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Cover Page Footnote

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The Manuscript Map of the Dagua River. A Rare Look at a Remote Region in the Spanish Colonial Americas

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Abstract

The *Manuscript Map of the Dagua River Region* (1764), produced in the Spanish Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada (today's Colombia), was created to support a land dispute. I argue that a careful art historical reading of this object, considered in conjunction with eighteenth-century archival documents, nineteenth-century explorers' accounts, and surviving historical maps, reveals other narratives about the lived experience for those in this socio-ethnically rich yet geographically isolated area of the Spanish Empire. The map highlights the incontrovertible place that geography held for inhabitants and the central role of enslaved and freed Africans who came to control trade and transport, purchase their freedom, and establish free communities.

Resumen

El *Manuscript Map of the Dagua River Region* (1764) fue creado en el virreinato de Nueva Granada (hoy corresponde al país de Colombia) para apoyar una reclamación sobre terreno. Aquí sostengo que un estudio cuidadoso de este objeto--aumentado con información en los archivos históricos del siglo dieciocho, los relatos del siglo diecinueve, y los mapas históricos--revela otras narrativas sobre la gente en esta región socio-étnicamente diversa, pero geográficamente aislado del imperio español. El mapa muestra el lugar incontrovertible de la geografía para los habitantes y el papel central de los africanos esclavos y libres, los cuales llegaron a controlar el comercio y el transporte de la región, comprar su libertad, y establecer comunidades libres.

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Introduction

Alexander Hidalgo and John F. López have observed that maps are never neutral, objective, or apolitical. Furthermore, they present a distorted reality.¹ In the case of the *Manuscript Map of the Dagua River, 1764* (Fig. 1), a hand drawn map produced in the Spanish Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada, periphery becomes center. While this object was created as visual testimony for a land dispute, a closer reading of the Dagua River Map reveals another narrative about ethnicity, industry, and society on the margins of a peripheral Spanish viceroyalty. Here, African slaves—who greatly outnumbered their white and indigenous counterparts—came to control trade and transport in the region. With time, they would buy their freedom and establish free communities. The Dagua River Map, by acknowledging the existence of the free community of Sombrerillo and identifying its strategic location along the Dagua River, is a testament to the dynamic role of free and enslaved Africans in the region's economy, challenging Sombrerillo's relative silence in archival records.

The Dagua River Map represents a distinct kind of cartography: amateur, executed by hand, not intended for wide dissemination, and one that drew from local knowledge and experience rather than scientific instrumentation. The Dagua River Map was created to support claims to land, however, I argue that it and territorial maps like it preserve otherwise undocumented parts of the Spanish Empire in the final century before Nueva Granada's independence. Without these informal maps, information on regions which fell outside the purview of imperial mapmaking would be lost.

As the earliest known detailed map of this region, the Dagua River Map holds historical importance. It is the only cartographic image that identifies the location and suggests the centrality of the free

settlement of Sombrerillo, whose inhabitants came to control transport as porters and canoe polers. Studied together with archival documents and other historical maps, the Dagua River Map helps to concretize a specific place at a particular moment in time, allowing us to resurrect little studied communities that existed on and beyond the margins of the Spanish colonial system. These hand-drawn territorial maps represent an untapped corpus of cartographic material that merits further study.

Mapmaking, Enlightenment, and Empire c. 1764

The creation of the Dagua River Map in 1764 coincided with a period of imperial initiatives that resulted in a great deal of map making. The new Bourbon king, Philip V, believed that sponsoring scientific expeditions was an excellent way to demonstrate the enlightened nature of the monarchy while also lending prestige to the Spanish nation.² One such expedition, the Paris Academy of Sciences Expedition to Ecuador in 1735, led by Charles Marie de la Condamine and Pierre Bouguer, set out to reevaluate the earth's shape, leading to confirmation of Newton's theory that the earth bulged at the equator, rather than at the poles, as proposed by René Descartes.³ Another outcome of this expedition was the publication of Bouguer's *La Figure de la Terre* (1749) and its detailed map of the Andes south of Quito which employed scientific measurements to pinpoint the location of cities, rivers, and mountain peaks. The very process of its creation was distinct from that of the Dagua River Map, which relied on local knowledge and experience as opposed to advanced scientific instrumentation.

¹ Alexander Hidalgo and John F. López, "Guest Editors' Introduction: Beneath the Surface of a Map," *Ethnohistory* 61, no. 2 (2014): 223.

² Neil Safier, *Measuring the New World. Enlightenment Science and South America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 7. Daniela Bleichmar writes that, between 1759 and 1808, the Spanish Crown funded almost sixty scientific expeditions throughout its empire, mounting a vigorous research campaign with economic, political, and scientific goals. See Bleichmar "The Imperial Visual Archive: Images, Evidence, and Knowledge in the Early Modern Hispanic World," *Colonial Latin American Review* 24, no. 2 (2015): 239. Antonio Barrera argues that these

information-gathering and knowledge-producing practices began in the earlier sixteenth century, citing the *Relaciones Geográficas* as one example. See Barrera, "Empire and Knowledge: Reporting from the New World," *Colonial Latin American Review* 15, no. 1 (2006): 39-54. Paula De Vos has proposed that Spanish imperial science was able to come to full fruition in the eighteenth century because of an earlier interest in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See De Vos, "Research, Development, and Empire: State Support of Science in the Later Spanish Empire," *Colonial Latin American Review* 15, no. 1 (2006): 55-79.

³ This is discussed by Safier, *Measuring the New World*, 6.

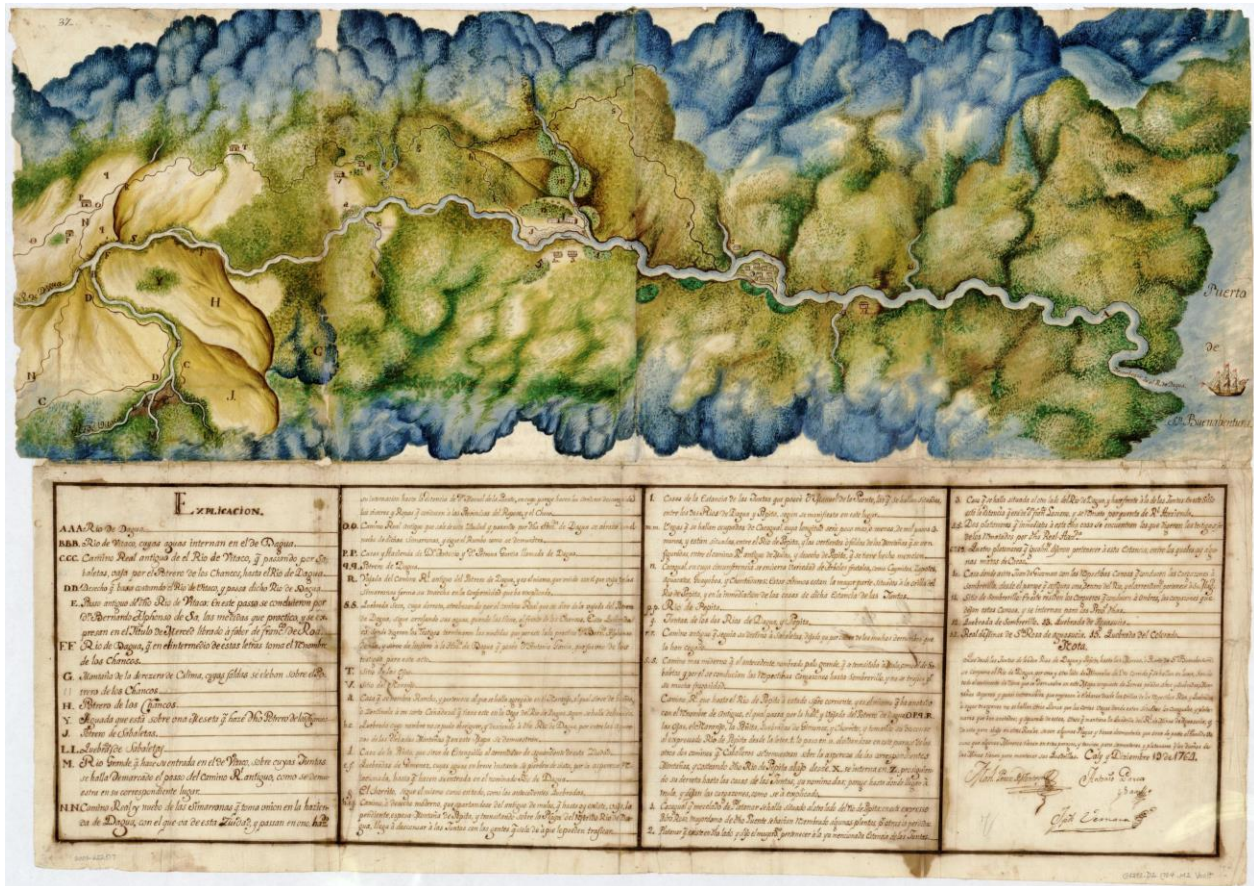


Figure 1. Manuscript Map of Dagua River Region (1764), Library of Congress, Geography and Maps Division, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001622517/>. This map, oriented with south at top and west at right, depicts an area of roughly 900 square kilometers that begins southwest of Cali and ends in the Port of Buenaventura. Deep blue indicates higher elevations while green and brown note lower terrain. The map was likely created to support a land dispute. The legend describes surrounding landscape and important stops along the river. At bottom right are the signatures of three witnesses.

Existing somewhere in between these two cartographic poles, one informed by scientific knowledge and the other the product of local knowledge, is a map of the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada produced in 1772 for the king of Spain by the high-ranking criollo functionary Francisco Antonio Moreno y Escandón.⁴ (Fig. 2) It is one of the first comprehensive, internally-created maps of the viceroyalty, but was not the result of land measurement or astronomical observation. Instead, it depended on data gathered in cartographic repositories in Santa Fé de Bogotá.⁵

Moreno y Escandón’s map depicts Nueva Granada as a compendium of separate regions, where each province is outlined in red. The map provides demographic as well as geographic information and its labeling of cities, rivers, and towns project a semblance of colonial order. For all its seeming detail, data, and precision, however, the Moreno y Escandón map presents none of the information conveyed in the Dagua River Map. Not even the Dagua River is identified by name, suggesting that nothing is known about an area which contributed (albeit minimally) to Spanish coffers.

⁴ The map’s creation and its history are discussed in Sergio Mejía, “Moreno y Escandón’s Plan Geográfico del Virreinato de Santafé de Bogotá, 1772,” *Imago Mundi* 68, no. 1 (2016): 36.

⁵ Mejía, “Moreno y Escandón,” 36-38. The map accompanied Moreno y Escandón’s written report, *Relación del estado actual del Nuevo Reino de Granada, comprensiva de lo militar, político y civil*, which was then annexed to Viceroy Messía de la Cerda’s own account of the viceroyalty.

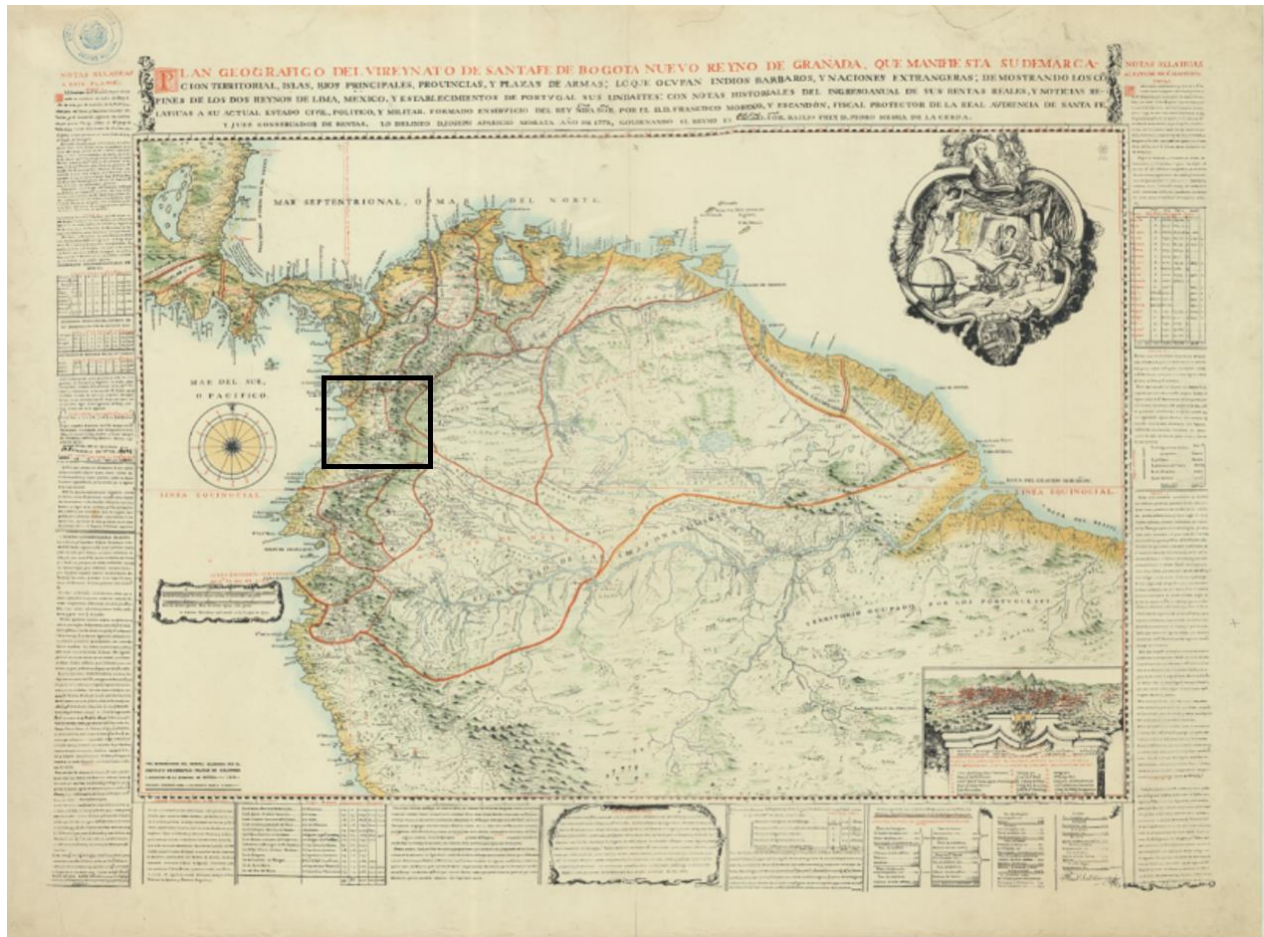


Figure 2. Plano Geográfico del Virreinato de Santa Fé de Bogotá Nuevo Reyno de Granada (1772). Año 1772. Archivo General de La Nación- Colombia. Sección Mapas y Planos, Mapoteca 2 Ref.1248.

This map, created by Francisco Antonio Moreno y Escandón, was one of the first comprehensive, internally-created maps of the viceroyalty. It depicts Nueva Granada as a compendium of separate regions, where each province is outlined in red. Minimal information is provided on the Dagua River region. Identified are the Bay of Buenaventura and the city of Cali.

From the Dagua River and Moreno y Escandón maps, we see that two very different views of eighteenth-century Nueva Granada are presented, underscoring that any accurate reconstruction of this history can only happen when official and unofficial maps are consulted together.

The Dagua River Map also makes clear that different types of cartography were possible at the same moment in time. While the Moreno y Escandón map suggests Nueva Granada as an ordered, controlled Spanish viceroyalty, the Dagua River Map reveals how isolated and disconnected many interior regions were from eighteenth-century political and intellectual currents.

At a time when other parts of the Empire were engaging in international and cross-cultural scientific discourse, as was the case with the Paris Academy in Ecuador, the Dagua River Map reflects a parallel universe, where—at roughly the same time—various types of maps came into being for different reasons. Through the Dagua River Map’s distinctive style and content—which preserves an area of the Empire outside the purview of the state and beyond the scope of scientific cartography—we are privy to a world beyond imperial map making.

To better understand how the Dagua region and the peripheral viceroyalty it formed part of remained outside of these progressive currents, it is necessary to review a bit of Nueva Granada’s

Spanish colonial history and understand how and why it differed from better studied viceroyalties like New Spain and Peru.

Nueva Granada. A Fringe Viceroyalty

Similar to New Spain and Peru, Nueva Granada was discovered and colonized in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, with the Caribbean coastal cities of Santa Marta and Cartagena founded in 1525 and 1533, respectively. An expedition to the interior in 1536, led by Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, resulted in the founding of Santa Fé de Bogotá in 1538. It was not designated a viceroyalty, however, until nearly two centuries later.⁶ Several factors contributed to this decision. Sebastián de Eslava (viceroy from 1740-1749) noted mid-way through his tenure that Nueva Granada was virtually ungovernable.⁷ For one, the viceroyalty's varied topography broke it into many isolated regions. While Nueva Granada (which encompassed today's Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela) boasted large urban centers like Cartagena, Bogotá, and Tunja, the majority of Nueva Granada's population lived in remote rural areas in the interior. Getting to these parts presented formidable challenges to imperial administrators.

Three mountain chains vertically divide the territory; all are at least 15,000 feet at their summit and extend more than 1,000 kilometers at their base.⁸ As a result, travel from the interior to the coast and vice versa was unusually onerous. Much of the travel within Nueva Granada transpired on fluvial highways, or rivers. Other areas were accessed by mule train and narrow paths which washed away in the rainy season. All modes of communication were unreliable, hazardous, and slow. Even urban areas were not well connected to

ports of entry. After making the month-long trip by sea from Spain to Nueva Granada's bustling port of Cartagena, one underwent another one to two months of travel to reach the capital of Santa Fé de Bogotá.⁹ The outcome of this isolation was that most regions operated independently of one another and of the viceregal capital.

In addition to its challenging terrain, Nueva Granada did not offer the Spanish monarchy much economic incentive. Gold mining was a seminal part of Nueva Granada's economy, representing nearly 100% of its exports until 1780.¹⁰ Robert West noted that gold was the main and perhaps only enticement for establishing Nueva Granada as a viceroyalty in 1717 and the only reason for reinstating it again in 1738.¹¹ Differing from vein mining in New Spain and Peru, which occurred in wealthy, urban, and geographically well-connected centers, mining in Nueva Granada was undertaken along rivers in dispersed isolated areas using small groups of laborers and simple technology.¹² The amount of gold extracted from Nueva Granada paled in comparison to the silver mined in Peru and New Spain. To provide an example, under Viceroy Pedro Messía de la Cerda (1761-1772), Nueva Granada's treasury collected only one-fifth of what Peru's treasury brought in and only one-tenth the amount collected from New Spain.¹³ Much of this industry was in areas with minimal colonial oversight, resulting in rampant contraband. Some scholars estimate that as much as half the gold mined escaped taxation.¹⁴ As Allan Kuethe observed, the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada was a "sieve through which trade entered and left on its own terms, quite independent of royal policy."¹⁵

Nueva Granada also lacked the opulence found in cosmopolitan centers like Lima and Mexico City. A visitor in 1789 described Santa Fé de Bogotá as

⁶ Until this time, it was known as the Nuevo Reino de Granada and was under the jurisdiction of the Audiencia de Santa Fé de Bogotá.

⁷ This is discussed in McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 198 based on a letter Viceroy Eslava wrote to Marqués de la Ensenada, 15 September 1746, AGI Santa Fé 572.

⁸ These are the Cordillera Occidental (15,630 feet, 1200 km), the Cordillera Central (17,598 feet, 1023 km), and the Cordillera Oriental (17,750 feet, 1200 km).

⁹ Aline Helg, *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia, 1770-1835* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 49 and McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 40.

¹⁰ Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, "La economía del virreinato, 1740-1810," in *Historia económica de Colombia*, José Antonio Ocampo, ed. (Bogotá: Siglo Veintiuno Editores de Colombia, 1987), 49.

¹¹ See Robert C. West, *Colonial Placer Mining in Colombia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1952), 112. In Nueva Granada, placer mining was much more common than vein mining and relied on various techniques including ground sluicing, stream placering, and pit placering. West, *Colonial Placer Mining in Colombia*, 54-62.

¹² See discussion in McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 1 and 71.

¹³ Allen Kuethe, "The Early Reforms of Charles III in the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada, 1759-1776," in *Reform and Insurrection in Bourbon Nueva Granada and Peru*, John R. Fisher, et al. eds. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 30.

¹⁴ Jaramillo Uribe, "La economía del virreinato," 53.

¹⁵ Kuethe, "Early Reforms," 33.

rustic, with unpaved streets and lined with drunkards and beggars. Fashion was decidedly behind the times, as well, with women reportedly donning their grandmothers' shawls. Absent were the silks, laces, and fine linens worn by upper class women in wealthier cities like Lima.¹⁶

It was not until 1717, motivated by declining revenues and threats of foreign encroachment, that Nueva Granada was finally established as a viceroyalty.¹⁷ Its first iteration was short lived. By 1723, the crown concluded that the costs of maintaining it outweighed any benefits.¹⁸ Another fifteen years would pass before it was reinstated, in 1738, at the urging of Cartagena official Bartolomé Tienda de Cuervo, who cited Nueva Granada's rich natural resources and its great economic potential as reasons to bring it back into the fold. Tienda de Cuervo was also motivated by fears that Nueva Granada's riches and resources would end up in the hands of foreigners through contraband if the viceroyalty was not revived.¹⁹

Nueva Granada was much less densely populated than Peru or New Spain. The 1778-1780 census indicates that only 800,000 people inhabited the entire viceroyalty. Its capital in Santa Fé de Bogotá was home to just 20,000, meaning it was one-third the size of Lima in 1791 and one-fifth the size of Mexico City in 1790.²⁰

Nueva Granada also differed ethnically from other viceroyalties. Unlike Peru and New Spain, it did not have large Spanish, criollo, or indigenous populations. Given its remoteness and its relative economic impoverishment, there were few incentives for Spaniards to come or to stay. By the mid-seventeenth century, in many areas, the

indigenous populations had been wiped out.²¹ In 1536, in Cali (the closest city to the Dagua River region), there were roughly 30,000 indians. By 1634, just a century later, those numbers had dwindled to just 420.²² To fill this rapidly diminishing labor force, enslaved Africans were brought to work in Nueva Granada's mining regions, and soon comprised a significant sector of the populace. By 1770, nearly half (46%) of Nueva Granada was comprised of free people of all colors (*libres de todos colores*), with just over a quarter (26%) white (encompassing both Spaniards and criollos), 20% indigenous, and a mere 8% enslaved Africans.²³ In mining areas, white and indigenous populations were often the minority. The same census from 1770 reveals that in the province of Raposo, which includes the Dagua region, Indians comprised just 7% of the population and Spaniards only 3%. Most of the indians in the Dagua region were not local to the area, but were brought in from Raposo and elsewhere in the 1750s and 60s.²⁴ Enslaved Africans made up 71% of the populace while another 17% were *libres*, or free men of all colors.²⁵

Anthony McFarlane has observed that, as a primarily mixed-race society, racial divisions mattered much less in Nueva Granada than they did in societies with more rigid ethnic hierarchies (for example, New Spain).²⁶ This flexibility, in areas like the Dagua region, led to a level of autonomy for both enslaved and free Africans not seen in other more ethnically rigid areas of the Spanish Empire. Aspects of this autonomy can be gleaned from the Dagua River Map.

¹⁶ McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 53-54 citing Francisco Silvestre's *Descripción del Reino de Santa Fé de Bogotá*.

¹⁷ With the death of the last Hapsburg monarch, Charles II in 1700, and the accession to the throne of the first Bourbon monarch, Philip V, Bourbon Spain sought to counter the decline of Spanish power. There were initial setbacks to reform, including the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), the result of Austria, England, and the Dutch Republic's contestation of Bourbon succession as discussed in McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 26-28.

¹⁸ See *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁹ Tienda de Cuervo's report (AGI Sante Fe 385) is discussed in *Ibid.*, 194-195.

²⁰ For discussion of the 1778-1780 census see *Ibid.*, 32-33. A breakdown by city is found in his Appendix A, Table 1, 353. Mexico City boasted 112,000 inhabitants in 1790 according to the censo de Revillagigedo, cited in *La población de la Ciudad de México en 1790. Estructura social, alimentación y vivienda*, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geográfica, Informática (Mexico City: El Colegio de Mexico, 2002), xiv.

²¹ The exceptions to this were the province of Pasto, in the Llanos of Casanare, and in the frontier regions along the Pacific and Caribbean coasts where indigenous people

were successful in resisting European encroachment. McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 34.

²² For these numbers, see chart in Kathleen Romoli, "Nomenclatura y población indígenas de la antigua jurisdicción de Cali a mediados del Siglo XVI", *Revista Colombiana de Antropología XVI* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología, 1974): 382. For numbers in the mountains around Cali, see Fray Gerónimo Escobar, "Gobierno de Popayán. Calidades de la tierra" [1582], in Pilar Ponce Leiva, ed., *Relaciones histórico geográficas de la Audiencia de Quito, Siglos XVI-XIX*, tomo I (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1991), 332-358 who writes that numbers fell from 8,000 to 600.

²³ McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 34-38. McFarlane speculates that some of the whites were likely mestizos, or *libres*, passing as white.

²⁴ This is referenced in AGN Visitas SC.62, Raposo y Dagua, Diligencias de Visita (8 July 1761-26 April 1762) and AGN Caciques y Indios, tomo 11, f. 633-663 (20 December 1754).

²⁵ McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 356. AGN Censos de varios departamentos, vol. 6, f. 377.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

Brief Overview of the Dagua River Region

Within Nueva Granada, the Dagua River area was a region within a region (Cauca Valley) within what has been referred to as a “country of regions.”²⁷ This regionalism is visually apparent in the Moreno y Escandón map of 1772 (Fig. 2) and was a source of frustration for Viceroy Eslava (1739-1749) who, having to govern so many independent areas, proposed that each region within the viceroyalty should have its own viceroy.²⁸ This regionalism continued into the nineteenth century; as late as 1850, the Republic of Colombia operated more like an archipelago than a continental country.²⁹

If Nueva Granada was an archipelago, then the small colonial city of Cali, located in the Cauca Valley, was one of its smallest islands. How then would we characterize an even more isolated area like the Dagua River region? An evocative description comes from Agustín Codazzi, who observed that those in this area lived without neighbors and almost without a single connection to the rest of the human race. Each family formed its own tribe and was heavily reliant on rivers to connect to others.³⁰ While penned a century after the map’s creation, this description accurately reflects the area rendered in the Dagua River Map.

Given its remoteness, why was this region even settled at all? It was the founding of Cali in 1536 by Sebastián de Belalcázar, and the need to identify a route to the Pacific coast, that eventually led to the discovery and slow settlement of the Dagua River region.³¹ While a backwater, the Dagua River region

was nonetheless a vital corridor that connected Cali to the Bay of Buenaventura, Colombia’s only Pacific port and one long claimed by colonial elite Cali residents as their own.³² Interestingly, Cali does not figure on the Dagua River Map but is referenced in the legend. Meanwhile, Buenaventura features prominently at right, the end point of the Dagua River’s currents.³³

Besides being an important corridor to the Pacific, the Dagua also boasted rich placer deposits. Mines had been established along the Dagua River as early as the mid-seventeenth century. By the first half of the eighteenth century, dozens of mines were in operation, each worked by 50 to 100 slaves.³⁴ One of these mines, that of Aguasucia, is mentioned in the map’s legend and identified on the map [14].³⁵

Most mines along the Dagua were owned and operated by families in Cali, who, given the frontier conditions in the Dagua region, preferred to reside in the city, leaving an administrator to manage operations and a labor force along the Dagua.³⁶ It was Africans, both free and enslaved, who formed this labor force as work gangs, or *quadrillas*.³⁷ Their arrival to the Dagua region coincided with the exploitation of its mines, which was especially felt in the period between 1714-1736.³⁸ Mining inventories from the early decades of the eighteenth century show a preponderance of African ethnonyms, suggesting they were recent arrivals to the Americas.³⁹ However, by the second half of the century, most African slaves in these inventories were designated as “criollo,” indicating they had been born in the Americas,⁴⁰ and possibly Nueva Granada itself. Quickly, they became critical

²⁷ See Nancy Appelbaum, *Mapping the Country of Regions. The Chorographic Commission of Nineteenth-century Colombia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 8.

²⁸ This is discussed in McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 198-199, AGI Santa Fé 572.

²⁹ Guido Barona et al. eds., *Geografía Física y Política de la Confederación Granadina vol. 1, Estado del Cauca*, tomo II, *Provincias del Chocó, Buenaventura, Cauca, y Popayan* (Cali: Universidad del Cauca, 2002), 40.

³⁰ Barona et al. eds., *Geografía Física y Política*, 146.

³¹ The first “successful” expedition was undertaken in 1541. In search of an indigenous road to Cali, the group set out from the Bay of Buenaventura, arriving to Cali 30 days later, having lost 17 Spaniards and 20 horses to starvation and drowning. See Gustavo Arboleda, *Historia de Cali. Desde los orígenes de la ciudad hasta la expiración del periodo colonial*, vol. I (Cali: Biblioteca de la Universidad del Valle, 1956), 46-47. For scholarship on the Dagua region, see Mario Diego Romero, *Poblamiento y sociedad en el Pacífico Colombiano, siglos XVI al XVIII*, 2nd ed. (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 2017). An excellent history of this area is Ana Beiba Martínez Capote’s *Orígenes del Municipio del Dagua* (Alcaldía Municipal de Dagua, 2005).

³² For foundational scholarship on elite Cali society and economy, see German Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, mineros y comerciantes. Siglo XVIII* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 1975).

³³ For the troubled settlement and eventual establishment of Buenaventura, see Kathleen Romoli, “El descubrimiento y la primera fundación de Buenaventura,” *Boletín de historia de antigüedades* 49 (1962): 113-123 and Alonso Valencia Llano, “Los orígenes coloniales del Puerto de Buenaventura,” *Historia y memoria* 9 (July-December 2014): 221-246.

³⁴ Colmenares, *Cali*, 101-102. For Cali owned mines in operation in the eighteenth century, see Colmenares, *Cali*, cuadro 9, p. 103-105. Romero adds to this information in his chart listing mines by region, *Poblamiento y Sociedad*, 2017, table 5, 85-88.

³⁵ See Colmenares, *Cali*, 75, ff. 28. AGN Minas Cauca SC.38, 2, D.14, f. 230v discusses the mine of Aguasucia.

³⁶ Colmenares, *Cali*, 106.

³⁷ Guido Barona notes that Africans were brought in to do what Indians had done before them. See “Problemas de la historia económica y social colonial en referencia a los grupos negros, siglo XVIII,” in *La participación del negro en la formación de las sociedades latinoamericanas*, Alexander Cifuentes, ed. (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1986), 61-66.

³⁸ Colmenares, *Cali*, 62.

³⁹ See, for example, ACC 8806, (Col. J 1-17 m).

⁴⁰ Colmenares, *Cali*, 107.

to the local economy, extracting gold and transporting goods into and out of the region as river polers (*bogas*) and human porters (*cargueros*). Their vital role in the Dagua River region is precisely the kind of information that can be teased from the Dagua River Map.

A Distinct Genre of Map: The Territorial Map

The Dagua River Map is one of hundreds of hand-drawn territorial maps created in Nueva Granada during the eighteenth century.⁴¹ Today, the majority of these territorial or historical maps are held in the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) in Bogotá, Colombia.⁴² Vicenta Cortés, who studied and catalogued this cartographic body in the 1960s, observed that while most maps are anonymous and have no known authors, they are nonetheless invaluable for the information they preserve about the numerous areas that were never visited by colonial period engineers or topographers.⁴³ As I noted in the introduction, these maps are often our only visual source of information for much of the viceroyalty, from its beginning in the early eighteenth-century until the mid-nineteenth century, when the Comisión Corográfica was tasked to document this vast nation of regions. These hand-drawn territorial maps emerged at a time when indigenous lands were being reclaimed by the crown, repartitioned, and sold, resulting in private land that soon became the center of contested legal battles.⁴⁴ These maps, never intended for publication or circulation, served local

needs, providing visual testimony for inspections (*visitas*), lawsuits (*pleitos*), and claims (*reclamaciones*).⁴⁵

The Dagua River Map, while not part of the AGN repository today, fits visually within this particular genre of hand-drawn map created by amateur cartographers or private citizens to accompany text-based appeals and arguments concerning rights to land.⁴⁶ While it shares many similarities with the territorial maps housed at the AGN, the Dagua River Map also differs in significant ways. For one, it is rendered in vibrant water color while most of the AGN maps are pen and ink drawings. The Dagua River Map is also massive by comparison, eight times larger than many of the pen and ink drawn maps, unfolding across eight sheets of laid paper as opposed to just one.⁴⁷ Also distinguishing it from other territorial maps is its detailed legend, whose text supports visual arguments in the map and provides information about residents, routes of trade, and local economy.

The majority of the legend describes the physical region depicted on the map, including its impassable roads, treacherous rivers, and steep escarpments. It also details crops cultivated along the Dagua, especially at Las Juntas and nearby sites down river. In the notes section (see bottom right of map), three signatures appear. One is that of the Italian notary in Cali, Josep Vernaza. The other is that of a witness, landholder Antonio Garcés y Saa, who the legend identifies as the owner of Hacienda de Dagua [PP]. The third signature is that of the plaintiff, Manuel Pérez de Montoya, owner of the mines at Aguasucia. Pérez de Montoya was a

⁴¹ For an overview of Colombian cartography, see Eduardo Acevedo Latorre, *Atlas de mapas antiguos de Colombia, siglos XVI a XIX*, 3.^a ed. (Bogotá: Litografía Arco, 1986); Jorge Orlando Melo, "Atlas histórico de Colombia," *Revista Credencial Historia* 25 (1992): 3-14; and Sebastian Diaz Angel, et al., *Ensamblando la nación. Cartografía y política en la historia de Colombia* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2010).

⁴² In 1957, these maps, which span the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, were separated from their associated documents with the aim of creating a single map repository, the Mapoteca at the AGN. Many include references to the files they once formed part of. Others have been separated from this information. Hundreds of maps catalogued under Mapoteca SMP 4 have been digitized and can be accessed online at <http://www.archivogeneral.gov.co/consulte/fondos-documentales>.

⁴³ See Vicenta Cortés, *Catálogo de mapas de Colombia* (Madrid: Cultura Hispánica, 1967) for a discussion of these maps as a group. A document providing individual description of each map is housed at the AGN Sección Mapas y Planos (SMP). Small publications discussing some of the AGN maps by region have been published by the Banco Central de la República. See for example, Roberto Velandia, *Cartografía histórica del alto Magdalena. Honda, Girardot, Neiva* (1999) and Martha Teresa Martínez Rubiano y Luz Marina Bautista Estupiñán, *Cartografía histórica de los territorios Boyacenses* (2003).

⁴⁴ Martínez Rubiano y Bautista Estupiñán, *Cartografía histórica*, 2003. Maps were also created in land disputes in other parts of the Spanish Empire. See, for example,

Howard H. Cline, "The Oztoticpac Lands Map of Texcoco, 1540," in *A la Carte. Selected papers on Maps and Atlases*, Walter W. Ristow, ed. (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1972), 5-33 and Barbara Mundy, "Litigating Land," in *Mapping Latin America. A Cartographic Reader*, Jordana Dym and Karl Offen, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 56-60. Special purpose maps created by notaries for lawsuits concerning land and geographical boundaries are mentioned in Richard Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 54.

⁴⁵ A *visita* was a tour or inspection, usually by an outsider, to investigate works of government. *Visitas* often responded to a particular complaint or suspicion, as noted by Peter Marzahl, *Town in the Empire. Government, Politics, and Society in Seventeenth Century Popayán* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 125.

⁴⁶ I was fortunate, thanks to the excellent cataloguing of the AGN and help of Mauricio Tovar, to locate the document filed by the plaintiff, Manuel Pérez Montoya, dated 1763. (AGN) Minas Cauca SC.38, 2, D.14, f. 223-236 (31 May 1763). While the defendant's testimony remains at large, later documents suggest the decision favored the defendant, Manuel de la Puente, Archivo Histórico de Cali (AHC) Fondo Escribanos, Notaría Primera, libro 43, 24, f. 17-17v (24 February 1764).

⁴⁷ Laid paper, made from linen pulp from the flax plant, was in use from the twelfth to nineteenth century.

Spaniard who held the positions of *aguacil mayor*, *teniente y justicia mayor*, and *capitan de la infanteria española*, among others. As a powerful member of Cali's cabildo and owner of mines along the Dagua, he felt entitled to the cultivable areas on its shores which he needed, he argued, to sustain his slave work gangs.⁴⁸ Securing permanent food supplies to feed *quadrillas* was a major preoccupation of mine owners who often sought to procure cultivable areas near their mining claims.⁴⁹ The Dagua River Map was likely created to serve the needs of Pérez de Montoya and better argue his case. However, a careful analysis of this map, augmented by information in regional archives, allows us to tease out additional narratives and resurrect one of many areas in Nueva Granada that existed outside the realm of imperial map making.

A Closer Look at the Dagua River Map

The Dagua River Map presents an aerial view of the Dagua River and a topographical view of the surrounding valley, where changes in color denote differences in elevation. Flowing to the Port of Buenaventura, the Dagua was the only river that connected the Andean interior with the Pacific coast, making it a principal artery for internal trade and transport. This map, produced at a time when those governing Nueva Granada knew very little about the geography within its borders, is historically significant because it preserves one of the earliest detailed snapshots of a region that will not be officially documented for another one hundred years.⁵⁰

Depicting the southwest portion of today's Cauca Valley, the Dagua River Map corresponds to an area of roughly 900 square kilometers, extending from the Port of Buenaventura in the northwest to the city of Cali in the southeast. Today, the 3-hour trip

from Cali to Buenaventura is facilitated by a paved highway 122 kilometers long. In the colonial period, however, this same trek unfolded along some of the worst roads in Nueva Granada and took up to 12 days one way.⁵¹ From Cartagena, travel to the Dagua Region was even more formidable, taking 40-50 days.⁵²

Maps as a Reflection of Order and Empire

Many maps created during the late Spanish colonial period demonstrate the extent to which New World lands had been remade in the image of the Spanish Empire. Counter to this idea, the Dagua River Map suggests that not every corner of the colonized Americas was firmly under Spanish control. Absent on this map, for example, is any semblance of a town. Richard Kagan has noted that, for the Spanish monarchy, a town was the basic administrative unit or building block of its colonial Empire. With its grid plan, central plaza, and one or several churches, a town projected order.⁵³ Towns served to populate and thus Christianize new lands, making them synonymous with civic order, justice, and religion.⁵⁴ Maps created in the eighteenth century, including the map of Moreno y Escandón (Fig. 2), aimed to reflect this imposed colonial order, or at the very least project it.

Official guidelines for the populating of cities, towns, and villages were laid out by the Catholic kings in the *Recopilación de las leyes de los Reynos de las Indias* (1680).⁵⁵ Taking these into consideration, as we scan the 900 square kilometers of the Dagua River Map, it is clear that settlements here have failed on nearly all counts. Nowhere is there a grid plan, a plaza, or a central market as specified in law 1; habitation has occurred in areas without fertile zones for

⁴⁸ AGN Minas Cauca SC.38, 2, D.14, f. 232r.

⁴⁹ Colmenares, *Cali*, 108.

⁵⁰ The Caribbean coast had been extensively mapped but the interior's rugged and often unnavigable terrain had thwarted any comprehensive crown-sponsored attempts at cartographic documentation until the Comisión Corográfica mapped the nation in the 1850s. For more on this see *La Comisión Corográfica: Aporte interdisciplinario para Colombia y para el mundo* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2008).

⁵¹ Fray Gerónimo de Escobar, "Gobierno de Popayan. Calidades de la tierra (1582)," in *Relaciones Histórico-Geográficas de la Audiencia de Quito, siglos XVI-XIX*, tomo I,

Pilar Ponce Leiva, ed. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1991), 54; see also Alonso Valencia Llano, "Los orígenes coloniales del puerto de Buenaventura," *Historia y Memoria* 9 (2014): 231-232.

⁵² This figure is extrapolated from West, *Colonial Placer Mining*, 135 who notes the trip from Cartagena to Honda required 30-40 days.

⁵³ Richard Kagan, "Projecting Order," in *Mapping Latin America*, Jordana Dym and Karl Offen, eds., (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2011), 46-50.

⁵⁴ Kagan, *Urban Images*, 26-27.

⁵⁵ Laws dealing with the population of cities, villages, and pueblos are found in book IV, title VII; see www.gabrielbernat.es/espana/leyes/rldi/indice/indice.html

pasturelands or wood for fires or construction, which goes against recommendations made in law 3; there are no wide streets, and arguably no streets at all as stipulated in law 10. And, while most settlement occurs along a river, it is not, for the most part, a navigable one, as recommended in law 5. In short, the Dagua River Map reveals a decided lack of colonial order and oversight, highlighting the region's distance from Spanish colonial authorities.

Especially striking is the absence of a church. Included on the map are structures identified in the legend as houses (*casas*), ranches (*haciendas*), and mines (*real de minas*). Nowhere, however, along this vast stretch of river is there a structure with a steeple. Moreno y Escandón's 1772 map of the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada (Fig. 2) indicates that the nearest churches were in Cali and Raposo, a week to two weeks' distance from the Dagua region. Even the closest urban area (Cali) is too distant to be pictured.

A Chorographic Look at a Cartographic Map

Oriented with south at the top and west at right, the Dagua River Map lacks latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates as well as any sense of scale or distance. As such, the map is neither officially cartographic, for use in navigation, nor does it present a cartographic history, similar to Mesoamerican maps like the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan 2*, which recounts creation myths and documents migrations, lineages, and territorial boundaries for indigenous inhabitants.⁵⁶ Instead, the Dagua River Map—which reads from left to right, following the course of the river as it flows westward to the Pacific Ocean—reflects local

knowledge and lived experience in a remote corner in a fringe viceroyalty.

The map is arguably more chorographic than it is cartographic. Cartography, or the science or practice of making maps, stems from the Greek *khartēs*, "papyrus, sheet of paper, map" and *graphein*, "write." Cartography aims to communicate spatial information in a precise and effective way.⁵⁷ Chorography, on the other hand, stems from the Greek *khōros*, "place" and *graphein*, "to write" and is concerned with the study and description of place.⁵⁸ According to Ptolemy, the Greco-Roman geographer, chorography aimed to "describe the smallest details" and "paint a true likeness" of the loci it depicts.⁵⁹

Richard Kagan, in *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793*, proposes a framework for the study of Spanish colonial maps. He makes a distinction between *urbs* and *civitas*, where maps that reflect a city as an architectural entity are classified as *urbs* and those that showcase people, as well as structures and activities endemic to that place, fall under *civitas*.⁶⁰ The Dagua River Map is neither strongly architectural, nor does it overtly emphasize "the human element in cities," placing it outside Kagan's useful *urbs* versus *civitas* model.⁶¹ Instead, the Dagua River Map (whose aerial view is more akin to a Google map) emphasizes topography, isolation, and features of the surrounding landscape. If anything, the Dagua River Map communicates a place, which Kagan defines as a space with distinct characteristics, embodying a *genius loci* unique to itself.⁶²

Integrating vivid color, pictographs, and text, the Dagua River Map is organized around five primary features. These include 1) the river, 2) surrounding landscape, 3) roads, 4) structures or stops, and 5) water craft. Each feature, represented by an icon or pictograph, offers a distinct point of entry into this chorographic microcosm, opening a window to

⁵⁶ An excellent source for cartographic histories is Elizabeth Boone, *Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). The *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan 2*, is explored in *Cave, City, and Eagle's Nest: An Interpretive Journey through the Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No 2*, David Carrasco and Scott Sessions, eds. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007).

⁵⁷ See Oxford English Dictionary and Merriam-Webster.

⁵⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Hugh Chisolm, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 270.

⁵⁹ *Geography of Claudius Ptolemy*, Edward Luther Stevenson, trans. (New York: The New York Public Library, 1932). Discussed in Kagan, *Urban Images*, 11, ff. 32.

⁶⁰ This is discussed in chapter one, "Urbs and Civitas" of *Urban Images*.

⁶¹ Kagan, *Urban Images*, 108. For discussion of the communicentric view, see chapter 5.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 17.

inhabitants, industry, and modes of transportation. In the paragraphs that follow, I will elucidate each feature, drawing from the map and legend in conjunction with contemporary archival documents (letters, *visitas*, mining inventories, and court cases) housed in Colombia's regional archives.⁶³ Accounts from explorers who traveled to this region in the nineteenth century are also useful in teasing out a more precise sense of place.

The River

We begin with the river, at the map's center, which traverses the work from left to right. Differing from rivers on official maps, which are often reduced to thin squiggly lines, the Dagua River is depicted as a wide serpentine band where waves, torrents, and whirlpools suggest it as a dominant force in a formidable landscape. Beginning in the Farallones de Cali (15 kilometers northwest of Cali) and feeding into the Bay of Buenaventura, the Dagua was, according to the accounts of Edouard André, a French botanist and horticulturist who explored the Andean Cordillera from 1875 to 1876, one of the fastest and most treacherous rivers in Nueva Granada.⁶⁴ Dr. Charles Saffray, another nineteenth-century explorer, shared André's views, calling the Dagua both difficult and dangerous.⁶⁵ Manuel Pombo, a native of Cauca, writing in 1850, described the Dagua as more of a torrent than a river, so impossible in places that canoes had to be taken out of the waters and carried along the shore until a safer section was found.⁶⁶ Because of its strong currents, sudden turns, and myriad waterfalls, only 50 of its 150 kilometers could be navigated in the Spanish colonial period, and then only by small canoe.⁶⁷ Saffray recounts losing a travel companion to the whims of the Dagua's currents, despite the fact they traveled only fifteen minutes apart.⁶⁸

The Dagua was infamous for its incredible descents. The most extreme of these was between Las Juntas [1] and El Salto [14] (coinciding with the mines of Aguasucia), a stretch of 8 leagues, or approximately 40 kilometers. Here the river dropped 380 meters.⁶⁹ The severity of these descents are captured in a nineteenth-century engraving, where an opening in dense jungle foliage reveals a canoe hurtling downstream at an extreme angle, guided by two men who avert rocks in their path using long poles (Fig. 3). This illustration follows written descriptions from the nineteenth-century where canoe polers (*bogas*) are noted as shirtless, standing resolutely on the bow and stern of the boat, barefoot, with feet wide like ducks. Pombo described the polers he entrusted to take him down river as herculean in size with cigarettes in their mouths, audacity on their faces, and vigor in their ironclad musculature. Standing in the shadow of these strong, confident men Pombo and his companion felt like babies in diapers.⁷⁰ While only some of this sumptuous detail is rendered in the image, the engraving does convey two resolute polers, navigating myriad dangers at high speed. It also depicts the canoe's passenger, who occupies a small "leaf-lined nest" in the center of the canoe, a space noted as so small that one was forced to ride with knees doubled to one's chest.⁷¹ One dared not move for fear of capsizing. The surrounding environment was dense with gigantic trees, overflowing with diverse flowers, and filled with serpents winding up trunks, brightly colored birds, and chains of monkeys jumping from tree limb to limb.⁷² While not all details are presented in the image, a wild, remote, and exotic place is nonetheless communicated.

⁶³ In particular, I draw from the AGN, the ACC (Archivo Central de Cauca in Popayan), and the AHC (Archivo Historico in Cali).

⁶⁴ "América Equinoccial," in *América Pintoresco. Descripción de viajes al nuevo continente* (Barcelona: Martin y Simon Editores, 1884), 701.

⁶⁵ Charles Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada*, (Bogotá: Biblioteca Popular de Cultura Colombiana, 1948), 248.

⁶⁶ Manuel Pombo, "Bajando el Dagua (1850)," in *Viajeros Colombianos por Colombia*, (Bogotá: Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1977), 109.

⁶⁷ Today only the final 20 kilometers are considered navigable. Ana Beiba Martínez Capote, *Orígenes del Municipio de Dagua*, (Cali: Alcaldía Municipal de Dagua, 2005), 36.

⁶⁸ Saffray, "Viaje a Nueva Granada," 312.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 312.

⁷⁰ Pombo, "Bajando el Dagua," 106-109.

⁷¹ Saffray, "Viaje a Nueva Granada," 314.

⁷² Pombo, "Bajando el Dagua," 110.



Figure 3. "Navegación en el río Dagua," engraving by Alphonse De Neuville based on Charles Saffray's sketch and published in "Viaje a la Nueva Granada del Doctor Charles Saffray en 1869," in *Geografía Pintoresca de Colombia*, (Bogotá: Litografía Arco, 1968), 31. From this image, we gain a sense of the perilous descents along the Dagua. The lush yet wild tropical environment frames the canoe navigated by two polers.

Surrounding Landscape

Returning to the map, we see the river framed by a dramatic landscape, where topographic detail is communicated through color as well as texture. Striated brown indicates steep barren slopes, while stippled green communicates dense forest, and airy indigo denotes impassible mountain chains. In addition to offering information about elevation, the map provides physiographic details using standardized sets of graphic marks. Wastelands, or *desechos*, are rendered as areas of green bordering brown [DD; h; I; j]. Uncultivated areas, or *potreros*, are represented through gradations of brown [H, J, QQ]. Small streams feeding into rivers are designated as *quebradas* [LL; b, c, e, f, 12, 13, 15].

Meanwhile, mountains, or *montañas*, are a vibrant blue. These physiographic features are described in the map's legend. Through text and image, an evocative portrait of this landscape emerges.

On the Dagua River Map, we can identify a handful of cultivated areas clustered near the rivers and rendered in green. Each crop is depicted in a distinctive physiographic way. An area dedicated to chocolate, or *cacao*, for example, is a dense green [6, 7, 8, 9] and visually differentiated from an area dedicated to bananas (*platanos*), which is less densely green [2, 4, 5]. Zones identified as orchards (*cacaguales*) meanwhile, depict individual trees from an aerial perspective [m]. The most detailed of these [n] reveals a variety of trees, where avocado (*aguacate*, a leafy dark green) is visually

distinguished from chontaduro palms, which are depicted in profile, highlighting their fronds.⁷³

While these orchards might suggest exotic bounty, all crops (with the possible exception of bananas) are endemic to the area. Furthermore, these cultivated areas comprise a very small percentage of the larger region. Staples like wheat or corn are notably absent, as are pastures for cattle and livestock.⁷⁴ A lack of arable land meant that foodstuffs crucial to basic subsistence—meat, wheat, *aguardiente*, or cane brandy, salt, and maize—had to be imported east from the Cauca Valley and west from Buenaventura, always at great expense.⁷⁵

The absence of commercial crops like sugarcane, tobacco, and coffee further underscores the disadvantaged economy of the Dagua River region. Thus, at a time when other areas of the Spanish Empire were actively engaged in global trade, with cochineal traveling from New Spain, and cinnamon being exported from the Philippines, the Dagua River area—and much of Nueva Granada generally—was excluded from this lucrative Atlantic commerce. McFarlane notes that the difficulty and expense of travel in Nueva Granada resulted in an agrarian economy that was both regional and disconnected from external markets.⁷⁶

Through the map's detailed topography, we gain a sense of the daily challenges of life along the Dagua, where travel was difficult when not impossible, and alimentation was unvaried, expensive, and generally hard to come by. The map captures a snapshot of an area cut off from global commerce and disconnected from the Spanish Empire of which it formed part.

Roads

Roads on maps point to popular destinations and illuminate connections between places, while serving to identify key nodes or nexus points.⁷⁷ All roads on the Dagua River Map lead to either the hub of Las Juntas or the free settlement of Sombbrero. Entering the region (at left) from locations not depicted but identified in the legend, are three roads.⁷⁸ Abruptly, they converge, forming a route which follows the serpentine contours of the river from an elevated distance. The lack of straight lines and the innumerable deviations this road takes underscores the steep and uneven terrain. While the legend identifies these brown lines as *caminos* (roads), archival documents make clear that they were more akin to paths.

Like the river itself, the roads of the Dagua River region were famed for being some of the worst in the Spanish Indies.⁷⁹ Many were impassable and others washed away in the rainy season. A *visitador* (royal inspector) dispatched to the Dagua region in 1762 (ostensibly to report on the treatment of slaves and indigenous inhabitants but also to verify that taxes were being paid to the crown), complained it was impossible to visit all areas of the province on account of the roads being “*penoso y intransible*.”⁸⁰

Travel along these roads often happened without the aid of pack animals. Instead, merchandise was carried on the backs of *cargueros*, or human porters.⁸¹ Early descriptions of porters in this area come from Fray Geronimo Escobar (1582) who described a strange form of tribute, where Indians paid with their bodies. In the early colonial period, Indians were obligated by *encomenderos* to transport goods from Cali to Buenaventura, bringing cargo from the ships back to Cali. This trek of 25 leagues (140 kilometers) took 12 days each direction, in part due to the condition of the terrain

⁷³ Other trees cultivated in this same orchard (*cacagual*) include caymitos, zapotes, and guayabos. All crops are identified in the map's legend.

⁷⁴ The acidic and humid soil of the Dagua River valley made it unsuitable for wheat or corn; it lacked pastureland to sustain livestock, as discussed in Mario Diego Romero, *Poblamiento y sociedad*, 25.

⁷⁵ McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 63. Licit goods brought into Buenaventura included salt, meat, flour, and wine. See AGN Visitas SC.62, Raposo y Dagua, Diligencias de Visita, f. 72r (8 July 1761-26 April 1762).

⁷⁶ McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 39-40.

⁷⁷ For an insightful read on what roads reveal, see Marianne Cardale de Schrimppff, *Caminos prehispánicos en Calima* (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1996).

⁷⁸ These roads correspond to the city of Cali (O), Sabaletas (C), and the gold mining areas of Raposo and Chocó (N).

⁷⁹ West, *Colonial Placer Mining*, 126.

⁸⁰ AGN Visitas SC.62, Raposo y Dagua, Diligencias de Visita, f. 1v (8 July 1761-26 April 1762).

⁸¹ McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 34.

but also because each indian was required to carry 2 *arrobas*, or approximately 50 pounds, of weight.⁸² Indians were obligated to make this trip three times per year. Escobar attributed this forced travel between Buenaventura and Cali to the annihilation of the indigenous population, which had dropped from 30,000 to 2,000 by 1582, and was further reduced to 420 by 1634.⁸³ By the eighteenth century, indigenous porters had been replaced by Africans and free people of all colors.⁸⁴



Figure 4. "El monte de l'agonia," illustration by Maillart and published in "Viaje de Edouard André," in *Geografía Pintoresca de Colombia*, (Bogotá: Litografía Arco, 1968), 150. This depicts a well-documented mode of travel in remote areas of Nueva Granada.

⁸² Escobar, *Gobierno de Popayan*, 346.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 345. For 420 figure, see Romoli, "Nomenclatura y población," 382. See also Anonymous, *Relación Nuevo Reino de Granada (1559-1560)* in *Relaciones Histórico-Geográficas de la Audiencia de Quito, siglos XVI-XIX*, tomo I, Pilar Ponce Leiva, ed. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1991), 41.

⁸⁴ See West, *Colonial Placer Mining*, 125.

⁸⁵ Travel by *silla* is documented from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. For early discussion, see Escobar, *Gobierno de Popayan*, 346.

Porters carried merchandise, but they also carried men. Vivid illustrations (Fig. 4) show sturdy, sure-footed *cargueros* climbing steep ascents barefoot while bearing the weight of foreign men seated in simple chairs.⁸⁵ Even intrepid and accomplished travelers like Gaspard Théodore Mollien (one of few to have survived the famed shipwreck of the *Medusa* eight years earlier) had no choice but to rely on local porters whose strength, familiarity with the terrain, seasoned feet, and muscle memory was often the only guarantee of getting from point A to B.⁸⁶

Roads, on the Dagua River Map, lead to one of two destinations: Las Juntas or Sombrerillo. Las Juntas [1], in the middle of the map, was a central node in the Dagua River region (Fig. 5).⁸⁷ Lying at the confluence of two rivers, the Dagua and the Pepita, Las Juntas received and redistributed goods coming from the Cauca Valley and Buenaventura and was one of two places from which the Dagua River could finally be navigated by canoe. Las Juntas was also the region's "fruit basket," producing the areas greatest amount of *platanos*, or bananas, an important local staple. *Platanos* comprised an important part of slave rations and, because they were grown locally, were a dependable source of alimentation in an area where most everything was imported. Given the assets of Las Juntas, it was coveted by mine owners, like Pérez de Montoya, with working slave gangs to feed. Possession of Las Juntas and control of its resources were central to the land dispute, which led to the Dagua River Map's creation.⁸⁸

The second destination arrived at by these curvy brown lines is the ethnically diverse settlement of Sombrerillo [11], the second spot from which canoes could be launched into the Dagua (Fig. 6). Sombrerillo was significant for housing the largest population of free people in the area, roughly 200, including Africans, Afro-Indians, and mulattos, as

⁸⁶ Gaspard-Théodore Mollien, *Viaje por la Republica de Colombia en 1823* (Bogotá: Biblioteca Popular de Cultura Colombiana, 1944).

⁸⁷ The road labeled [N] and those that connect to it [g, h, i] allowed for the transport of food and textiles to Las Juntas which were re-directed to the mining regions of Raposo and Chocó.

⁸⁸ See Minas Cauca SC.38, 2, D.14, f. 223-236 (31 May 1763).

well as runaway slaves and a few white merchants.⁸⁹ Some of Sombrerillo's residents, working as porters, transported goods coming into and going out of Las Juntas. Others skillfully navigated the canoes that descended the Dagua. As such, Sombrerillo's inhabitants controlled both overland transport (linking the Dagua Valley to Cali and to gold mining regions to the west and southwest) and fluvial transport to the Pacific Ocean by way of the Dagua River.⁹⁰

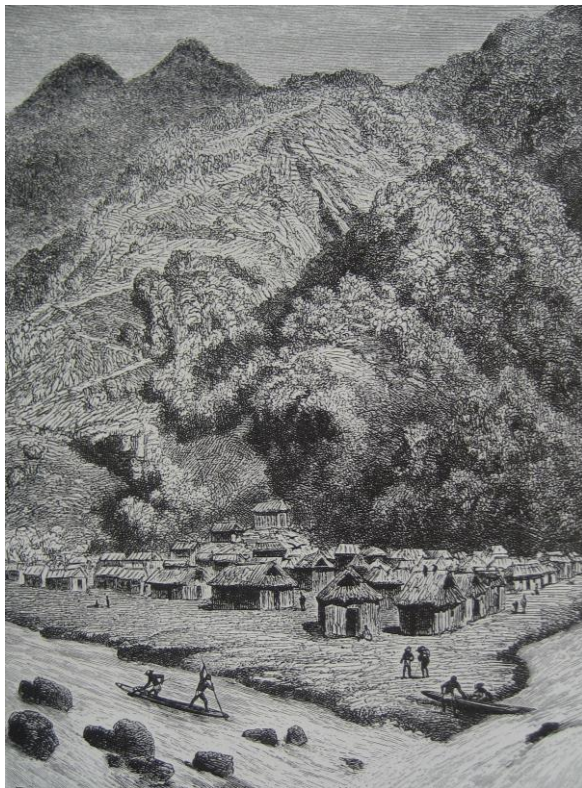


Figure 5. "Vista de Las Juntas," illustration by Francois Louis Niederhausern-Koechlin based on sketch by Charles Saffray and published in "Viaje a la Nueva Granada del Doctor Charles Saffray en 1869," in *Geografía Pintoresca de Colombia*, (Bogotá: Litografía Arco, 1968). While likely romanticized, this image conveys the perils of travel by canoe along the Dagua and the dramatic topography of the area. This image suggests that, even in the mid-nineteenth century, Las Juntas was more of an outpost than a town.

There is a curious lack of roads between the settlement of Sombrerillo [11] and the Port of Buenaventura. This deliberate withholding of information is an excellent example of what J.B. Harley referred to as the "doctrine of silence."⁹¹ Roads from Buenaventura to the interior had to exist because the Dagua River was navigable only one way, to the port.⁹² It is possible that such roads were beyond the purview of the mapmaker or outside the argument of the map itself. It is also possible that knowledge of such roads was proprietary.

Structures or Stops

If the perilous river and the punishing terrain came to symbolize the constant and inescapable confrontation with nature, the structures or stops along the road from Cali suggest a temporary reprieve from these elements. On the map are small buildings, each identified in the legend. Based on morphology of the structures depicted, we can tease out four distinct categories: 1) *casa/hacienda* 2) *real de minas* 3) *casa de la estancia* and 4) *sitio*. A closer look at each opens a window to local industries vital to this area—mining, agriculture, and transport—discussed in the paragraphs that follow. All of these, with the exception of the *estanco de aguardiente* mentioned under *casas*, are locally constructed and administered.

Casas, including *haciendas* (indicated by the presence of one door and one window), likely functioned as both private house and rustic lodging place for weary travelers. One such *casa* is the Hacienda de Dagua [P], the first inhabited place one arrives to after crossing the Dagua River seven times.⁹³ The Hacienda de Dagua was likely where travelers stayed the night and, with luck, procured something to eat.

⁸⁹ One of few scholarly publications on Sombrerillo is Kris Lane and Mario Diego Romero, "Miners and Maroons: Freedom on the Pacific Coast of Colombia and Ecuador," *Cultural Survival. World Report the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Minorities* 25, no. 4 (2001), 35. See also Arboleda, *Historia de Cali*, vol. II, 102.

⁹⁰ Lane and Romero, "Miners and Maroons," 35.

⁹¹ J.B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps. Essays in the History of Cartography*, Paul Laxton, ed. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 14-15.

⁹² There are early accounts of indigenous salt roads from the bay inland, Valencia Llano, "Los origenes coloniales," 224. These may have been out of use by the eighteenth century.

⁹³ Mollien, *Viaje por la República*, 292.



Figure 6. Detail of Manuscript Map of Dagua River Region (1764), showing the central node of Las Juntas [I] and the free settlement of Sombrerillo [11] as well as cultivated areas along the rivers Dagua and Pepita. The *real de minas* of Aguasucia [14] identifies the mine of Aguasucia owned by Manuel Pérez de Montoya.

Edouard André, passing through in the late nineteenth century, describes the Hacienda de Dagua as a hut with a straw roof. As for food, there was little save for *pan de bono*, a *torta* of corn and egg, which he found to be “sovereignly tasteless and repugnant.”⁹⁴

Another *casa* (d) marks the location of an *estanquillo* where *aguardiente*, or cane brandy, was sold. *Aguardiente* was a staple in high demand in mining areas and was, until 1760, locally distilled. With the aim of monopolizing this commodity to bring in extra revenue, local production was forbidden by the Spanish crown and it was mandated that all *aguardiente* be purchased from

government-licensed *estancos*, or liquor stores, at elevated prices.⁹⁵ In remote areas, like the Dagua Region, the *estancos* met with great resistance. Two years after the map’s creation, in 1766, gangs of *cargueros* (who carried provisions to the mining areas of Raposo and Chocó) led a successful revolt against the *estancos* in Las Juntas, Sombrerillo, and Calima, attacking, drinking, wasting, and selling jugs of *aguardiente* without anyone to stop them.⁹⁶

Another building referenced in the legend is *real de minas* [14], identified by a door but without windows. *Real de minas*, or mining areas, were administrative units which in theory enabled Spanish authorities to control gold mining

⁹⁴ André, “América Equinoccial,” 704.

⁹⁵ Anthony McFarlane, “Civil Disorders and Popular Protests in Late Colonial New Granada,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 64, no. 1 (1984): 22. *Aguardiente*

sales represented between 10% and 15% of tax revenues. See Jaramillo Uribe, “La economía del virreinato,” 80.

⁹⁶ AGN Militias y Marinas, tomo 126, fol. 199-204.

production and ensure that the proper percentage, or royal fifth, was sent to the crown. While the royal fifth suggests that 20% of gold was turned over to the crown, this was far from the case. In the first part of the eighteenth century, the royal fifth in Nueva Granada had been reduced to 6.5% and then, after 1777, further decreased to 3%.⁹⁷ It is likely that mine owners in the Dagua area managed to pay even less, given their isolation. In the case argued by Pérez de Montoya, he suggests that potential revenues were intimately tied to slave work gangs having enough to eat, hence his interest in the *platanares* of Las Juntas.

The presence of *real de minas* on the Dagua River Map reveals the underlying reason for habitation in this area. By the early eighteenth century, a number of *real de minas* were in operation along the Dagua. Only one of these, however, is identified on the map, that of Santa Rosa de Aguasucia [14], a fairly large mining operation for the region, worked by at least 50 enslaved Africans.⁹⁸ In 1764, it was owned by Pérez de Montoya, whose interest in the arable zone of Las Juntas for the sustenance of his *quadrillas*, or slave gangs, was at the heart of the land dispute that brought the Dagua River Map into being.⁹⁹

Another category of structures is *casa de la estancia*, supporting slightly larger populations than did *casas*. Las Juntas [1], the only area given this designation in the legend, is depicted with two structures, one with two doors, and the other with a door and two windows. Positioned at the confluence of the Dagua and Pepita rivers, Las Juntas is the central node on the map, where goods from outside came into the region and the place from which products continued on to Sombrerillo or headed west along the Dagua to the Port of Buenaventura. Las Juntas, the most centrally located spot on the map, was the main cultivable zone in this 900-square kilometer span of territory.

Las Juntas was also a key stop for nineteenth-century explorers who braved the Dagua hoping to later sail out of Buenaventura's port. Manuel Pombo described the lazy pleasures of passing the afternoon at Las Juntas conversing, smoking cigarettes, and rocking in a hammock, being lulled to sleep by the rush of the rivers.¹⁰⁰ Other visitors waxed less poetic, complaining about the steep mountains, dense vegetation, and suffocating heat. Charles Saffray, writing in 1869, was quick to point out that no one lived in Las Juntas "por su gusto."¹⁰¹ While Las Juntas—bordered by two rivers, boasting arable land, and enjoying a central location—was one of the most desirable places to live along the Dagua in the eighteenth century, most nineteenth-century travelers saw it as a hardship post.

The final category of buildings on the map represents *sitio*, or places. *Sitios* (which are larger than *haciendas*, *real de minas*, and *casas de estancias* but smaller than *pueblos*, or towns) are indicated by a structure with two doors. *Sitios* on the Dagua River Map include Las Ojas and Naranjo [T, V], both points along the route between Cali and Buenaventura and likely places where travelers would rest and refuel along the journey.

A much larger "sitio," identified by ten structures, marks the location of Sombrerillo [11]. Sombrerillo, like Las Juntas, occupies a central spot on the map yet is essentially cut off on all sides by water. The pivotal role of Sombrerillo's inhabitants in the region's economy is suggested by its size and its strategic placement, near the hacienda of Las Juntas. Roads linked Sombrerillo to economies outside the region. Meanwhile, the Dagua River connected Sombrerillo to the Port of Buenaventura. Sombrerillo is also the largest settlement on the Dagua River Map, housing the largest population of free people in the area, many of whom were porters and polers.¹⁰² All of this helps to underscore Sombrerillo's central place in the Dagua region. Its inhabitants were a lifeline to everything the Dagua region lacked: food, drink, tools, and especially

⁹⁷ Jaramillo Uribe, "La economía del virreinato," 53.

⁹⁸ Earlier, in 1759, the mine was owned by Salvador de Caicedo, Colmenares, Cali, 101-102. See also AGN, Minas Cauca SC.38, 2, D.14, f. 228r.

⁹⁹ AGN Minas Cauca SC.38, 2, D.14 f. 223-236. Montoya's possession of the mines is noted in 230v (31 May 1763).

¹⁰⁰ Manuel Pombo, "Bajando el Dagua," 59.

¹⁰¹ Saffray, "Viaje a Nueva Granada," 311.

¹⁰² This is noted in the legend under number 11, where it describes Sombrerillo as a place inhabited by porters who carried on their shoulders shipments, brought by canoe, which are then transported to the provinces of Raposo and Chocó.

labor. As a central point of entry and exit for the region, the largest inhabited area on the map, and a key player in acts of resistance against *aguardiente* and tobacco monopolies, Sombrerillo seems a place of historical significance. Yet, it is only through the Dagua River Map that we come to know its precise location and understand its regional significance. There is relatively little discussion of Sombrerillo in archival documents. The earliest mention comes from the Cali cabildo records where, in 1739 Sombrerillo is described as a hedonistic place inhabited by over 150 porters in addition to “indios, negros, mulattos, mestizos y aún blancos.” Some came from remote regions, some were runaway slaves, others were criminals. None participated in mass, and all lived inebriated and scandalous lives, committing robbery and assault.¹⁰³ One of the last mentions of Sombrerillo is made by Manuel Pomo in 1850, noting it as one of several stops along the Dagua. After 1850, Sombrerillo disappears from the record. The Dagua River Map, then, is the only known map to pinpoint the whereabouts of this vitally important but historically obscure settlement of free slaves and free people who had managed to, in a remote part of the Spanish Empire, gain a fair amount of autonomy. Sombrerillo's descendants would continue to inhabit this area until the early twentieth century.

Water craft: Ships and Canoes

Our remaining pictographic elements are a ship and a canoe, which seem inconsequential but are in fact specific, revealing, and strategic in their placement. The ship sits in the Port of Buenaventura, in the mouth of the Dagua River. While it appears to be headed into the river, the Dagua could not accommodate large water craft and could only be navigated one way, into the Pacific Ocean. The ship's three masts, portholes, forecastle and aftcastle suggest it as a galleon. It flies the flag of the cross of Burgundy, an emblem of monarchy used by

Spanish merchant ships during the colonization of the Americas.¹⁰⁴ The flag further identifies the ship as a *Spanish* galleon, similar to the recently discovered San José, destroyed off the coast of Cartagena in 1708 by British warships in a successful attempt to thwart the delivery of gold, silver, and gemstones to Spain. As armed cargo carriers, galleons were the mainstay of maritime commerce, responsible for bringing New World silver and gold back to Spain. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, galleons had been suspended in an effort to minimize their capture by foreign interlopers. They were replaced with smaller more mobile register ships, used until 1758.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, outside threats continued and during 1763 and 1764, the year the Dagua River Map was produced, seven foreign ships had entered Nueva Granada illegally, selling their cargo of wine, wheat, and slaves.¹⁰⁶

Given that Spanish galleons were out of use by 1764, the choice to depict one on this map is interesting. Its appearance here seems to assert that gold mined and sent down the Dagua would be met by Spanish ships which would transport the valuable cargo back to Spain. The ship in Buenaventura's port may have been on the established Lima-Guayaquil-Panama route.¹⁰⁷ While the Dagua River was isolated, its importance to the Spanish Empire cannot be understated. The presence of the ship reinforces the map's underlying agenda: it argues that the Dagua River mines (and the mines of Aguasucia in particular) would ensure handsome revenues for the crown only when the slaves, or *quadrillas*, working the mines could be guaranteed sustenance from the banana groves, or *platanares*, of Las Juntas [1].¹⁰⁸ The ship, therefore, must be read as part of this larger argument: the plantations of Las Juntas were needed to sustain Pérez de Montoya's slaves, so that they could extract gold earmarked for Spanish

¹⁰³ For this, see Arboleda, *Historia de Cali*, 102.

¹⁰⁴ I am grateful to Jose Quijano and Vera Moya for their help in identifying this vessel, which may also reference a frigate.

¹⁰⁵ During and after the War of Spanish Succession (1700-1720), Spain's trade with its colony was undermined by foreign interlopers and the viceroyalty became largely detached from Spain, see McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 102-105, 113.

¹⁰⁶ McFarlane, *Colombia before Independence*, 118-119.

¹⁰⁷ It may also have doubled as a defensive and commercial vessel, Kris Lane, personal communication 2018.

¹⁰⁸ This is one of the central arguments in AGN Minas Cauca SC.38, 2, D.14, f. 236.

coffers, which would be directed downriver to meet ships bound for Spain.

We conclude with the canoe at the center of the map. The canoe was the only water craft agile enough to navigate the Dagua's currents. As such, it was the principal mode of transport from Las Juntas to Sombrerillo and from Sombrerillo to Buenaventura. Canoes supplied mines in operation downriver and ferried extracted gold to the port. In this region, the canoe had other associations, as well. Together with roads, canoes represented a lifeline to both miners and inhabitants along the Dagua's shores. Canoes provided one of two principal modes of transportation in the region and presented the most reliable way to get from Las Juntas to Buenaventura. While the river was risky, Spaniards knew that travel by road incurred even greater cost.¹⁰⁹ The canoe's location on the map coincides precisely with the place (Las Juntas) from which the Dagua River was finally navigable, so its placement is not accidental. Interestingly, the canoe hosts the only human figures that appear on the map, suggesting African river runners as a steady, dependable, and vital presence in an otherwise tenuous landscape.

With Isolation comes Autonomy

By the eighteenth century, it was African slaves and free people who controlled all river commerce in the region. Those on the canoe—representing the only two human figures on the map—are African polers. Because polers and porters controlled the flow of goods, they also had the power to *stop* the flow of goods. Reacting in 1766 to the crown-imposed *aguardiente* monopoly, porters led a successful revolt in Las Juntas, Sombrerillo, and Calima, as noted earlier. They also went on strike, refusing to transport *aguardiente* or basic staples to the *quadrillas* working the mines along the Dagua. This strike gravely impacted Spaniards in the area, who complained of being without meat for 5 days.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ This is alluded to in RM 370, f. 74-75, Biblioteca Nacional Colombia (BCN).

The ability to resurrect from obscurity the location, existence, and significance of a place like Sombrerillo, largely absent in colonial records, underscores the potential scholarly value of territorial maps like the Dagua River Map. While created at the behest of a Cali businessman to defend his own interests, this map and maps like it preserve information and argue for the historical importance of little-studied communities existing beyond the margins of the colonial system. Through its detailed legend and vibrant imagery, the *Manuscript Map of the Dagua River Region* presents a counter narrative to colonial life in better studied viceroyalties (such as New Spain and Peru), where inhabitants were more closely controlled by the Spanish crown. This counter narrative may, in fact, reflect the lived experience for most colonists living in isolated areas of this peripheral viceroyalty.

Conclusions and Larger Implications

Through the Dagua River Map we are introduced to an understudied cartographic type: informal, hand-made manuscript maps, generated to meet local needs. These maps, whose particulars stemmed from local knowledge and experience, differed from official maps which were based on scientific data. While produced for very specific purposes in the eighteenth century—to support claims to land—these maps take on new levels of importance in the twenty-first century, preserving information on the many remote areas which were never documented through imperial mapmaking initiatives.

Studied together with archival documents and historical cartography, territorial maps like the Dagua River Map allow us to reconstruct little-studied communities residing along and beyond the margins of the colonial system. While official maps project Spanish colonial order—with cities, churches, and neatly defined borders—territorial maps bring to the fore untold narratives about remote corners in peripheral viceroyalties. As such, they reveal a very different face of the Spanish

¹¹⁰ Pedro Garcia Valdez in a letter to Cali's cabildo written from his house in La Cruz on 2 March 1766, AGN Militias y Marinas, tomo 126, f. 200v-201r.

Empire, one with different protagonists and different priorities.

The Dagua River Map, in particular, presents a snapshot in time of a remote region, where Spanish and indigenous inhabitants were a minority and African slaves, free slaves, and free people of all colors comprised the majority. As the earliest known map of this region, it preserves the location of places which will, a century later, have disappeared. And, as the only map that identifies the location and suggests the centrality of the free settlement of Sombrerillo, whose inhabitants came to control transport as porters and canoe polers, the Dagua River Map asserts the dynamic role that free and enslaved Africans played in the region's society and economy.

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