Questions of Identity and Cultural Contributions in the Archaeology of Maroon Settlements

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The archaeology of maroon settlements is a subset of the archaeology of slavery. Both topics have been extensively studied using many different themes, including conceiving of slavery as a global process brought about by the expansion of capitalism starting in the early sixteenth century. A strong focus on human rights and social justice is an important element of this perspective. which is particularly popular because the three leading researchers in maroon archaeology, Pedro Paulo A. Funari, Charles E. Orser, and Michael Rowlands, often employ such an approach in their research (Ferreira 2014, 379-380). I agree with their overall narrative, as it is true that some form of slavery is a near-universal part of human societies, and whenever there are slaves, some of them are going to attempt running away.

Therefore, a global perspective can provide important insight into the experience of slavery and marronage. However, it is important not to overlook differences in local conditions and their effects on individual maroon societies, and we must not lose sight of individual people and their everyday lives (Marshall 2014a, 2). Additionally, it is important not to overestimate the influence of European capitalism and colonialism, as it was not a universal process, while slavery and marronage are. This paper will discuss main theoretical some of the and methodological concerns in maroon archaeology and will then move on to compare case studies of how maroon identity negotiation differs dramatically based on attitudes toward bondage in different parts of the world. It will conclude with an example of maroon contributions to New World culture.

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One of the central issues in maroon archaeology is adequately defining marronage. It seems relatively simple at first glance: it is usually defined as the act of running away from slavery. The trouble is that slavery is difficult to define. In most scholarship, it appears that the word 'slave' is applied to a chattel slave, or a person who was considered property, whose owner had the power of life and death over him or her, whose status was hereditary, who could be bought and sold at will, and who had no status in the larger community. Many scholars emphasize the violence inherent to this process; it is not limited to physical violence and can include situations like alienation from one's family (Miers 2005, 2, 7). Another problem with most academic definitions of slavery, which Lydia Wilson Marshall astutely points out, is that scholars have failed to consider contexts where slavery was just being established, and they conceive of the categories 'slave' and 'slave owner' as too naturalized, without analyzing the mechanisms of enslavement (2014a, 3).

In addition, chattel slavery is only one form of bonded labor; even though indentured laborers, convict laborers, debt pawns, and others were not considered property, their status was not hereditary, and they still had a place in their society, one would be hard-pressed to claim that they were 'free.' After all, they did not have much control over their futures, lifestyles, or the labor conditions in which they found themselves, and it seems that they faced comparable levels of violence to their chattel slave counterparts (Miers 2005, 2-7). Suzanne Miers even states that "[s]lavery is arguably the most misused word in the English language" (2005, 1). For this reason, workers such as indentured servants, convict laborers, debt pawns, concubines, etc., are often referred to as 'unfree laborers,' to highlight their status between chattel slaves and free laborers. Some researchers object to writing about slavery in the past tense, as many forms of unfree labor still exist around the world today.

The complexity of the slave/unfree laborer experience raises questions about how to most effectively define marronage. One question I have that I have not seen scholars deal with is whether it is necessary for a person to have been a chattel slave before he or she escaped. Could other types of unfree laborers who ran away from their employers be considered maroons? I am inclined to think they could since there are likely commonalities in their experiences. and other escaped unfree laborers might ioin previously established settlements of escaped chattel slaves. Oddly, the analyses I have seen do not mention this possibility.

Most historians and archaeologists distinguish two main types of marronage; petit marronage and grand marronage (Fellows and Delle 2015, 118). Petit marronage is the act of running away from bondage with the intent of returning, perhaps to seek medical care or to visit family members in other locations. Because this type of running away is, by definition, temporary, it is not as likely to be very archaeologically visible, so it is not as common a topic of study (but see Fellows and Delle 2015). Grand marronage is the act of running away with the intent of never returning. This type of marronage often results in maroon settlements or colonies, usually in remote and inaccessible, areas that are good vantage points to watch for slave catchers or police (Chowdhury 2014; Goucher and Agorsah 2011; Marshall 2014a, 8; Fellows

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and Delle 2015, 119). However, in certain places, maroon settlements do not develop because fully escaped slaves can sometimes disappear and integrate into a large city nearby (Chowdhury 2014, 258), Additionally. if remote. inaccessible natural formations are not available, then fugitives have strategies for building defenses, which will be discussed in greater detail below (Duvall 2009).

Still, some researchers have pointed out that the distinction between petit marronage and grand marronage should be thought of as a continuum, rather than as two discrete categories. After all, re-enslavement was a constant threat for most who escaped, so thinking of 'maroon' static as а identity or 'marronage' as a natural linear progression does not seem congruent with reality (Marshall 2014a, 8; Chowdhury 2014, 257). A related point is that maroon camps often closely resemble settlements in parts of Africa established by people hiding from slave raiders (Marshall 2014a, 8). This might mean that attempting to prevent oneself from being enslaved in the first place could be considered a form of marronage, since it seems similar to preventing oneself from being re-captured. However, this remains open for further discussion.

Maroon settlements can take many forms, ranging from temporary waystations to large and long-lived independent cities and kingdoms. The classic example of a large, permanent, independent settlement is Palmares in Brazil, which was established in the early 1600s and survived until 1695. Funari, Orser, Rowlands. and others have extensively studied the site, which became emblematic of resistance to slavery and racism among Brazilians by the 1980s (Ferreira 2014, 377-379). Lucio Menezes Ferreira claims that three main factors were essential to the survival of the settlement: bickering European powers (which prevented them from being

organized enough to effectively control the fugitives), the cooperation of indigenous people, and the continued oppression of the enslaved, which encouraged them to run away (2014, 377). Other scholars besides Ferreira consider the cooperation of indigenous people important for survival, although they state that most researchers have not considered this aspect of maroon life until recently (Marshall 2014b, 292; Goucher and Agorsah 2011, 147, 159). In their analysis of Nanny Town, a maroon site in the mountains of Jamaica, Candice Goucher and Kofi Agorsah mention that they found a few Taino artifacts (the Taino were one of the main indigenous groups in Jamaica); this suggests that the maroons may have joined a refugee indigenous population, which may have contributed to their success (2011, 147-148).

Temporary settlements are more difficult to identify, as one might expect, although several examples existed in the Mauritius. mountains of Amitava Chowdhury claims that marronage in Mauritius may have been more successful under Dutch rule in the seventeenth century, as there were fewer colonial officials, and maroons could hide in forests. He has not found direct archaeological evidence of this claim. though, because the plantations established by the French in the eighteenth century destroyed most of the forests, which would also destroy evidence of any maroon sites there. This environmental destruction, as well as the fact that the French had a much larger official presence than the Dutch, also means that marronage was more difficult by the time the French took control (Chowdhury 2014, 256-257). Chowdhury's analysis focuses on three sites occupied during the eighteenth which were remote and century, located the inaccessible caves in mountains, which made them good vantage points to watch for slave catchers or police.

These sites show evidence of limited occupation by relatively small groups who struggled to find adequate food; fragmented animal bones (likely broken to acquire the marrow) are common finds, as well as natural basalt blocks used as furniture (Chowdhury 2014, 270-271). The sites were temporary because maroons were extremely vulnerable to recapture, the sites were too remote to allow easy access to food and water, and because runaways also had the option of disappearing in Port Louis. which had become a large, cosmopolitan city by the eighteenth century (Chowdhury 2014, 258). Another factor that I think is important but that Chowdhury does not link to the apparent failure of these maroon settlements is that Mauritian maroons did not have the assistance of an indigenous population; the island was uninhabited before the Dutch arrived. Therefore, this may have made them even more vulnerable to recapture than fugitives in other places. Chowdhury suggests that the pattern he has found in Mauritius of fragmented animal bones and basalt block furniture might be applicable to sites in other parts of the world, which I think is a really interesting idea.

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The above discussion suggests that while maroon settlements are diverse. they have some characteristics in common. such as the tendency to be located in marginal areas with good vantage points. Further, they are affected by certain nearly universal factors, such as the organization of slave owners, the cooperation of indigenous people, and whether there are more viable escape strategies than forming one's own settlements. This meshes well with another important aspect of maroon and slave studies, which is that maroons exercise agency and resistance. This idea seems obvious, as running away is one of the most overt forms of resistance in which a slave can engage. Resistance to slavery is an enormous research topic in itself, so I make no attempt to cover it

comprehensively here. Rather, I will address some issues concerning how and why maroons resisted, which is more complicated than it first appears.

In many places, maroons are celebrated even today for resisting slavery. The fact that Palmares holds a special place in the Brazilian popular consciousness as a symbol of resistance to slavery and racism was referenced above. In Mauritius. Le Morne Brabant, a maroon settlement located on top of a high and steep mountain is known as a symbol of freedom because colonial officials never managed to access it and recapture the fugitives (Chowdhury 2014. 263). Jamaican people and scholars apparently have the most jingoistic conception of the role of maroons in their history; Goucher and Agorsah repeatedly describe maroons as "freedom fighters," and they even claim that Jamaican maroons were the first to resist colonial rule (2011, 145). Some researchers claim that maroon sites are so important because they help demonstrate the horror of slavery, and they give people hope that injustice and oppression today can be rectified in the future (Funari and Orser 2015, 3).

These ideas are poignant and inspiring, and one can certainly see their appeal to the descendants of former slaves. I do not mean to diminish the importance of these ideas in any way, and I see the value of framing the study of marronage in the context of human rights and social justice. However, it is not clear that all maroons ran away out of a desire to undermine the institution of slavery, although it is likely that some of them did. It is also quite possible that many of them simply wanted to change their lives. Even some violent slave rebellions are more complicated than they first appear: sometimes they are actually led by free people with local agendas, like the Zanj Revolt in Iraq in the ninth century CE, and sometimes rebels were concerned with specific aspects of their treatment, rather

than the institution of slavery itself (Campbell, Alpers, and Salman 2007, 2-4).

If even violent rebellion, the most overt form of resistance possible, is not always intended to abolish slavery, it seems likely that people's motives to run away are more diverse than commonly realized. The idea that maroons were not necessarily 'freedom fighters' is also borne out by the historical records of maroons in Jamaica, making Goucher's and Agorsah's characterization somewhat problematic. Warfare between colonialists and Jamaican maroons led to treaties that gave maroons sovereignty provided that they aided the British in preventing future selfemancipation (Fellows and Delle 2015, 118). Therefore, it seems more likely that maroons in Jamaica (at least, the ones who signed the treaties) were more concerned with their own freedom and autonomy rather than abolition. Interestingly. Marshall claims that such treaties, as well as established maroons turning in more recent fugitives, are not unique to Jamaica and are found in other parts of the New World (2014b, 292).

This characterization of maroons can limit academic inquiry; if one sees maroons as 'freedom fighters,' and running away is only seen as a triumph against an oppressive regime. I think the temptation to assume that 'the story is over' is quite powerful. In other words, scholars are likely to forget that escaping is only the first step to freedom and autonomy, and fugitive slaves may not have acted according to such abstract ideals anyway. Because fugitive slaves were so vulnerable to recapture (and presumably harsh punishments when returned to their masters), not to mention starvation, as the sites in Mauritius suggest, marronage bore a significant cost. Moreover, making a new life for oneself even if one evaded recapture was no small matter, so there may have been very little return for some fugitive slaves who took such a large risk. This jingoistic

conception also undermines the idea that marronage (and slavery) is a diachronic process, not a category. Therefore, while maroons are certainly worthy of our respect for their bravery, and their descendants certainly have a right to be proud of them, scholars should not lose sight of the difficulty and costs associated with their actions.

Beyond getting a sense of what constitutes slavery and marronage, the commonalities and differences between maroon sites around the world, and how to best describe maroon resistance, scholars have also focused on aspects of maroon identity. Oddly, almost none of the papers I have read, either by archaeologists or historians, have engaged comprehensively with gender and how it might affect a maroon's experience. The assumption seems to be that most or all maroons were men because women may have had less reason to leave bondage; they often had children or other family and social networks that they did not want to abandon, and remote areas were not often women travelling alone. safe for Therefore, because it is often assumed that nearly all maroons were men, it seems that neglected to manv scholars have significantly consider gender.

While it is possible that women had more to lose by running away, this does not mean that women never attempted it. After all, some settlements, like Palmares, survived for generations, which could only happen if women were significantly involved because presumably reproduction was a main source of new community members. Even if most of the women were indigenous, the effect of gender on marronage would still be worth considering. Furthermore, the word 'gender' is not equivalent to 'women.' Surprisingly, I have encountered only one maroon considers analysis that masculinity, which I will discuss in more detail below (Marshall 2014b). It is almost like archaeologists and historians think of maroons as genderless, which is a particularly strange research blind spot because countless books have been written on slave women and the effects of slavery on concepts of masculinity. It would seem that studies of slave women would naturally lead to the study of maroon that studies of slave women, or masculinity would lead to studies of maroon masculinity. On a related note, studies of sexuality are also hard to find. Hopefully future studies will take gender and sexuality into account to a greater extent than they do currently.

As I have described above, in many places, maroons hold a special place in the popular consciousness, especially for their descendants. Even today, a maroon identity still exists in places like Jamaica and Brazil because there is great pride in overcoming the adversity of slavery (Ferreira 2014, Goucher and Agorsah 2011). Because studies of the African diaspora are greatly privileged in the Atlantic world compared to the Indian Ocean or Pacific worlds, one would be forgiven for assuming that a maroon identity survives to this day in most places; however, this is not necessarily the case, which I will discuss in more detail below (Zeleza 2005). Of course, this is not to say that all descendants of slaves in the Atlantic world have the same attitudes toward marronage as many people in Brazil or Jamaica.

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For example, there does not seem to be a specific maroon identity in the United States or Canada. Certainly, there is a Black, African American or Afro-Canadian identity, but there is apparently no distinction between the descendants of slaves who escaped and those who were freed by the Thirteenth Amendment. This is somewhat surprising several maroon there are because settlements throughout the United States and Canada (though they do not seem to be well-studied), and some of the most famous figures in African American history were former slaves, such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth. I do not have an explanation for this difference, but perhaps an African American identity arose out of a desire not to be defined by slavery.

In some parts of the Indian Ocean world, there does not seem to be a maroon identity at all, despite the fact that maroon settlements existed. Marshall offers a fascinating case study of two maroon settlements in the interior of Kenva, where today there is little popular memory that slavery even took place; she calls it a "collective amnesia" (2014b. 277). This is a stark contrast to Jamaica and Brazil. The coast of modern-day Kenya had a slave-dependent plantation economy in the nineteenth century, and Swahili and Omani traders controlled most of the plantations. Unlike in most areas of the New World, slave status was (and is) strongly stigmatized, leading many former slaves to become Swahili to mask this status (Marshall 2014b, 279). As a side note, the fact that Omani and Swahili elites and traders also kept slaves calls into question Funari and Orser's narrative that slavery emerged and spread as a result of the rise of European capitalism (2015, 2).

By the 1840s, some independent maroon settlements in the interior existed. Marshall focuses on Koromio, which was destroyed by Swahili traders in 1848, and Makoroboi, which was destroyed in 1883. The destruction of these settlements further highlights that marronage is a reversible process with no guarantee of success. Both settlements were apparently very ethnically diverse, although they were dominated by runaways from the coast, which can be seen in the Islamic influence in Koromio (Islam was rare in the interior at the time) and the rectilinear wattle and daub houses at both sites, which were more common on the coast (Marshall 2014b, 281-284, 286). Marshall uses the term 'ethnicity' to describe cultural and linguistic groups because it is a less

fraught and essentialized term than 'tribe.' Marshall argues that ethnicity in East African societies was flexible in the nineteenth century, and former slaves at Makoroboi took advantage of this This settlement was malesituation. dominated (a demographic apparently to maroon settlements. common as discussed above), so Makoroboi residents mostly had to marry women from other settlements, who belonged to different ethnicities. In this way, most former slaves were absorbed into other groups. Former slave status appears to have been an ethnicity in itself, like the label 'maroon' is essentially an ethnic marker in many parts of the New World today: the word used was watoro (Marshall 2014b, 288, 290).

This situation is so interesting to historians and archaeologists because it is the opposite of the usual practice in East African societies at the time. Generally, when a marriage between ethnic groups takes place, the wife takes on the husband's ethnicity and ioins his homestead. In this case, men took on their wives' ethnicities (usually the women were Giriama) and joined their wives' families, and no bridewealth was required, which makes sense because former slaves were not likely to be wealthy. This situation was so unusual that sometimes people referred to it as 'cohabitation,' not marriage. The trade-off to an exemption from bridewealth was that these men did not have the same rights and privileges that a full member of the group would have had, and any children from these unions belonged to the heads of the households (the wives' fathers, brothers, uncles, etc.), not to the watoro biological fathers, although it should be noted that the children themselves had full rights and privileges. The result of this practice was that maroon ethnicity essentially disappeared in one generation, and their descendants surviving today often do not accept that they have ancestors who were enslaved (Marshall 2014b, 291).

The situation is less clear in Koromio because the group neighboring the settlement, the Waata, is in such a minority in Kenya today, but Marshall suspects that a similar pattern exists there as well (2014b, 291-292). Marshall therefore cautions readers that the concept of "African American unity" may not always be meaningful, not least because not all slaves were African (2014b, 292). This case study further supports the idea that the cooperation of the indigenous population is essential for maroon survival, even if the native population was not Native American. However, because slave status was and is still so stigmatized in Kenva, the descendants of slaves adopted the non-slave identities of their mothers and grandmothers in order to empower themselves and gain the privileges associated with being 'native' (Marshall 2014b, 293-295). Marshall's analysis leaves out how fraught the debate about what constitutes 'native' and 'settler' is in most parts of Africa, but that is a topic for another paper (see Mamdani 1996. Mamdani 2001, Mamdani 2012 for an introduction). Nonetheless. it is я fascinating case that calls into question uncritical celebration of maroon resistance and demonstrates that maroon identity can disappear depending on local values.

Other scholars of maroon settlements have pointed out the influence of escaped African slaves on aspects of the built environment in the New World. which could be considered a type of ethnic influence. Chris Duvall claims that historians and archaeologists often underplay African contributions to New World land use in favor of European interference, but that African knowledge of tropical plants played an important role in New World settlements (2009, 232-233). His case study focuses on the contributions of maroons to live fencing practices in early Spanish America (Duvall 2009).

Despite the fact that Duvall is a geographer and not an archaeologist, his

findings are worth discussing here because they have implications for the landscape archaeology of maroon settlements. Live fences "human-created are barriers composed at least in part from living plants, usually trees or shrubs" (Duvall 2009, 234). They can be hedges or rows of trees with wire in between, and the use of tropical trees in particular suggests African influence, as the tree species on both continents were similar, but Europeans would not have been familiar with them. These fences have a variety of uses, although there is no evidence that people used them for livestock management before 1800 (Duvall 2009, 234).

Live fence-posts were first developed in maroon settlements for defense, and maroon practices influenced the Native Americans they met. Even some slaves had live fences because they were sometimes able to have personal gardens and livestock land. As discussed above, insecurity (food, material, and personal) was a central aspect of maroon life, and defense was essential. After all, those marcons who were born in West Africa faced similar conditions at home: they were trying to avoid being captured and sold into slavery. Live fences were a preferred defense tactic in West Africa at the time; sometimes they consisted of concentric circles with the settlement in middle, and sometimes the they incorporated a more labyrinthine design (Duvall 2009, 235-236). Several examples have been found in Latin America as well: there is a particularly large maroon site with live fencing outside Veracruz, Mexico, and other examples are located in Brazil. Panama. and Florida. Few historical accounts exist of the maroon built environment in the early Spanish colonies. although missionaries and describe travellers routinely maroon settlements as "hidden in the bush." Duvall argues that they could be referring to overgrown circular live fences deliberately built for defense (2009, 237).

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The technique was apparently even picked up by people in Spanish Florida for defense against the encroaching British. The lack of evidence that Euro-Americans routinely used this technique further suggests that this was African knowledge brought to the New World (Duvall 2009, 238). This knowledge was useful because Africans on both sides of the Atlantic faced chronic warfare and had limited labor and capital. Thorny bushes and trees are excellent for keeping out intruders, and planting and maintaining these fences is not expensive or laborintensive. The main drawback to this strategy is that it takes a long time for the most plants to grow, so neonle supplemented live fencing with walls and moats, which require more labor but can be built more quickly and are more durable (Duvall 2009, 239).

From 1650 onward. the functions of live fencing were expanded, as fewer slaves were imported to Central America, and maroon communities gained legal recognition as the Spanish colonial government's efforts to subjugate them started to become less and less successful. The fences started to function as a means to control livestock, and as sources of important plant products. Eventually, live fencing's origins as a defense tactic were forgotten, although African knowledge still remained in the preference for trees and for using cuttings rather than seeds; pre-contact Native Americans apparently did not use cuttings (Duvall 2009, 239-241). Further, Duvall claims that there is no evidence that live fencing practices were brought to the New World by Europeans because they tended to only plant hedges for decorative gardens, and they preferred stone walls to control sheep in Mexico because they did not learn about tropical plant biology until the 1800s (2009, 241-242). However, the prevalence of hedgerows in the United Kingdom casts some doubt on this last claim.

Duvall uses the above information to remind readers that African contributions to culture and knowledge in Latin America are often overlooked, and that maroons faced hardship both in Latin America and at home (2009, 242). His discussion also reflects Marshall's assertion that maroon settlements often resemble sites in Africa belonging to people trying to avoid enslavement (2014a, 8). It also emphasizes maroon agency: even if there were no inaccessible and remote natural sites or large cities available, maroons came up with other strategies to defend themselves. Finally, this analysis ties in well with the theme that cooperation with indigenous people was often an important survival strategy, as maroon settlements increasingly incorporated indigenous people, and live fencing became known as a "mestizo practice" (Duvall 2009, 240). Perhaps landscape archaeologists can use the presence of live fences in concentric or labyrinthine formations to help determine if the area of study was a maroon settlement.

This paper has highlighted research themes in maroon archaeology, including the difficulties in defining and categorizing slavery and marronage; the range of sites occupied by maroons and their typical characteristics; the cooperation of indigenous people as an essential factor in maroon survival; the ways in which maroons resisted, how they may have thought about their station, and whether most maroons were concerned with the abolition of slavery; and crosscultural differences in how fugitive slaves negotiated their identities. The leading researchers in maroon archaeology, Funari, Orser, and Rowlands, use a global capitalist model that emphasizes European colonialism to explain the maroon experience, although I think this is too generalized.

I have tried to approach negotiations of maroon identity with a

comparative perspective by illustrating that maroon status was a source of pride in such areas as Brazil and Jamaica, but that it was a source of shame and stigma in places such as Kenya, so it is important not to think of marronage as a monolithic experience. Further. by comparing Brazilian and Jamaican long-term occupation sites with the situation in Mauritius, we can tentatively conclude that a lack of cooperation from the indigenous population may have precluded a maroon community's success, although we cannot be sure from only one study. Finally, I have tried to include examples from different parts of the world in order to do justice to the fact that slavery and marronage are global processes (not just naturalized categories), but that there can be tremendous local diversity.

However, there are yet more angles of analysis that one could take. For one thing, slavery is not a uniquely African experience, and more studies should be devoted to fugitive slaves from other parts of the world and in other time periods besides the sixteenth to the late nineteenth centuries. There are few archaeological studies that follow this research angle. Second, as Duvall's analysis shows, landscape archaeology could offer important insight into the defense strategies maroons employed when caves, cliffs, or other inaccessible sites were not available. Third, I discussed the lack of gendering historical in most and archaeological narratives about marronage, apart from Marshall's analysis of marriage practices among watoro in Kenya. Fourth, I have not focused in any detail on cultural exchange between Europeans, Africans, and indigenous peoples, apart from live fencing practices, but that is another important aspect of the maroon experience. Possible future directions for research include an increased focus on gender and an expansion of focus to include non-African slaves and runaways.

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