

La Guairita

Historical Archaeology of a Coffee Hacienda on the Periphery of Caracas, 1830-1930

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Abstract

We present here the first published historical archaeological study of a coffee hacienda in Venezuela. The coffee hacienda of La Guairita, whose ruins are today located in a suburb of metropolitan Caracas, was in the 1830s a sizeable plantation located along a commercial road that led from the cacao- and coffee-growing towns of Santa Lucía and El Hatillo to the south and connected with Petare, Chacao, and the city of Caracas, as well as the seaport of La Guaira, to the north. By contrasting archaeological data from survey and excavations at the site of La Guairita and evidence from primary and secondary documentary sources, we paint a preliminary micro-historical picture of the hacienda's economic network and the social and material lives of its rural inhabitants and labor force. We argue that those tending to the coffee crops and managing the hacienda were probably rural people – *pardos*, enslaved Afro-Venezuelans, indigenous people, poor white Canary Islanders – who had to diversify the production of the hacienda to weather the unstable coffee economy and the ravages of the early Venezuelan Republic's internal conflicts and wars. This study aims to complicate simplistic notions of rurality and peripherality in Republican-period Venezuela, suggesting, among other things, that La Guairita was economically well-connected to its hinterland, as well as Caracas and its port, and by way of this connectivity its non-elite inhabitants came to display intriguing cosmopolitan tastes.

Keywords: micro-history, commodity production, rurality, non-elites, social and material lives, economic networks.

Introduction

Throughout its history, the economy of Venezuela has heavily depended on a single commodity. During the three centuries of Spanish colonialism it was wheat, tobacco and cacao, and following independence, it was coffee, and thereafter oil. Coffee was the

main cash crop during most of the nineteenth century in Venezuela and numerous coffee haciendas still dot the country's forested hillsides to this day. In this chapter we present the first published historical archaeological investigation of one of these coffee haciendas – the hacienda of La Guairita, located on the periphery of the capital city of Caracas. We first situate the hacienda within its broader regional historical context, exploring how the inhabitants of the area of La Guairita and the land use of the peripheries of Caracas changed over time. We then discuss the documentary evidence at hand that reveals who the owners and laborers of this hacienda were in the nineteenth century and what the commercial network of the plantation would have looked like, especially after independence and during the numerous internal Venezuelan wars of the nineteenth century.

In the second part of this chapter, we then turn to discuss the archaeological survey and excavations at the site of La Guairita. We offer a preliminary analysis of the material remains recovered within and around different structures and features on the plantation landscape and present our initial interpretations of what these reveal about the social and material lives of the hacienda's rural inhabitants and workforce during the nineteenth century. Historical archaeological research on rural households in republican-period Venezuela is scant, and this investigation seeks to provide a starting point and a foundational case study with which to compare future studies of the material lives of non-elites living on the peripheries of Venezuelan cities and towns. We now turn to introduce the geographical setting and physical environment of La Guairita.

Geographical Setting and Physical Environment

The La Guairita archaeological site (Mi-1301A) is located in the Cuevas del Indio Recreational Park, within El Hatillo municipality of Miranda State, Venezuela (Figure 10.1). The site lies at an elevation between 900 and 1200 m a.s.l. (meters above sea level) and has a steeply sloping topography composed of small valleys, and surrounding hills, including many limestone caves and shelters. It receives 1000 to 1200 mm annual average precipitation and is covered in a dense tropical forest (Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales La Salle [SCNLS] 1951a:21-26).

The site is located near the town of El Hatillo which is c. 2 km across the ridge to the south, the town of Baruta which is some 10 km up the valley of the La Guairita Creek to the southwest, and the town of Petare located at the banks of the Guaire River some 5 km to the northeast. Today La Guairita is closest to the El Cafetal neighborhood of Caracas to the north. The La Guairita Creek, which begins in the vicinity of the town of Baruta, flows down through its valley which runs in an arc from west to east and joins the Guaire River at the southeastern end of the valley of Caracas (SCNLS 1951b:14-15). The site of La Guairita is found in a sharp bend of the creek, close to where the creek flows into the Guaire River (Figure 10.1).

Historical Background

Precolonial Settlers of La Guairita

Evidence for precolonial indigenous occupation of the Caracas Valley has been identified at more than 30 sites, only a small number of which were reported through systematic excavation, with most others being casual finds or isolated discoveries (Antczak *et al.* 2017:148). Precolonial archaeological materials in the vicinity of La Guairita have been



Figure 10.1. Location of the La Guairita archaeological site on the periphery of Caracas with other adjacent neighborhoods and towns.

found at El Cafetal (Colinas de Tamanaco), La Peñonera, La Lagunita, and Iglesias Cave (Antczak *et al.* 2017:148). The site of La Guairita was excavated systematically by the first author in 2017, and hundreds of precolonial potsherds, and lithic and zooarchaeological materials were recovered. The earliest precolonial ceramic occupation at La Guairita was identified at Mi-1301A, Locus D1, dating back to 1700 BC and making it one of the oldest precolonial ceramic sites to have been reported in the valley of Caracas. In addition, a second precolonial occupation was identified at Mi-1301A, Locus C4, which dated to AD 1440. These two examples indicate an indigenous presence at La Guairita deeply rooted in the past and suggest that the site was still occupied right before or during the time of Spanish invasion.

The Early Spanish Colonial Period

The Province of Caracas (also known as the Province of Venezuela), saw a slow and drawn-out process of colonization following the first European encounter with indigenous populations in 1498 during Columbus' third voyage. Spanish expeditionary forces invaded, conquered, and colonized the north-central region of the province, including the valley of Caracas, as late as the second third of the sixteenth century. Prior to this, the province had been ceded by the Spanish Crown to the German Welser

banking family until 1546 and European settlement had occurred primarily in the northwest.

The valley of Caracas was conquered by the expeditionary forces of Diego de Losada in 1567 and the city of Santiago de León de Caracas founded that same year (Nectario María 1979, 111-129). The valley and its surroundings were inhabited by the indigenous peoples of north-central Venezuela who probably shared broadly similar ethnolinguistic traits (Antczak *et al.* 2020). These natives fought against the Spanish incursion and occupation and numerous violent confrontations ensued in the following years, with the invaders eventually “pacifying” the region by 1578. The Spaniards then began the division (*repartimiento*) of the conquered natives and their lands into forced reservations (*encomiendas*) that were assigned to specific conquistadors who were tasked with converting the natives to Catholicism (with the assistance of Franciscan missionaries or *curas doctrineros*), as well as requiring forced labor from them and demanding tribute (Bjord Castillo 2001).

The early-colonial-period history of the site of La Guairita and its surrounding area are difficult to trace in the fragmentary documentary record, especially since indigenous and later Spanish toponyms and the specific places they referred to have changed with the passage of time or have been altogether forgotten. It is possible that the site of La Guairita was included within one of the *encomiendas* of the valleys of San Francisco de Baruta or Dulce Nombre de Jesús de Petare, given originally to Losada’s faithful fighting men Sebastián Díaz de Alfaro, Francisco Infante, and Alonso de Andrea, among others (Dávila 1927:50, 73, 78-79; SCNLS 1951c:44-46). The indigenous people who were subject to the *encomiendas* in these valleys seem to have been principally *mariches* and *quiriquires*, some of the “Indian nations” that had posed the staunchest resistance to the Spanish (SCNLS 1951c:38). Since there are no extant maps of the area from this time, it is difficult to ascertain how many *encomiendas* there were in the valleys of Baruta and Petare and within which of these territories La Guairita might have been included.

Located at an average elevation of 920 m a.s.l., the valley of Caracas and its surroundings had a favorably cool climate for the cultivation of wheat and from the 1580s to the 1630s, this was the primary cash crop. Wheat was harvested here by the Indians on the *encomiendas*, with the flour then being sent to Cartagena to fuel the Spanish Tierra Firme fleet, in turn providing much needed silver specie to the fledgling capital (the capital of the Province of Venezuela was moved to Caracas in 1577) (Díaz *et al.* 1995:23-26; Ferry 1989:3). Given this, it is probable that from the late sixteenth to the late seventeenth century the indigenous inhabitants of the valley of La Guairita Creek were forced to cultivate wheat under their respective *encomenderos*.

By the 1690s the *encomienda* system in the region was largely terminated by the Spanish Crown, since by 1630 wheat had given way to the much more profitable cacao grown in the warmer and lower-lying central coast to the north and the lowlands of the Tuy River and its tributaries to the south and southeast (Ferry 1989:3-4; 1981:633-635). This intensive cacao cultivation required a much larger forced labor source, and imported captive Africans began to swiftly replace the *encomienda* Indians. It is notable, nonetheless, that in 1690 when the *encomienda* system was in its demise, and many *encomenderos* had decided to not pay for their land titles (their grants being reverted to the crown), only the *encomiendas* in the vicinity of Caracas including the wheat fields in Petare and Baruta had paid their taxes and kept their titles (Ferry 1981:633). Given that the site of La

Guairita was located in between the towns of Petare and Baruta and was probably under the jurisdiction of either parish at the time, it is possible that it was part of one of these last productive wheat-cultivating *encomiendas* in the region.

The Latter Spanish Colonial Period

There is only fragmentary documentary evidence to trace what occurred at the site of La Guairita and its surroundings throughout most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is probable that following the dissolution of the *encomiendas*, the lands were further divided, and it is at this point that La Guairita became a more spatially constricted hacienda within the vaster prior territory of the *encomiendas* of Baruta and Petare. From 1670 to 1740 the region saw a large immigration of poor white Canary Islanders (*canarios* or *isleños*), many of whom settled in the valleys of the rural parishes of Baruta, Petare, and El Hatillo that had been principally dominated by rich *caraqueño* (also known as *mantuanos*) landholdings until then, including the *encomiendas* (Hernández González 2015:11; 2008:127-129). During the first three decades of the eighteenth century the *canarios* would come to form the majority of the white population of these rural parishes, acquiring small plots of land and dedicating themselves to subsistence agriculture, providing Caracas with introduced produce such as wheat, barley and cabbages as well as native staples such as maize, potatoes, pulses and manioc (*yuca*), as well as fruits such as papaya, pineapple and avocado, among others (Hernández González 1999:30; SCNLS 1951:49; Vila 1947:92).

This immigration of *isleños* would transform the region demographically and would also challenge the socio-economic power of the influential *mantuanos* or *grandes cacao*s, the cacao aristocracy of Caracas (Hernández González 1996:117). Within this immigration trend, *canarios* settled in La Guairita. In 1716, Francisco Hernández from El Sauzal on the island of Tenerife and Ana Estancia Hernández from Las Palmas on the island of Gran Canaria had, through her inheritance:

[...] a piece of land in the valley of the Baruta Creek. He also owned houses in La Candelaria [a canario neighborhood of Caracas] on a plot provided by the town council and there he had a tile works [...] He was owner of 7 slaves, 16 mules, 7 donkeys, a piece of land in Baruta and a hectare of land in the valley of the La Guairita Creek (Hernández González 2008:127).

It is impossible to ascertain if the hectare of land owned by the Hernández couple included the land on which the site of La Guairita is today, especially given that the La Guairita Creek runs some 10 km all the way from the town of Baruta in the west to its eventual confluence with the Guaire, in the vicinity of our site. Nonetheless, as we shall see below, the subsequent usage of this toponym in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to refer to the larger area within which the archaeological site discussed is found and suggests that this might be the first specific mention of ownership of land within La Guairita.

The La Guairita Coffee Hacienda

As we have discussed, the seventeenth-century emphasis on wheat production in *encomiendas* in the north-central part of the Province of Venezuela shifted to *canario* smallholdings and subsistence agriculture. In the last third of the eighteenth century this

eventually gave way to large-scale coffee cultivation. The first mention of coffee growing in colonial Venezuela is by Jesuit priest Joseph Gumilla who began cultivating the African plant in the Orinoco region in 1730. Coffee cultivation then steadily made its way northward to other parts of the territory and by 1768 the Spanish Crown had ordered the governor to promote its cultivation in the Province of Venezuela (Arcila Farías and Fontana 1997). The beginning of formal coffee production in the Caracas Valley dates to 1783-1784 at the La Floresta, Blandín, and San Felipe plantations of Chacao parish which produced the first crop for export to Spain in 1785 (Arcila Farías and Fontana 1997; Lovera 2009:252-254). It is during this time that the *canarios* became heavily involved in coffee cultivation in the coffee belt of Caracas including Los Mariches, El Hatillo, San Antonio, and Los Budares (Hernández González 2008:134). In 1800 Humboldt remarked that the coffee from these last three locations was of superior quality, even though the plants yielded less fruit due to the colder climate (Humboldt 1852:478).

We have yet to find documentary mentions of the site of La Guairita from 1716 up until 1790, yet in 1796, when coffee cultivation was expanding rapidly in the mountains surrounding Caracas, there is the first mention of there being an hacienda with this name:

Recognition of censos [a form of mortgage] established by Doña María Manuela Tovar, for the cult of several images of the church of San Mauricio, one was recognized by Don Pedro Gerardo Ñañez, on a coffee hacienda called "Tusmare", located in the town of El Hatillo, and the other by Don José María López, on another hacienda called "La Guairita", located in the jurisdiction of the town of Baruta. – December 24, 1796 (AGN, Iglesias, 1796, folio 351).

In 1801, Juan Hernández Vargas (most probably a *canario*) is recorded in a *censo* as owner of 12 *fanegas largas* (11.5 km²) of agricultural land (*posesión de tierras*) in La Guairita in the jurisdiction of the town of Petare, along with eight slaves (Fuguett 1982:506-507). There is, however, no mention here of there being an hacienda at the site, and it also appears under the jurisdiction of Petare, which might suggest that this latter land was not the same as the first.

In 1814, in the midst of the struggle for independence in Venezuela, a coffee hacienda "[...] at the site of La Guairita [...]", was seized by the Republican *Tribunal de Secuestros* [Tribunal of Seizures] because it belonged to a priest by the name of Francisco Delgado Correa who had emigrated back to Spain because he did not support the cause of independence (Bruni Celli 1965:46). The property was thereafter auctioned off (Carrera Damas 1964:610). This is the first explicit mention of a coffee hacienda at La Guairita, although, given that coffee had begun to be cultivated in the 1780s in neighboring Chacao Parish, it is possible that the hacienda was established at some point in the 1790s, with the trees taking some 3 to 4 years to yield their first crop. In the same year of 1814 there is also a mention of an *hacienda de caña* [sugar cane hacienda] at La Guairita, belonging to one D. José María Uribe (Bruni Celli 1965:130). In a similar case, and possibly relating to the same hacienda, once he returned from exile in 1819, D. Manuel Palacios filed a lawsuit (which he won) to regain his sugarcane hacienda at La Guairita that had been auctioned off by the Tribunal of Seizures to one Bernardo Alco (Rojas 2011:413). This suggests that there might have been a few haciendas or agro-industrial units within the area known at the time as La Guairita (in the late eighteenth century there were three haciendas in the

Valley of Baruta [Lovera 2009:130]), with the sugar cane hacienda perhaps being located in the flat lands of the La Trinidad Valley close to the La Guairita Creek, where an old sugar mill (*trapiche*) still stands to this day within what is known as the Parque Cultural Hacienda La Trinidad.

The most complete description of the La Guairita coffee hacienda is from an 1835 *censo* in which the son of Don Pedro Gerardo Ñañez (the owner of the Tasmare hacienda in El Hatillo in 1796), Bernardo Ñañez, and his wife Ana María Guitan, appear as owners and the property is described as follows:

[...] a possession which they call La Guairita, jurisdiction of the town of Baruta and in it a coffee hacienda with more than 50,000 fruit trees with a price of 10 to 12,000 pesos, taxed with the censos already referred to and with 535 pesos 11/2 reals from the Chaplaincy that Juan Espinoza established. Its boundaries are: on the east with the old boundaries of Antonio de Ponte, including Guairita abajo, which is also known as Los Teques; on the west with the waterfall they call the Chorro de La Guairita; on the south with the summit that goes to El Hatillo; and on the north with the summit of the hill of Las Minas. On the slopes to the east and west of the hill flow the waters that run into the river of La Guairita; the boundaries of the properties are found in the Certification of the Mortgage Writer (Troconis de Veracochea 1982:516-517, 208).

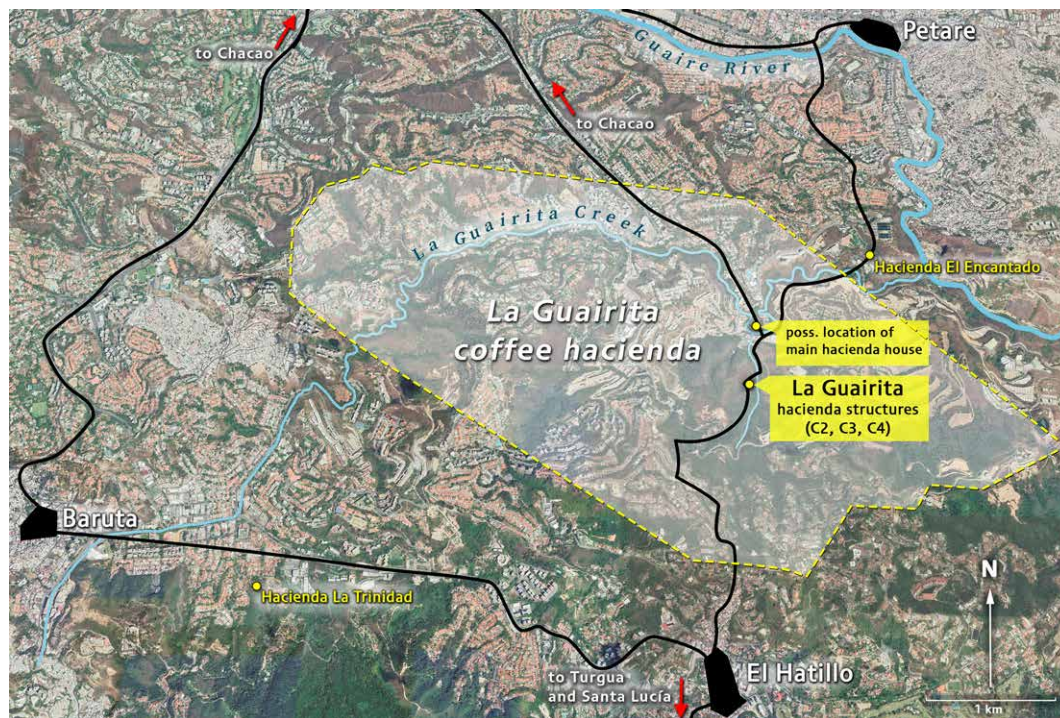


Figure 10.2. Tentative area of the La Guairita coffee hacienda based on the 1835 boundaries, showing the other haciendas and the main towns and roads.

This description of the property with its 50,000 coffee trees, in total valued at 10,000 to 12,000 pesos, suggests that the hacienda was actually of an intermediate size, and if well administered, must have produced a sizeable coffee crop (Figure 10.2). In fact, agricultural know-how of the time stipulated that a smaller stand of well-maintained trees could give a higher yield for a longer time than a larger stand of badly administered ones (Anonymous 1833:24). Comparatively, the large Hacienda Carabobo located to the southwest and close to the town of Turgua, midway down the road to Santa Lucía, had 35,000 trees when it was bought and consolidated in the mid-1850s and cost a respectable 6,000 pesos; albeit poorly managed, it would come to have nearly 140,000 trees some 20 years later (Figure 10.3) (García Castro and Benítez 1999:86, 95, 98). Taking advantage of the road that ran right through the area, the coffee crop from La Guairita would probably itinerate on mules and donkeys to Caracas and then further on to the port of La Guaira to be exported.

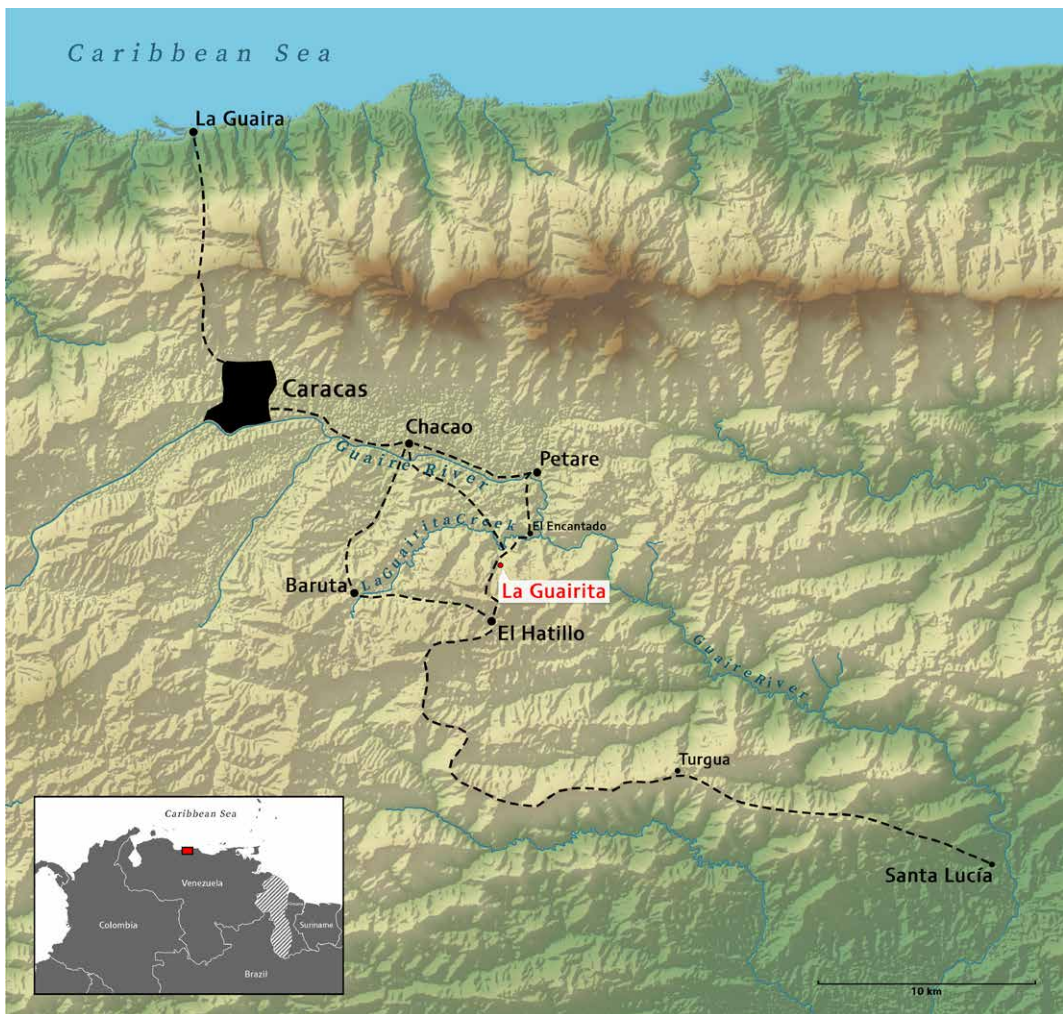


Figure 10.3. The La Guairita coffee hacienda as well as the El Encantado hacienda in the nineteenth century with Caracas and adjacent towns and the roads connecting them.

The Commercial Network of La Guairita

Beginning probably at some point in the late eighteenth century, the hacienda of La Guairita became part of the commercial trade network of Caracas and its surroundings. In the 1830s, the place (*sitio*) of La Guairita (also spelled “Guayrita”) and its hamlet (*caserío*) were located on the road heading southward to El Hatillo (which was connected to Baruta) and Santa Lucía, and heading northwestward to Chacao and northeastward to Petare (via Hacienda El Encantado) (Figure 10.3) (Actas del Cabildo de Petare [ACP] IX 1854-1857:xxii; ACP X 1858-1860:71, 79-80; Landa Doxandabartz 2021: 208-216; Rivas 1995:45; Rodríguez Souquet 2021:221-222). Most roads in and around Caracas were rudimentary (López Maya 1986:28), and at the time there were people regularly commissioned by the Municipal Council of Petare to maintain the road that passed by La Guairita and other roadways throughout the municipality (Aizpurua 2009:177; ACP VII 1846-1849:120; Izard 1972:242). The location of the site and hacienda of La Guairita on this important road connecting the capital and the town of Petare with the coffee growing regions of El Hatillo and Baruta would have not only allowed for an efficient means of transporting the agricultural produce of La Guairita, but also offered locals the possibility to make a living by catering to the muleteers, by selling them alcohol and other necessary goods as well as providing lodging (López Maya 1986:25). As shall be seen in the discussion of archaeological evidence, La Guairita might have been situated on the periphery of Caracas, yet it was not peripheral, since there is material evidence of access to a broad array of imported goods at the site.

The hamlet of La Guairita was sizeable enough in the 1820s and 1830s to warrant the existence of a *comisario de policia* [police inspector or commissioner] (ACP II 1826-1830:8, 72, 133; ACP IV 1833-1835:23, 391; see also González Travieso 2005). It is possible that La Guairita’s growth in the early nineteenth century was due in part to the mass emigration (some 30,000 people) from Caracas following the devastating earthquake of 1812 (Altez 2010:53; Cunill Grau 1987:450). At some point in the 1840s the site of La Guairita began to be distinguished between “La Guairita abajo” and “La Guairita arriba” suggesting that the 1835 coffee hacienda shown in Figure 10.2 was divided into at least two separate lots (ACP VII 1846-1849:120). La Guairita Abajo was probably located close to the La Guairita Creek and bordered Hacienda El Encantado, and we suggest these are the coffee hacienda structures we investigated archaeologically (Figure 10.2 and 10.3). Indigenous people were still inhabiting the area in the nineteenth century, and probably formed part of the population of the rural agricultural hamlet, as evidenced by Santana Marín from Baruta Parish, a descendant of tribute-paying Indians [*indios tributarios*], who in the mid-1830’s claimed his right to two house plots [*solares de casa*] on a plain by the La Guairita Creek (possibly La Guairita Abajo) (ACP IV 1833-1835:313). The hamlet of La Guairita was probably formed in part by the peons and/or the enslaved who labored in the haciendas of the area, as well as other subsistence farmers, including indigenous peoples. By the time a general census was taken in the years between 1874 and 1876, La Guairita Abajo had a modest population of 45 people and La Guairita Arriba had 100 inhabitants (Primer Anuario Estadístico de Venezuela 1877:418).

The geographical peripherality, yet connectedness, of La Guairita was reflected in a notable historical anecdote. In 1847 the liberal general Ezequiel Zamora, who had instigated a peasant rebellion against the conservative government the previous year, went into hiding at the La Guairita hacienda, which at the time was property of the Cotarro family from Caracas. There he disguised himself as a *caporal* [foreman] with

the pseudonym “Don Manuel” and hid for a few months until he was given amnesty by President José Tadeo Monagas (Villanueva 1898:233-235). This anecdote shows that La Guairita, located on the main road to Caracas from El Hatillo, was well connected to the capital, yet the sizeable hacienda and its forested hillsides offered enough concealment and rurality for this guerilla leader to hide relatively anonymously for some time.

Modernization in transport came to the area in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In 1881, president Guzmán Blanco ordered the construction of the Caracas-La Guaira railway which began operations between the capital and the port of La Guaira in 1883 (Santamaría García 1998:483). In 1885 the construction of the Central Railway from Caracas to the Tuy Valley was begun, connecting Caracas with Petare, Santa Lucía and Santa Teresa (García Castro and Benítez 1999:40). As construction proceeded over the following years, the railway came to include several minor stations along the way in order to facilitate the commercial exchange with coffee-producing towns close to Petare, El Hatillo and the cacao and sugarcane producers in Santa Lucía. Thus, with the opening of the railway, coffee and other commodities could be efficiently transported to Caracas for local distribution and consumption and to La Guaira for export. The rugged topography, however, along with economic problems, delayed the construction of the entire line until 1913 when it finally reached Santa Lucía; it functioned until 1957 and was then abandoned (Delgado de Smith and Manama 2007; Santamaría García 1998:493).

The Nineteenth-Century Venezuelan Coffee Economy

The war for independence ended in 1823, and the heavy losses inflicted by the conflict drained the new nation of manpower and destroyed most cacao plantations. It is within this post-war panorama that coffee was quickly adopted, since, when compared to cacao which had been the region’s economic mainstay, coffee plants only took half the time to reach fruiting maturity (three versus six years), and each unit of land could generate nearly twice as much income; moreover, there was an expanding world demand for the commodity (Lombardi and Hanson 1970:357-358). In the late 1820s planters also found it relatively easy to access capital for the establishment of plantations, and what resulted was a widespread coffee boom that lasted until 1842 and had profound effects on Venezuelan society. After the war of independence, the Church no longer figured prominently in contributing to agricultural development through loans, yet the case of La Guairita seems to have been different, since as we have seen above, it distributed various *censos* to owners of haciendas in the area from the 1790s to the 1830s (Lombardi and Hanson 1970:357-358; Zambrano Sequín 2002:69-70).

The cycle was, however, short-lived and the sharp drop in coffee prices due to Brazilian and Ceylonese overproduction in 1842-1843 brought about the beginning of a depression marked by widespread debt and a political struggle that would lead to the Federal War of 1859-1863 (Izard 1972:209-211). It is probable that during these years of economic decline, the haciendas of La Guairita produced other commodities for local and regional markets in order to ride out the harsh times. Low coffee prices probably pushed the haciendas there to produce tiles, bricks, and lime. In fact, the relations of production between the absentee landowners and the workers at these haciendas in the central region of Venezuela made them relatively self-sufficient latifundia, where not only was coffee grown, but livestock (milk cows, poultry, small caprines) were raised and sugar cane and other local subsistence crops (beans, roots, plantains, fruits, *etc.*) were grown to feed the

workers (Arcila Farias and Fontana 1997; García Castro and Benítez 1999:48-49). Moreover, extra labor on coffee plantations from *jornaleros* or *braceros* was principally needed during the short periods of harvest, and plantation workers were thus only employed occasionally, dedicating themselves to other subsistence and small economic activities during the remainder of the year (Aizpurua 2009:132; Ríos de Hernández 1999:46).

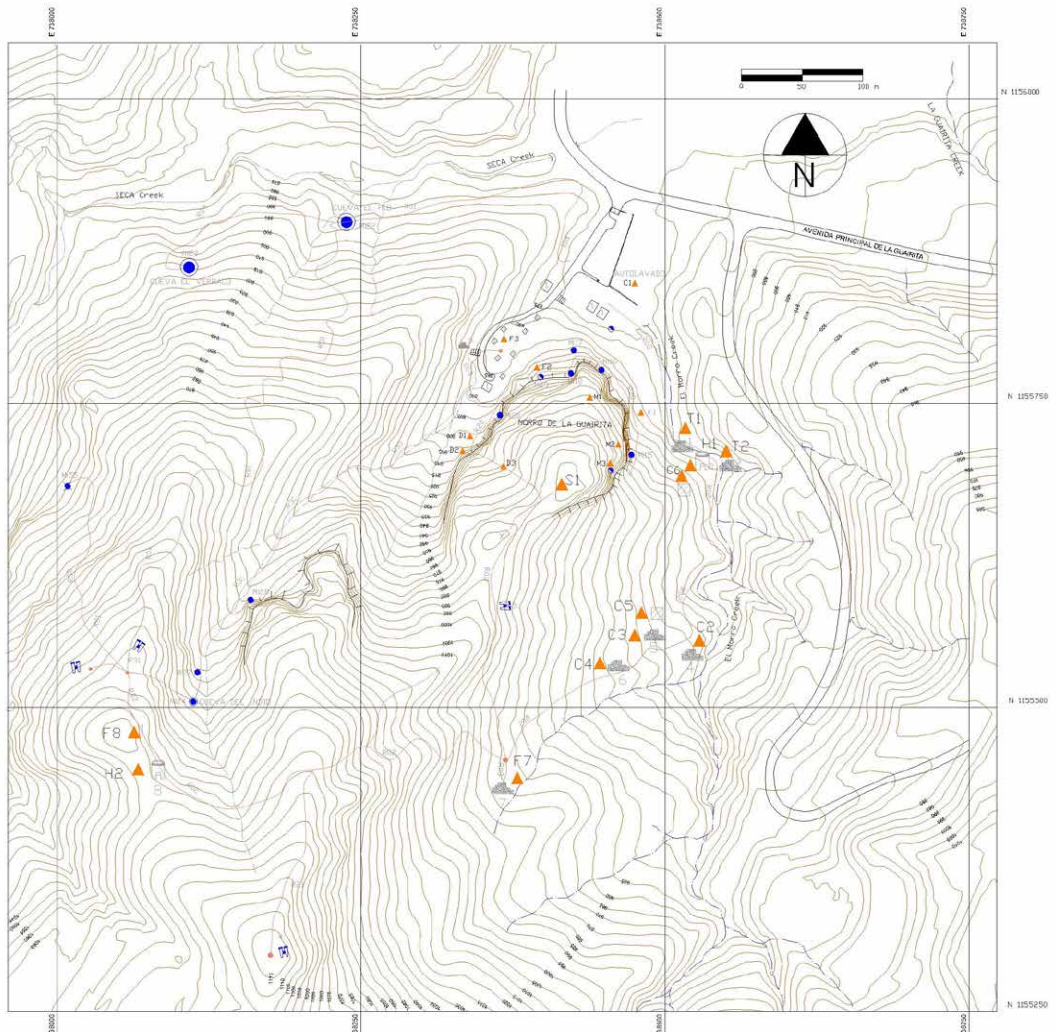
As discussed earlier, *canarios* also formed part of the area's inhabitants, and from the late eighteenth century they had come to be the main merchants in Caracas and its surroundings, managing *pulperías* or *bodegas* (general stores) retailing an assortment of everyday items and necessities (Hernández González 2008:212-241). Moreover, *pulperías* such as the one that might have existed at La Guairita, were often located at strategic nodes on the few roads that connected towns and therefore became important spaces for inter-ethnic social and economic interaction (Lovera 2009:281; Ochoa Hernández 2013:63).

Venezuela's overreliance on a single crop during the eighteenth and nineteenth century (first cacao, then coffee) made for a volatile relationship, and the capriciousness of coffee prices dictated by distant markets often had dire economic and social consequences, leading to national political upheavals and armed rebellions (Izard 1972:261). Even though the coffee market never returned to be what it was in the 1830s, after 1870 production continued to grow in the region and remained the main export of Caracas and its surroundings until the 1920s, when the oil boom took the country by storm (D'Ascoli 1970:394; Hernández 2000:109; Izard 1972:211-212; Ríos de Hernández 1999:58-71).

Archaeological Survey and Preliminary Excavations

Before we turn to explain the archaeological investigations at La Guairita, it is important to first present the antecedents for the archaeology of coffee haciendas in Venezuela. A few archaeological studies of coffee haciendas have been undertaken to date in the country, all of these in Caracas and its surroundings, and only one so far has involved extensive excavations. The first archaeological investigation was undertaken by Luis Molina (1989; see Molina 2011:64-65 for a short summary of the findings) at hacienda La Floresta in Chacao, which as mentioned earlier, was one of the first locations where coffee was grown in the Valley of Caracas. There, Molina (1989:71-75) undertook extensive test-pit and transect excavations. More recently, an archaeological GPR survey of the waterworks of the hacienda was also conducted (Fuenmayor Jiménez 2013). Further investigations focused on various aspects of rural colonial- and republican-period coffee haciendas such as: settlement patterns that included twentieth-century coffee haciendas in Guanasna, Filas de Mariche (Urbani 2000); the standing architecture and built environment of the hacienda of El Tapial, in Laguneta de Montaña (Altos Mirandinos) (Escalona León 2004); settlement patterns and various structures in the Galindo Sector on the southern slope of the Ávila National Park, including the hacienda of La Urbina and San Rafael (Ruinas de Meztiatti) (Carballo 2007; González 2007); and settlement patterns and landscape transformation in a coffee-growing area in Los Altos de Pipe (Altos Mirandinos) (Navas 2007). Only limited test pit excavations were undertaken in Galindo, and most eighteenth- through twentieth-century artefacts from all these sites were found through surface collections.

The archaeological project at the site of La Guairita (Mi1301A) began in February of 2017, with the preliminary phase ending in December 2018. The original intention was to not only undertake test pit excavation, but eventually excavate large units in and around the existing architectural remains. However, due to permit restrictions, limited



SYMBOLS	
	Features
	Limekiln
	M15 Small cave
	M16 Main caves
	M19 Shelter
	M25 Dangerous cave (not for public access)
	Park Infrastructure
	R3 Park Foodpath
	X Closed or dangerous foodpath
	Abysm, gorge, climbing rock wall
	Observatory
	Creek
	Seasonal creek/ Rain water ditch

ARCHAEOLOGICAL LOCUS	
	C1 House 1 (outside park area)
	HI Limekiln No.1
	T1 Water dan No. 1
	T2 Water dan No. 2
	C2 Main house
	C3 Coffee processing house
	C4 Hut/Mule yard
	C5,C6 Possible houses (non excavated)
	F7 Heart water tank/Pond
	H2 Limekiln No.2
	F8 Lime quarry
	F1,F3 Lime quarry
	F2 Storage shelter
	BI,B3 Prehispanic ceramic site 3700 AP
	S1 Prehispanic Settlement >3700 AP
	M1 Prehispanic Rock
	H2,M2 Prehispanic shelters

CAVES AND SHELTERS	
	M15 CUEVA DE LA GUAIRITA No.1
	M16 CUEVA DE LA GUAIRITA No.2
	M17 CUEVA DE LA GUAIRITA No.3
	M18 CUEVA DE LA GUAIRITA No.4
	M19 COBERTIZO LA GUAIRITA No.5
	M20 CUEVA DE LA GUAIRITA No.6
	M21 CUEVA DE LA GUAIRITA No.7
	M22 CUEVA EL PIDO
	M23 CUEVA EL VERRACO
	M24 CUEVA DEL INDI0 2
	M25 CUEVA DEL INDI0 3
	M26 SIMA DE LA GUAIRITA

TRAIL OR FOOTPATH	
R01	Vest path: EL PIDO cave trail
R02	East path: River trail
R03	CENTRAL Path: Seat trail
R04	West path: EL VERRACO cave trail
R20	Walkaround path: MORRO trail
R21	South path: TOPO ALTO trail
R30	Vest path: LA SIMA trail
R31	CENTRAL path: INDI0 cave trail

Figure 10.4. La Guairita archaeological site map within Cuevas del Indio Recreational Park indicating the location of the loci discussed in the text.

funding, and the lack of security in the Cuevas del Indio Recreational Park, we were forced to adjust the strategy to only perform a pedestrian survey and test pit excavations in order to obtain a preliminary understanding of the material remains present there. During this phase we excavated a total of 34 test pits, ranging from 0.3×0.3 m to 1×1 m in size, within a total area of approximately 24 ha of part of the Recreational Park. The selection of test pit locations was mostly non-arbitrary, and only around 10% of these were selected arbitrarily. The placing of test pits was more intensive around the architectural remains, especially in those locations where archaeological materials were visible on the surface or possible trash middens were detected during pedestrian survey, eroding out of the edges of the trails in the park. A local datum was set up and the geospatial recording was done utilizing a standard GPS receiver, scaled maps, a magnetic compass, a clinometer and measuring tape. Using the above methods, we identified and recorded sixteen archaeological loci and features within the La Guairita site, most of which we discuss below (Figure 10.4).



Figure 10.5 Different pre-colonial ceramics recovered at the La Guairita site in loci S1, D1, D2, and D3.

Archaeological Loci and Features

Loci S1, D1, D2, and D3 – Pre-colonial Settlement

These loci include pre-colonial deposits containing hundreds of potsherds (Figure 10.4 and 10.5) in a matrix of lithics, dense charcoal lenses and dozens of terrestrial snails (*Megalobulimus oblongus*). The lower layer of this context yielded an estimated date of (Beta 350298, Cal 2 Sigma on charcoal material) 1,920 to 1,750 BC. Locus S1 has been identified as a small pre-colonial ceramic-age settlement, probably the oldest ceramic settlement reported for the Caracas Valley, with the other loci being smaller artifact scatters. This site will require further fieldwork and will be part of a future investigation.

Locus C4 – The Mule Yard

This locus consists of an artificial terrace of approximately 360 m² located close to the El Morro Creek on the southeast side of the La Guairita site (Figure 10.4). The shallow stone foundations of a possible wall are still visible at the perimeter of the terrace

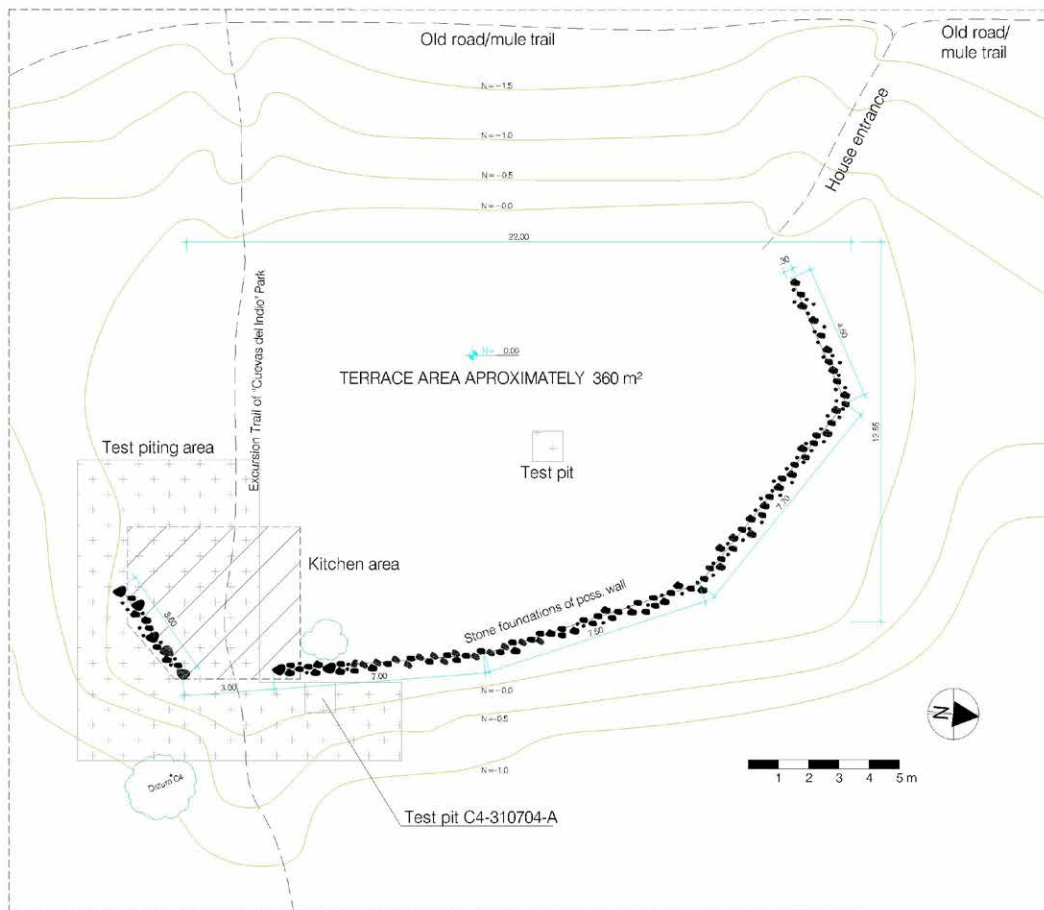


Figure 10.6. Locus C4 which we suggest might have been a mule yard indicating excavations of the terrace and wall foundations.

(Figure 10.6). Preliminary excavation of the wall foundations and in the center of the terrace revealed a hard-packed floor with no evidence for supporting structures (no postholes, columns, stone or *tapia* [rammed-earth] walls), although the presence of postholes cannot be discarded given the limited scope of test excavations. On the southeast side, opposite the possible entrance from the old mule trail, test pits revealed tiles, ceramics, metal items, bones, and charcoal, which suggest that this might have been a kitchen refuse midden. Although the determination of the minimum number of vessels (MNV) has yet to be done, initial observations reveal that a third of the ceramic vessels are coarse earthenware and the forms include cooking vessels such

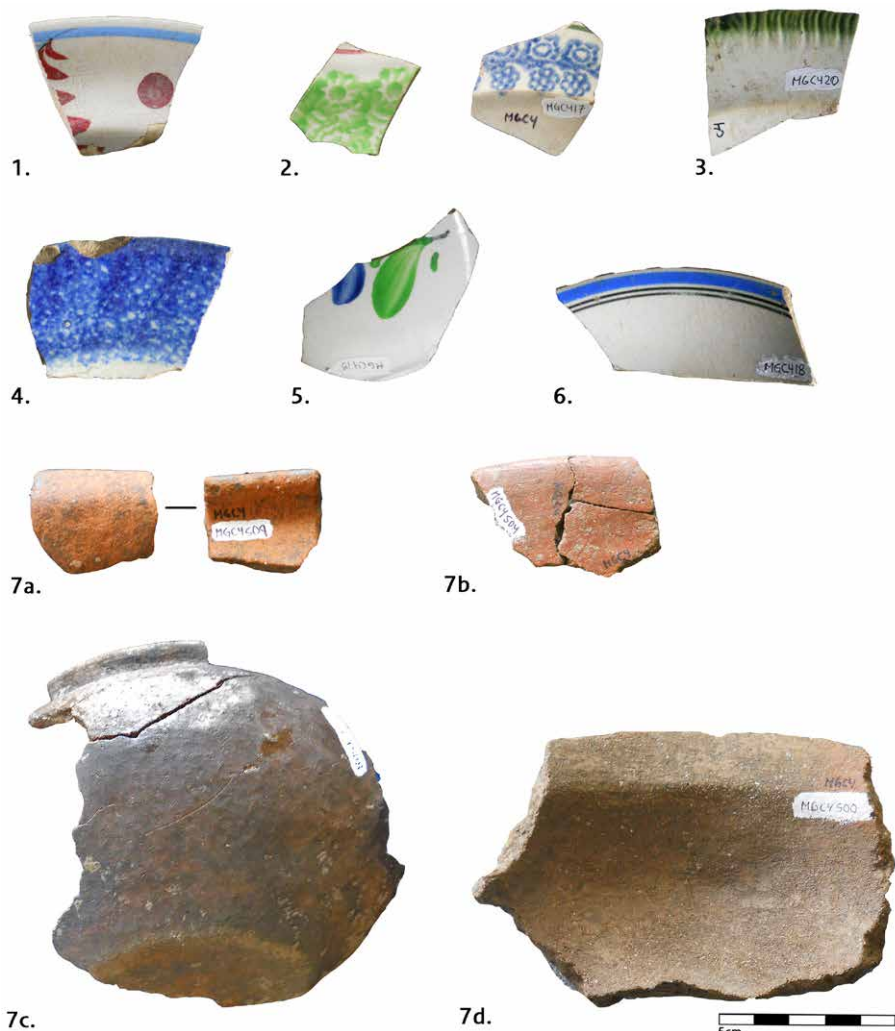


Figure 10.7. Ceramics recovered at Locus C4, probably a mule yard. (1) Painted whiteware soup plate with chrome colors (c. 1830-1845). (2) Cut-sponge stamped whiteware bowls and mug (1845-1870). (3) Shell-edged whiteware plate or soup plate with embossed edge (1820-1835). (4) Sponged whiteware plate or soup plate (1820-1860). (5) Painted whiteware with sprig pattern (1835-1850). (6) Banded-ware plate or soup plate (1860+). (7a) Locally or regionally made coarse earthenware *cuenco*. (7b) *budare* or *aripo*. (7c) *olla*. (7d) large *olla*.



Figure 10.8. Miscellaneous items found at Locus C4, the mule yard. (1) 20-centesimi Italian silver coin from 1863 (diameter 1.5 cm). (2) Fragments of iron scissors. (3) Bone table knife handle. (4) Cast-iron cooking pot. (5) Iron hoe.

as *ollas* [cooking pots] and a *budare* or *aripo* [griddle], tablewares such as *cuencos* [bowls], and the spout from a *hidrocéramo* or *botijo* [water-cooling jug] (Figure 10.7, a – d). These are coarse earthenwares known locally in the colonial period as “loza criolla” (criolowares) or “loza de la tierra” (Duarte 1977:181) that were probably of local indigenous and/or afro-descendant manufacture. Their identification and dating, however, is currently not possible due to limited comparative data from other excavations of colonial- and republican-period sites in the region. Further cooking vessels include two cast-iron cooking pots (Figure 10.8, 4).

The refined ceramics found at the locus are all white-bodied and of British manufacture, dating to between c. 1830 and 1890, and include painted, shell-edged, engine-turned, industrial slip-decorated, transfer-printed, banded and sponge-decorated wares (Figure 10.7, 1-6) (Brooks 2005; Miller 2013; Samford 2013). The identifiable vessel forms include bowls, plates, soup plates, jugs, and mugs. Other ceramics include a *botija* [olive jar] with lead glaze on the interior and a fragment of a German stoneware water or gin bottle. One mold-blown nineteenth-century, probably medicinal, syrup bottle marked “Reuters, New York” was also found. Other miscellaneous items include the engraved bone handle of a table knife, fragments of a pair of iron scissors, an iron hoe, and a heavily worn 20-centesimi Italian silver coin

from 1863 with the bust of Vittorio Emanuele II (Figure 10.8, 1). The coin is pierced and was probably worn as a pendant with the reverse side displayed, perhaps as a memento or even an amulet. Although the sample from the excavations at C4 is not large and the site awaits larger and more systematic excavations and analysis, the preliminary picture of the material remains from C4 offers some clues as to who might have been using this space.

A large, forged iron nail, with a round head and taper on four sides (dating to the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century), was possibly used to hold together architectural timbers (Wells 1998:92). Based on the material evidence from the test pits at C4 we tentatively suggest that the terrace was built at the beginning of the nineteenth century and there was possibly a light wooden *chosa* [hut] here with a thatched palm roof and posts for hanging hammocks, as well as a small open-air kitchen with a tiled roof to the southeast. The nail suggests the wooden structure might have been at C4 before the kitchen was installed and domestic activities were begun after 1830 (as indicated by the earliest refined ceramics).

Although we will further discuss our interpretations of this locus at the end of the chapter, once we have presented the evidence from excavations in adjacent structures, we suggest that this locus was part of the built environment of the larger coffee hacienda of La Guairita. Its location, right beside the mule trail and close to a fresh water supply from El Morro Creek, as well as its large flat terrace with a low wall on its perimeter, suggest that it might have been utilized as a mule yard from the early nineteenth century onwards. Later, toward the mid-1830s, a few simple huts and the kitchen were constructed here to further accommodate the muleteers and their animals travelling on the road and transporting coffee and other goods from this and other haciendas to Caracas. A variety of coarse earthenware cooking and serving vessels, including an *aripo* for making the Venezuelan staple corn cakes, *arepas*, as well as a small but diverse sample of refined ceramic tableware forms and the bone-handled table knife, indicate that the domestic activity here was strictly functional and no-frills. As hinted by the iron hoe (Figure 10.8), we suggest that plantation peons or *jornaleros* might have also hung their hammocks and cooked their meals here when they were seasonally hired for the coffee harvests and the periodic *desyerbo* or weeding of the coffee stands.

Locus C2 – The Coffee-Processing Patio

This locus consists of an artificial terrace built on a stone supporting wall (Figure 9). The area is approximately 350 m² and is located 20 m from C3 and 100 m east of C4, right by the El Morro Creek (see Figure 10.4). On the terrace there is a stone-lined patio of approximately 290 m² for drying coffee, surrounded by a retaining wall that encloses it on the southern and eastern sides. Based on a nineteenth-century agricultural manual (Madriz 1869:30-31, 87-88 in Lovera 2009:81), it can be estimated that at some 4 metric tons of coffee could be processed on a patio of this size during harvest season, and it was large enough for a stand of at least 8,000 trees. An ideal patio area for the 50,000 trees the hacienda had in 1835 would have been some 1720 m², which raises the possibility that there was at least another patio withing the large area covered by the hacienda (Figure 10.2), perhaps in the area of what would be later called La Guairita Arriba. It is important to note that this coffee-processing patio was located strategically next to El Morro Creek that, unlike the larger and dirtier La Guairita Creek that ran through a longer and more populated valley, offered a fresh and clean supply of spring water to wash the coffee beans and for the inhabitants of the hacienda to use.

On the eastern end, beyond the patio, there are four 60 × 60 cm column bases made of stone and brick joined with sand and lime mortar. These suggest that there was a

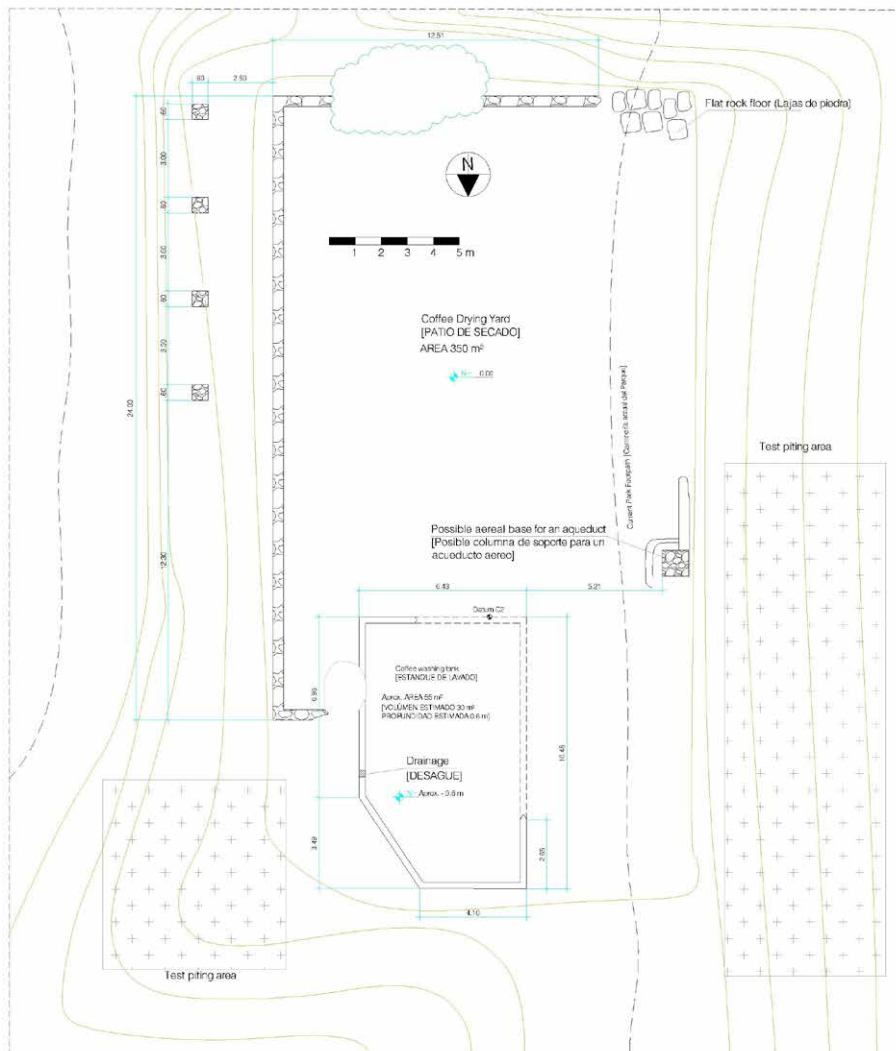


Figure 10.9. Locus C2, the coffee-processing patio and excavations.

wall and a roofed corridor facing east, which probably housed the coffee-harvesting and -processing equipment and functioned as a shelter for the workers. At the northern end of the patio there is also a coffee holding tank or vat and the foundations of what seems to be an aerial water aqueduct probably coming from Feature F7 (the water reservoir) to the southwest. Limited archaeological materials were found at C2: a few mule bones and iron debris, which suggests the site was only used as a workplace.

Based on differences in the construction of the stone foundations, we identified two phases of construction at C2. The initial phase is comprised of the roofed corridor and the coffee drying patio, and a second phase, extending to the north of the patio including the coffee holding tank and its water intake. The second phase looks more recent, with the use of modern Portland cement over the *tapia* [rammed earth] to fix part of the new area and the inclusion of an iron water pipe. These additions can be

tentatively dated to after c. 1870 (see Figure 10.9). It is also important to note here that the presence of this coffee holding tank indicates that the hacienda utilized the wet method (*beneficio humedo*) of processing coffee, where the pulp was first removed mechanically and then the cherries were passed into a fermentation tank for 8 to 12 hours, after which they were washed to remove the remainder of the pulp. This process was very water intensive but yielded a higher quality coffee bean that could be sold at a greater price (Ríos de Hernández 1999:49).

Locus C3 – The House of the Mayordomo

This locus includes a house of about 80 m², which probably had a tiled gable roof and a wall made of *tapia* with a foundation of brick and stone joined by mud, sand, and lime mortar (80 cm high). The house probably only had one entrance located south toward the old mule trail, a kitchen located at the northeast corner and two additional rooms, one on the south side probably for storage, and one at the center which was probably the dormitory. The bases of two external columns on the north side suggest an extended roof or *alero* that probably covered a sheltered porch for hanging hammocks (Figure 10.10).

Test pit excavations at Locus C3 revealed a high density and variety of archaeological material. Among the foodways-related things there were very few coarse earthenwares, these being only fragments of an *olla* and a small *cuenco*, as well as a metal *aripo* or *budare*

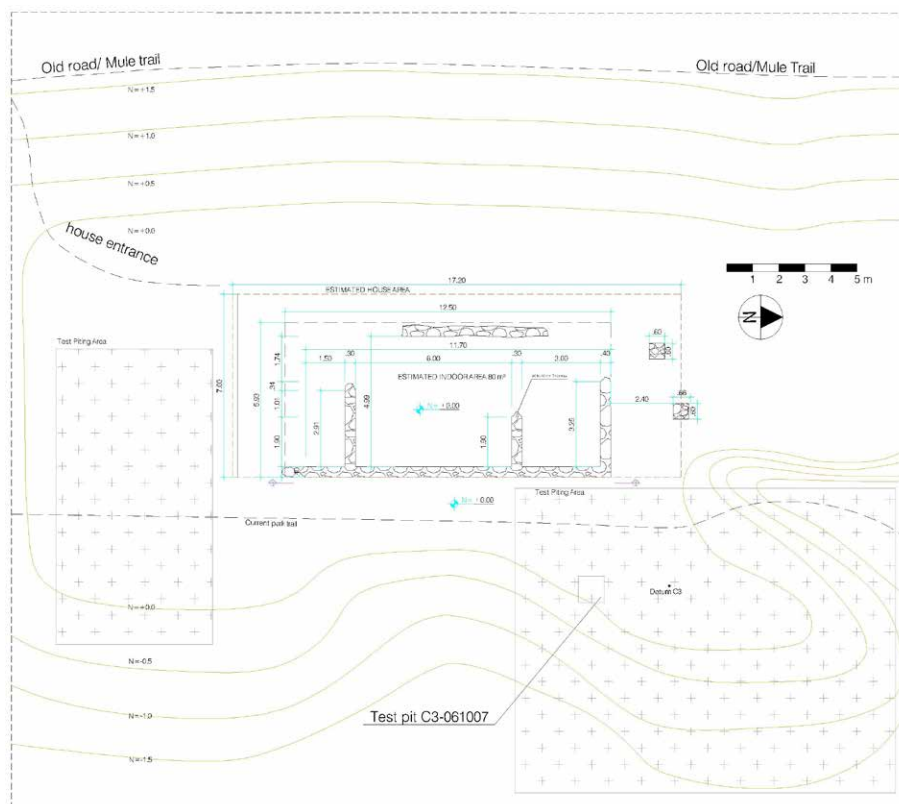


Figure 10.10. Locus C3, *mayordomo* house remains, features, and excavations.



Figure 10.11. Ceramics recovered at Locus C3, the house of the *mayordomo*. (1) Painted whiteware soup plate with chrome colors (c. 1830-1845). (2) Painted whiteware chamber pot handle (c. 1830-1845). (3) Shell-edged whiteware plate or soup plate with unscaloped edge (1840-1860). (4) Cut-sponge stamped whiteware bowls and mug (1845-1870). (5) Prob. blue transfer-printed whiteware flower vase (1830+). (6) Poss. Dutch or French painted bowl. (7) Manganese transfer-printed (dendritic-pattern) plate or soup plate (1830+). (8) Willow-pattern transfer-printed plate (1830+). (9) Gilt-banded ware cup and plate or soup plate (1870+). (10) Banded-ware plate or soup plate (1860+). (11) Tin-glazed earthenware ointment jar, pre-1830. (12) Prob. porcelain flower vase (1850+). (13) Soup plate marked "Bordeaux" (c. 1930). (14) Bowl marked "Villeroy and Boch, Dresden" (c. 1930). (15a - d) Fragments of cooking and storage vessels, unprovenanced morrowares, mid-nineteenth century. (16) Glazed *botija*, prob. Spanish but also poss. locally or regionally produced, mid-nineteenth century. (17) Crudely thrown and lead-glazed storage jar, poss. locally or regionally made. (18a - c) Prob. Locally or regionally made coarse earthenware vessels.

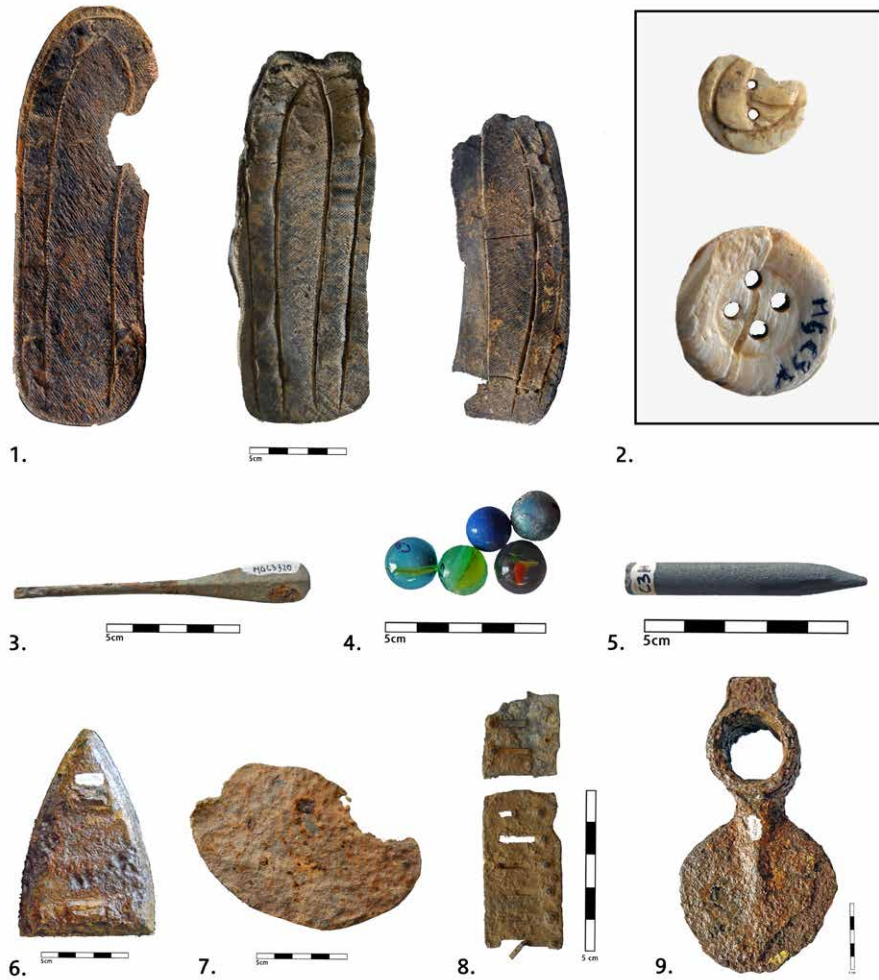


Figure 10.13. Miscellaneous items found at Locus C3, the house of the *mayordomo*. (1) three rubber *alpargata* soles. (2) A shell and a bone button. (3) Finial from a metal spoon or fork. (4) Glass marbles. (5) Graphite pencil. (6) Clothes iron. (7) Iron *aripo* or *budare* [griddle]. (8) Fragments of a music box. (9) Petaloid iron hoe.

[griddle]. The remainder of cooking vessels are various lead-glazed coarse earthenwares including *ollas* for cooking as well as probable storage jars. We identify these as the yet-uprovenanced morrowware (“El Morro”-type ware) which is ubiquitous at Spanish-colonial sites in the Americas and was either an Iberian import or was locally or regionally made in the greater Caribbean (Antczak 2019:293). There is also a probable nineteenth-century French Vallauris cooking pot (*marmite*), a couple of fragments of glazed *botijas*, and a lead-glazed coarse earthenware base that is more crudely thrown and glazed than the morrowares and therefore possibly of local Venezuelan manufacture (Figure 10.11, 15-18) (see Duarte 1977).

Tableware is abundant and includes an array of refined, white-bodied wares and porcelain dating to between c. 1830 and 1930. Among these there are numerous mostly British painted, engine-turned, industrial slip-decorated, transfer-printed, banded, shell-



Figure 10.12. Bottles found at Locus C3, the house of the *mayordomo*. (1) Mold-blown wine bottle (mid-nineteenth century) (2) French “Medard” champagne bottle (mid- to late nineteenth century) (3) Blue-green beer bottle marked “Cerveceria Caracas” (prob. early twentieth century). (4) Codd-neck soda water bottle marked “Caracas S.C.H. the Niagara Bottle Barnett & Foster Makers London N.” (1887+). (5) Amber machine/made tuberculosis medicine bottle marked “Inst. Ravetllat Pla Barcelona” c. 1920. (6) Blue mold-blown medicine bottle marked “Phosphodyne” and “London” (1869+).

edged and sponge-decorated wares much as those found at C4, and mostly dating to between 1830 and 1890 (Figure 10.11, 1-8, 10). There are also a few other ware types including gilt-banded ware, decal-decorated wares, two porcelain cups, a plate marked “Bordeaux”, and one bowl with the “Villeroy and Boch, Dresden” mark dating probably to the first third of the twentieth century (Figure 10.11, 9, 12-14) (Brooks 2005). The tableware forms include plates, soup plates, bowls, mugs and pitchers; notably, no serving dishes were found. Other table utensils include a finial from a metal spoon or fork (Figure 10.13, 3).

Hundreds of animal bones, many of which evidenced metal cut marks, were also recovered at C3. Although more detail analysis of these zooarchaeological specimens remains to be done, most bones were cow (*Bos taurus*), suggesting that meat might have been brought to the site salted and barreled (*tasajo*), or perhaps also obtained from standing herds in the La Guairita Creek valley. A large number of cow bones have been also reported by Navarrete (2017:156-160) for the Hacienda San Mateo, Aragua State, and the Casa del Bicentenario, Caracas. Various domestic pig specimens (*Sus Scrofa domestica*) might have been from animals reared at the site. Furthermore, a few specimens of probable white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) as well as an agouti (*Cuniculus paca*) molar suggest that the occupants of the house also hunted in the adjacent forest. The recovery of three shotgun cartridge shells, dating to after 1850 (Miller *et al.* 2000:14), further strengthens this hypothesis. Curiously, there is an absence of domestic chicken (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) which was a common yard animal throughout rural Venezuela.

A few diverse mold-blown and machine-made beverage bottles were also found dating from the mid-nineteenth to the first third of the twentieth century. These include probable French burgundy bottles, a French “Medard” champagne bottle, madeira bottles, local beer manufactory bottles marked “PATENT” and “CERVECERIA CARACAS”, and a codd-neck soda water bottle marked “CARACAS S.C.H. THE NIAGARA BOTTLE BARNETT & FOSTER MAKERS LONDON N.” as well as a fragment of a stoneware Dutch gin bottle (Hannon and Hannon 1976) (Figure 10.12, 1-4). This variety of foreign alcoholic beverages is not surprising as *bodegas* in Caracas in the early nineteenth century were known to be well stocked with wines from France, Portugal and Spain (Rivero 1989:28). The variety of glass alcohol and beverage containers, some of which probably contained imported European wines, suggests that perhaps these were not solely meant to be used by the inhabitants of the house but were sold here to locals and travelers on the road.

Other ceramic household items include a small tin-glazed drug or ointment jar, a painted whiteware handle from what seems to have been a chamber pot (c. 1830-1845), a blue transfer-printed whiteware flower vase (c. 1835-1850), and fragments of a molded and painted porcelain flower vase from the later nineteenth century (Figure 10.11). The transfer-printed whiteware and porcelain vases were arguably the most expensive ceramic items at C3, but these were also the only extravagant things found. A few pharmaceutical bottles were also found at the site. These include a blue mold-blown bottle marked “LONDON” and “PHOSPHODYNE” that contained Dr. Charles Bright’s Phosphodyne, a “medicine” he patented in London in 1869 which, like many quack medicines of the time, was claimed to cure a wide host of complaints from indigestion to nervous debility (Figure 10.12, 6) (Victorian Collections 2017). An amber

machine-made bottle marked “INST. RAVETLLAT PLA BARCELONA” was probably made in the 1920s and contained an anti-tuberculosis medicine made at the Institute Ravetllat Pla in Barcelona, Spain that was also unrecognized by the wider medical community and considered heterodox (Figure 10.12, 5) (Lugo Márquez 2012; Mónica Bonet, personal communication 2018). Tuberculosis was in fact endemic in the area throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Navas Martínez 1996:18; Wright 1990:100). Furthermore, the presence of these sham European medicines in this rural household is also evidence that the international commercial ventures and marketing campaigns for such products proved remarkably effective and even rural Venezuelan households could have fallen prey to them.

Further items include a metal clothes iron, a probable stove burner cover, five marbles, fragments of a music box, an unidentified lead seal, and a graphite pencil (Figure 10.12, 4-6, 8). Personal items include one bone and one shell button, a metal hook-and-eye fastener and three rubber soles from *alpargatas* (typical Venezuelan espadrilles or rudimentary sandals), as well as the bezel from what was probably a pocket watch (Figure 10.12, 1-2). There are also various architectural items including six large iron nails probably pertaining to the roof work, a locally or regionally made roof tile, and two unidentified iron rings. The materials at the house of the *mayordomo* (C3) and the possible mule yard (C4) indicate that both sites were occupied concurrently from around 1830. Another structure we identified beside C3, but could not excavate, might have been an ancillary hut for hacienda peons, or possibly an animal pen (Figure 10.4).

We identify this house as the house of the *mayordomo* of La Guairita coffee hacienda where the overseer probably lived. Since absentee landownership was broadly the norm in colonial and post-independence Venezuela, the owners who lived in Caracas entrusted the functioning of their plantations to a *mayordomo* [overseer] or a *capataz* [foreman] who managed the estate’s commercial activities and workforce (Aizpurua 2009:97; Lovera 2009:286-293). Furthermore, we know that in the late 1840s, fearing arrest, Ezequiel Zamora passed by the house of the Cotarro family, affluent landowners who lived in the center of Caracas, to then under the cover of night leave to their hacienda at La Guairita, where he apparently worked as foreman for a few months (Cordero Negrín 2002:118; Villanueva 1898:233-235). It is even possible that Zamora stayed at the C3 house, given that the earliest ceramics date it to have been built after c. 1830. The previous owners of the hacienda, Bernardo Ñañez and his wife Ana María Guitan, who appear as its proprietors in the *censo* of 1835, also probably lived in Caracas and only occasionally visited their plantation (the possible ruins of the main hacienda house are located down by the La Guairita Creek and will be explored in the future [see Figure 10.2]). The foremen on such plantations were often poor whites, freed slaves or slaves who exhibited loyalty to the owner and knew in detail the workings of the plantation and could also use their position to their own convenience (Aizpurua 2009:97).

Loci H1 and H2 – Limekilns

A few other structures within what we suggest was the coffee hacienda landscape were also found and surveyed. Loci H1 and H2 present still-standing cylindrical limekilns, probably of the draw or “low flame” type (Figure 10.14). Draw kilns were cylindrical kilns with a stoke hole, furnace on the bottom, and a grate within, on top of which alternating layers of stone and fuel were stacked and burned (Williams 2008). We tentatively suggest

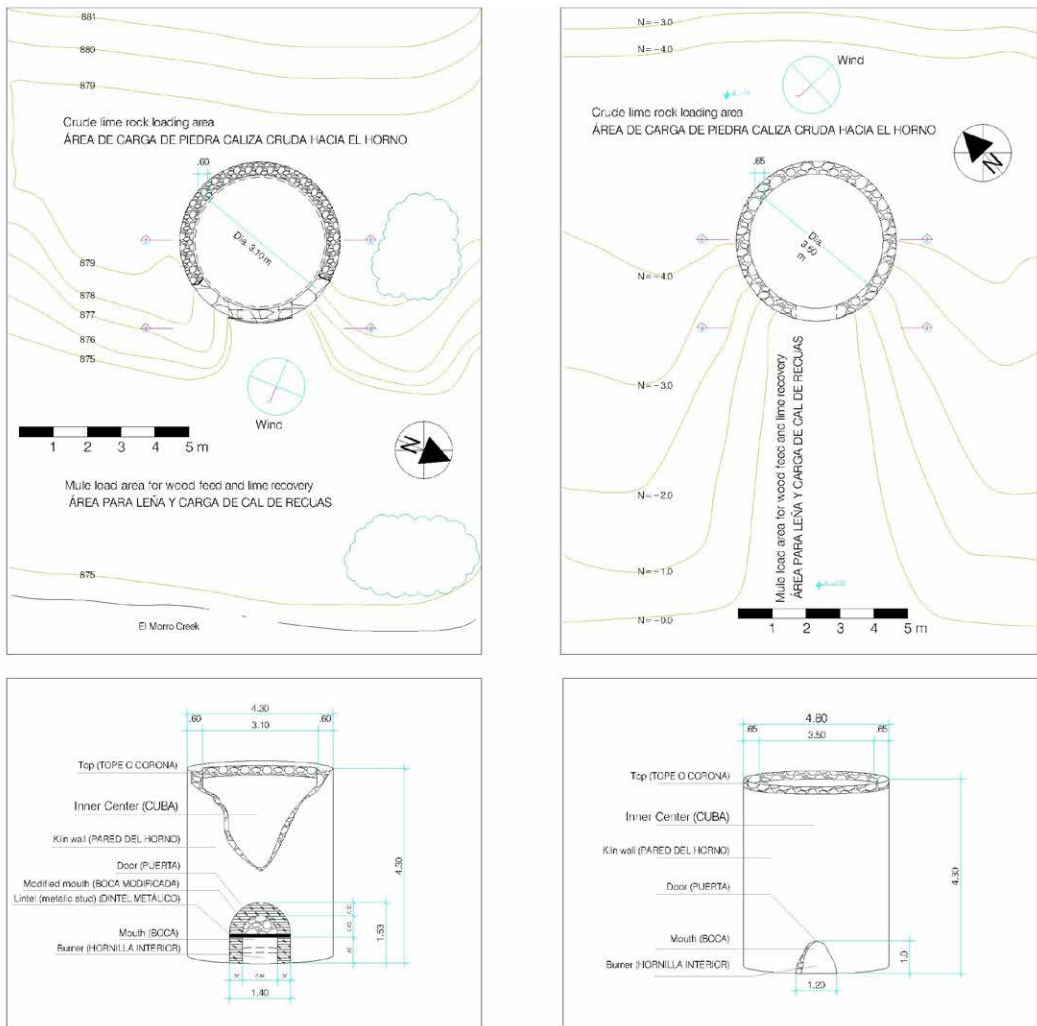


Figure 10.14. H1 and H2 Limekilns.

that both limekilns are similar in shape and features to those found on Lanzarote in the Canary Islands, although limekilns have not been studied in depth in Venezuela and quality comparative data is lacking (Hernández and Rodríguez 1993; although see Urbani 1999). This similarity might be attributed to the fact that *canarios* are known to have built and owned limekilns and kilns for firing roof tiles in the vicinity of Caracas in the eighteenth century (Hernández González 2008:130-131, 210). We identified some dispersed material remains up slope from kiln H1 which we labelled C6. We suggest that perhaps the kiln workers camped here to manage the limeburning process (which usually took 5 to 6 continuous days to produce crude lime [Hernández and Rodríguez 1993:16]), and they could have been peons working the La Guairita coffee hacienda who were probably rural settlers living in the *caserío*.

It is important to note here that these limekilns possibly gave the site of La Guairita its name, since it is probably derived from the term “guaira” or “guayra”, most probably

of indigenous origin, which in colonial times appears to have signified a subterranean oven or a large, artificially excavated cylindrical cavity, similar in concept to the limekiln (Alvarado 2021:193; Carreño 1999:41). For this reason, it may be suggested that some form of kiln already existed here in the early eighteenth century, from when we have the first documentary mention of La Guairita, although it is difficult to estimate the possible dates of construction of these two limekilns because there is very little archaeological evidence associated with them. Given its relative proximity to the coffee hacienda structures, it is possible that limekiln H1 was built concurrently with the house of the *mayordomo* (C3) and the coffee-processing patio (C2), during the second half of the nineteenth century. Both hacienda structures required lime and tiles for their construction, and these could be produced in the kiln. It is possible that H1 started first as a tile kiln, because we identified a modification to the kiln mouth. The mouth (or stoke hole) was initially wider and higher, probably to provide more oxygen but at a lower temperature more appropriate for tile and pottery firing. Later, the mouth was reduced by about 40% to increase the temperature within to a more optimal level for limeburning (see Figure 10.14). The H2 limekiln located on the hill above the La Guairita site, was probably a later project to sell lime to the highland

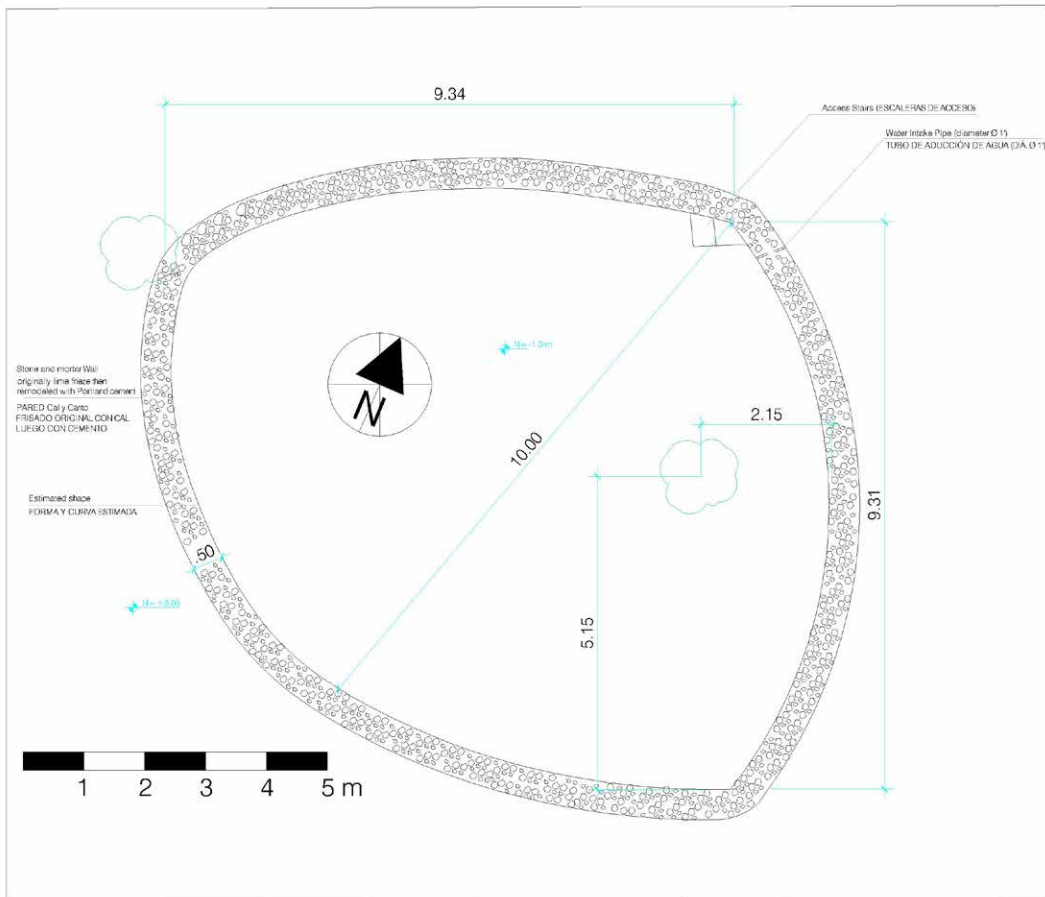


Figure 10.15. Feature F7, the water reservoir.

town of El Hatillo. These kilns could have also plausibly provided lime to Caracas, Chacao and Petare down the road, since lime was indispensable in construction – as mortar and as paint to coat walls – and in critical demand in urban areas (Urbani 1999:5-6).

Feature F7 – The Water Reservoir

The final structure discussed here is feature F7, a water reservoir originally constructed with stone and lime mortar (*calicanto*) and waterproofed with fine lime and sand mortar (Figure 10.15). The reservoir is located uphill from the C4 house, beside the El Morro Creek. We estimate the date of the construction to be around 1830, much like the other hacienda structures (C2 and C3). The reservoir was probably connected via an aqueduct with the coffee holding tank of the hacienda patio (C2). During the second phase of construction of C2, after 1870, the pond was then fixed and sealed with Portland cement. The reservoir also has the remains of a metal pipe of about 2.5 cm in diameter at its northern end that probably fed the tank (Figure 10.9 and 10.15).

Discussion

This chapter has presented the first published archaeological investigation of a Venezuelan coffee hacienda. As we have discussed, toward the end of the eighteenth century, colonial Venezuela started to transition from cacao to coffee monoculture, which experienced a short-lived boom in the 1830s, and continued to be an important crop grown in the cool mountainous region on the outskirts of Caracas until the 1930s. Test pits placed within three hacienda structures at La Guairita – the house of the *mayordomo* (C3), the coffee-processing patio (C2), and the mule yard (C4) – reveal that the earliest refined white-bodied ceramics at the site are British whitewares painted in chrome colors dating to as early as 1830 (Miller *et al.* 2000:13). Although more extensive excavations await, a tentative *terminus post quem* of 1830 can be established for the construction of the coffee hacienda, within the decade of the coffee boom. This is further corroborated by the fact that in 1835 the hacienda had 50,000 coffee trees, that if already productive, would have taken some three years to fruit. The archaeological and architectural evidence indicates that the hacienda produced coffee and was occupied until the 1930s or 1950s (when a few other local haciendas closed), and although its actual production figures remain unknown, we suggest a few ways in which it could have weathered the often-disastrous fluctuations of Venezuela's fickle coffee economy and the ravages of numerous wars and conflicts.

The road heading from Santa Lucía and El Hatillo to Petare and Chacao passed right by the house of the *mayordomo* and the mule yard of La Guairita (Figures 10.2 and 10.3) and could have offered advantages to diversify the income of the site's inhabitants when coffee prices slumped. Locus C4, which we suggest was a mule yard, might have been one way in which the hacienda's *mayordomo* earned some extra money by offering the muleteers a sheltered place to tie their animals, hang their hammocks for the night and eat a hot meal. Since no post-1900 ceramics were found at C4, the mule yard might have been disused after the construction of the Petare – Santa Lucía railway and the introduction of the automobile in the early 1900s. We suggest that the house of the *mayordomo* could have also functioned as a *pulpería* or *bodega*, a local shop that offered travelers alcohol and other refreshments, as well as meals and essential goods on the road, and the adjacent kilns indicate that tiles and lime were also probably sold to the

nearby towns and city. Clearly, the coffee hacienda endured the turbulent economic times of the nineteenth century and such economic diversification must have been one of the reasons it survived.

When comparing the British whitewares from C3 and C4 dated to between 1830 and 1890, the collections do not seem to be very different, and there are no clear luxury items that stand out, except for the transfer-printed and porcelain vases at C3 that would have been somewhat more expensive household items. As mentioned earlier, at least in the 1830s and 1840s (from when we have documentary evidence) the hacienda was probably managed by a *mayordomo* and the absentee landlord lived in Caracas. In this case, the material remains from the house of the *mayordomo* (C3) could have been a combination of items that the landlord had bought for the house and the personal belongings of the *mayordomo* and his family. It is probable that the *mayordomo* in the mid-nineteenth century was a trusted freedperson or an experienced rural *canario* or *pardo* peon who was loyal to the owner (although the figure probably changed with different owners over the hacienda's 100-year existence).

The presence of marbles and a small-sized *alpargata* at C3 (Figure 10.13, 1) suggests that there were children at the house, and the music box evocatively brings the house ruin to life with now forgotten melodies. We suggest the household supplied its fruit and vegetables from the hacienda lands, as indicated by the recovery of a rounded iron hoe that was probably used for planting, unlike the square hoe found in C4 that would have been more appropriate for weeding the coffee stands (Figure 10.13, 9). Meat was most likely brought salted and barreled (in the 1930s, probably from a slaughterhouse in Baruta [Navas Martínez 1996:20-21]) and wild deer and agouti were also hunted in the forest. Livestock probably wandered around the house at will and would have only been sacrificed and eaten on special occasions (Wright 1990:52).

The variously decorated British whitewares from C3 and C4 date to between 1830 and 1850, and do not seem to fall outside what has been found at other Venezuelan haciendas from this time period such as the Scottish indigo colony at Topo (although this was a little earlier, 1825-1827) (Key 1986:170-187); Hacienda San Mateo (Navarrete 2017:170, 2014); Hacienda Guayabal, the La Venta inn (posada), and the casa Tabacal along the Spanish colonial road from La Guaira to Caracas (Amodio *et al.* 1997:109-119); and Quinta de Anauco, Caracas (González Portales 2014). Compared to San Mateo and Quinta de Anauco where the landed elite lived, and Topo which was an unusual and short-lived foreign agricultural experiment, the inhabitants of the La Guairita coffee hacienda were rural people most probably from the lower social and racial strata of post-independence Venezuela. Numerous historians of Venezuela consider that the rural elites and even many of the urban elite did not live in luxury in the mid-nineteenth century, and that the urban and rural *pardos* were generally impoverished (Lovera 2009:97-99; Sosa Cárdenas 2010:28; Wright 1990:51-52). This was probably broadly true, yet archaeology complicates this by revealing the variability within the lived experiences of the “poorer” rural classes. The evidence from the house of the *mayorodomo* and the mule yard kitchen at La Guairita suggest that the economic scaling of ceramics at Anglo-American sites (Miller 1991) does not translate well to republican-period Venezuela, where decorated whitewares made it to the tables of richer and poorer rural households alike and shared the stage with locally or regionally produced earthenwares (Duarte 1977). In this way, our archaeological findings seem to lend credence to historian Michael McKinley's (1985:28) observation for late pre-revolutionary Caracas that “the

economic distinctions between many whites and many free-coloureds were not that pronounced” and extend this phenomenon into the early years of the republic.

This lack of plain undecorated whitewares suggests that cheap unpainted whitewares were not sold to Venezuela by British pottery manufactories in the mid-nineteenth century. The preliminary excavations at La Guairita therefore provide further evidence that in the decades following independence, more expensive British ceramics penetrated the Venezuelan market and were not only used by the urban elites but also swiftly made their way onto the tables of rural houses, coming to totally replace Spanish tablewares (Brooks and Rodríguez 2012:79-81; Rodríguez Yilo and Brooks 2014:35; see also Amaiz, this volume). Furthermore, the French and German tablewares dating to after 1860 were also found in household assemblages in the center of the eastern Venezuelan town of Píritu and at the Escuela José Angel Lamas in Caracas, providing more evidence that, after independence, refined earthenwares were not only bought from Britain but also from France and Germany (Brooks and Rodríguez Yilo 2012:82; Sanoja Obediente *et al.* 1998:141).

The material evidence analyzed so far reveals that while the rural coffee hacienda of La Guairita might have been located on the periphery of Caracas, it was by no means peripheral. It was well-connected to the capital and its surrounding main towns by means of a rudimentary yet functioning road network that also linked it to the port of La Guaira. The material remains evidence that even though dire economic times and war often interrupted commerce during the nineteenth century, this did not prevent imported ceramics, wines and medicines from percolating down the Venezuelan social and racial ladder to the households of impoverished peons on rural plantations. Locally made rudimentary earthenwares and fashionable foreign tablewares shared the same space on the dining table and in the kitchen. Likewise, the *mayorodomo* and his family might have worn simple *alpargatas*, yet their plain clothes were probably ironed. Everyday simplicity did not preclude the occasional dash of panache.

Our case study complicates the notions of rurality, poverty and peripherality in republican-period Venezuela and suggests that these are not as clearly evidenced and distinguished in the material record as historical documents might suggest. We, however, cautiously temper our interpretations knowing that there is still much investigation and analysis to be done at La Guairita itself and at other rural Venezuelan sites before further regional conclusions can be reached that broaden or convincingly challenge extant historical understandings. In this study we do propose, nonetheless, that the material entanglements of the non-elite people who worked and lived at this rural coffee hacienda between 1830 and 1930 notably evidence commercial flexibility, economic resiliency, and transatlantic cosmopolitan tastes.

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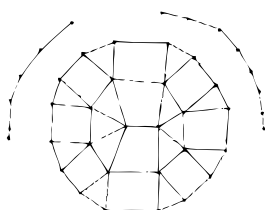
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