



A student reader on African resistance in Panama

African Maroons in Sixteenth-Century Panama

A History in Documents

By Robert C. Schwaller

From the 1520s through the 1580s, thousands of African slaves fled captivity in Spanish Panama and formed their own communities in the interior of the isthmus. *African Maroons in Sixteenth-Century Panama*, a primary source reader, edited by Robert C. Schwaller, documents this marronage in the context of five decades of African resistance to slavery.

The self-sufficiency of the Maroons, along with their periodic raids against Spanish settlements, sparked armed conflict as Spaniards sought to conquer the maroon communities and kill or re-enslave their populations. After decades of struggle, Maroons succeeded in negotiating a peace with Spanish authorities and establishing the first two free Black towns in the Americas. The little-known details of this dramatic history emerge in these pages, traced through official Spanish accounts, reports, and royal edicts, as well as excerpts from several English sources that recorded alliances between Maroons and English privateers in the region. The contrasting Spanish and English accounts reveal Maroons' attempts to turn European antagonism to their advantage; and, significantly, several accounts feature direct testimony from Maroons. Most importantly, this reader includes translations of the first peace agreements made between a European empire and African Maroons, and the founding documents of the free-Black communities of Santiago del Príncipe and Santa Cruz la Real—the culmination of the first successful African resistance movement in the Americas.

Schwaller has translated all the documents into English and presents each with a short introduction, thorough annotations, and full historical, cultural, and geographical context, making this volume accessible to undergraduate students while remaining a unique document collection for scholars.

Robert C. Schwaller is Associate Professor of History at the University of Kansas. He is the author of *Géneros de Gente in Early Colonial Mexico: Defining Racial Difference* and coeditor of *History of the World: Benzoni's Historia del Mondo Nuovo*.

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