Abstract

After their discovery in 1535, the Galápagos Islands remained sporadically inhabited until 1832 when they were legally annexed to the Republic of Ecuador. For three centuries, the archipelago was visited by pirates and whalers, and was later the location of industrial size plantations, one prison, and an American army base. Today, the archipelago is one of the most visited tourist destinations in the Americas. These events have permanently modified the local landscape but also the terrestrial and maritime ecology. In this research, I explore the ecological effects of the initial human occupation of the archipelago. The overall goals are to explore the initial human-plant interactions during the 19th century and how social, economic, and political relations formed the social landscapes of the early occupation of San Cristóbal Island. I combine the theoretical frameworks of Historical Ecology with the methodological frameworks of Environmental Historical Archaeology and Garden Archaeology. The integrated analysis of historical written records, historic cartography, and microbotanical remains were the research model. The internal layout and agricultural lands of Hacienda “El Progreso” (1870-1904) were studied.

Keywords: Historical Ecology; Environmental Archaeology; Industrial Plantation; 19th century prison, Ecuador