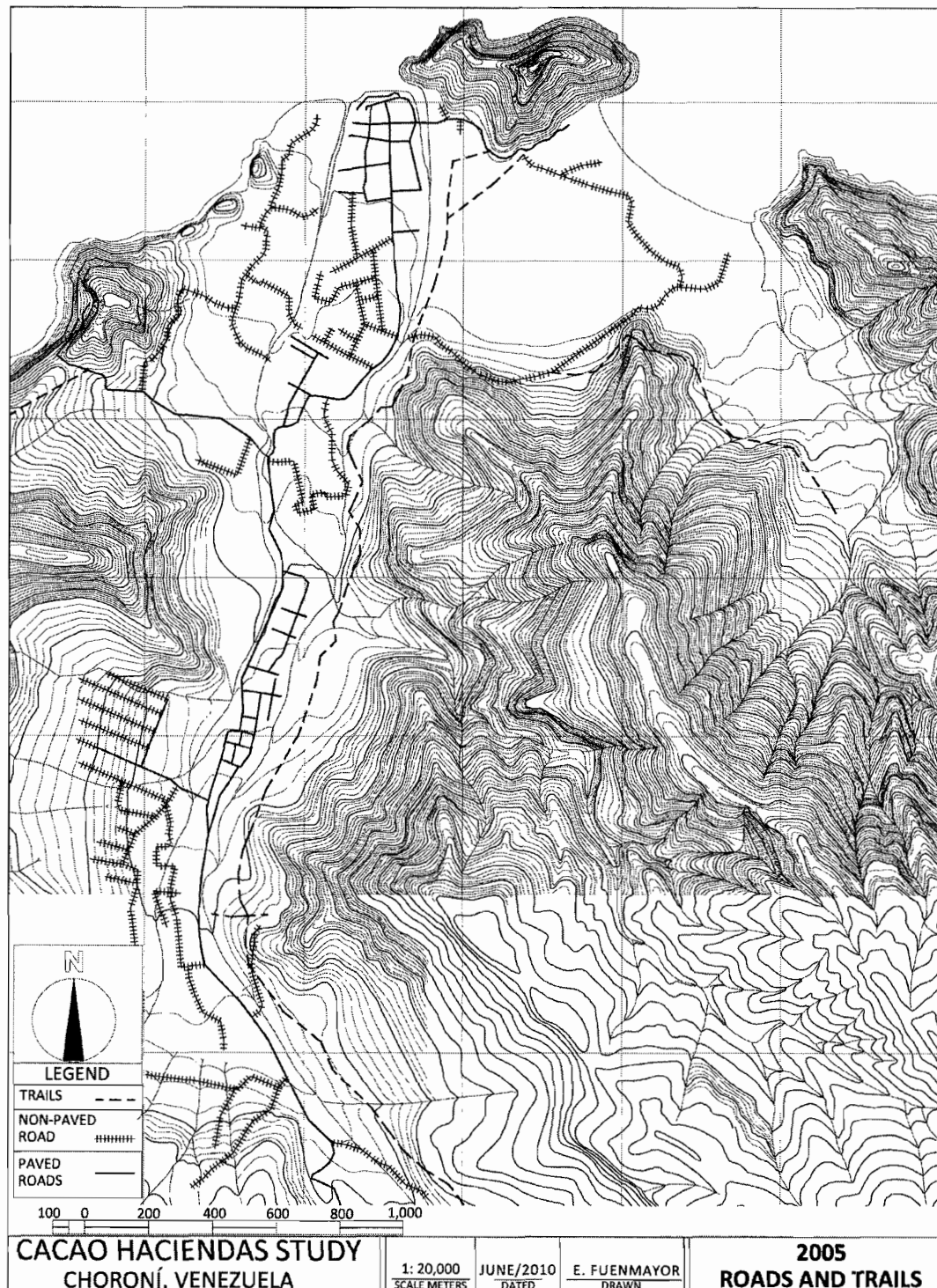


Figure 46. Roads and trails analysis from the aerial photograph from 2005. Source: Data from aerial photo 2005 and topographic map from 1984, courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawing by author

Today's road to Maracay was built between 1920 and 1935, and does not exactly follow the previously described trail. In the research process, there was not much information to be found about the original trail. The old trail is known as "*El Camino de los Españoles*" (the Spanish Road) and entered Choróní at the east side of the river. This might partially explain the location of the most important haciendas at the east side, including Torres, Payare, Casibo, Sabaneta, Rinconada, among many others, whose owners during the colony were part of the Choróní elite. Also, the soil at the east side of the eastern mountain range in the valley are fertile as shown on the soil map (Figure 26), and many communities like La Ceciba still exist today, and are very important for the cultivation of bananas, plantain and yucca.

The other two trails still exist, however the one most used is the west path that connects to Aroa, which is only six hours away. The trail to Chuao takes longer; from Playa Grande it can take up to twelve hours at a fast pace. They are not as dangerous as the way to Maracay, but there are similar characteristics: very narrow with precipices, steps, rivers and steep upwards and downwards. The trail to Chuao also connects with the path that goes through the El Casibo, La Rinconada and La Ceciba that is called "*El Camino Real*" (The Royal Road). The name Camino Real indicates that it was the most important trail even though there were not enough historical findings to confirm whether this trail connected to the *Camino de los Españoles*.

The maps drawn based on the three aerial photographs (Figure 44, Figure 45, and Figure 46), show the incremental density around the Choróní-Maracay road. As described in Chapter III, the road has many villages in what are former haciendas. The only active cacao haciendas that are west of the river and east of the road are Tesoro, and Santa Apolonia and San Miguel (both part of Monterrosa). However, these haciendas face continuous threats from the community to be built upon, or to be divided into lots among the neighbor villages. Since 2009, the government started to intervene on these matters and in July 2009 Hacienda Monterrosa was taken over by the federal government. However, they did not divide the land, they kept it as a productive hacienda. In March 2010, Hacienda Tesoro was also taken over by the government, with an unclear future.

The growth of the roads in Choróní has been crucial to the growth of the towns, as well as a big threat to the vegetation, and therefore the haciendas. The areas where cars have reached face the biggest changes. In order to preserve the landscape there must be

restrictions for vehicular access. A good example is also the road that connects Playa Grande beach to Puerto Colombia. As seen in the aerial photograph from 1936 (Figure 31), the road was just a trail and then, by 1974 a concrete slab had been built on the river that facilitated vehicular access to the beach. As a consequence, during 1980s, the local government allowed parking below the coconut plantation, cutting down trees and contaminating the sand. The owners, in this case, fought for their property rights and restricted the cars from their agricultural areas. Then, by 2009 the federal government proposed a parking lot of 300 vehicles, at the east side of the river, just after crossing the concrete slab, by cutting down all the trees for this new use. The automobile is still winning these battles.

Each of the elements analyzed in this section are connected, and have been directly affected by the economy of the country, social changes and the political winds affecting the country over time. Since its foundation as an *encomienda*, Choroní has been molded by these factors. The landscape is dynamic and cannot be preserved perfectly, but it can be conserved enough so that future generations understand the origins of the site, and the reasons for its shape as it is today. The cases selected for this study are the remaining cacao haciendas in the area (Figure 47).

They face continuous threats, not only from the community but also from the local and federal governments that do not understand the historic importance of the hacienda and the economic tie of cacao and this land. Sadly, it may take the complete destruction of the haciendas to promote the value of their heritage. This thesis is intended to prevent this from happening, to continue the legacy of many, like poet José Antonio Maitín, José Felix Sosa (who signed the Declaration of Independence), Pedro Machado Rodríguez, Vicente Fuentes, Kai Rosenberg, among others who have believed strongly.

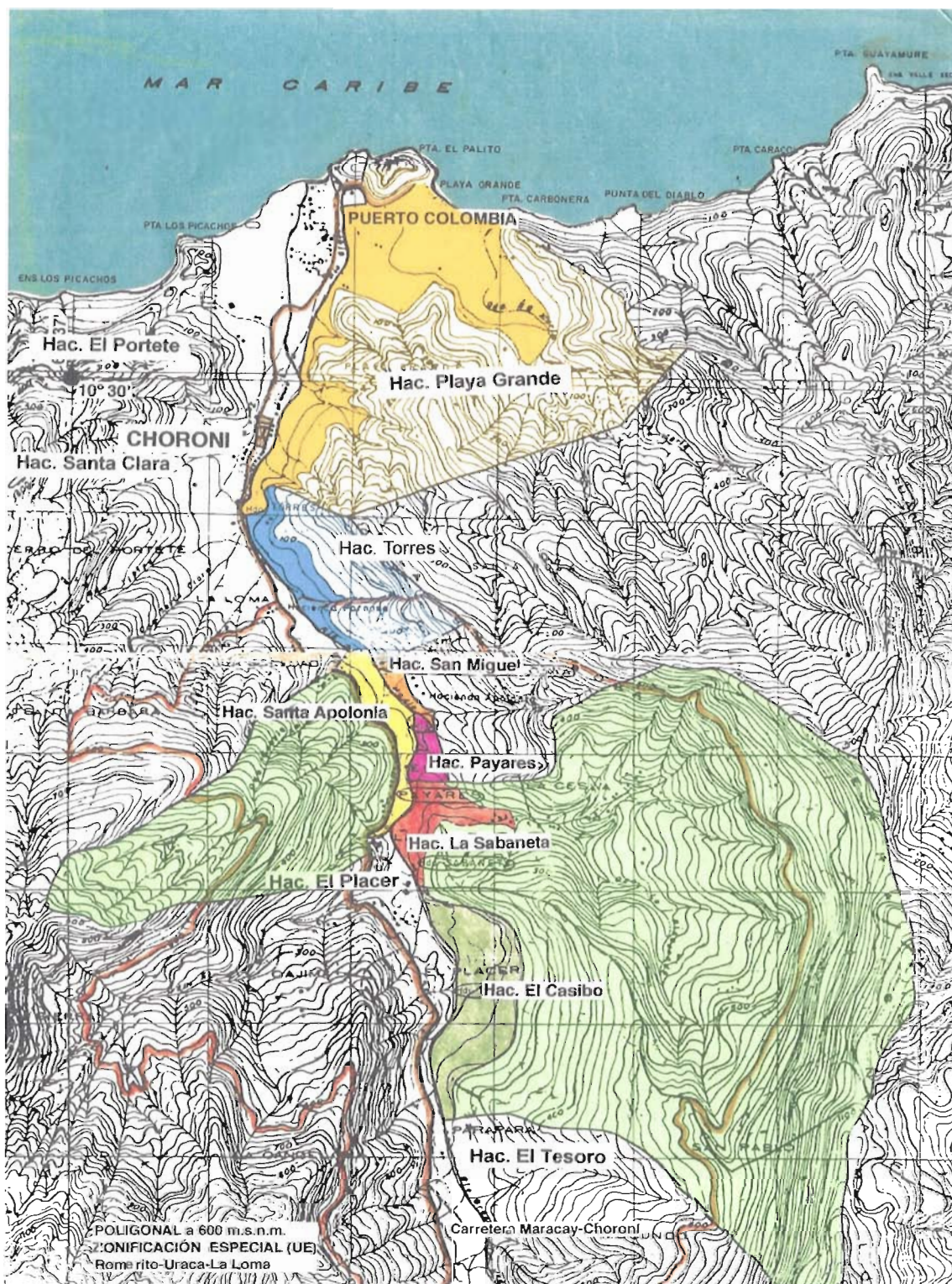


Figure 47. The cases selected for this study are the remaining cacao haciendas in the area. At the north in yellow is Hacienda Playa Grande, in blue is Hacienda Torres, and to the south in green are the haciendas that form Hacienda Monterosa. The darker color areas around the river are the areas apt for cacao plantation. Map courtesy of Kai Rosenberg

CASE STUDY I: HACIENDA PLAYA GRANDE

Location

The Hacienda Playa Grande is located at the northeast end of the valley, at the east side of the Choroní River in the Puerto Colombia area. Within its limits is *Playa Grande* beach (“the large beach”) where most tourist activities occur (Figure 48 and Figure 49). Its west side runs along the Choroní River. At the north end, it borders the property of the Marquez Family and the crest of Cerro Pan de Azúcar. To the northeast is the Caribbean Sea. Its limits to the east go to the crest of the northeast mountain range and the Fila de Santa Rosa (crest of Santa Rosa range). In addition, to the south, it borders the Hacienda Torres and Hacienda Santa Rosa.

This hacienda includes a total of 436.66 hectares (1,078.55 acres), however most of the land is mountainous, and leaving only approximately 20% of flat area that can be cultivated. This result in having only 15% of the land to be suitable for cacao, because the coconut plantation occupies a large area on the flat land.

History

Many owners and people were living in the sitio or area of Playa Grande during the colonial times (1600s-1810). Within the research for this thesis, the earliest mention of Playa Grande is in 1756 when Domingo Correa sued Elvira López over the sale of a cacao hacienda in Playa Grande.¹⁸²

Later, the census of 1790 surveyed by Priest Joseph Antonio Sabino Gómez. The area of Playa Grande included eight houses:

- Isidoro Guardia House: seven (7) free slaves
- Félix Gil House: four (4) free slaves
- Don Juan Luis Atalais [Atalai or Atalay] House: five (5) free slaves
- Miguel Atalai [Atalais or Atalay] House: three (3) free slaves
- Manuel Benites House: three (3) free slaves
- Don Gabriel Oses House: two (2) free slaves
- [illegible] Oses House: eight (8) free slaves
- Don Carlos Rodríguez House: four (4) free slaves¹⁸³

¹⁸² Ibid., 1:313.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 1:176

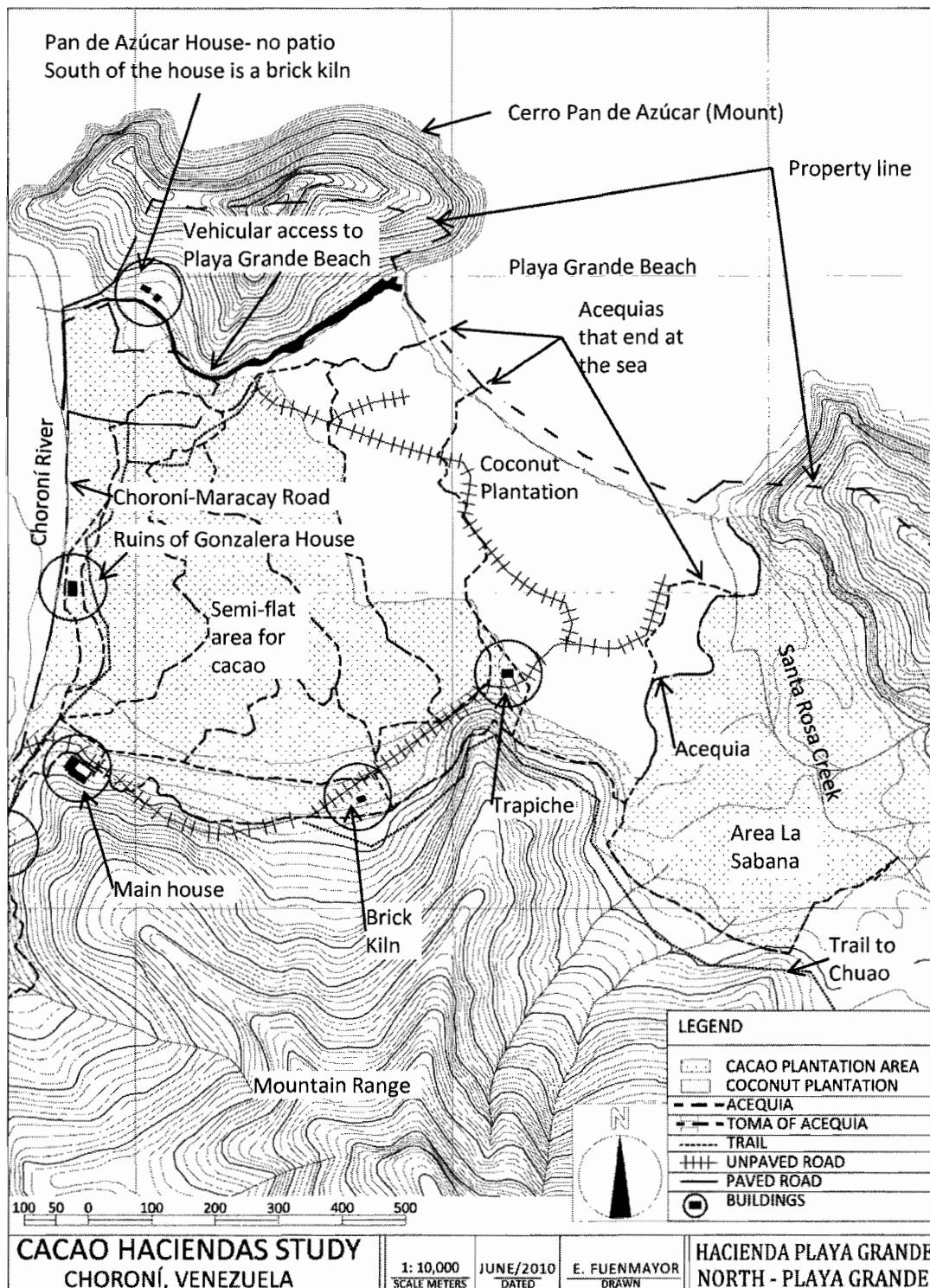


Figure 48. Hacienda Playa Grande. The hacienda was originally two haciendas, in this map is shown the north area corresponding to Playa Grande. Source: Data from topographic map courtesy of the Machado Family and on the topographic map from 1984 courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

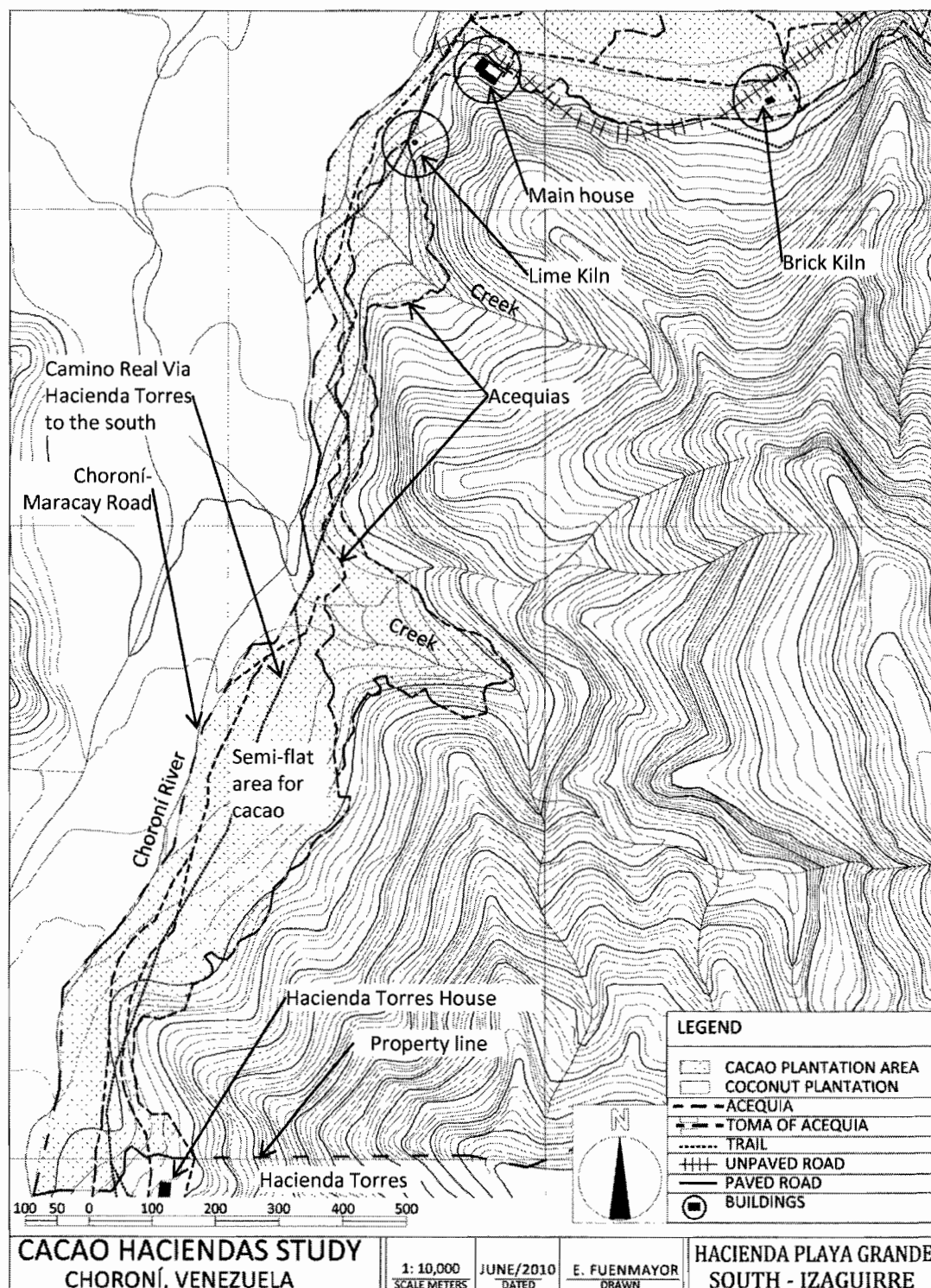


Figure 49. Hacienda Playa Grande. The hacienda was originally two haciendas, in this map is shown the south area corresponding to Izaguirre. Source: Data from topographic map courtesy of the Machado Family and on the topographic map from 1984 courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

Interestingly, the Atalay family would remain in Playa Grande until 1903 when Antonia Roldán de Rojas sold out to Emilia Maitín de Collazo. She inherited it from her mother Carmen Atalay de Roldán in 1850.¹⁸⁴

In Choroní, many Spaniards migrated from the Canary Islands, among them was Francisco Romero, from Santa Cruz de Tenerife. When he died in 1791, he left behind three haciendas: *La Escorzonera* (today the village of *Romerito* along the road), *La Isleta* (today part of Monterrosa), and Playa Grande. Romero had purchased these properties from the Blanco de Villegas Family.¹⁸⁵

Another Spaniard from the Canary Islands was Antonio González de Sotomayor, who owned the Hacienda Playa Grande, and died in 1801. His daughter married José Gorrín, who took charge of the hacienda and its 15 slaves.¹⁸⁶

However, the person who changed the course of the history of Playa Grande was José Andrés Hernández who in 1880 started to buy up small surrounding properties. His son Froilán Hernández Ojeda married Emilia Maitín, but then died early. Emilia Maitín married Tomás Collazo, who was the *capataz* (overseer) of the hacienda, who also played a role in the history of Choroní haciendas. José Andrés Hernández left in his will in 1895, all his properties to his grandson José Rafael Hernández Maitín when he was still underage. Emilia Maitín, later known as Emilia Maitín de Collazo as legal guardian of her son bought many properties in the area of Playa Grande. During this time in Venezuela, there was a growth on the latifundia, where one powerful person was buying small properties; it appears that Choroní did not escape this trend.

Between 1880 and 1927, José Andrés Hernández, and then his grandson José Rafael Hernández Maitín acquired more than fifteen properties, increasing the size of the Hacienda considerably. During this period, there were other houses in the area, and today only two remain as evidence of this process. The main house of Hacienda Playa Grande was included among the first properties acquired by Hernández in the nineteenth century, and is still the

¹⁸⁴ "Escritura de Adquisición (Deeds): Juan Vicente Gómez. Haciendas de Cacao, Cocos y Café, Denominadas "Playa Grande," "Izaguirre," "Torres," "Payares," "Santa Rosa" y potrero "La Laguna" y Casas de Choroní." (Registro de Oficina Subalterna. Estado Aragua, Venezuela, 1934), Bajo el número 54, Folio 78 al 86 del Protocolo Primero.

¹⁸⁵ Manuel Hernández González, *Los Canarios en la Venezuela Colonial, 1670-1810*, 1st ed., Taller de Historia 25 (Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain: Centro de la Cultura Popular Canaria, 1999), 258

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 259

main building today (Figure 50). The house is located to the southwest of the Playa Grande area, at the foot the mountain, elevated from the plantation and with an excellent view over the property.

Hernández and Hernández Maitín bought three large haciendas, along with Playa Grande: Hacienda *Campos Elíseos* (*Champ Elysees*), also known as *La Gonzalera* owned by the Gonzalez Cordero Family, and sold in 1924. Hacienda *El Rosario*, also known as *La Pantojera*, was owned by the Pantoja Family and sold to Hernández Maitín in 1920. In addition, Hernández acquired the Hacienda *La Trinidad*, also known as *Izaguirre*.¹⁸⁷



Figure 50. The main house of Hacienda Playa Grande. Northeast facades with drying patio between buildings. The right area was historically the residence and the left wing was dedicated to storage. Photo by author, August 2009

It is worth mentioning that many of the Haciendas had names that have been overtime replaced by their historical owner's last name, for example, Hacienda El Rosario is now known as La Pantojera because its owner's last name was Pantoja. In the case of Hacienda La Trinidad, the common name is Izaguirre that originates from the last name of the owner from 1700s (Table 4), Don José Ignacio Eizaguirre (also spelled Izaguirre) who is named as the owner of the Hacienda *Chimine*, with twenty-eight slaves by the end of the

¹⁸⁷ "Escrituras de Adquisición."

eighteenth century. These kinds of facts indicate the importance of traditional families, and their existence in Choroní. For more than two centuries, these families have been part of the community, and in the twentieth century, families like the Pantoja, Gozalez Cordero, Atalay, among other, started leaving their haciendas and changing their lifestyle, as agriculture lost power in the economy.¹⁸⁸

However, as some families sold and moved away others stayed and found opportunities in the international venue. Venezuela had a pavilion in the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition, showing among many other things, cacao and their products. In the book from the exhibition, the following haciendas from Choroní was indicated:

- Don José Andrés Hernández from Hacienda Playa Grande, with 50,000 trees and 400 fanegas of cacao
- Manuel Pimentel Otero from Hacienda Payare, with 10,000 trees and 60 fanegas of cacao
- Baldomero Sosa from Hacienda Santa Clara, with 30,000 trees and 300 fanegas of cacao¹⁸⁹

In 1934, most of the properties owned by Hernández Maitín were sold to Juan Vicente Gómez, the president of Venezuela, as explained in previous chapters. However, the period where the property was owned by Gómez was very short, because he died in 1935 and later all the possessions were passed to the nation. For only six years, Hacienda Playa Grande was managed by the government, and was kept in production. The government offered the haciendas back to the former owners, but many did not accept the offer because of the lack of interest in cacao, and agriculture in general. These properties, as previously explained, were offered to families that had suffered under the dictatorship of Gómez as a compensation for their losses. Under this figure, the Hacienda Playa Grande was sold in 1940 to Pedro Machado Rodríguez, agricultor (farmer) as he would called himself, who against many people beliefs managed to produce the best cacao in the country, winning prizes and steadily increasing coconut production as reflected in the aerial photographs (Figure 31 and Figure 32).¹⁹⁰ After Pedro Machado's death in 1973, his daughter Rosa

¹⁸⁸ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeño*, 1:173,182.

¹⁸⁹ Arístides Rojas, ed., *Exposicion Universal Colombina de Chicago: Los Estados Unidos de Venezuela en 1893. Publicado de Orden del Gobierno de Venezuela* (New York: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores Venezuela, 1893), 42

¹⁹⁰ "Escrituras de Adquisición."

Haydée Machado Segovia managed to keep the hacienda moving between an architectural carrier of cacao and coconuts.

The Hacienda Playa Grande is today one of the most threatened haciendas because of its proximity to the tourist areas. The cacao plantation is currently being restored with 5,000 cacao trees being planted, and has had the same ownership for 70 years. The granddaughters of Pedro Machado Rodríguez are the newest generation to take charge and help produce the best cacao in Venezuela once again.

CASE STUDY II: HACIENDA TORRES

Location

The Hacienda *Torres* is located to the southeast of the valley, at the east side of the Choroní River in the Choroní area (Figure 51). It is just south of the southern boundary of the town of Choroní and to the western limits at the Choroní River. At the north with former hacienda Izaguirre, today part of Playa Grande, at the east with the crest of the mountain range, which is also part of the property; at the south with Hacienda Monterosa. The actual hacienda was formed by two haciendas or areas, Torres and *La Guillermera* (Figure 52).



Figure 51. The main house of Hacienda Torres. View from the north patio. This was originally the residential wing. The desbabadero is at the left, as a late addition. Beyond on the right is the two story building originally for storage. Photo by author, August 2009

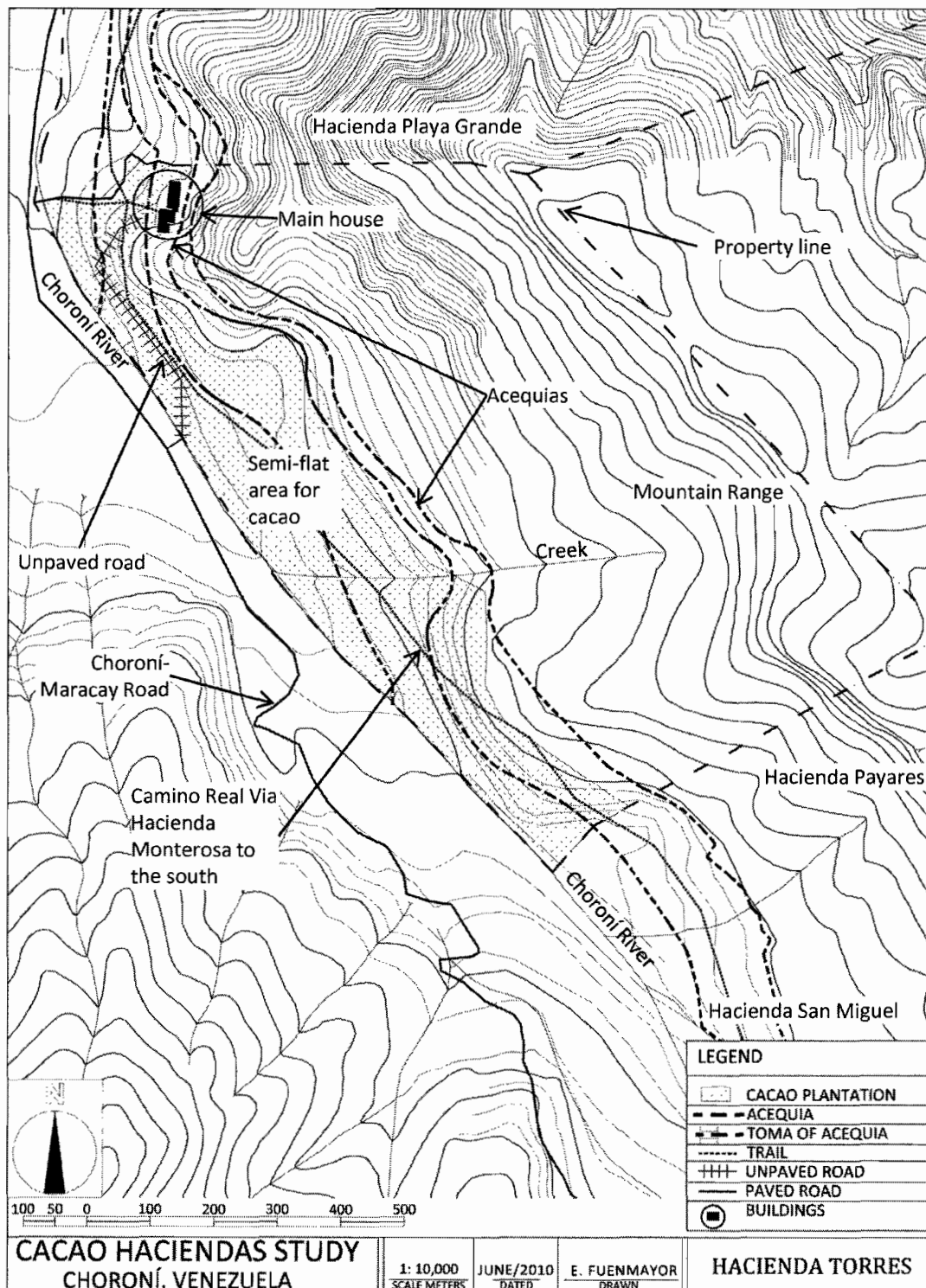


Figure 52. Hacienda Torres. Source: Data from topographic map courtesy of the Vicente Fuentes and the topographic map from 1984 courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

This hacienda includes a total of 176.95 hectares (437.25 acres); however, most of the land is mountains with an estimated 30 hectares of semi- flatland that can be cultivated. This indicates that less than 18% of the land is suitable for cacao, a similar situation to Hacienda Playa Grande.

History

Similar to Playa Grande, the historic documents and census from the colonial era indicates that there were many people living in the *Sitio de Torres*. As early as 1753, Torres is mentioned as a site with haciendas and houses (Figura 49). As shown in Table 4, by the end of eighteenth century, Hacienda Torres was owned by the heirs of Dr. Antonio Martínez de Fuentes, and the mayordomo was D. Nicolás García. Also in 1753, Don Domingo Correa complained that neighbors from Payare are stealing the water from his acequia that irrigates his hacienda in the Sitio of Torres. This hacienda was inherited by Correa's sons in 1787.¹⁹¹

In more recent history, in 1913 the Hacienda Torres was sold by Simón Bravo to Tomás Collazo, who was the stepfather of José Rafael Hernández Maitín. However, by 1924, Tomás Collazo was sick and blind and just two days before he died, he sold the Hacienda Torres to his only daughter María Lourdes Collazo de Gordils. In 1934, María Lourdes and her stepbrother José Rafael Hernández Maitín decided to sell the property to President General Juan Vicente Gómez.

In 1941, the government sold the property to Julio Urbano, who also acquired land in the area of Payares called *La Guillermera*. This property was bought by Gómez in 1934 from María Cleofe Guzmán de Guzmán and Guillermo Guzmán who inherited it from her dead husband José del Carmen Rojas in 1919.¹⁹² In 1943, just two years after Julio Urbano bought the hacienda, he sold it to Vicente Fuentes, agricultor. Since then, the Hacienda Torres has been owned by the Fuentes Family, who inherited it after Vicente Fuentes death.¹⁹³ His youngest son, Vicente Fuentes is an agricultural engineer who currently lives

¹⁹¹ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeño*, 1:298, 301.

¹⁹² "Escritura de Adquisición (Deeds): Vicente Fuentes." (Registro de Oficina Subalterna. Estado Aragua, Venezuela, 1943), No. 83. Folios 154 del Protocolo Primero. Tomo 1º de 1948

¹⁹³ Ibid.

on the Hacienda, and since 1989 has started to restore the cacao plantation. In this process, Fuentes provided vehicular access to the hacienda by building a concrete slab at the river level; however, a solution that seemed to improve the business of cacao has also become one of the most damaging, mainly by adding easy tourist access to the “forest” which became a violation of private property, whether intended or not.

Today, the Hacienda Torres is located across the river from the Haciendas El Parnaso, El Cumbe and Santa Bárbara, areas that are bringing waves of people looking for a piece of land to build on and sell. The easy access to the cacao has also been affecting the plantations, whereby many loads are stolen or damaged for sabotage and/or delinquency. The house is also not being maintained or restored, and some areas are going into ruins.

Despite the threats, the Hacienda Torres has been in the same ownership for almost 70 years and is producing an excellent cacao criollo with about 12,000 highly productive cacao trees.

CASE STUDY III: HACIENDA MONTEROSA

Location

The Hacienda *Monterosa* is located at the southeast side of the valley, at the east side of the road Choróni-Maracay (Figure 53). It borders Hacienda Torres to the north; the Choróni River to the west in some parts with, with the road Choróni-Maracay some, and others with the crest of the western mountain range; with the crest of the mountain range that is also part of the property to the east; and to the southwest by Hacienda El Tesoro; and to the south with the boundary line of Maracay. The hacienda was formed by Sabaneta, Casibo, Santa Apolonia, and San Miguel (Figure 54 and Figure 55).

The haciendas that form Monterosa are geographically similar to Torres and Playa Grande, where most of the area is mountainous and a lower percentage is left for agricultural activities. The hacienda Sabaneta has an area of about 200 hectares, however only 17 hectares can be cultivated. The hacienda El Casibo is about 2,276 hectares (6,000 acres) only 41.50 hectares or 2% are semi-flat lands apt for cacao plantation. Santa Apolonia is about 400 hectares, however, only 15 hectares or 4.93% are semi-flat lands, and only 41.5 hectares (1.80%) and 15 hectares (3.7%) are apt for cacao plantation. Therefore, 97.8% in the case of El Casibo and 95.1% in Santa Apolonia are mountainous lands without

agricultural possibilities, and most of them are located in the National Park, and follow the *Reglamento de Uso del Parque Nacional Henri Pittier* (Special Use Law for the Henri Pittier National Park) where agricultural activities are not allowed. The area that corresponds to this special use is 98% of El Casibo and 95% of Santa Apolonia; these areas are reservoirs to protect fauna and vegetation.

History

In 1996, Kai Rosenberg decided to create an organization called Hacienda Monterosa as an initiative to scientifically and commercially, restore cacao cultivation in Choroní. This organization bought the Haciendas La Sabaneta, El Casibo, Santa Apolonia, and San Miguel in 1996, as part of the Rosenberg project in Choroní. The names of the haciendas are still their historical names, but for the purpose of this thesis, the name Hacienda Monterosa was used in reference to the entire group of haciendas.



Figure 53. The main house of Hacienda Monterosa, the house of Hacienda La Sabaneta. The building at the left is facing north and was originally for residence. The building at the right faces east, and was originally for storage. Photo by author, August 2009

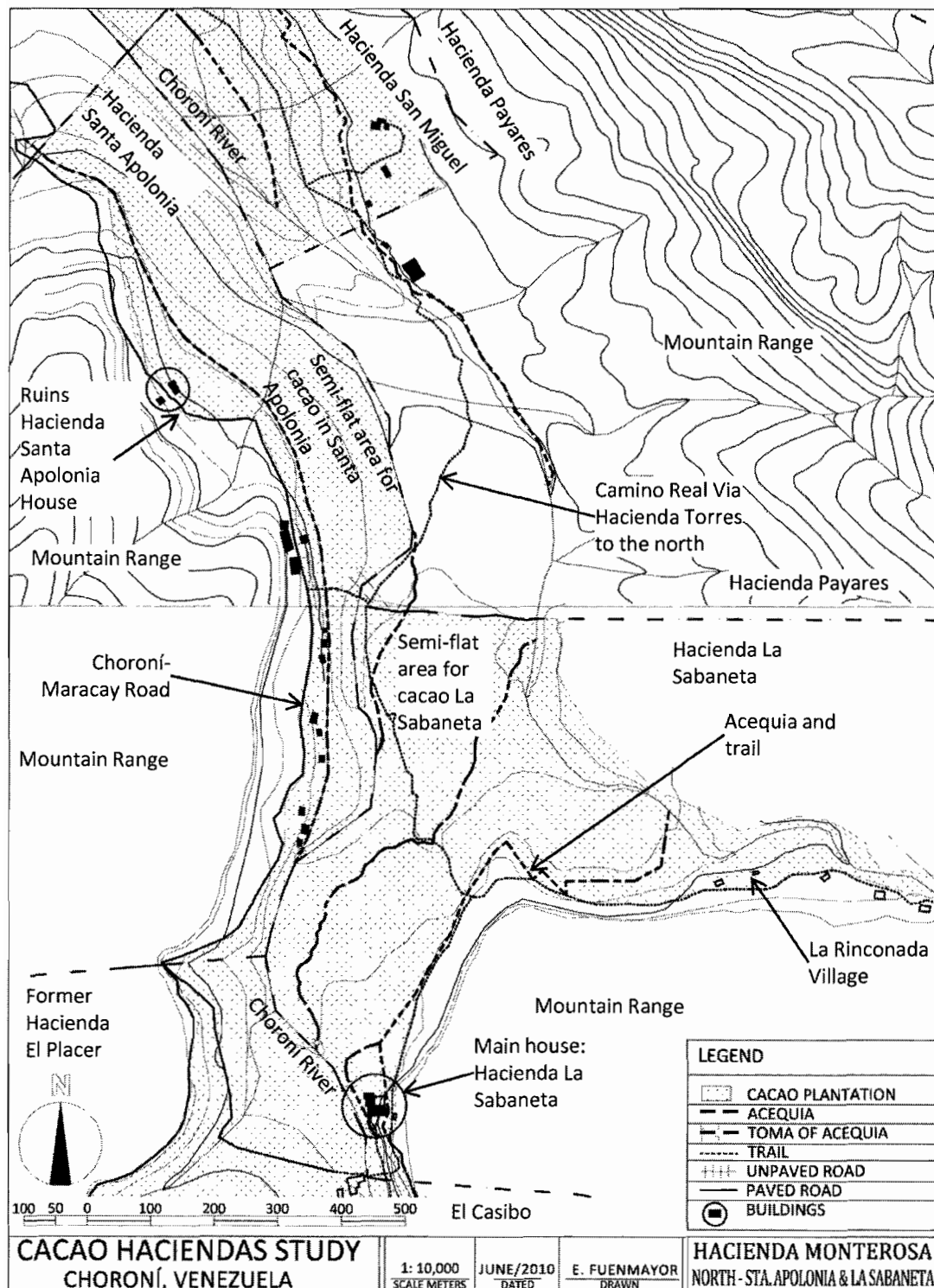


Figure 54. Hacienda Monterosa. Formed by three main haciendas: Santa Apolonia, La Sabaneta and El Casibo. In this map is the north area of Hacienda Santa Apolonia and La Sabaneta. Source: Data from topographic map courtesy of Kai Rosenberg and on the topographic map from 1984 courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

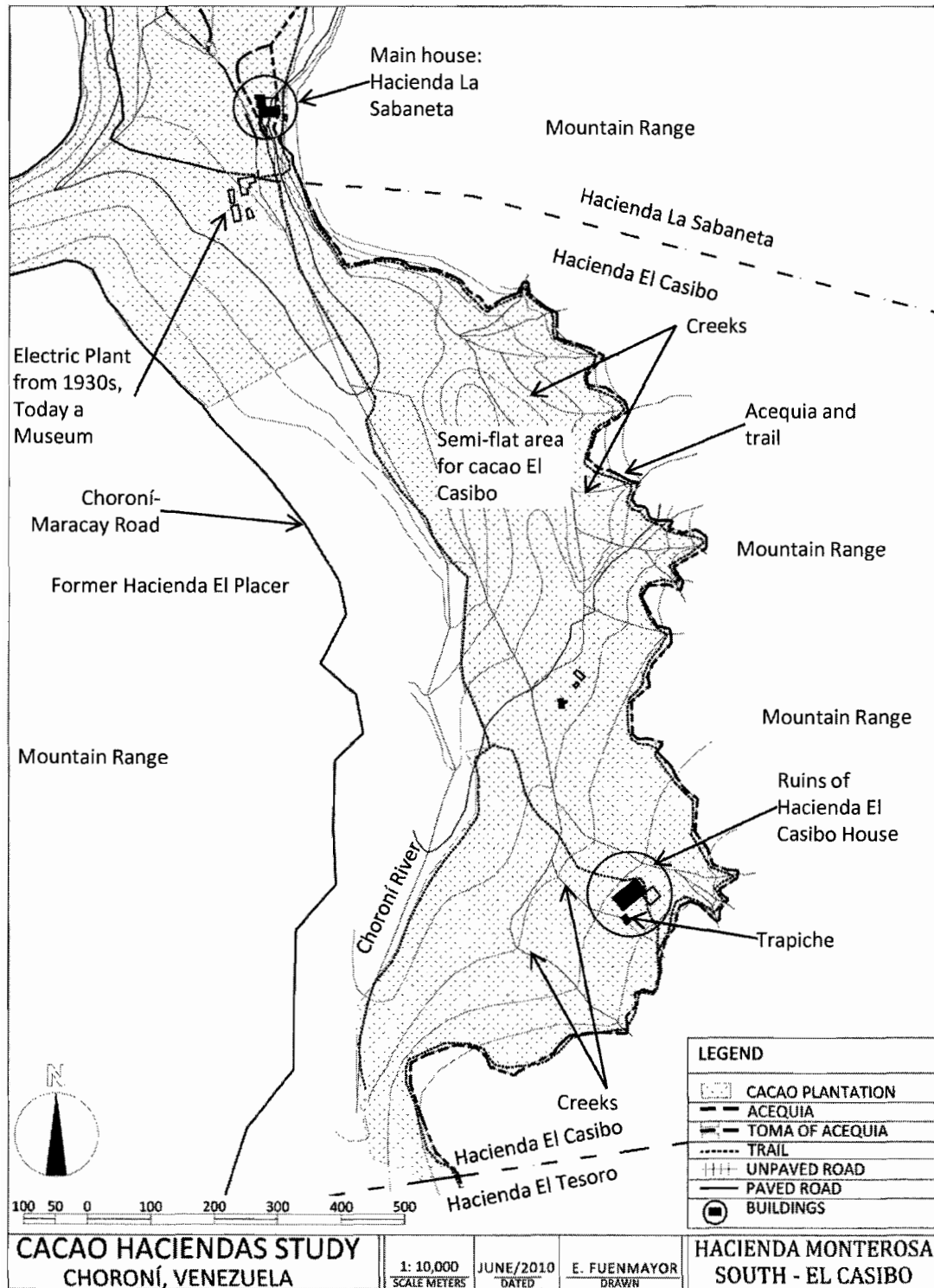


Figure 55. Hacienda Monterosa. In this map is the south area of Hacienda El Casibo. Source: Data from topographic map courtesy of Kai Rosenberg and on the topographic map from 1984 courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawn by author

The Hacienda El Casibo was mentioned in the Olavarriaga's census of 1720, and was owned by Don Simón Coupar and housed 14,000 cacao trees. This hacienda is located at the southern limits of the valley (Figure 55), and because of this geographic location and topography, it was cultivated with cacao and sugar cane, since before 1720.¹⁹⁴ By 1741, the hacienda was owned by Francisco Pérez González, and had grown to 23,000 cacao trees with 12 *tablones*¹⁹⁵ of sugar cane, included a trapiche by waterpower, and forty slaves.¹⁹⁶

In the late eighteenth century census, the Hacienda El Casibo was owned by Doña Catalina Pérez de González, with 61 slaves.¹⁹⁷ In 1802, Captain Don Manuel de Ayala Soriano,¹⁹⁸ received a donation from his aunt Doña Catalina Pérez de González, with many properties and among them, were the Hacienda El Casibo and La Sabaneta. These neighboring haciendas sat on the northern limit of El Casibo, separated by a creek. In this census, Hacienda La Sabaneta also appeared as owned by Juan Joseph de Ochoa (Table 4). These two haciendas shared more than a creek and acequias, since they have shared owners beginning with Ayala up until today.

The haciendas were divided after the death of Ayala's wife Josefa Manuela de Ayala, and it was not until almost a century later that these properties were grouped again. In 1904, Fermín Piña bought different properties that once belonged to Hacienda El Casibo, which were distributed among Ayalas's inheritors, and in 1905 Piña sold the Hacienda El

¹⁹⁴ Olavarriaga, *Provincia de Venezuela en los Años de 1720 y 1721*, 230.

¹⁹⁵ *Tablones* is the measuring system used during the colonial times for sugar cane, and is referred to the area planted. One *tablón* is usually one hundred square *varas*. One *vara* is the equivalent of three feet, about a yard. This measuring system varied from country to country but in Latin America, was commonly used the Castilian Vara that is about 0.9 modern yards (0,8359 m).

¹⁹⁶ Castillo Lara, *Nortemar Aragüeño*, 1:187-188

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:181-182

¹⁹⁸ Manuel de Ayala was an important and respected person in Choróní, by 1794 he was the *Comandante de Armas of Choróní* and vicinities (Commandant of the Army). He was born in a family with Military tradition, his father was Coronel Manuel de Ayala, who had important position on the Spanish Government and his mother was Juana Josefa Soriano. His three brothers were also in the military career. Manuel de Ayala was a fervent supporter of the patriotic cause and in 1810 (the year of the Declaration of Independence) was designated by the inhabitants of Choróní, one of the electors to designate de senators to the First Congress of the Republic. After the Declaration, he was elevated to Coronel and was designated the Commandant of the Army of the cost from La Guaira (Caraca's Port to Patanemo, see figure xx in Chapter II). After the fall of the First Republic in 1814, his properties were confiscated by the Spanish Crown but then were given to his wife.

Casibo to Jorge Rivas Sosa. In 1974, the many descendants of Rivas Sosa formed a company called *Hacienda Casibo Compañía Anónima*, and the property was sold to Kai Rosenberg in 1996.¹⁹⁹

The Hacienda La Sabaneta (Figure 53), as explained before, was also owned by Manuel Ayala, and it was kept in the family until 1895, when brothers Casimiro and Justo Sosa Rojas acquired most of the property from Ayala's granddaughter Mercedes Marquez. In 1907, they also purchased small properties around the hacienda to augment the size of the asset. When the alliance of the Sosa Rojas Brothers was dissolved in 1909, the Hacienda La Sabaneta was left in the hands of Casimiro Sosa Rojas, who died in 1943 leaving the properties to his son Pedro Ramón Sosa Serrano. From 1947 to 1949, after a series of transactions, the hacienda was owned by María Paula Sosa de Rojas, an illegitimate daughter of Casimiro Sosa Rojas. In 1991, Sosa de Rojas sold the hacienda to Camilo Daniel González. In 1992, it was acquired by Hacienda La Sabaneta Compañía Anónima, a company owned by Kai Rosenberg that was later incorporated in the Monterosa project.

The Hacienda Santa Apolonia has a similar history of ownership, starting out as a large property, divided up, and later re-established as a large hacienda. The Sosa Rojas Brothers inherited the Hacienda Santa Apolonia, among other properties in the area, from his father Domingo Sosa García in 1885, who had also inherited it from his father Domingo Sosa Pérez in 1827 (Domingo Sosa Pérez was also a supporter of the patriotic cause as Manuel Ayala, and his properties were also confiscated and later given to his wife).²⁰⁰ The Sosa Rojas Brothers grouped together many properties as José Rafael Hernández Maitín did with Playa Grande around the same time. The brothers began buying properties in 1895, and continued until 1909 when they split the assets and the haciendas were again separated.

In the 1909 partition of the brothers' properties, the Hacienda Santa Apolonia was left in the hands of Justo Ramón Sosa Rojas. His wife Enriqueta Padrón de Sosa and their

¹⁹⁹ "Escritura de Adquisición (Deeds): Hacienda El Casibo" (Oficina de Registro Inmobiliario del Municipio Girardot. Estado Aragua, Venezuela, January 31, 1974), Bajo el Folio 46 al 53 del Protocolo 3, Tomo 1, Primer Trimestre.

²⁰⁰ This lineage of the Sosa Family comes from Domingo Sosa, the father of Domingo Sosa Pérez, who was born in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Canary Islands in 1725 and moved to Venezuela where he had important positions among the Spanish Crown, including the administration of taxes in Choróní. His name is mention in many documents related with Choróní in the eighteenth century. Hernández González, *Los Canarios en la Venezuela Colonial, 1670-1810*, 258

daughter María Sosa Padrón, inherited among other properties, this hacienda that was sold in 1944 to Antonio María Romero. In 1972, it was inherited by Manuel Simón Vázquez, and similar to the other haciendas, after a series of transactions was owned by Freddy Bernardo Rodríguez Verenzuela in 1979, who sold it to Kai Rosenberg in 1993, as part of Hacienda Monterosa Compañía Anónima.

In 2009, the federal government started to intervene in the cacao production of Venezuela, and initiated actions in Choróní by taking the Haciendas El Casibo and Santa Apolonia. Then, a few months later, the government confiscated Hacienda La Sabaneta. However, the government continues to operate them as cacao haciendas.

It is interesting how all these haciendas are related, not only physically but also throughout their history, because their ownership tradition is connected through the traditional families that stayed in Choróní up to the twentieth century. The history of these three haciendas: Playa Grande, Torres, and Monterosa are good examples of the flexibility of the hacienda system mentioned in Chapter II. Because it not only shrinks and expands in size, but also the people, owners, families, the haciendas have still managed to continue to exist until the twenty-first century, (and further) to produce and serve the same purpose, even using the same mechanisms as over the past centuries. More research can be done to understand the movement of these ownership patterns through the valley, but for the purpose of this thesis, the major changes are enough to comprehend their influence on today's landscape.

THE HACIENDA'S CULTURAL LANDSCAPE: PROCESSES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The history of these haciendas is as complicated as the elements that are part of these microcosms, because the landscape depends on all of them: trees for shade, cacao trees, acequias, buildings for offices and residency, trails, and people. All of these elements are character-defining features, however, because the goal of this thesis is to propose a conservation plan for future generations to enjoy and learn about these historic places, the clear identification of these features is important to read the landscape and reach the main goal of this thesis.

In order to comprehend the connection of these elements, a series of detailed maps and sections of the landscape were created for each hacienda (Figure 56). The detailed maps focus on the buildings' interaction with the landscape. For Monterosa, the house of

Hacienda La Sabaneta was chosen, because it is the hub of the Hacienda Monterosa and the only building use for storage and living space. There are many ruins on the landscape, as part of this shrinkage and expansion process of ownership that has been happening for centuries.

Bulletin No. 30, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*²⁰¹ from the National Park Service, is an excellent tool designed to understand rural landscapes such as these haciendas. Although these guidelines were designed specifically for the United States, the methodology of observation and identification is generic enough, that it can be applied in a completely different landscape such as Choróní.

Bulletin No. 30 indicates eleven characteristics that “are the tangible evidence of the activities and habits of the people who occupied, developed, used, and shaped the land to serve human needs; they may reflect the beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and values of these people.”²⁰²

There are processes that have shaped the landscape, many of which have already been mentioned and discussed throughout this thesis, and there are physical components that are evidence of the use of the land such as the hacienda houses and acequias.

Processes

Land Use and Activities

The three hacienda case studies contain uses for agriculture, industrial, recreational, and/or conservation activities. The agricultural activities are represented mainly by the cacao plantation that is located at the flat or semi-flat areas, and is defined mainly by the topography, rivers, and creeks.

In the Hacienda Playa Grande, there are two main agricultural uses, the cacao and coconut plantations, and both have affected the cultural landscape. The cacao is located at the foot of the mountain in a “P” shape, with the round area of the “P” in the north; this flat area includes the La Gonzalera, the Playa Grande beach, and La Sabana. The stick of the “P” on the southwest is known as Izaguirre.

²⁰¹ Flint McClelland et al., “NR Bulletin 30.”

²⁰² Ibid., 3

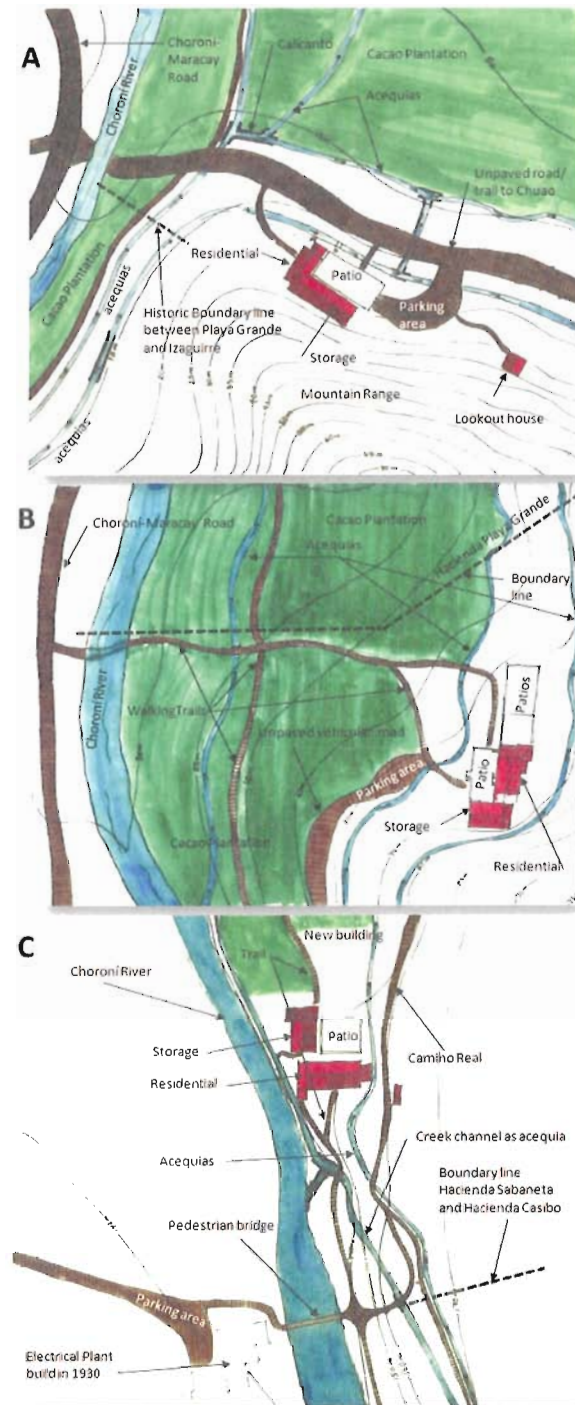


Figure 56. Maps indicating the main elements of the landscape on selected case studies: “A” is the Hacienda Playa Grande. “B” is the Hacienda Torres and “C” is the main house of the Hacienda Monterosa (La Sabaneta). Source: Data from topographic map from 1984, courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar, aerial photograph from 2005, courtesy of Google Earth and topographic maps courtesy of hacienda owners. Drawn by author

In Hacienda Torres and Monterosa, the main agricultural activity is cacao. The plantation is located west of the house in the semi-flat area, bordered by the river to the west and the foot of the mountain to the east. In Hacienda Santa Apolonia, the cacao plantation is located between the Choróní River to the east and the Choróní-Maracay road to the west, in a semi-flat area. There are other secondary products like banana, plantain, and other fruits for domestic consumption within the cacao plantation.

The main buildings house residential and industrial activities; this last one is related to the dry and fermentation element of the cacao process. These uses are directly connected to the roads and trails to facilitate transportation of the final product, as well as the mobilization of the cacao pods and beans through the plantation.

In Playa Grande, there are also three kilns identified during the survey in 2009. Two brick kilns built of bricks to produce roof tiles and bricks. One is located east of the main house, on the trail to Santa Rosa, and the other one at the foot of the house located at the Cerro Pan de Azúcar, on the trail that connects the Playa Grande beach with Puerto Colombia, north of the hacienda. The third one is a limekiln built of stone, located southwest of the house in the area of Izaguirre, at the foot of the mountain and east of the trail that connects to Hacienda Torres. In Hacienda Torres, no kilns were identified during the survey (Figure 49 and Figure 52).

In the Hacienda El Casibo, as well as in Playa Grande, there are also trapiches used to process sugar cane, as previously explained, using waterpower from the acequias, and workings on domestic production of the sugar. The trapiche from Playa Grande was small and used a wooden wheel. The trapiche from El Casibo is larger and has a tower, where drinks were also distilled, as explained in the deeds documents. There are probably more kilns on the haciendas that have not been surveyed, some may have been demolished, others just buried in vegetation, long forgotten.

The major recreational areas are found in the Hacienda Playa Grande in the area of the beach. This activity has been a major shaping element during the last twenty years. The roads that were used for internal transportation of the crops are also sometimes used by tourists who need their vehicles close by, to access areas where this is not permitted. The construction of barriers like doors and fences has been more reinforced in the last ten years, as Choróní becomes more popular not only domestically but internationally. This activity is restricted to the beach area and the riverbanks. The other haciendas have also

been impacted by recreational use of the riverbanks, especially Hacienda Torres, where tourists use the “*batea*” or concrete slab on the river to park their cars and wash them, even though there is a sign that prohibits such activities (Figure 57).

In the Hacienda Playa Grande, the conservation activities are practiced by the family that owns the hacienda by controlling hunting and poaching, and preventing unnecessary deforestation. The Henri Pittier National Park does not cover this hacienda. However, Hacienda Torres and Monterosa are all located within the National Park area. The mountainous areas do not allow agricultural activities.



Figure 57. “*Batea*” or concrete slab on the river to access the hacienda, where tourists illegally park their cars and wash them at the entrance of Hacienda Torres. The sign indicates that is prohibited to wash cars. Photo by author, August 2009

Patterns of Spatial Organization

The Choroní River has been a major feature in the development of the haciendas. Today, the area east of the river has been kept protected, leaving the haciendas for agricultural uses, while west of the river where the towns are located has been mostly developed for tourism. There are a few exceptions, like the Hacienda El Tesoro and Hacienda Santa Apolonia (part of Hacienda Monterosa), which are still producing cacao that are located between the river and the road Choroní-Maracay.

The mountains' presence has limited growth of the plantations. In most of the haciendas, more than 80% is a mountainous area, not workable for agricultural activities. Nevertheless, the architects of the haciendas took advantage of this "disadvantage" by elevating the buildings instead. The offices and residential areas are located at the foot of the mountain and elevated enough to watch over the plantation.

Another pattern that has affected the landscape is the change in land ownership, as was explained with the history of the haciendas. These events can also be related with the political development during the different periods, as analyzed in early chapters. The flexibility of the haciendas has allowed them to expand and shrink in size, with consequences such as discarding extra utilitarian buildings on site, and/or other houses in the Haciendas. In Playa Grande, the area known as La Gonzalera, was a hacienda that contained a house with a drying patio, calicantos, acequias and other features. Today, only the ruins remain. In the Hacienda Monterosa there are several ruins that are identified in the topographic map (Figure 54 and Figure 55). Many small haciendas were grouped as explained in the history, to create the present landscape.

Response to the Natural Environment

The hacienda is not only an economic system, but also an agricultural entity that in Choroní is based on cacao. To ensure the continuity of the haciendas, the cacao crop should remain in the landscape. However, the weather in the Central Coastal Region of Venezuela is challenging for this crop, which needs constant shade only provided by large trees like Mijao, Caobas, etc. The survival of these large trees and the cacao depend directly on the acequias. This very complex irrigation system was developed over centuries, to move the water by gravity through the landscape and reach places where creeks and rivers cannot. The acequias that are used today are still the same that originated on this landscape. Today, the tradition of building new acequias has not been continued, however existing ones are being maintained and preserved. It is one of the most expensive parts of the haciendas' maintenance, because it requires many hours of strong physical labor, and because just a few branches and leaves can prevent their fully function.

Another response to the natural environment is the topography mentioned before in this chapter. Each hacienda possesses its own unique topography. The valley of Choroní is shaped by the mountain and the river that also defines the limits and agricultural areas,

as previously explained. However, there are some commonalities, especially on the location of the plantation and its relation to towns, roads, and water. The settlements are all located close to the roads and/or springs, and elements like the acequias and creeks have been adapted to this topography, to serve these settlements. The locations of the edifications in the haciendas have also been influenced by the mountain terrain and the wind. As the Laws of Indies recommended, most of the houses in the haciendas are located in elevated areas, at the skirt of mountains, and protected from the southerly wind that is usually warmer than the north wind.²⁰³

The topography not only affects the elements previously explained, but also the actual kind of plantation. At a higher elevation, cacao is been replaced by other crops like coffee. The elevation above the sea has the most impact on the air temperature in Northern Venezuela. In 1948, the temperature sinks on the average 0.57° Celsius per 100 meters. “The cold limit for the cultivation of cacao on a commercial scale is reached in the Venezuelan Highlands, as a rule, at about 1000 meters above the sea.”²⁰⁴ In Choroní at sea level, the plantations are cacao, coconut, etc., and in the higher mountain areas, there is coffee, oranges, lime, among others.

The other important response to the environment is the actual process of the cacao that is dried in the sun, using solar energy instead of ovens. All the Hacienda houses have one or more patios used to dry the cacao seeds. This sustainable agricultural practice uses not only zero electricity, but also conserves the fauna and vegetation that are part of the cacao natural process.

Cultural Traditions

The layout of the haciendas was inherited from the Spanish culture. As it has been previously discussed, the hacienda was a new economic-agricultural system created for Latin American; however, the settlement organization was used during the Reconquista period with the re-conquest of the Spanish and Portuguese territory on the Muslim occupation, explained in Chapter II. The organization of the buildings on the site, as well as

²⁰³ Brewer-Carías, *La Ciudad Ordenada*, 232.

²⁰⁴ Ivar Erneholm, *Cacao Production of South America: Historical Development and Present Geographical Distribution*, Meddelande från Göteborgs Högskolas Geografiska Institution 34 (Gothenburg, Sweden: Göteborgs Högskolas Geografiska Institution, 1948), 226

the use of the water for the creation of the acequias, came from the traditional Spanish way of settlement.

The strategic placement of buildings demonstrates an intention of vigilance over the plantation. The access trails to the buildings are in all of the case studies from below, which also creates an effect of dominance over incoming visitors or transients. The plantations of cacao are usually between ten to twenty meters below the level of the house, and the people that would walk across these spaces were (are) the workers, so there is a clear social separation.

There is also a cultural tradition of surrounding residential areas with orchards of various fruits, sugar cane, spices, and other necessary plants for everyday consumption. In addition, the use of the acequias, which is a constant among all the hacienda buildings studied, are part of culture for fresh water close to the main house, not only for consumption but also for bathing. There are at least two acequias close to the house, in some cases like in La Sabaneta and Torres, there is one (two in Torres) up on the mountain at the rear area of the house, and another in the immediate front of the house. The one on the front receives rainwater run-off from the patio and roofs, as well as the liquid that comes out of the fermentation room. These acequias ensure fresh water for human consumption and for keeping the areas around the house clean.

An important aspect is that cacao is an American fruit, meaning that the plantation and the processes are an adaptation of the Native American cultures. The process of the cacao pod is not as different as many other products used in Native American cultures: corn, chili, and yucca, among other, where the seeds or the product itself is extracted, dried in the sun, and then crushed against a stone, obtaining a powder. The Spaniards carried this knowledge farther and improved it repeatedly, even up to the nineteenth century when fermentation was introduced to the cacao process.

The landscape observed today in the haciendas has been shaped by many cultures, some of their traditions were left on these sites for us to remember them, and some may have vanished. However, their history is imprinted in the features that this thesis intends to record and direct conservation efforts for.

Components

Circulation Networks

There is a direct connection between water and circulation in the haciendas. The trails that connect all the haciendas follow the path of the river, creeks and acequias, which is reasonable for the need of a source of water in case of resting or camping. These trails are also used for work within the plantation for internal transportation of the pods that are cut in the field, as explained in Chapter III, and the beans to storage and drying areas.

The main trail is located along the river, and runs north-south. This trail connects all the haciendas used as a case study (Figure 58). There are perpendicular trails that connect to the main path and to access the hacienda houses and the other areas of the

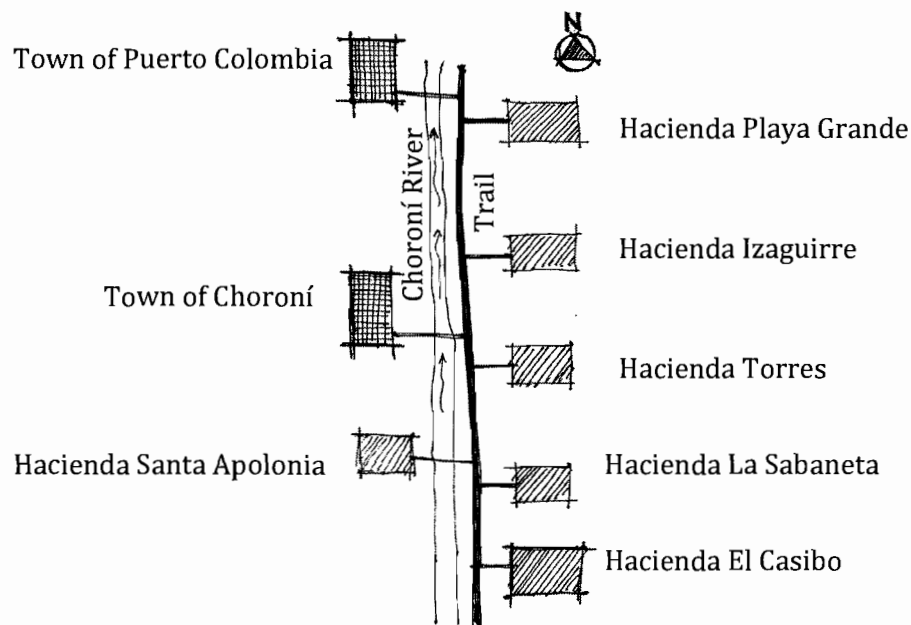


Figure 58. The main trail is located along the river, and runs north-south. The trail connects all the haciendas. The squares with diagonal lines represent the haciendas. The squares with a grid pattern indicate the towns of Choróní and Puerto Colombia. The thick line represents the trail. Drawn by author

plantation. This path also connects with the two towns, and therefore with the port. This trail is slowly losing ground in some areas, because the Choróní-Maracay road is now mainly used.

The road that connects to Maracay has historically marked the development of the area. Since its opening for vehicular access in 1935, the dynamic of the haciendas has

changed. The Hacienda Playa Grande had a transportation system with vehicular access since 1940s, when the last ownership change happened. Pedro Machado invested in widening the internal roads to facilitate the transportation of the harvest throughout the hacienda. The main areas connected the town of Puerto Colombia with the house and the beach. Concrete bridges were built over the acequias to facilitate the road access, and to protect the acequias, because they are very important in the prosperity of the crop. The cacao plantation is protected from the vehicular access, because the road surrounds the plantation.

The Hacienda Torres opened vehicular access in 1989 as explained before, and it crosses the cacao plantation. Because the opening of the road was not fully planned, there are not bridges to cross the acequias, only at the entrance just after the concrete slab was built at the river level to allow access to vehicles (Figure 57).

Boundary Demarcations

The hacienda is a flexible organism, capable of growing or shrinking depending on the geography or economy. It is a structure in continuous evolution, whose expression transforms depending on the necessities of its inhabitants.²⁰⁵ Most of the historical limits of the haciendas are geographical features: rivers, creeks, mountains, acequias. However, in some documents, the limits are just set by a tree, an acequia, and/or a trail.

The acequias are also used as features to define boundaries lines between properties, which indicate their permanence and the sense of perpetuity that they generate. Each of the hacienda houses surveyed during 2009 included at least two acequias close to the house to ensure fresh water. This common element ranks first among the haciendas as a character-defining feature for the landscape. The effects of their discontinuity are observed in the different cases presented in the first part of this chapter, and their loss would mean the imminent demise of the cacao plantation.

The relationship between buildings and boundaries is impressive in its consistency. Throughout the case studies, it was noted that all hacienda houses were located at the edge of the boundary line (in some cases the historic boundary line) of the properties. This can be observed in Figure 56. There is a clear surveillance purpose to the house location in relation to the plantation and for control of the access to the property.

²⁰⁵ Gonzalez Casas, "Las Haciendas en Venezuela," 209.

Vegetation Related to Land Use

The cacao trees are planted in flat areas, and protected by large shade trees. The coconut plantation is found right on the shore, and along with these trees are plants like uveros (*Coccoloba uvifera*) or almendrón (*Terminalia catappa*), with large and thick leaves that help protect the cacao plantation from sea salt and winds.

Building, Structures, and Objects

Each hacienda contains a drying patio surrounded by two buildings, one for residential use, and the other for storage-fermentation use. In the three case studies, the main buildings form a “L” shape with its two separate structures, except in Playa Grande where the two building are linked by a late 19th-early 20th century room. The open space is for the patio, which always faces north. The Hacienda Torres has a patio between the two buildings, but also another one to the north of the residential wing. In the Hacienda Playa Grande, the buildings are facing the northeast, at the same angle as the Playa Grande bay. In Torres, the residential building faces west to the river and the storage area faces north. In Sabaneta, the residential area faces north and the storage faces east (figure 53).

The buildings are all elevated in relation with the plantation and the trails. They are placed on bedrock. In the Hacienda Playa Grande, the main building is within one to two meters from the mountain. In the Hacienda Torres, the house is located about two to five meters from the mountain, and in La Sabaneta the buffer is between five and fifteen meters.

In the Hacienda La Sabaneta, the trail is at the east (rear of the house), and goes up the mountain overlooking the house. This is an exception and it is probably related to the special location of this house in a very busy environment, where different trails meet, as well as acequias from El Casibo and a creek that discharges into the river, but was channeled to continue as an acequia (Figure 53). In Playa Grande, the road is located north of the house and about five meters below the patio. In Torres, the trail is located west of the house also about five meters below the patio.

As explained before, the buildings are all located close to the property line, and serve as a control and protection to the access of the property. In the Hacienda Playa Grande there is also a lookout house located east of the main building, and elevated about ten meters from the level of the patio, where the whole plantation can be clearly observed

and controlled. There is a similar situation in the Hacienda Torres, but the building exists only in ruins at this elevated point. In the Hacienda La Sabaneta, there was no evidence of a similar building. However, it is important to note that this house had been modified to a great extent, so that perhaps its ruins were removed from the landscape. Only archeological investigation could help to determine the actual existence of this structure.

The buildings are also located between acequias, as previously explained. The buildings were built with earth and wood, all local materials that can be easily transported along the trails that connect to the kilns and the material sources. Today the Hacienda Playa Grande and Hacienda Torres have vehicular access to the main buildings, which facilitates moving materials.

Clusters

As observed in the maps of the haciendas, there are clusters of buildings where main features converge, like the trails, river, the boundary lines, and the acequias. Along the creeks today are settlements like the La Rinconada area, where all the houses are located close to a creek by the same name. There are also clusters of calicantos or distribution points for the acequias close to the main houses.

Fruit trees can be found close to residential areas, which is an indicator of household activity. Even in the areas where only ruins are left, mango, tangerine, guava trees, among others, can reveal that residences were once located there, as is observed today around the La Gonzalera ruins.

Archaeological Sites

As explained earlier in this chapter, there are several archaeological sites on the haciendas. Many ruins can be found all around the landscape, from former houses to platforms of structures related to the slaves quarters, Native American houses, or simply outbuildings that were no longer needed. Bridges that helped move water from one acequia to another, and other similar structures are found within the landscape. The kilns that are not in use are also archeological sites. By word of mouth, a Native American cemetery seems to be in the area of La Sabana, in the Hacienda Playa Grande. However, there have not been any further investigations into this matter.

Small-Scale Elements

Around the landscape, there are small structures as bridges on the acequias, calicantos to distribute the water, as well as bridges or pipes used in the acequias to cross the creeks or other acequia (Figure 59).



Figure 59. Bridge used in the acequias to cross-creeks or other acequias. Where the person is standing is the canal for the water, and on the arch at the bottom another acequia circulate. Hacienda Playa Grande. Photo by author, September 2009

In the history of Choroní, the sitios that are today haciendas once had many people living in their houses, as the various censuses from eighteenth and nineteenth century indicated. Pivies and other “trash” areas with artifacts can be found around the main hacienda houses, however there has not been any archaeological research done in Choroní. In the surrounding areas of the Hacienda Playa Grande House, many artifacts have been found throughout the years, also in Torres, as witness of their residential use. However, as

further construction is been done in the haciendas, especially the former haciendas on the west side of the river, more archeological sites are being lost in the earth movement for the construction of buildings. A survey of possible archeological sites should be performed to secure future investigation on these sites.

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

Character-defining features are physical elements that represent the significance of the cacao haciendas in Choróní. After analyzing and understanding the complexity of the hacienda's landscape, the character-defining features of the haciendas can be summarized and outlined (Figure 60).

Cacao Plantation

The haciendas in Choróní are based on the cacao plantation, this character-defining feature correlates directing with their regular use and the main reason these entities were created in the valley. Their preservation is very important to the haciendas.

Shade-Providing Trees

As important as the cacao plantation is, the shade that protects them from the sun and the wind is a character-defining feature. The presence of these large trees creates a special and essential atmosphere that has been the theme of poems, songs, and narrative of the area. Their conservation is important; not only for the cacao plantation, but also for the sense of place that attracts both tourism and local visitors.

Acequias

The cacao plantation and the trees for shade cannot survive in Choróní without a continuous water supply. The acequias are not only a necessity for the trees' survival, but are also a character-defining feature that is found in each hacienda and throughout the landscape. These historic elements are shared among the haciendas, irrigating the entire valley, taking advantage of creeks, river, and topographic features. The acequias also provide fresh water to the hacienda houses and help keep fauna alive.

Hacienda Houses and Outbuildings

The buildings used for residence and storage are unique to this architecture. The drying patio with the two buildings surrounding it, and their location at the foot of the mountains, make these buildings a character-defining feature. There are many hacienda houses in Choróní, however few are still being used for their original function, and even fewer retain good integrity. The locations of the buildings, along with their traditional earth construction are also important for the sense of history these places provide.

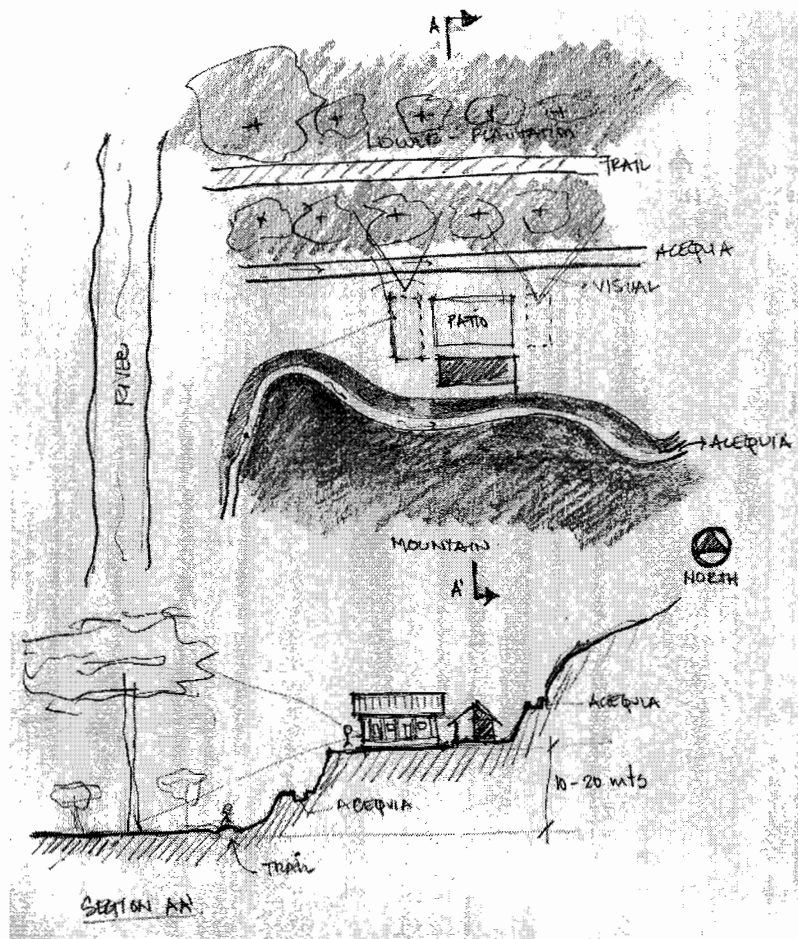


Figure 60. Typical cacao hacienda. Plan layout and section. This scheme synthesizes the typology of the haciendas in Choróní, built during the eighteen and nineteenth century. Drawn by author

Drying Patios

The drying patio has been introduced to the architecture as part of the cacao haciendas and their industrial processes. This new element is a character-defining feature

that is unique to this architecture. The lack of a drying patio changes the understanding of the place, as happened in the Hacienda El Portete, where the house was divided and the patio was enclosed by buildings, and is now used as hotels rooms. As observed in the photograph from 1905 (Figure 61-A), the patio was open and had the industrial feeling of the haciendas, however today the space reminds you of an urban colonial house with interior patios, rather than hot open drying patios (Figure 61-B).

Trails and Roads

In the case of Hacienda Monterosa, it is important to conserve that sense of remoteness. The lack of vehicular access to the hacienda is a character-defining feature that was lost on Playa Grande and Torres. However, in the case of Playa Grande the vehicular access is limited to the perimeter of the cacao plantation. In this case, that peripheral road is a character-defining feature that needs to be conserved.

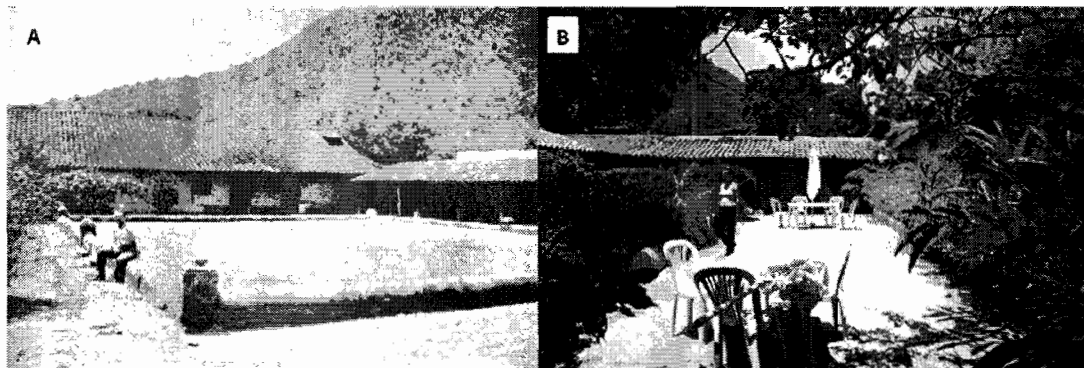


Figure 61. In the photo “A” is the Hacienda El Portete in 1905. Photo “B” is the same house in 2009. The patio and house was divided and modify. Photo “A” from El Cojo Ilustrado, courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de Venezuela. Photo “B” by author , September 2009

Ownership

This distinguishing element is also a feature that should be preserved. These entities were designed and developed to be managed by one owner (one person or one company) with many workers. As difficult as this statement can be, community management is not part of the working hacienda system. The leadership of one person or entity over a group of workers is important to continue what was defined as an hacienda. The conservation of this kind of system is important for the landscape and functions of the

houses. The partition of land among communities has not been a solution to conserve the agricultural places. Throughout time, there have been unions and dissolutions of the haciendas sizes, however the economic system have been preserved, permitting its long survival.

Physical Size

The size of the land is important to determine whether a property is a hacienda or a conuco. The haciendas are large extensions of land. Cacao needs at least five hectares to be economically feasible. The sense of place the hacienda implies also needs a landscape that surrounds the houses and trails. To understand this concept, the case of Hacienda *La Floresta* (*Centro de Arte La Estancia*) in Caracas is a good example. This eighteenth century coffee hacienda was renovated from 1988-1995, to house a cultural center. The rehabilitation of the landscape and respect for the size of the property, allows the people from Caracas to feel, in some sense, the true feeling of an hacienda even though it is in the middle of the busiest area of the city (figure 58).



Figure 62. Hacienda La Floresta (*Centro de Arte La Estancia*) in Caracas. This coffee hacienda conserves a considerable extension of land around the house that allows the people feel like they are in a hacienda, rather than in a city. Source: Photo by www.radiomundial.com.ve

The loss of the property size can lead to the lost of integrity, as happened in the Hacienda San Antonio in Puerto Colombia (Figure 43), as explained before, where just a sign on top of the entrance door indicates that the building was once part of a hacienda.

THE FUTURE OF THE HACIENDAS

The definition of these features is important to develop a plan to guide the future of these endangered sites and to protect them. Each of these characteristics needs to live on in the landscape in order to be understood by future generations. In the next chapter, a conservation plan is proposed to help owners, communities, and authorities to more fully comprehend and to protect the haciendas that remain today. It may also help to restore some of these characteristics back to the former haciendas, to interpret the landscape and the architecture for the young generations and tourists that enjoy visiting.

CHAPTER VI

CONSERVATION PLAN: GUIDELINES TO CONSERVE CACAO HACIENDAS

Every chapter of this thesis has explained the historic importance of the haciendas in Choroni. In Chapter IV, Bulletin N° 30: *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*,²⁰⁶ was used to comprehend and explain the complex historic cultural landscape of the haciendas, while this chapter will apply these processes and components to the organization of the conservation plan.

This plan addresses three main issues: Landscape Protection, Conservation of Physical Components, and Cultural Components: Educational and Technical Training. The Cultural Landscape Protection section addresses the legal problems for heritage conservation in the haciendas and the modifications needed to integrate the haciendas in to the existing heritage conservation system in Venezuela. The Conservation of Physical Components section emphasizes in the built elements that integrate the landscape, the character-defining features, and how they should be conserved. The last category is the most important and addresses the cultural elements serving as the link between the first two sections. The cultural components are focused on engaging the community, the interpretation of the history and legacy and their dissemination. The protection of the landscape depends on community action and a willingness to conserve the past. The physical components can only be conserved as long as the community appreciates them, understands them and learns appropriate preservation techniques (Figure 63 and Figure 64). Each section explains the proposed strategies, organized by High, Medium and Low Priority to indicate the importance of the overall plan for each proposed step:

- *High Priority*: currently needed and requires immediate attention by community, hacienda owners, and authorities. No action could end in a total loss of the patrimony.

²⁰⁶ Flint McClelland et al., "NR Bulletin 30."

- *Medium Priority:* very important and needs immediate attention, however, the consequences of no action from the community, hacienda owners, and authorities, will not necessarily result in the loss of the patrimony. However, attention would speed conservation and restoration of the heritage.
- *Low Priority:* needed, but involves a longer time and legal processes to work through. The consequences of no action will not necessarily result in the loss of the patrimony. The community, hacienda owners, and authorities should start taking action, but it will take time to see results.

GOALS OF THE CONSERVATION PLAN

The main goal with this proposed conservation plan is to create awareness in the community about the history that exists in these haciendas, and the benefits of conserving them as tourist attractions and economic resources. Tourism is the main source of income today in the region, and the interpretation of the haciendas to the public will motivate the locals to learn about their history, if only for the simple reason of increasing tourism, which can later teach them the real necessity of saving these sites.

The youth community and the students need to learn about their history, and everything related to their families is most likely related to these haciendas. In the past, haciendas were the single source of income for the town. Everyone has a piece of history related to any hacienda; acknowledging these resources as a key part of their own history that should be told is important for the self-esteem of the people of Choróní.

Cultural Landscape Protection Strategies

1. **High Priority: Enforce the law on the endangered sites already declared as having historic importance in Choróní.** In the I Censo del Patrimonio Cultural (First Census of the Cultural Heritage) the historic value of many haciendas in the region was identified; however, only five are still operating as cacao haciendas: Hacienda La Sabaneta, Hacienda Torres, Hacienda Playa Grande, Hacienda El Tesoro, and Hacienda Payares, while the rest have changed use or have been divided into lots and built on: Hacienda Aljorra, Hacienda Santa Clara, and Hacienda El

Portete. The Providencia Administrativa N°012/05 (Administrative Providence), years 196° and 146° on *Capítulo II, De Los Bienes Tangibles Inscritos en el Registro General del Patrimonio Cultural* (Chapter II, Of the Tangible Assets Register on the General Register of Cultural Heritage) establishes that:

- a. “Las intervenciones de las edificaciones contenidas en los centros históricos que pongan en peligro su integridad física general y la de sus diversos componentes, sean estructurales, de cerramientos, de pisos y cubiertas, ornamentales y de revestimientos, no se podrán realizar sin la previa autorización del Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural.”²⁰⁷ (The interventions in the buildings of the historic centers that threaten the general physical integrity and the various components, that might be structure, enclosures, floors or roofing, decorative features, or cladding , cannot be performed without authorization of the Institute of Cultural Heritage). This statement indicates a necessary revision from the Institute of Cultural Heritage to the current constructions or modifications on buildings within these historic centers ; however, the outreach of this entity is limited and needs to include a better plan to control changes to these historic sites. Training of local authorities under the umbrella of the institute could be an option to protect the haciendas and their buildings and landscape from future or actual interventions.
- b. The law also indicates “Las obras nuevas a realizarse en terrenos sin construcción contenidos en esa poligonal deberán ajustarse a las normas y procedimientos que establezca el Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural conjuntamente con las oficinas municipales de patrimonio.”²⁰⁸ (The new work on such properties in places without previous construction, within the boundary, must comply with the norms and procedures established by the Institute of Cultural Heritage along with local heritage offices). This will

²⁰⁷ Instituto de Patrimonio Cultural, “Catálogos del Patrimonio Cultural Venezolano: Municipios Girardot and Francisco Linares Alcántara,” *Instituto de Patrimonio Cultural* , 2004, <http://www.ipc.gob.ve/images/stories/mapa/RegionCentroOriente/Aragua/Girardot.pdf> (accessed November 15, 2009).

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

apply to construction within the existing agricultural areas; however, there is no local office to control this process.

2. **High Priority: Maintain the current ownership of the haciendas, when possible.** The haciendas have been private entities since their foundation in Choróní in the seventeenth century. The management of the haciendas under one person or entity has succeeded and helped continue the legacy of the hacienda system. The distribution of the land among the community for agricultural purposes by the government in past experience has resulted in the loss of the hacienda and development of the agricultural areas. It is imperative to conserve the tradition of ownership to ensure the conservation of the haciendas.
3. **High Priority: Include the haciendas as *Sitios (Sites)* or *Centros Históricos (Historic Centers)*.** These historic cultural landscapes are **not** clearly identified by the *Ley de Protección y Defensa del Patrimonio Cultural* from 1993 (Law of Protection and Defense of the Cultural Heritage), however the haciendas are sites that include agricultural areas, buildings, outbuildings and acequia systems that can be treated as Historic Centers, rather than buildings, as categorized in various surveys over time.
4. **Medium Priority: Define the *poligonal (boundary)* of the remaining haciendas' cultural landscape.** This would involve using the geographic coordinates of the legal property boundaries of the haciendas to establish a boundary line to define the extent of the haciendas' heritage. This line should be incorporated into the census by the *Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural* (Institute of Cultural Heritage of Venezuela). The *Providencia Administrativa* N°012/05 (Administrative Providence), years 196° and 146° on *Capítulo VII Disposiciones Finales* (Chapter VII Final Dispositions) defines a poligonal (boundary) as “el levantamiento planimétrico levantado con el objeto de demarcar una porción de territorio característica y significativa para la identidad cultural de los venezolanos, en correspondencia a sus valores artísticos, históricos, plásticos, ambientales, arqueológicos, paleontológicos o sociales.”²⁰⁹ (The topographic survey performed with the objective to determine the portion of land which is distinctive and significant to Venezuelan cultural identity, in

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

correspondence to artistic, historic, environmental, archeological, paleontological, or social values).

5. **Low Priority: The haciendas are agricultural areas that should be differentiated from park areas.** The large reduction of the green spaces in Choróní requires faster reaction to protect the remaining haciendas from development. Even in the cases where agriculture is not productive; these haciendas are refuges for fauna and vegetation that need to be conserved to protect the sense of place. The concept of a park involves, in many cases, public access to the sites, but with these private properties dedicated to cacao, the flowering process and the maintenance of the sites requires different activities and protection than park areas.

Conservation of Physical Components

6. **High Priority: Maintain the cacao plantation and restore as needed.** The cacao plantation is a character-defining feature that initiated the prosperity of the Choróní valley. The cacao criollo from the valley is considered one of the best in the world. The unique conditions of the soils and environment are needed for the cacao tree, but also the care, insects, and other animals help sustain the trees. The promotion of hacienda research as done by Kai Rosenberg should be supported and reinforced to continue the tradition and to restore the famous cacao criollo of Choróní.
7. **High Priority: Maintain and restore as needed the shade-providing trees.** The cacao tree requires shade in this hot and sunny environment. The trees that provide shade are needed to protect the cacao plantation from the sun and wind, and also provide an ideal micro-climate to produce high quality cacao. The trees cultivated in Choróní are primarily the Mijao, Higuierote, Caoba, and Cedros, among others. A large, but not too dense canopy is required, in order to allow filtered sunlight to reach the cacao trees. Loss of these trees in the areas of development have caused a rise in local temperatures, as well as empty and open space, where phenomenon like the August 2009 tornado have begun to affect some of the new settlements, especially in the areas of El Cumbe, Parnaso and Santa Clara. The restoration of shade in the areas of development will help to conserve the sense of place the vegetation of the haciendas provides, and that has attracted tourism since the early 1980s.

8. **Medium Priority: Restoration of the coconut plantation.** The coconut plantation is one of the most critical areas, because is located in direct contact with the tourism industry. These delicate trees require attentive care, fresh water and maintenance that can only be provided by specialized workers. The restoration of the plantation is beneficial for the community, tourism and the cacao plantation, because these plants act to buffer and protect the cacao trees from the salt and wind from the Caribbean Sea. The areas to restore include Playa Grande, Puerto Colombia, and Tipire.
9. **Medium Priority: Restoration of the uveros (*Coccoloba uvifera*) and almendrones (*Terminalia Catappa*).** As important as is N° 8 with the restoration of the coconut plantation, is also the restoration of uveros and almendrones. These plants were planted during the colonial era (1550-1810) especially to protect the cacao plantation from the salt and wind, because of the thickness of its leaves. Their restoration not only benefits the plantation, but also acts as a visual attraction, and protects the ferrous materials used in general construction in Choróní.
10. **High Priority: Maintain the existing acequias, and restore the inactive ones.** To restore the plantations as proposed in N°6 to 9, it is necessary to have plenty of fresh water. The river capacity is not enough to irrigate all the areas necessary to maintain the vegetation, and therefore during the past 400 years a complex acequia system has been developed. The area east of the Choróní River, where most of the remaining haciendas are located, have maintained most of the active acequias, however there are some that need to be restored and maintained. The area west of the Choróní River has stopped using acequias, and as a consequence lacks vegetation. This traditional system will help provide fresh water and irrigation for the vegetation and the houses that have been built, besides providing an attractive environment to tourists. A community organization, like the *Concejo Comunal* (Community Council) can manage the maintenance and administration of the water in the settlement areas, similar to what is done for New Mexico's acequias.
11. **High Priority: Maintain environmentally-friendly barriers to separate the areas for tourism from the agricultural areas.** This action must be done especially in the Hacienda Playa Grande near the beach and along the riverbank.

These fences should be set up using plants and other environmentally-friendly materials. Use of brick, concrete blocks, or thick walls are not recommended.

12. **High Priority: Forest fire prevention.** A ban of bonfires on the beach and river banks will prevent uncontrolled fires on the plantations. An educational campaign to explain the consequences of such actions must be implemented, starting with tourist sites where the bonfires are a nightly practice.
13. **Medium Priority: Maintain and renovate the hacienda houses, with in-kind materials and construction techniques in kind.** The continued use of traditional construction techniques and materials is necessary to conserve the integrity of the buildings. Substitution of wooden columns with concrete should not be allowed. Any additions to improve the services of the houses should be done in accordance with the building's original style and materials. Most of the construction was originally done using earth, such as adobe and tapia (rammed earth). The traditional roofs were covered with red Spanish tiles on top of a layer of mud and another layer of cane. Continuing to use original techniques is important to conserve the tradition and to understand the origin of these houses as working places and not only a residential area.
14. **Medium Priority: Maintain the drying patios.** This element was introduced to the architecture by the cacao haciendas, and was then extended to coffee. The conservation of these spaces as part of the architecture is necessary to preserve the integrity of the buildings. The patios were built facing north with no shade after early morning to dry the cacao beans. The correct interpretation of these places is important to understand the origin of the layout of the building as well as the location of the plantation for the house.
15. **High Priority: Maintain the current condition of roads in the haciendas.** Limited access to the haciendas is important to maintaining the integrity of the landscape. The roads should be limited to the current roads and the trails and paths should be preserved as walking areas. Examples like Chuao, where the vehicular access was limited to car and bus transported by sea, had kept the community prosperous and safe from the development, keeping the cacao plantation in excellent condition so that it reached international importance, much like Choroni had a century ago. Today Chuao is getting more vehicular access, and a concrete

road is being built, and as a consequence the plantation is losing its integrity and the price of cacao is dropping. The vehicular access should be managed with care when vegetation, fauna, and vistas are in peril.

Processes: Community and Educational Component

16. **High Priority: Engage the community** in understanding the importance of the haciendas through lectures on its history and encourage the sharing of family stories so they can personally relate to these sites. Getting the Institute of Cultural Heritage, the professionals and the universities, involved with the community to run workshops and lectures about the local history, concepts of heritage conservation, and local architecture will emphasize their importance to the community at a local and national level, as well as for the tourists. Demonstrate the value of local history to tourism for exploration of the past with successful examples nearby and around the world.
17. **High Priority: Engage the young community.** Find a way for students to increase their knowledge about local history, the importance of these sites to the local, state and national level, and their family participation in the over-development of the haciendas. This can be done through lectures, promotion of small research projects, and involvement in volunteering activities such as surveys and inventories, and guide field trips, as well as drafting and observing the local heritage. Internships can be sponsored through the Institute of Cultural Heritage. Connecting with the Brazilian Institute of Cultural Heritage is recommended to learn about their experience with students in their site conservation projects.
18. **High Priority: Engage the tourism industry and visitors in understanding the local history.** Promote the production of brochures, pamphlets, plaques, or panels around the towns to explain the local history, the origin of the haciendas in Choroni and their recent history. Promote hacienda tours with the authorization of the owners, to make the tourists aware of their conservation efforts. Encourage photographic research to compare and contrast the changes of the landscape, and make them part of the brochures and signage to create awareness of the threat haciendas are under.

19. Medium Priority: Interpret the history and importance of the haciendas.

Promote their importance at the local, state and national level through production of documentary features, papers, books, articles, websites, and any media that can help disseminate the history of the haciendas, as well as their importance for the community.

20. Medium Priority: Train the young community with the knowledge of the elder.

The lessons learned in the past are vital to continue tradition. The elder community in Choróni possesses great knowledge of techniques for the cacao plantation related to recollection, maintenance of the plant, fermentation, and drying. This knowledge needs to be shared and passed on to the next generation that is today only working in the tourist industry. Through survey work in collaboration with the local students, this information can be processed and disseminated with training workshops, classes and other techniques that might be available.

21. Medium Priority: Training in traditional construction techniques. Teach the working community about tapia (rammed earth), adobe, and bahareque (wattle and daub) for building new houses and hotels and about how to use more energy efficient methods to cool buildings. Teach the importance of the orientation of the buildings, and the styles used in the past to interpret them for modern architecture. Involve local architects and tourist in the importance of the local architecture, the materials, and the techniques. Examples such as the Brazil Institute Cultural Heritage training programs have excellent tools that can be applied in Choróni.

22. Low Priority: Promote small business ownership in the chocolate industry.

Through training and workshops, create a local market for organic chocolate that can also serve as an attraction for tourism. Over time, this can be expanded beyond tourism into a strong chocolate industry that obtains its primary products locally, reducing the transportation issues and the cost of intermediaries. Success will create the awareness that from a combination of history and local products there can be an economic benefit to help see the haciendas in a new way. By coordinating with culinary schools across the country as well as with the national and international chocolate processing companies, workshops taught in the area can help improve the economy and find new value in the area's cacao.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASING

To accomplish this conservation plan, the points explained above are divided into three phases. However, it is important to recognize that many of the steps to conserve the haciendas are ongoing processes that should not end.

Phase One

Goal: Create the foundation for the conservation plan, with the incentive of the community, hacienda owners, and authorities by disseminating the history, importance and legacy of the haciendas, as well as their legal frameworks.

The following actions should be accomplished in five (5) years, starting in 2010:

- a) Engage the community.
- b) Engage the young community.
- c) Engage the tourist industry and visitors in understanding the local history.
- d) Enforce the law upon the endangered sites already declared as having historic importance in Choroní
- e) Maintain the current ownership of the haciendas, as possible.
- f) Maintain the current conditions of roads in the haciendas.
- g) Include the haciendas as *Sitios* (Sites) or *Centros Históricos* (Historic Centers).
- h) Maintain environmentally-friendly barriers to separate the areas for tourism from the agricultural areas.
- i) Forest fire prevention.

Phase Two

Goal: With the support from the community, hacienda owners, and authorities, the restoration and improvements of the haciendas can be initiated.

The following actions should be accomplished in seven (7) years, starting in 2010:

- a) Interpret the history and importance of the haciendas.
- b) Maintain existing acequias, and restore inactive ones.
- c) Restoration of the coconut plantation.

- d) Restoration of the uveros (*Coccoloba uvifera*) and almendrones (*Terminalia Catappa*).
- e) Maintain the cacao plantation and restore as needed.
- f) Maintain and restore as needed the shade provided by the trees.
- g) Maintain and renovate the hacienda houses, with materials and construction techniques in kind.
- h) Maintain the drying patios.
- i) Define the *poligonal* (boundary) of the remaining haciendas cultural landscape.

Phase Three

Goal: Evaluate progress, complete phases one and two, and set new goals.

The following actions should be accomplished in 10 (ten) years, starting in 2010:

- a) Train the young community with the knowledge of the elder.
- b) Training in traditional construction techniques.
- c) Haciendas as agricultural areas should be differentiated from park areas.
- d) Promote small business ownership in the chocolate industry.

The realization of this plan will help promote better tourism for Choróní, elevating the education level of the students and their vision of their future, including career possibilities and overall hope for a better place for the next generation. Conservation of the haciendas can also help conserve fauna and the vegetation that is needed to help the health of our planet. The water resources are scarce and plantations like cacao can help prevent evaporation from the rivers with their shade trees. The dissemination of this information will also help national and international tourists appreciate the history that is hidden behind the acequias, houses, towns, trees, among other features that are been forgotten by the everyday routine. Conserving the haciendas in Choróní ensures a better future.

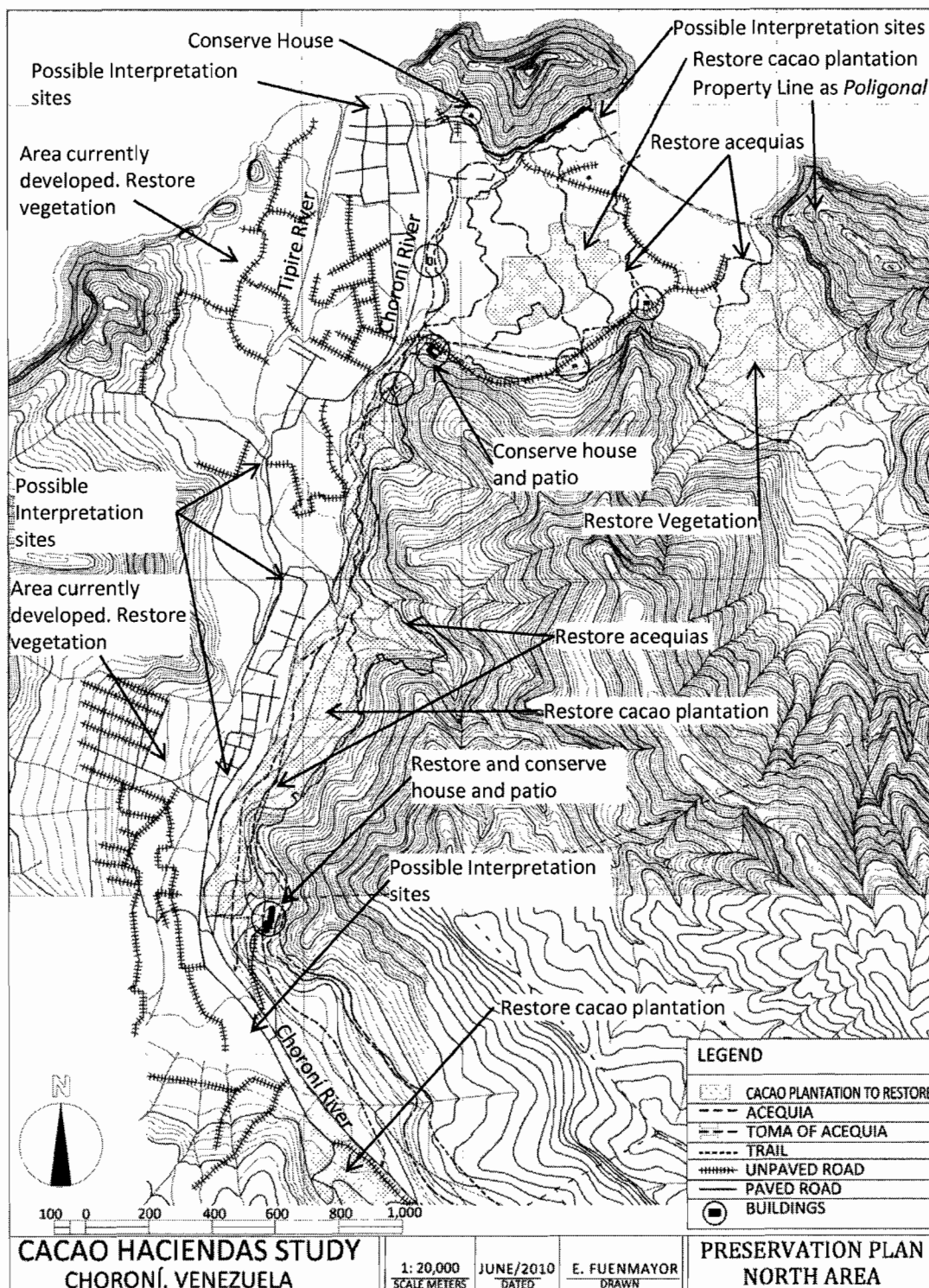


Figure 63. Conservation Plan for the cacao haciendas. North area. Source: Data from aerial photo 2005 and topographic map from 1984, courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar. Drawing by author

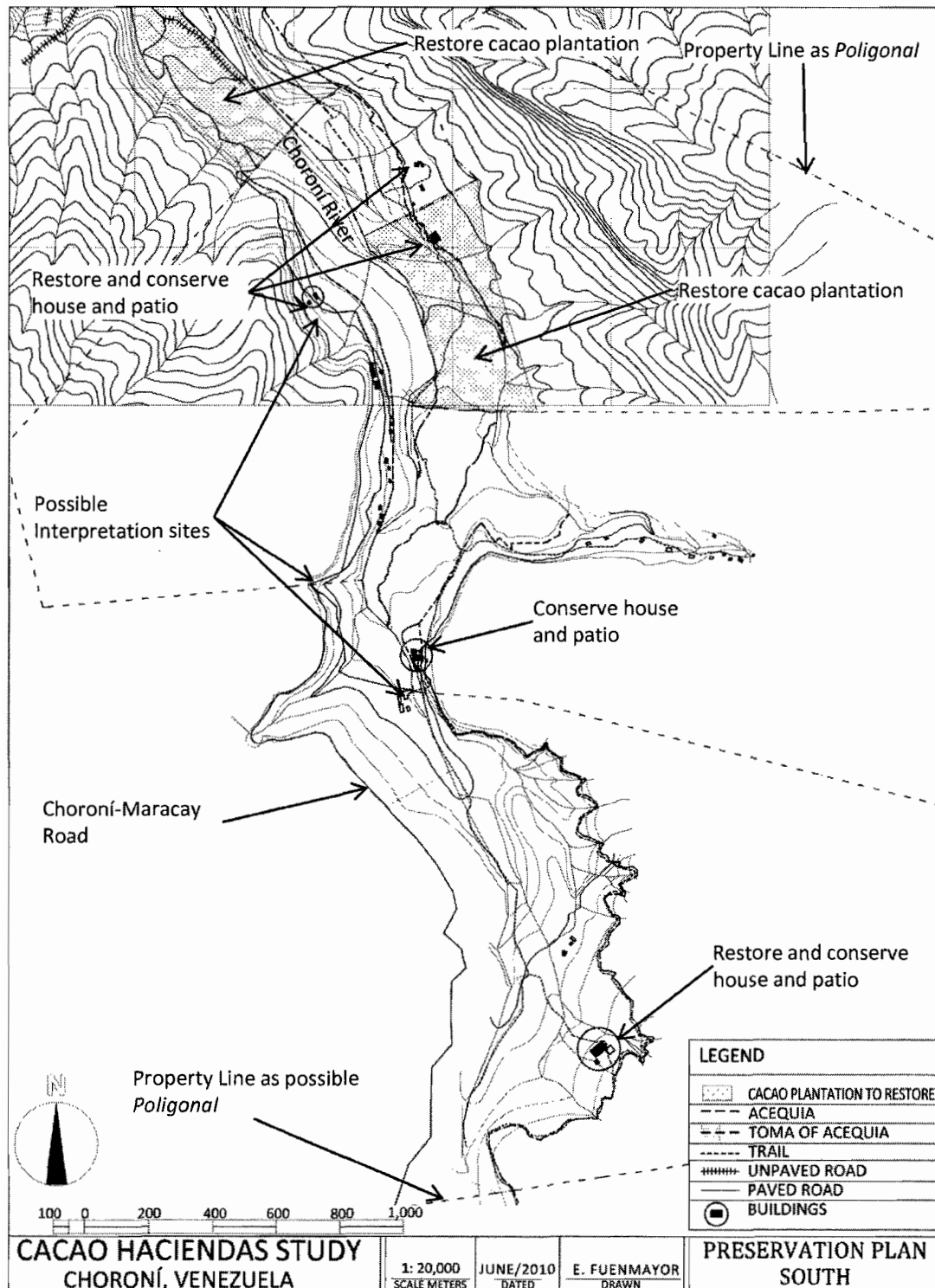


Figure 64. Conservation Plan for cacao haciendas. South area. Source: Data from aerial photo 2005, the topographic map from 1984 courtesy of Instituto Geográfico de Venezuela Simón Bolívar, and from the topographic map of Hacienda Monterosa, courtesy of Kai Rosenberg. Drawing by author

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

After completing research on cacao haciendas in Choroní, and identifying the character-defining features in the landscape, a conservation plan was proposed to preserve the remaining haciendas. The major shaping element of this landscape has been its inhabitants, however, it is only the European and African heritage that we can observe today. There are likely some remaining Native Americans elements on the landscape, but without further research this cannot be confirmed. The 400 years of layering in this landscape are a compelling argument to conserve the remaining haciendas. However, without the support of the community, in just five years all of it could be forgotten. This chapter will summarize the conclusions of the study, and outline its findings.

The historic research and the data collected during the survey for this thesis indicate that the haciendas are an extremely valuable resource for studying the past and ensuring the future of the heritage of Choroní and Venezuela. The complex process of cacao production has shaped the landscape in Choroní, creating haciendas that are distinct from each other but that also have commonalities.

The buildings and landscape of the haciendas surveyed reveal a consistent typology in the setting of the haciendas, especially in the layout of the buildings and their relationship to landscape components.

The cacao haciendas in Choroní have the following characteristics:

- The haciendas selected for this study - Playa Grande, Torres, and Monterosa - are all connected by one trail that runs parallel to the river, and that also connects to the houses.
- The trails and roads are situated lower than the house.
- The houses are all located close to the river, no farther than one hundred meters (330 feet).

- The houses are elevated in relation to the plantation, from ten to fifteen meters (30-50 feet), and at the skirt of a mountain.
- The hacienda's houses were historically used for housing and office. All of them have a drying patio facing north, and two buildings in an "L" shape with a single specific use for each. There is also a *desbabadero* or fermentation room close to an acequia.
- There is a veranda facing the patios and one that faces the plantation, usually serving as the main entrance.
- There are at least two acequias close to the house, one at a higher elevation and one lower sitting at the edge of the drying patios to receive rainwater run-off and residue from the fermentation process.
- Historically there was no high vegetation close to the house (only trees for shade).

This study determined the character-defining features of the landscape to be the following: cacao plantation, shade-providing trees, acequias, hacienda houses and outbuildings, drying patios, trails and roads, ownership, and size.

The haciendas face several conservation challenges, including:

- A vague protection status as currently defined by the Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural.
- Constant pressure by the community to replace the haciendas with housing and tourist attractions.
- A scarcity of economic resources to compete with the tourist industry.
- A shortage of skilled workers, who prefer easy jobs in hotels over working in the agricultural fields.
- Large masses of tourists who damage the coconut plantation, the water resources, and in many cases cause wild fires from bonfire during the windy season (March-November).
- A lack of knowledge of local history, including a low self-esteem among the community.

This thesis proposed a conservation plan with the intent of creating awareness about the preservation issues for the haciendas, and presenting an alternate future for Choróní.

FUTURE WORK

After completing this study, there is future research and work that can be done using this thesis as a starting point:

1. Develop methodologies to engage the community with specific projects regarding conservation of the past, involving both social and cultural issues.
2. A study in the incorporation of heritage conservation in the educational system, not only at the high school level, but also at the university level. The universities that teach architecture should include the subject of addressing heritage conservation as a requirement.
3. Undertake an extended survey on the haciendas, including the former haciendas, to record the architecture of the buildings and landscape.
4. Further research should be done in the ownership history of the haciendas in Choróní.
5. Record the ruins of the outbuildings and discarded houses on the haciendas, including archeology to prevent further losses.
6. Study the acequias and their engineering, phasing and influence on the landscape, including the consequences of their disappearance.
7. Study the effects of deforestation in Choróní, and their impact on the environment and tourist industry.
8. Clearly define the boundaries of the historic haciendas that remain and need to be protected and conserved.
9. Create an interpretation of the cacao hacienda's history, and their influence on the historic events in Venezuela. Also an interpretation of the landscape features and their importance in Choróní's culture.

10. Set up training workshops for construction workers in areas of restoration of tapia, adobe and bahareque, as well as other traditional construction techniques. This should include the restoration of acequias and other landscape features.
11. Research the history of the Choroni's families and mine the knowledge the elderly community can share with the young community. Especially their knowledge of cacao processes, hacienda ownership and past lifestyles.
12. Study similar landscape in Venezuela or in other countries, and compare with this thesis, especially in cacao or similar agricultural processes.

It is important to conserve the haciendas and to teach the local and national community about their legacy. The realization of the proposed conservation plan can help the future of Choroni, and can influence the future of similar towns in Venezuela, and other countries.

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY

Acequia: of Arabic origin; the Spanish word *acequia* signifies ditch or irrigation canal

Acequia madre: meaning “mother ditch,” The *acequia madre* is the main irrigation channel

Amos: owner of the haciendas

Blancos de orilla: a direct descendant of Europeans born in America

Cabildo: a town council; a municipal council; town hall. Also called Ayuntamiento.

Calicanto: masonry construction that uses stone and lime mortar. Cal means lime and canto means stone.

Capellán: a priest

Capitanía: a large demarcation of territory; a government of a territory belonging to a viceroyalty.

Casa grande: see oficina and casona.

Casona: main house of the haciendas, also known as oficina, casa grande, or hacienda house.

Conservation: describes the process through which the material, historical, and design integrity of humanity’s built heritage are prolonged through carefully planned interventions.

Criollo: descendant of Europeans. In Venezuela is referred to the sons of the Spaniards born in America.

Desbabadero: a fermentation room.

Doctrina: a corpus of religious dogma as it is promulgated by a church. In the colony was also referred as the parish and their followers.

Doctrinero: teacher of Christian doctrine; Curate or parish priest in America.

Drying Patio: open space between the hacienda houses use to dry the cacao and/or coffee. It is usually built of lime or concrete.

Edification: building or structure in the haciendas

Ejido: a communal land holding system

Encomienda: a kind of trust, whereby the Crown granted to a conquistador the right to tributes of native community, in exchange for benefits, such as the support of a priest, indoctrination. A land grant with the right of settler in Latin America to extract tribute from certain groups of Native Americans. The system theoretically obligated the Spaniard to care for the welfare, spiritual and physical well-being of the Indians; the Encomendero was supposed to indoctrinate the Indians into the Catholic religion and to build a church.

Laja: stone slab

La Sabana: same as savannah ; a flat grassland in tropical or subtropical regions

Los Llanos: meaning 'the plains'; is a vast tropical grassland plain situated at the east of the Andes in northwestern South America (Colombia and Venezuela). Its main river is the Orinoco, which forms part of the border between Colombia and Venezuela and is the major river system of Venezuela.

Malecón: a boardwalk with a seawall that overlooks the Caribbean Sea.

Mayordomo: foreman; manager of the haciendas.

Mestizo: a person whose parents are European or European descendant and Native American

Mulatos: a person whose parents are European or European descendant and African American descendant

New Granada: Viceroyalty of New Granada located in northern South America, corresponding mainly to modern Panama, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela.

New Spain: Viceroyalty of New Spain; was the first of four viceroyalties created to govern Spain's territories in North and Central America. It was ruled by viceroy from Mexico City who governed many territories on behalf of the King of Spain.

Oficina: see casona and casa grande.

Pardos: refers to the group of mestizo people including Mulatos and Zambos.

Patrimonio: same as cultural heritage; is the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed for the benefit of future generations.

Peón: Laborer

Poyo: a bench, a seat made of stone and mortar against a wall, usually at the lower part of windows on the width of the wall. Also known as Alféizar.

Preservation: same as conservation.

Pueblos de Indios or Indian towns: also known as cabeceras de doctrina; they were Native Americans towns created during the colonial era in America. These towns were created, in many cases, by grouping different Native Americans communities and forced to lived together in a specific area. These towns were recognized as an administrative figure, similar to a municipality.

Quitapolvo : see **Vierteaguas**.

Repartimiento: a system whereby a Spanish settler in Mexico was allotted a division of cultivated land and was assigned, as his personal slaves, the Indians who lived on it, with the consent of the Caciques or chiefs; a grant for Indian labor. Term is indigenous to Spain also as the Christians re-conquered their territories.

Repisa: free hanging shelves.

Tejas: Spanish roof tiles made with clay

Toma: the water intake for the acequias

Vierteaguas: a small Hood built with stone, azulejos, zinc, wood, brick, etc. that forms a slope where water can run, on top of the windows, protecting the Poyos, the projected elements, etc. Also known as quitapolvos.

Zambo: a person whose parents are Native Americans and African American descendant

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